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HRNSW introduce revolutionary scheme

NSW INDUSTRY TO OFFER TWO \$1MILLION FUTURITY JUVENILE RACE SERIES'

By **ANDREW GEORGIU**

HARNESS Racing New South Wales (HRNSW) has announced the launch of a new juvenile futurity series called the NSW Breeders Challenge, which is set to inject up to an additional \$1million in prizemoney funding into the industry.

Plans to conduct another futurity series similar to the NSW Sires' Stakes have been in the pipeline for the past few months.

With the 'new look' progressive board conducting several workshops and publishing information for participants to view their concerns/feedback, HRNSW have come up with a scheme that is set to improve the foundations of breeding in NSW.

The NSW Breeders Challenge will allow breeders, who choose to venture outside the State to either a stallion or broodmare, to compete for a series worth up to \$1million. Under the current Sires' Stakes scheme, a foal must be sired by a NSW registered stallion only.

The only condition for the Breeders Challenge is that either the mare or stallion has to be NSW based. Those foals that are fully bred in NSW are also eligible to compete in both the Sires' Stakes and Breeders Challenge series.

In a boost for breeders who have supported local stallions and studmasters, the current NSW Sires' Stakes Series is to be retained under the current eligibility conditions for a period of no less than four years.

This decision means that foals currently in utero will be eligible for both the Two and Three-Year-Old divisions of the new series. Furthermore, 2006/07 matings to NSW based and registered stallions have a guarantee of competing in a 2YO NSW Sires' Stakes Series.

Some are already saying the Breeders Challenge series will see NSW become the leading State in which to breed and race a juvenile.

HRNSW Board member Rob Nalder, who has raced and bred many horses over the years, said the introduction of the Breeders Challenge was something the participants in NSW were calling for.

"People in this State, whose foal wasn't fully bred in NSW, wanted the opportunity to race in a major event in their own backyard," he said.

"We consulted all the accredited bodies and the Breeders Challenge is what we came up with.

"Aspects such as transported semen made the board feel like the NSW Sires' Stakes series needed to be looked at, from a broodmare owners' point of view, as they wished to breed to a stallion outside of this State.

"After receiving plenty of feedback from participants, we found that they embraced the concept of

racing in their hometowns for \$10,000, and not having to travel to the city to race for that amount of money.

"They also liked the idea of racing for a \$100,000 Group One event."

Nalder explained that close to 1400 foals were 100 per cent NSW bred last season, while on the other side, there were 350 foals were thrown by mares based in NSW but served by outside stallions.

The major concern here was that by going to an outside stallion, that foal was prevented from racing in the Sires' Stakes series, and therefore, ineligible to compete for big prizemoney at a juvenile level in NSW.

"One thing this board has done is acknowledge the efforts of Studmasters in NSW to increase the quality of stallions standing in this State," Nalder stated.

"Studmasters have spent plenty of money to acquire good stallions and increase the quality of bloodlines in their horses.

"For this reason, we needed their continued support from a monetary point of view, to keep the existing Sires' Stakes scheme afloat.

"They have agreed to this and as such, it has ensured the life of the Sires' Stakes scheme, as we know it, for the next four years."

HRNSW came up with a payment structure, which was agreed to by Studmasters in NSW, that they pay \$100 plus GST for every foal produced on their farms.

This money goes into an industry fund to support NSW Sires'

Stakes racing. Going on last season's figures, where there were 1400 fully bred NSW foals, it would equate to 14 per cent of the total prizemoney in the series, as the Sires' Stakes is worth \$1million.

Mares' owners would pay \$132 at foal nomination time and that money also supports Sires' Stakes racing.

The Board, however, is planning on charging mares' owners a further \$132 (\$264 in total), and that will give the foal that is 100 per cent NSW bred the chance to compete in two series' worth \$1million each.

How the Breeders Challenge series will work is that via a futurity payment system, a fee of either \$330 or \$550 is due at foal nomination time.

The fee of \$330 is for those breeders who have a mare based in NSW, who wish to have her served by a stallion outside of NSW. However, that particular stallion MUST have paid a \$2,200 fee for their progeny to be eligible.

