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New Details Emerge for Return of Horse Racing During Carnival: Ticket Costs, Entertainment, VIP Section and More

After seven years, the iconic track reopens with major upgrades and a full schedule of race day festivities

Sports / **Published On April 16, 2024 06:03 AM /**

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Preparations are in full swing for the return of a beloved tradition as the Clinton Phipps Racetrack in St. Thomas prepares to host its first race day in seven years next month.

At Monday's Government House press briefing, V.I. Dept. of Sports, Parks and Recreation Commissioner Calvert White spoke on the work that has been done to reach this present state of preparation.

When DSPR took over the facility, Mr. White said 12-foot high mangroves blocked visibility and the running surface was overgrown after years of disuse. "We basically were starting from the beginning," he said. Permits were obtained to cut the mangroves down to four feet high for better visibility, while new track conditioning and grooming equipment was purchased to restore the track surface. Around 200 tons of sand was spread across targeted areas to improve the surface.

Additional upgrades include a new watering system installed on a department water truck. After several rescue horses were moved off-site, the racetrack's stables now house up to ten racing horses, according to Mr. White. The new grandstand seating constructed by Southland Gaming is three times the original size, and elevated for optimum views. Comfortable folding chairs will be available for pre-purchased assigned seating at \$40 each, Mr. White noted.

The DSPR commissioner emphasized safety as the top priority, with metal detectors, scanners, and added private security personnel on site. Parking will be available at nearby schools for \$5 per vehicle, with shuttle service running continuously. General admission is \$25, while children 12 and under will pay only \$5. Patrons will, for the first time, have the option of purchasing tickets online, under the "Rebirth of Carnival Races" banner on Eventbrite. Noting that those with pre-paid tickets will join a separate line for admission into the racetrack, Mr. White encouraged people to take advantage of the convenient option. "Obviously the line with prepaid tickets will move faster," he noted, since gate staff would only have to scan a QR code instead of dealing with taking cash and making change.

A VIP section in front of the bleachers will host around 100 guests with its own bar and appetizers for \$125. Mr. White aims to get the first race started promptly at 1:00 p.m., with subsequent races 45 minutes after. Entertainment like DJs, step shows, and calypso performances will occupy spectators between races.

After overcoming the challenges involved in reviving the dormant facility, Mr. White said he's confident Carnival revelers will enjoy the "rebirth of horse racing" at the Clinton Phipps track on May 4th.