



**Emerald Downs  
Presiding Steward  
2017 End of Meet Report  
November 9, 2017**

**Emerald Downs Racing LLC.**

The main change for Emerald Downs 2017 live racing season happened on the fifth floor. A complete renovation was done making it the base of all the simulcast wagering and adding a card room with 15 tables that was open by the start of the live racing season. The card room and simulcasting facility is open seven days a week from 9:00 a.m. until the end of the simulcast card. The card room is open from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 a.m. Emerald Downs also installed a new phone system this year. There were some issues that involved the new system and we are working with Steve Dunham, Emerald Downs IT lead, to have some corrections completed before the start of next year. Matt Dinerman, announcer for Emerald Downs worked well with the board of stewards in informing the public of the stewards' decisions and explaining the decisions regarding inquiries and objections.

Emerald Downs presented two new promotional days along with the much favorite return of the Indian relay races this year. For the first time the promotional department brought in Ostrich and Camel races for special events. The riders for these races consisted of pony and exercise persons, a trainer, three jockeys, and Emerald Downs announcer Matt Dinerman. Jockey Rocco Bowen was the only rider that rode both species. The other first time promotional event was the Corgi races with four qualifying heats and a final race for the championship. Emerald Downs was expecting eight to ten thousand people for this event and over twelve thousand patrons showed up causing backups in parking, concessions and mutuels.

On Saturday, July 29<sup>th</sup> before the running of the third race the steward's console went out along with the WHRC ELMS system. A short time later the entire phone system also went down. All the departments that needed to be contacted were mostly done by cell phones and radios with the few exceptions of the ones that could be contacted in person. Tote did get the stewards console up and working, which is used to post finish positions and the official sign on the tote board, just before the running of the sixth race but the phone system wasn't fixed until the following day.

This year there was one day that Emerald Downs cancelled three live races. On Saturday, July 22, during the running of the sixth race a three horse spill happened at the head of the stretch, there were three riders injured and due to miscommunication in the protocol used to transport them to an emergency room,

management, after discussion with the jockey colony, cancelled the remainder of the race card for the betterment of the public and participants. A meeting was held the following day to review the protocols and procedures to ensure all stakeholders were informed on the process in the event of a multiple injury accident in the future.

### **Emerald Downs / Race Office**

Emerald Downs originally offered seventy live racing days as it did last year but at the June commission meeting Emerald Downs President Phil Ziegler requested an additional two race days of September 23 and 24 due to unprecedented rainy weather in the spring. Races were offered Saturday and Sunday for the first two weekends in April and increased to three live days a week with the addition of Friday night racing starting April 21<sup>st</sup> with holiday racing offered on Memorial Day. Emerald Downs did run a special Monday, July 3<sup>rd</sup> live race card. For the first time, Emerald Downs did not offer live racing on Labor Day or the final three Friday's of the live race meet. For the second year Emerald Downs ran evening races on four Saturdays in July and seemed pleased with the attendance and handle. The number of races carded would have decreased again this year with 584 races with the original 70 days of racing with 599 races last year but with the addition of the two days added in September the total number was 604 races carded with 72 days of racing. The number of starters decreased from 4,452 horses starting last year to 4,223 horses this year, which lowered the field size from 7.43 down to 6.99. The number of trainer licenses issued stayed about the same with 162 last year compared to 163 this year.

Emerald Downs kept the incentive program for the horseman as in the past and added a bonus program. Emerald Downs and Hastings Racecourse announced a \$125,000 stakes bonus events for two year old, three year olds and older horses which participated in select stakes races at both venues. Emerald Downs stall applications stayed about the same. The race office received ninety-six stall applications turned in this year versus ninety-five applications last year. The stall allotment dropped with 1,249 stalls being allotted this year versus 1,263 last year.

The two year old races had an increase this year with 41 races compared to 32 last year. The number of Washington bred races carded stayed exactly the same with 21 races carded last year and this year. The number of horses claimed showed the largest increase in several years with 234 this year compared to 204 claims in 2015, and 203 last year. Quarter horse races stayed about the same with 12 races carded last year to 11 races carded at Emerald Downs this year. Emerald Downs was again the host of the Bank of America Emerald Challenge Championship for the seventh consecutive year along with adding the Distance Challenge going 870 yards and the John Deere Juvenile Challenge for two year olds that was previously run in Idaho.