Should, however, a studmaster not pay the eligibility fee for their stallion, then the owner of the mare can pay \$550 and have their foal eligible to compete in the Breeders Challenge series.

"The board is putting \$400,000 a year for three years into this concept," Nalder said.

"At this stage, we are intending it to be run after the Sires' Stakes series and before the Breeders Crown.

"Naturally, we will have to discuss the positioning of dates, and will be talking to Harness Racing

Victoria (HRV) as to not clash with their Breeders Crown series.

"Another thing we are trying to achieve is more Sires' Stakes racing in the country."

The NSW Breeders Challenge will bring together the 'Best of the Best' - foals that are fully or partially bred in NSW - to compete in a \$1million series.

Nalder mapped out a scenario where the winner of the Sires' Stakes could also win the Breeders Challenge.

"Then we would really know who is the best of the best," he said.

HRNSW is working on finalising the detail of the changes to the terms and conditions of the Sires' Stakes as well as defining the terms and conditions of the Breeders Challenge for general issue.

HRNSW Chief Executive Max Pool advised that "now that a final decision has been made, we are working as fast as we can on a final paper containing all of the terms and conditions, explanations of the various changes as well as Q&As to assist everyone understand how the Sires' Stakes and Breeders Challenge will hang together. I will put these documents to the Board early next week for final review with an aim to releasing them to the industry later in the week."

Reaction from all corners of the industry has been positive to say the least.

Rob Van Dyke, of Peppertree Farm, said the concept of a new race series was great.

"I think the board has to be commended on such an initiative but it

must be promoted and given the right coverage," he said.

"The Board has realised how important an initiative like this is to the industry."

Anne Lamb, who conducts leading stud Golden Gait with her husband Wayne, said the Breeders Challenge was ideal and gave breeders a wealth of choice.

"The good thing about it is we are keeping our Sires' Stakes system and getting another futurity series worth just as much," she said.

"It is what the industry wanted and gives owners the chance to race for \$2million in prizemoney."

Reaction from the Studmasters and Breeders Association was just as positive, with Les Camarda stating the two futurity series' working together would benefit NSW in a big way.

"Bringing in the Breeders Challenge is great and what's more, our Statebred Bonus Scheme is protected," he said.

"I am glad we, along with others, were consulted all the way through by the Board with their intentions and plans.

"Finally, the mare owners are not disadvantaged anymore."

Wally Mann, of the United Harness Racing Association, also welcomed the Breeders Challenge initiative.

"We welcome any initiative that improves the quality of racing and has the potential to bring new people into the sport," he stated.

Prominent owner-breeder-sponsor Colin McDowell believes

the new series will force the quality of stallions in NSW to reach new heights.

"I think Studmasters all around the State will be more keen to attract clients with a selection of better quality stallions," he said.

"For me, I am in favour of domicile mares but I will be supporting this new initiative.

"For years, I have gone to Victoria to have my mares served by stallions down there, however, with the introduction of this new scheme, I can see a lot of that money now being spent in NSW."

Harold Park Chief Executive John Dumesny welcomed the initiative of HRNSW.

"Boards have sat on this topic for many years, now and finally, we have movement which should be accepted, supported and encouraged by all in the industry," he said.

"The finer details as yet have not been released, however, I am sure HRNSW will take into account the other established events such as the Linden Huntley Little, Bathurst Gold Crown and Australian Pacing Gold, which can be extremely taxing on the juveniles when setting the race conditions for the Sires' Stakes and Breeders Challenge.

"Already I have taken a call from a prominent Queensland breeder/administrator who stated the concept is that of a genius.

"I might say he had tried to initiate a similar type of event between the States some years ago, so which genius he was referring to I am not sure."

HONAN SALE PROVES A BIG HIT

STORY ON PAGE 4



On a brilliant Sunday afternoon at Canowindra, the huge crowd in attendance at the Honan Family Reduction Sale anxiously await as the first Lot is prepared to enter the sale ring.