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NATIONAL STEEPLECHASE ASSOCIATION | 400 FAIR HILL DRIVE, ELKTON, MD 21921

Colonial Downs gives big boost to successful summer season

With a strong assist from a reborn and revitalized Colonial Downs, the National Steeplechase Association wrapped up a successful summer racing season with the Virginia track's Randolph Rouse Handicap on Sept. 7.

"From two flat races at Parx Racing to Colonial's races, the summer season has been very gratifying," said NSA Director of Racing Bill Gallo Jr. "Monmouth Park rescheduled two maiden races for us, and our Saratoga Race Course program this summer was very strong."

Indeed, Saratoga's two Grade 1 races, the A. P. Smithwick Memorial (Gr. 1) and the New York Turf Writers Cup Handicap (Gr. 1), were won by Hudson River Farms' rising star Winston C, and the New York Racing Association meet also featured two other stakes races and impressive winners in allowance hurdles.

"I can't say enough about Colonial Downs," Gallo said. "Virginia is a stronghold of jump racing, and the Colonial races benefited all of our horsemen by offering 10 racing opportunities that we would not have had otherwise."

"The atmosphere was terrific, and Colonial's Secretariat Turf Course was a wonderful surface to showcase our sport."

Gallo noted that the Colonial races targeted horses that otherwise would have been idle over the summer. "Maidens cannot race at Saratoga, and Colonial provided five opportunities to create new winners," he said. "Ratings handicap horses had no opportunities at Saratoga this year, and they had four races at Colonial."

"As a result, the Saratoga and Colonial racing programs meshed together well to provide a robust menu of jump racing opportunities for our owners and trainers through the summer."



Reopened under new ownership and management after a six-year hiatus, Colonial Downs attracted large crowds and large betting fields to the track located between Richmond and Williamsburg. Racing fans of all ages packed the track's apron, and crowds were four deep to watch the horses being saddled before their races.

Colonial Downs welcomed the steeplechase horses and horsemen as well. "We were very pleased with the steeplechase races. They were very successful," said Jill Byrne, Colonial's vice president of racing operations.

"Given Virginia's steeplechase heritage, it was a natural to have jump races here. The steeplechase races were well received by the public; people like to watch it. Our flat jockeys would come out to the rail to watch the jump races."

Colonial's spacious and safe turf course also was an attraction. "The ability to race over this course was a big positive," she said.

Steeplechase racing also received strong

support from the Virginia Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association. "Our board supports steeplechasing," said VHBPA Executive Director Frank Petramalo. "Some of our directors race both flat and steeplechase horses."

"Overall, the horsemen were absolutely delighted with the Colonial meet," said Petramalo, a former NSA director. "We had good support from the steeplechase owners and trainers for the races."

Colonial attracted large fields throughout its meet, and the steeplechase races also filled well. Colonial averaged 8.53 starters per race, and the jump races were close to that average at 8.4 starters in each of the 10 races. Betting on Colonial's races exceeded \$1-million a day, and the track's purse structure--topping \$500,000 a day over the 15 dates--attracted horsemen from all over the country.

"Those purse levels were just unheard of for Virginia," Petramalo said. "The new management is very racing savvy and committed to bringing back Virginia racing at a high level."

The summer races at Saratoga and Colonial put the NSA ahead of 2018 figures for both races and starts. The Rouse Handicap, which concluded Colonial's jump-racing schedule, was the NSA's 101st race this season, and those races have had 804 starts. At the same point on the calendar last year, 98 races had accounted for 756 starts.

The Virginia track plans to expand its racing program next year to between 21 and 30 dates from this year's 15, and steeplechasing very likely will be a part of the program. Colonial also is considering a standalone day of steeplechase races in coming years.



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Stewards attend NSA seminar

Approximately 40 stewards and racing officials packed the Thoroughbred Racing Associations' conference room on Sept. 10 for the National Steeplechase Association's semiannual seminar on racing and officiating issues.

Attendance at one of the two annual sessions is required for stewards serving at NSA meets. The NSA program is a part of the Racing Officials Accreditation Program, which oversees training of new stewards and continuing education for current stewards.

The daylong session, led by NSA Director of Racing Bill Gallo Jr., considered current issues within the sport, continuing safety considerations, and new developments that will affect racing in the coming months.



Stewards and racing officials posed for a group photo outside the Thoroughbred Racing Associations headquarters in Fair Hill, Md., on Sept. 10.

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Tullock joins NSA

Jillian Tullock, formerly the Maryland Jockey Club's assistant racing secretary, has joined the National Steeplechase Association staff.

"Jillian Tullock brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the National Steeplechase Association, and we welcome her to the organization," NSA President Guy J. Torsilieri said.

"She also is an accredited steward and will have an immediate impact on our racing program."

She had been the assistant racing secretary for Maryland's Laurel Park and Pimlico Race Course since 2000, and served as a steward at the Charles Town Races in West Virginia.

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