

## From the Executive Office



# The Best of the Best

One aspect of the California-bred breeding and racing program that we have strived to expand and promote over the last ten years, is the restricted stakes races offered throughout the state. After reviewing the combined results of the recent California Gold Rush IV, the inaugural Sunshine Millions in late January this year, and California Cup XIII last November, there is no doubt that we have the best stakes schedule in the country. I do not know of any other state that has both as many premier days of racing as well as numerous other lucrative black-type opportunities offered throughout the annual racing season.

The current stakes schedule includes 62 races for Cal-breds with purses totaling nearly \$10 million. This is a far cry from 1990, when we had 32 restricted stakes and roughly \$3 million in purses. The stakes schedule, which is an important part of the \$35 million breeding and racing program, has indeed come a long way.

One of our premier events, the Citibank California Gold Rush IV Day held at Hollywood Park this past April 26, once again proved a success when a record \$17,230,000 was handled. This was not only the highest handle in the four-year history of the event, but also an increase of nearly \$1 million from last year's handle for the day.

Beginning with the initial discussions that we had with Hollywood Park over five years ago, our goal was to offer a spring celebration of the California-bred which would complement the existing Cal Cup Day that is held in the fall. Furthermore, we wanted to provide opportunities not only to Cal-breds that have consistently competed in stakes company, but also to those who are aspiring stakes horses as well.

Thus, at Gold Rush we continue to card four non black-type races—two for maidens and two

for non-winners other than maiden claiming or starter. Each of these four races carry higher than normal purses and are denoted as stakes, so that they do qualify under stakes rules but not black-type. This helps the catalog page of those families in certain regional sales and, most importantly, allows more breeders and owners the opportunity to run on a premier day.

With the continued support of Hollywood Park and the Thoroughbred Owners of California (TOC), California Gold Rush promises to be a regularly popular event and a mainstay on our annual stakes calendar.



On another note, a sad one, the California breeding industry lost a major supporter in the month of May, with the passing of Mr. Robert "Bob" Walter.

Mr. and Mrs. "W" (as they were frequently referred to) and their Vine Hill Ranch have perennially been amongst the state's leading breeders, producing a number of California champions as well as countless stakes winners.

I still remember, as if it were yesterday, watching the Walter's homebred Cavonnier take the lead in the stretch of the 1996 Kentucky Derby, only to get heartbreakingly nosed out at the wire. Cavonnier began a 4-year dominance by Cal-breds in the grade I Santa Anita Derby and was a great representative of the state, just as his owners were and continue to be. On page 14, we pay tribute to Bob and his wife Barbara's accomplishments as prominent Thoroughbred breeders in California.

Mr. "W" will definitely be missed and we extend our condolences to Mrs. "W" and the rest of the family.

— Doug Burge