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CHRB NEWS RELEASE

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Safety Committee Reviews New Vests, Helmets & Whips

DEL MAR, CA – New standards and specifications for safety vests, safety helmets, and whips will be discussed Friday as the Safety Committee of the California Horse Racing Board begins the regulatory process to mandate the use of updated safety equipment utilizing the latest technology and materials available for the protection of racing participants.

Chaired by CHRB Commissioner Bo Derek, the Safety Committee recently was created by CHRB Chairman John Harris specifically to review recommended standards and proposals and to develop regulatory language for amendments to CHRB rules. Jockeys and exercise riders, who would be the principal beneficiaries of any changes, will be attending the meeting at the Surfside Race Place (Del Mar simulcasting facility) to participate in the discussion, beginning at 10:30 a.m.

While moving forward to a new generation of safety equipment, the Safety Committee will take a moment Friday to acknowledge the contributions of John Alessio for developing the first “Caliente” safety helmet back in the 1950s, which is credited with preventing serious injuries to riders over the decades. John Alessio’s son, Dominic “Bud” Alessio, will accept a resolution on behalf of the family.

Proposals to update standards and amend regulations were brought to the full Board last month by representatives of the Jockeys’ Guild and the California Horsemen’s Safety Alliance, who will participate Friday along with manufacturers of safety equipment. The new helmets and vests are constructed to provide better protection to riders. The discussion will include consideration of laboratory standards that all such equipment would be required to meet.

The new whips have been described as being “kinder” to horses. In a recent action, the full Board waived a portion of the existing rule to allow for the use of these kinder whips. Various California racing associations and fairs either already have or are considering house rules to require the use of these “kinder” whips in their races. A CHRB regulatory amendment would go further by mandating the use of such whips in all races.

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