In its fourth year of racing for the Emerald Racing Club, a change was made by adding one additional trainer. Trainer Michael Puhich was added to the club along with Larry Ross who has trained the club's horse's since the program started. The club had three horses this year. McDove, trained by Larry Ross, had five starts for the club and finished the season with one second and one third. The club's other two horses, Distinguishable trained by Michael Puhich had one win, one third and a fifth when it was claimed from the club June 23<sup>rd</sup>. On July 2<sup>nd</sup> Trainer Michael Puhich then claimed the third horse E Z Larry for the club to replace Distinguishable. E Z Larry had one win in three starts before being claimed from them

September 10<sup>th</sup>. After E Z Larry was claimed, McDove was sold to one of the Emerald Club owners as required by the Emerald Club requirements of dispersing the horses at the end of the race meet.

### **Jockey Colony**

The jockey colony was adequate all season with new faces that included two apprentices from northern California, David Martin and Kevin Orozco, also apprentice jockey Francisco Orduna-Rojas from Oregon, and jockey Julien Couton returned the end of June after Golden Gate closed.

There were a total of 27 jockey rulings issued this year doubling the amount of rulings of 13 issued for riding violations in 2016. Of these rulings, 15 rulings were issued assessing fines ranging from \$200 to \$500 for careless riding infractions. Six rulings were issued assessing a two day suspension due to a disqualification or treating the incident as a suspension with no disqualification involved. Three rulings were issued holding the rider blameless in a disqualification. The remaining three rulings issued included one for failing to ride through the wire, one for misuse of the whip and one for conduct (fighting) in the jockey's room.

### **Mutuel Department and Sportech Totalizator System**

Sportech, the tote company serving Emerald Downs, headed by Tony Lovell, worked well with the board of stewards with very few interruptions. The Mutuel department did have several days throughout the year that it was having trouble posting the pay off right away due to delays with their imports, which is expected.

### **Emerald Downs Video Department**

The video department is essential to the stewards when regulating live racing and they worked hard to ensure that the videos were working properly and rectifying any malfunctions that occurred.

### **Emerald Downs Security**

There is a good working relationship between Emerald Downs security and the WHRC staff. With the turnover of the WHRC investigators, Emerald Downs security kept the WHRC investigators informed of situations that needed to be addressed by the board of stewards along with assisting the WHRC in any way they could.

### **Physical Inspection of the Grounds**

The annual inspection of the barn area once again demonstrated that the association does an excellent job maintaining the property including the perimeter fence and barn area throughout the season.

### **Licensing**

Longtime employee Debbie Hopkins ran the licensing department mostly by herself the majority of the year and was instrumental in ensuring that all licensing tasks are done efficiently and correctly. Debbie has been significant in the agency's ongoing efforts to administer the Labor & Industries (L&I) Industrial Insurance program, as well as tracking all Washington-bred horses for the yearly owners and breeders bonuses.

There was a slight drop in the number of licenses issued in 2017 with 2,879 compared to 2,963 licenses issued last year, down by a total of 84. The three areas that showed the largest decrease for the industry was the owners licenses that were down by 54 with 1387 issued in 2017 compared to 1441 in 2016. The prospective owners licenses showed an increase again this year with 47 in 2017 compared to 38 in 2016. Other licenses that showed a decrease were exercise riders down by 20, pony riders down by 11, jockey agents down by 1, and jockey licenses issued were down with 53 this year versus 55 last year.

### **WHRC Investigators**

There was a big change to the WHRC Investigative department this last year. Former WHRC investigator Jill Hallin resigned last year from her position and Michael Cassaday was hired to fill that position. Darrell Farwell was hired after the unexpected passing of Dick Smith in April. WHRC investigator Steve Kalmbach from Kennewick was then brought in occasionally to assist in training both Mr. Cassaday and Mr. Farwell in performing the duties of the WHRC investigators position.

