

INTERNATIONAL GOLD CUP AND FAR HILLS OFFER TRIFECTA OF BIG CROWDS, PARI-MUTUEL WAGERING, HIGH-DEF VIDEO

American Steeplechasing will offer a Thoroughbred-racing trifecta on the final two weekends in October, with large crowds, pari-mutuel wagering, and high-definition video coverage for the two most important race meets on the fall calendar.

Kicking off the jump-racing Octoberfest will be the 98th annual Far Hills Races in New Jersey, where \$850,000 in purses will be on the line, including the \$450,000 Grand National (Gr. 1), the richest steeplechase race in North America, on Saturday, Oct. 20.

A week later on Saturday, Oct. 27, the action swings to Virginia for the International Gold Cup in the Washington metropolitan area. The 35th annual International Gold Cup will offer close to \$400,000 in purses over a mixed program of hurdle, timber, and flat races.

Both meets are extremely popular in their respective markets and draw crowds of up to 40,000 each, making them some of the best-attended races in North American Thoroughbred racing on their respective weekends.

In partnership with Monmouth Park, Far Hills will make its first foray into pari-mutuel wagering, while the International Gold Cup launched wagering on its races in 2013 under the supervision of the Virginia Racing Commission. Similarly, the New Jersey Racing Commission will oversee the Far Hills races, which are being conducted under Monmouth Park's pari-mutuel license.

The leaders of both race meets said they were enthusiastic about the combination of high-definition video and pari-mutuel wagering. They see the betting option not only as providing an additional service to their fans but also as a way to support Thoroughbred racing in general and American jump racing.

"The exposure is fantastic," said Dr. William H. Allison, the longtime co-chairman of the International Gold Cup with Dr. Al Griffin. The International Gold Cup signal this year will be carried worldwide under a contract with XpressBet, one of America's premier horse-racing betting outlets.

"It's hundreds of thousands of people, if not millions," Dr. Allison said of the XpressBet distribution. "It's the greatest thing for jump racing." Dr. Griffin said the International Gold Cup signal also will be picked up in Australia, which has a rich tradition of betting on horse racing, including jump racing.

Dr. Allison noted that the benefit is not only for steeplechase racing. The wagering exposure supports all of Thoroughbred racing and especially Virginia racing, where the International Gold Cup and the Virginia Gold Cup in the spring have been the principal live racing venues since the closing of Colonial Downs in 2014. The track located in the Richmond, Va., area is scheduled to reopen next year under new ownership.

"Now and into the future, the Virginia Gold Cup and the International Gold Cup will occupy an important role in Virginia's Thoroughbred industry," Dr. Allison said. "We are so grateful for the support that we've

received from the Virginia HBPA, the Virginia Equine Alliance, and especially the Virginia horsemen in the years that Colonial has been closed.”

Guy J. Torsilieri, Far Hills’ chairman, said the advent of pari-mutuel wagering is intended to provide the meet’s thousands of fans with another on-site amenity and also to promote American Thoroughbred racing around the world.

The Far Hills meet has attracted significant international participation over the past decade, and this year no fewer than six horses based in England or Ireland will be shipping in for the racing program on Oct. 20.

“All the good things are coming together this year,” Torsilieri said. “We are becoming a target for overseas trainers in the early fall. Bettors in Ireland, England, and other overseas markets will be able to watch and wager just as American fans will be able to bet as part of Monmouth’s well-developed wagering platform.

“We want the world to see American steeplechasing at Far Hills and the International Gold Cup, and we want the world the racing opportunities we provide,” said Torsilieri, who also serves as president of the National Steeplechase Association.

He expressed appreciation to those who brought about pari-mutuel wagering for Far Hills. “This was a long, sustained effort. We are especially grateful to the horsemen and management at Monmouth who made this possible. We had three races at Monmouth this summer, and we appreciate their support.

“We’re also grateful to the New York Racing Association and their horsemen for supporting steeplechase racing at Saratoga Race Course and Belmont Park. We look forward to being a part of NYRA’s pari-mutuel menu,” Torsilieri said.

“Our expenditures on pari-mutuel wagering—and they are substantial, both at Far Hills and the International Gold Cup—are intended to reach new markets and new potential fans for American Thoroughbred racing,” he said.

The pari-mutuel wagering on worldwide betting platforms will be complemented by high-definition video broadcasts. In July, the NSA Board of Directors unanimously adopted the recommendation of a subcommittee headed by Dr. Griffin to implement high-definition video for all race meets beginning this fall.

The enhanced video primarily is intended to assist the stewards in assuring fair racing, and the high-definition signals will benefit all race meets.

For instance, Shawan Downs in Maryland utilized the high-definition signal in September to provide live-streaming video on its website. The web broadcast was watched by more than 9,000 racing fans all over the world.

Like Shewan, the International Gold Cup and Far Hills will provide professionally produced programming and race commentary to accompany the high-definition video presentations on their websites.