MONITORING RACING SURFACES

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Our Situation

• Racing is a challenging game
  – Training horses is competitive
  – Owners want answers
  – Not every horse is a winner (or is even sound)

• It is easy to blame the track (and it is occasionally true)

*Surface not ALWAYS the problem, but is part of the solution*
RECOMMENDATION 1:
TRACK SURFACES
Primary Objective:
Promote consistent and safe track surfaces conditions
Outcomes

2nd Welfare and Safety Summit

**What has happened:**

- Non-profit laboratory
  - Standard procedures
  - Goal, a single lab with consistent methods
  - Tests with split samples
  - Develop new tests
- Start of central database
  - Track composition
  - Weather/Maintenance

**What has NOT happened**

- No new “tool kit” to monitor the surface performance
  - Need daily info on track performance
  - Methods need to be based on science not tradition

- **No generally accepted monitoring protocol**
What is Needed?

- Database to understand surfaces data
  - Reliable & consistent testing
  - Risk assessment data
  - Sharing of methods

- Different regional needs, Superintendent and track make decisions

- More information, more consistent tracks

- Focus investments on protecting horses & riders
Need **OUTCOMES**

- Traditionally focused on **INPUTS**
  - Composition  - Wax  - Design
  - Water  - Maintenance  - Banking

- Need tools for **PERFORMANCE**
  - Permeability  - Hardness/Modulus
  - Shear Strength  - Energy absorption

- Track how we got there (maintenance, etc.)

  **Both in the lab and at the track!**

**Target: safer tracks for horses and riders**
Basic Data on Conditions and Inputs

Maintenance ↔ Weather

• Weather data
  – Station at a standard track location
  – Weather logged to central database

• Water application

• Evaporation model
  – Weather and water truck, estimate moisture content
  – Established methods from precision farming

• First correlation to risk – moisture in track
Measure Moisture in Track

Use Off-the-Shelf Equipment if Available

• Time Domain Reflectometry
  – Works best at lower moisture
  – Less sensitive to composition, it still can give pretty big errors on a dirt track near rail
• FieldScout TDR 300 Soil -- $945
• GPS does not work reliably
• NOT FOR SYNTHETICS!!!
• We are big enough to address needs.
Track Composition Testing
A Critical Input

• Maintenance depends on:
  – Climate
  – Design (shallow sand track on hard base or pad with developed base layer)
  – Choice of materials

• Standard lab tests used for racing surfaces

• Response to maintenance and weather depends on design and materials
Track Composition

- Consistent test methods
- New methods when needed, standards if applicable
- Database of results

Open to all users: Non-proprietary methods

A Single Reliable Lab for the Industry
the Racing Surfaces Testing Laboratory
Basic Laboratory Composition

All Tracks
- Sieve separation
- Hydrometer
- Shape of the sand
- Fiber weight percentage
- Sand mineralogy

Dirt
- Organic content
- Salt content
- Clay mineralogy (XRD)

Synthetic
- Wax percentage
- Gas chromatography of wax
- Wax oil content
- Characterization

Track testing and material receiving verification
Inconsistent Material Addition?

Not wear:
- Drainage or mat'l. additions,
- no spreader or rototiller

¾ and ¼

Wire and ½
Implementation: X-Ray Diff. (XRD)

- Clay mineralogy
  - "East Coast" vs. "California"
  - "No" clay in most east coast tracks

### Summary Mineralogy (Weight Percent)

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<td>TOTAL</td>
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Track Inputs

• Broad participation
  – Existing material sampling and input tracking
  – Access to database of materials and consistent testing methods

• Measurement aspects of “the silver plan”
  – Weather monitoring to database
  – Documenting water and track configuration
  – Material composition testing
Beyond Inputs, Performance

• Need the right material,
  – Shear
  – Hardness
  – Energy absorption

• NOT THE WHOLE STORY
  – Maintenance
  – Design
Basic Laboratory Performance Tests
Not what it is, but what it does

- Triaxial shear strength (cuppy)
  - Temperature
  - Moisture
- Tangent modulus (hard)
  - Temperature
  - Moisture
- Penetration resistance (forgiving/lively)
Lab Test: Strength vs. Water

Moisture: 14% to 10%
Shear Strength: 24.6 to 33.7 psi
Laboratory Tests

- The material has changed.....
But Does It Matter!

Link to epidemiological research

Database

Each data set is a piece of the puzzle
In-Situ Performance and Design

• Lab testing of materials ignores
  – Design
  – Maintenance
  – Weather
  – Wear

• Focus on the horse: expensive but most relevant tests
A Tool to Test the Track

- Biomechanical Hoof Tester
  - Matches speed
  - Matches load
  - Periodic testing: All Churchill Downs Tracks & California

- More frequent testing approach?

Churchill Downs monitoring, Derby Week, on track support Arlington, set up synthetic before start of meet
Biomechanical Hoof Data

Peak load

Shear

Peak Load

Shear


Peak Load

Shear
Design Evaluation

• Banking/transitions
  – GPS
  – Laser
• Evaluation of drainage
  – GPS
  – Ground Penetrating Radar
• Cushion using a probe or radar, based on design
• Monitor gaps, traffic, cushion, drainage
Ground Penetrating Radar

- Detect variation in the base and depth of cushion: Holes in the base, Separation of materials, Loss of fines – drainage
- Identify issues before a problem arises.
GPS Mapping
Support for Grading

¼ chute

Low areas in blue

More crown on ¼ chute

Low area along rail between drains

Drains
Cushion Depth and Base

East Coast Style Track
Dynamic Load
2 ½ times Body Weight

Theoretical Normal Stress in the Soil (kN)
7500 N Load on a 10 cm Hoof

California Style Track
Dynamic Load
2 ½ times Body Weight

Test with a Probe

Ground Penetrating Radar
All Data: Central Database

- Central data repository
  - Maintenance methods
  - Performance testing
  - Track composition
- Data can be tied to outcomes
  - Injuries to horses and jockeys
  - Effectiveness of maintenance methods
  - Equipment & labor expenditures
Tracks did not “cause” the problem, they CAN improve the situation

No disease no breakdown....

Issues in Musculoskeletal Disease

- Conformation
- Individual predisposition
- Pre-existing disease
- Shoeing
- Training
- Track surfaces
- Multi-factorial risk
Outside the Box

Moisture

#1 uncontrollable variable on turf and dirt

Churchill Downs Inc., Research Project...

The Advanced Water Truck......

Improved tracks can make racing better, even if they did not CAUSE the problem
The critical question (the Holy Grail): **Epidemiology?**

*What track characteristics protect horses and riders*