

2009 Indiana Thoroughbred Breed Development Program Approved

On March 12th the Indiana Horse Racing Commission approved the 2009 Indiana thoroughbred breed development program that uses a budget that approaches \$9.8 million. This is a substantial increase from years past. Within the program, there is an increase in purses across the board, an expanded restricted stakes program, an expanded awards program, and a flexible race scheduling format that is sure to provide greater opportunities to race than in the previous year.

For the 2009 overnight program races there are a number of changes. First, the commitment from Indiana Downs is to provide a base purse of \$6,000 per overnight race from the horsemen's purse account and Hoosier Park providing \$8,000 per overnight race. The balance of the purses will come from the Thoroughbred Breed Development Fund. Secondly, to provide more appropriate racing opportunities, the mix of program races will be approximately 70% maiden special weight and allowance races with 30% claiming races. This is an increase in the number of claiming races than in years past from a mix of approximately 85%-15%. The committee wanted to provide more claiming opportunities to allow as many Indiana-breds as possible to compete within this year's program.

The following schedule for purse supplements for the allowance level portion of the restricted racing program will be in addition to the base purses provided by the horsemen's purse accounts: maiden special weight, \$16,000; non-winners of two lifetime races, \$19,000; non-winners of three lifetime races, \$22,000 non-winners of four lifetime races \$25,000, and non-conditioned allowance \$34,000. So, a maiden special weight purse at Indiana Downs will be \$22,000 (\$6,000 base purse plus \$16,000 supplement) and \$24,000 at the Hoosier Park meet. Taking into consideration the purses and the owner awards, our goal was to reach an equivalent of a \$30,000+ purse at the maiden special weight level and we were able to accomplish that. At the higher end, the "open" allowances for Indiana-breds will have a \$40,000 purse!

There will also be purse supplements for all scheduled breed development claiming races at a \$10,000 claiming price and above. These purse supplements range by condition from \$5,300 to \$17,000 at the higher claiming prices. The purses for all claiming races within the program are targeted to be \$2,000 higher than the same condition for open horses. In 2008, there were no purse supplements above open races for Indiana-bred claiming races. As always, the racing secretary will have the unlimited capability to write races that are not supplemented for Indiana-breds under the \$10,000 claiming price.

We wanted to try to build a flexible race schedule in the overnight program that has the ability to be modified, if necessary, from condition book to condition book taking into consideration available horses and condition availability of those horses. With the race meets being so close together, we saw this as an opportunity to look at 2009 as one continuous race meet. In years past, if a race did not fill, it may have been brought back the next day. If the race did not fill on the next day, the race was dropped. Moving forward, a race brought back that does not fill is eligible to be brought back later in the meet as needed, and possibly with a change in condition based upon the composition of available horses.

In 2008, the restricted stakes program consisted of 18 stakes races. For this year, there will be 22 stakes with the Thoroughbred Breed Development Fund providing the entire purse of \$70,000. All 22 stakes races will also be 'added money' races, which is a change from the prior years. With a purse of \$70,000 with added money for all stakes, and with the owner awards, our goal was to have an equivalent compensation to the winning owner of a \$100,000 purse and we accomplished that.

The breed development committee also felt that one of the keys to retaining and attracting breeders and owners to our program was to provide significant opportunities for return on investment through available purses and awards. (For breeders, we felt that the combination of available purses and awards will have a significant impact on the sale prices of Indiana-breds, enhancing return on investment.) We felt that the two-year old program did provide appropriate opportunities for return on investment, yet we were lacking in a three-year old only stakes program. Therefore, we have added four new three-year old only stakes races, with both a colt and a filly stakes race at Indiana Downs and another pair at Hoosier Park. These stakes additions give the program a total of six stakes races for three-year olds. The two new stakes at Hoosier Park are being scheduled to be run on the undercard of Indiana Derby in early October.

Beginning in 2009, all owner, breeder, and stallion owner awards will be calculated on the gross purse (total purse) and no longer on just the base purse. All owner and breeder awards will be 20% of the gross purse with the stallion owner award being 10% of the gross purse. The owner award for the program's claiming races, equal to or greater than \$10,000, is an increase from 15% in prior years. We have also removed the maximum cap of \$10,000 per award which allows the owner and breeder awards to expand to \$14,000 in the restricted stakes program.

For other parts of the program, we made some minor adjustments to the Out-of-State Breeder Award and the Open Race Awards. The minimum level race to qualify for the out-of-state breeder award is being adjusted slightly upward to a condition greater than or equal to a claiming price of \$10,000. Prior to 2009, the minimum level to qualify for this award was above a claiming price of \$7,500. The out-of-state breeder award will now be available for two-year olds racing any time prior to the start of the Hoosier Park meet as opposed to the prior cut off of July 1st in years past. With the 2009 Indiana race meets moved closer together, we wanted to recognize that many will seek out racing opportunities outside of Indiana for their two-year olds as preparation for the Hoosier Park meet.

The open race awards will now be patterned after the out-of-state breeder award as a percentage of the winner's share of the purse. The award for winning an open race at or above a \$10,000 claiming price, not restricted to Indiana-breds, will be 25% of the winner's share of the purse for both the owner and the breeder up to a \$15,000 cap. The open race stallion owner award, paid to the owner or lessee of a registered Indiana stallion, will be 12.5% of the winner's share of the purse for the stallion owner up to a \$7,500 cap.

So far, the 2009 breeding season is off to a great start with over 900 registered mares compared to just 515 two seasons ago. We are also looking forward to a great racing season and we hope you are as well. We feel that there is plenty of opportunity for everyone in 2009 and we only expect to get better in the years to come.