The WHRC investigators did a total of 98 drug and alcohol tests this year compared to 66 last year and had 2 positives for alcohol, both from the same licensee and one positive for THC (marijuana) with no refusals. Of the tests performed 7 were required for persons holding a conditional license, 6 were for reasonable cause, and 85 were for licensees on horseback. These results continue to demonstrate the value the testing program has in controlling and keeping the barn area alcohol and drug-free as possible.

### **WHRC Veterinarians / Test Barn**

Another change was in the test barn staff. Dr. Tricia Arnold did not return so Dr. Ron Friedman, who was previously the State veterinarian from Turf Paradise, was brought in to fill the position of Equine Medical Director. The WHRC veterinarians along with the test barn staff continue to work well with the stewards. Dr. Collette Bergam DVM again was very helpful after her return from the Class C tracks with Dr. Gary Bergsma DVM again filling in as the backup veterinarian. All of the veterinarians did their jobs with professionalism and integrity and were available to assist the stewards in all equine medication matters.

### **WHRC Receiving Barn**

The receiving barn, staffed by identifier Joan Hutchison and receiving barn clerk Kimberly Wales did a good job identifying the horses to ensure that the right horse was in each race. Joan and Kim also assisted in the transfers of all claimed horses this year which were not selected for post race testing. All horses which were claimed and selected for testing were transferred in the test barn. Again this year Vince Funk and Tim Harder filled in as needed in the receiving barn and test barn positions.

### **Photo Finish**

Photo finish operator Jody Parmenter did a good job in producing the order of finish and the photo finish images in a timely manner for the stewards. The timing system also worked well this year with no real problems. The timer worked for all of the Quarter horse races but occasionally it was necessary to reset the connection with the starting gate immediately prior to the race to ensure the timer triggered when the gates opened.

## **Staff**

The WHRC staff at Emerald Downs continues to utilize their experience while regulating horse racing with upmost professionalism. The majority of the employees have been with the commission for many years and are willing to perform the duties of different positions as needed to ensure that the regulatory duties at Emerald Downs continues and the integrity of horseracing is upheld. The WHRC staff at Emerald Downs added three new employees to fill the positions that opened up due to promotions or retirement. Danny Bryson filled the vacant steward position when Amanda Benton was promoted to Deputy Secretary. Hugh Wales was hired for the clerk of scales position following Danny Bryson's promotion. Marlene Spencer retired following the 2016 race season and an individual was hired to fill the vacant Pari-Mutuel Inspector and claims clerk position. This hire did not demonstrate the skills required to perform the duties and was dismissed at the end of May and the position went unfilled for the remainder of the meet. Between the assistance from Sportech on mutuel issues, and the stewards' agreement to assist in processing claims for the rest of the season, all duties were assumed by current employees. Marlene Spencer did agree to be available and come back and fill in for Debbie Hopkins and Jody Parmenter at different times throughout the season when needed. Every employee stepped up as needed to help fill positions that were vacant from day to day for various reasons. Vince Funk and Tim Harder again aided the WHRC by filling in at different positions including receiving barn clerk, photo finish, paddock judge, clerk of scales, film analyst, steward, and test barn secretary. Paddock judge Pat McDowell continued doing an excellent job staying in contact with the stewards during situations that developed as well as maintaining an outstanding working relationship with the horsemen. The WHRC staff works hard to ensure that all participants in horse racing are following the rules of racing while being treated fairly and respectfully to make certain that the integrity of horseracing is sustained.

## **Board of Stewards**

The board of stewards issued a total of 144 rulings at Emerald Downs as of September 30, 2017. There were ten medication violations this year compared to six last year at Emerald Downs with penalties ranging from a warning to \$500.00 in fines.

The stewards continued to work towards making decisions that encourage public transparency by providing a daily report to the association for its website that lists scratches, late rider changes, claims, the reasoning behind the decision on any objection or inquiry that occurred, as well as all photo finish images used for placing. Backup steward Vince Funk filled in as needed and Tim Harder helped as an assistant to the stewards.

Overall, the 2017 race season went well and ended on a positive note and we are looking forward to 2018.

Sincerely,



Ken Doll Sr.  
Presiding Steward