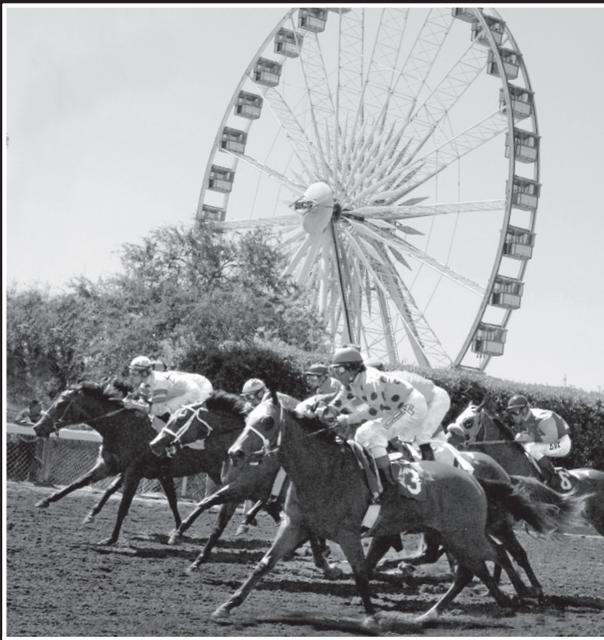




Fairplex Park

Handicapping Shift Real Dirt Track Mixes Up the Odds



Attention Handicappers:

\$5,000 is up for grabs to the most consistent handicapper who plays all three weekends beginning Sept. 6-7 in the **DRF/NTRA National Handicapping Championship Qualifiers at Fairplex Park.** Fifteen qualifying spots are up for grabs as well as up to an estimated \$10,000 in prize money each weekend. Contact Steve Rittenour at (909) 865-4630 to register. **Hurry, available spots are filling up fast!**

When it comes to handicapping Fairplex Park, everyone has their own theory. Now that the majority of horses in southern California have trained and raced over synthetics for a full year, the longest all-synthetic racing streak so far, how will they do coming back to dirt?

Trainer Barry Abrams has had a standout 2008, including a grade 1 win by *Golden Doc A.* Of Fairplex, he says, **"It's not a real deep track, it's more of a turf feel for the horses... Horses get a good hold of it, there's no slipping, and the ones that run well [on synthetics] will do just as well at Fairplex."**

HRTV host Peter Lurie offers up handicapping angles that many share. **"Speed is a big factor there. Turf horses, obviously more times than not, really love the course. You have to know the tendencies of horses. I think you also have to go for rider, trainer tendencies,"** he says. The tight turns on Fairplex's five-furlong oval have a reputation for aiding turf specialists who are used to running on the tighter turns of inner turf tracks. Lurie is in line to start his first year as Fairplex's in-house television commentator.

However, Doug O'Neill, Fairplex's leading trainer for five of the past six years, cautions that the switch back to dirt may produce some surprises. **"I think you're going to see a lot of horses that maybe didn't run so good on the Polytrack run better on the dirt. As a handicapper, I would definitely look at a horse's form on dirt and not so much how they ran on Polytrack."** To do that, one may have to travel back to the 2007 Fairplex meet for dirt form in this first full year of synthetic racing at Santa Anita Park, Hollywood Park, and Del Mar.

Synthetic surfaces at other California tracks appear to be friendlier to turf horses than traditional dirt had been. Will the same horses with synthetic success do well at Fairplex? If the track plays to grass horses, they could very well win, but if the synthetics are different from both turf and dirt, a profitable puzzle awaits for handicappers who can piece it together. **NTRA Handicapping contests, "Pick 3 for a TV" Thursdays, "Budweiser Beer Jockey" Fridays,** and other betting promotions enhance the 2008 Fairplex Park meet, September 5-22, 2008, dark Tuesdays.

Live Racing Sept. 5-22 (Dark Tuesdays)

First race Monday, Wednesday and Thursday at 1 p.m., Friday, Saturday and Sunday at noon.

L.A. County Fair • Sept. 5-28
Wednesday - Sunday

Presented by **SAN MANUEL**
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