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Carnival Race Day to Feature Governor's Cup and Six Other Events; \$100K in Prizes Confirmed

The Horse Racing Commission members approved a preference system for horses meeting a 30-day residency rule amid concerns of unfair advantage for late arrivals. Thirty horses have passed pre-race veterinary inspection.

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During Wednesday's meeting of the St. Thomas-St. John Horse Racing Commission, chair Hugo Hodge detailed the seven races scheduled as part of the 2025 Carnival race day on May 2 at the Clinton E. Phipps racetrack.

The main event, the Governor's Cup, is a mile-and-70-yard race for Class A horses. Other races include the Albert "Boysie" Benjamin Cup, an open handicap 1 1/16 mile race for Class A horses,

a six furlong open sprint for Class A,B, and C mares and fillies, the mile-long Bonnie Bonita classic for mares and fillies, as well as another race for female horses of a yet-to-be-determined length. A mile-long race for Class B and C horses, as well as a 7.5 furlong race for non-winning Class C and Class D horses round out the events for the day. Track developer Southland Gaming VI has committed \$100,000 in prize money for the day's events.

During planning for the Carnival race events – specifically the Governor's Cup – Mr. Hodge said that a discussion arose surrounding the question of the 30-day residency requirement for horses to be eligible to participate in the race.

“There's one consideration that the 30-day cutoff was unfair for owners trying to import horses, because there was nowhere to put the horses – there weren't any barns available,” Mr. Hodge outlined. “Equally understandable was a perspective from those that were here that it would be an unfair advantage if...the 30-day is waived when the surface was being redone and there was no training for quite some time.” That circumstance, Mr. Hodge explained, would mean that “someone importing a horse after the 30-day deadline could bring in a horse in race shape condition that had been training the entire time when there were horses here that qualify for the race but [were] unable to do the same training.”

This could create a situation of “unfair advantage,” the chair noted, seeking comment from other HRC members on the issue.

Commissioner Sheldon Turnbull suggested the implementation of a preference system, offering priority registration and a reduced weight requirement to those horses meeting the 30-day/one previous race threshold. “I think that would be the most viable solution to this conundrum,” he said. Commission Vice-Chair Dr. Laura Palminteri concurred. “Having horses that have been here all along race against each other, I think will give us a better, more competitive race. If it doesn't fill, then...we can have other horses and give our ones that have been here an advantage,” she said. “Hopefully it fills with horses that have been here. That would be the best-case scenario.” A motion to that effect was passed unanimously by commissioners.

In preparation for the upcoming race day, 30 horses have received veterinary inspections by Dr. Laura Palminteri . “Everything went well,” she reported, noting that another round of inspections would be carried out on race day.