

# THOROUGHBRED™

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## N • E • W • S T O D A Y

**JOCKEYS' GUILD GIVES TRA CHOICE OF TWO PLANS** The Jockeys' Guild officials yesterday said they intend to reject the Thoroughbred Racing Associations' most recent offer to provide increased accident coverage, life insurance and disability payments. The Guild instead proposed two plans to provide compensation for jockeys' media rights and an improved benefits program. John Giovanni, national manager/secretary of the Guild, presented the Guild's proposals to TRA Commissioner Brian McGrath yesterday afternoon. "Both plans are based on an idea suggested by 'Daily Racing Form' executive columnist Joe Hirsch," Giovanni said, referring to a plan that would add one race at each track around the country and dedicate the net proceeds to the Guild's benefits plans. "The TRA appeared to endorse this plan in its proposal to the Guild December 9, but without spelling out any details or taking any responsibility for the results. All we've done is work out some specifics and ask the TRA to assume its share of responsibility for seeing that this plan will succeed."

The first Guild plan would implement the Hirsch proposal with the stipulation that the TRA would guarantee the participation of each of its member tracks. The Guild would assume full responsibility for securing the participation of all non-TRA tracks. In addition, the TRA would share some responsibility for seeing that the amount received by the Guild would equal one-tenth of one percent of handle, the amount the Guild has repeatedly stressed it was entitled to receive for its members' media rights in order to acquire decent health insurance and other benefits. If the total generated by the Hirsch proposal did not reach the equivalent of 0.1 percent of handle, the difference would be absorbed *pro rata* by all tracks based on their handle, with the Guild assuming responsibility for the non-TRA tracks' share.

Under the second plan, the Guild proposed that six races be held annually at TRA tracks on dates to be selected by the Guild. The Guild would put up the purses and would guarantee that these races would generate a minimum of \$2.5 million for the Guild's benefits program. Any shortfall would be absorbed by the Guild, while any excess would go dollar-for-dollar to reduce the TRA's annual payment to the Guild for its members' media rights. Under the second proposal, the TRA's maximum annual contribution

to the Guild's benefits program would be \$6.5 million, and could be significantly less depending on the success of the program. A final element of both Guild proposals concerns language in the contract addressing the issue of jockeys' media rights. Although payment for media rights has been the foundation of every agreement between the Guild and the TRA since 1968, the recent TRA proposal introduces language that the Guild believes calls into question the jockeys' ownership of their media rights.

While Giovanni was hopeful the two sides could reach agreement before Dec. 31, TRA Commissioner McGrath was less optimistic. "We view John's letter to us as a rejection of our letter and proposal," said McGrath. "This is virtually the same thing that they proposed previously under the disguise of what has become known as the Hirsch plan. I have no grounds for optimism. There is no basis for it. This is not a counter-proposal at all."

**HARNESS GREAT TO TRY HIS HAND AT THOROUGHBREDS** Bill Robinson, arguably the most dominant trainer in the history of Harness Racing, has taken his first steps toward expanding into Thoroughbred Racing. Robinson recently purchased a two-year-old at Calder named **Cherokee Pacemaker** (Cherokee Fellow) and is reportedly attempting to buy additional horses from local trainer Butch Richards. "I'm at the end of my rope in the Standardbreds," Robinson told the Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel. "I seem to keep getting more horses and I've done everything in this sport. I'd like to try working with Thoroughbreds and see what happens." It is expected that Robinson will at first function as a Thoroughbred owner before a possible changeover in training. Robinson, 48, is approaching the \$13 million mark this year as a Standardbred trainer, which puts him about \$4 million ahead of Thoroughbred leader D. Wayne Lukas. Robinson has already shattered his own record for most money earned in a year by a harness stable. He trained 1991 Harness Horse of the Year Precious Bunny and his Cam's Card Shark is expected to be named 1994 Horse of the Year.  
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