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Report on Maine Racing, 1956

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REPORT ON MAINE RACING

The overall picture in Maine is one of uncertainty and confusion. There was no formal Commission meeting while I was there, and most of the decisions and discussions took place by telephone. There were a great many calls. Meanwhile, there was all kinds of track talk, rumors, even reports the New Gloucester meeting would not be permitted to go. There is a serious lack of unity.

I found a great deal of delay and trouble in connection with the appointment of officials, particularly in two categories:

1. The Commission has not yet approved Estella Mason as Clerk of the Course and will not give her a reason. They have only one other Clerk of the Course, namely, H. Neely Smith, who is past his seventieth birthday and will not work regularly. Mrs. Mason is apparently competent, has served for many years, and is available. I agree with the opinion expressed by the Directors at Portland, that she deserves approval.

2. They have never been able to agree on a Race Secretary for the coming meetings. Edmund Webb was allowed to work as a Secretary at the Cumberland meeting but had not been permanently approved at that time. It was assumed by everyone including the management that Phil Pearson would be Race Secretary at the Gloucester and Lewiston meetings. The first time I had any idea that there would be a change was Wednesday, May 30th, when I met Commissioner Davis. He told me he would not approve Pearson on any condition. Apparently there is a difference of opinion that has prevented either Webb or Pearson, or both, from obtaining formal approval. The situation is not conducive to getting things organized and having a smooth running operation. I am afraid that personalities are entering into the selection of officials. Some qualified persons are not being used. The unqualified officials were largely eliminated by the examinations in connection with the Officials' School.
The facilities are in great need of improvement, particularly at Lewiston. Not only are they lacking for the horsemen, but they are in deplorable shape insofar as accommodating the public. Part of this is due to old buildings, but a substantial part is due to neglect and lack of management. There are improvements needed in almost every aspect of their operation.
PLACE: Cumberland, Maine.

DATE VISITED: May 28 thru June 2, 1956

STATE STEWARD: William Berry - He is a hard worker, does a good job, but needs more cooperation. He has had a difficult time getting the officials okayed. He understands racing and is trying hard to improve things. If he has help and backing, I believe he will do a good job.

PRESIDING JUDGE: Thomas Kiley - Mr. Kiley has passed his written examination. I found him to be alert and observant in the stand. He conducts himself well. With more experience and training on racing, he should make a very good judge.

ASSOCIATE JUDGE: George Maling - Mr. Maling failed in his examination - both on rules and horse knowledge. He does know the procedure of the stand but isn't too alert.

ASSOCIATE JUDGE: Noland Morrill - Mr. Morrill failed in his examination - both on rules and horse knowledge. He doesn't know procedure and is not alert. He also does not understand nor know the rules.

PATROL JUDGE: Harlan Redding - Mr. Redding passed his examination. He is alert but needs training on rules. He is unable to give a clear picture of happenings on the track in his territory.

PATROL JUDGE: Raynor Crossman - Mr. Crossman did not come back after the first night. Edwin Parker took his place. I did not check him this week.

PADDOCK JUDGE: Frank Butler - Mr. Butler passed his examination well. He is a hard worker and gets his fields on the track on time. He is a very capable man.

CLERK OF THE COURSE: H. N. Smith - Mr. Smith passed his examination, and seems to do a good job. He has a very able assistant in his wife. I see nothing wrong with either him or his work.

RACING SECRETARY: Edmund J. Webb - Mr. Webb passed his examination. His office is not operated very efficiently. He keeps very inadequate records, also he is not alert insofar as posting and application of rules.
STARTER: Walter Stuart - Mr. Stuart passed his examination. He is alert and does a good job with the class of horses he is starting.

ANNOUNCER: Clayton Smith - Mr. Smith has a pleasing voice, and makes his calls well.

PROGRAMMER: W. B. Harnden - Mr. Harnden passed his examination. He does a good job. Is very exacting and efficient, also very cooperative.

CHART DEPARTMENT: Clarence Butler and Zillah Witman. They are both very conscientious and will do a good job.

PUBLICITY DEPARTMENT: The newspapers carry little except entries and results. There was very little in the way of advertising and promotion - no posters or signs. As far as I can tell they are lacking in this department. They practically do nothing.

TIMERS: Jack McGee and his associate timers are very exact.
RACING AND TRACK CONDITIONS

PADDOCK FACILITIES AND OPERATIONS: The facilities are fair and the paddock is well operated.

TRACK CONDITION, CARE, HAZARDS, OBSTRUCTIONS, ETC: The race track is safe, there are no hazards or obstructions. It is cared for fairly well. There are some shadows on the track due to the lights being too high.

STABLE AND HORSEMEN'S FACILITIES: The stables are fair but in need of repairs.

MANAGEMENT: (General)

The grounds at Cumberland have very good possibilities. With some repairs on the barns, the back fence painted (this would make a very good background for night racing) the track lighting lowered, grandstand redecorated and general brightening up, would make it much more inviting to the public. There also needs to be a general tightening up of the racing rules, there is much to (sic) much leniency.

MISCELLANEOUS:

1. Too many driver changes.
2. Allowing a driver to not try after making a break in the earlier part of the mile.
3. Enforce the inconsistency rule.
4. Operate the track in a more business like manner. Post times should be corrected, the horses are kept on the track much too long after post - each race from five to eight minutes on the back side.
5. More unity, starting from the Commissioners on down to the horsemen.
6. A better check on equipment, especially check lengths of all hopples in every pacing race.
7. More and better advertising.

All the above mentioned will help to gain public confidence - this I find lacking very much.

I realize management is hindered when it comes to spending money, because of the Maine Racing Laws. The fact that they can only race for a very short period of time does not give them much of an opportunity to get a return on the money they have invested.
TRACK REPORT - NEW GLOUCESTER, MAINE


DATE VISITED: June 4 thru June 8, 1956

OFFICIALS: (List the officials and your observation of their work)

PRESIDING JUDGE: Mose Nanigian. He is a good official - knows what to look for, and not afraid of his convictions.

ASSOCIATE JUDGE: Thomas Kiley. He is very observing and is a lot of help to the Presiding Judge.

ASSOCIATE JUDGE: Frank Olsen. He knows his job well. It is my opinion from the short time I was able to observe him he may be a little too easy and not want to offend the horsemen.

PATROL JUDGE: A. A. Fenlason. He is very good on Patrol. I believe he is good material for an Associate Judge.

PATROL JUDGE: Harlan Redding. He is a good man on Patrol. (Except as noted in Cumberland report)

Paddock JUDGE: Frank Butler. He is a good steady hard working paddock man.

CLERK OF THE COURSE: H. N. Smith. He is a good Clerk and seemed helpful to everyone.

RACE SECRETARY: Phil Pearson. He was very careful in checking, followed the rules, and does okay. I don't find anything wrong with his work.

STARTER: Harry Mickalide. He does a very good job of starting, gets his fields away good and clean, and on gait. Being a young man he should have a good future as a Starter.

ANNOUNCER: Richard Michelson. He is a good man, calls his fields clear and exact, and never calls the field at the finish.

PROGRAM DIRECTOR: M. P. Miller. She has let a few errors get by. She may improve when she has more time to spend as Program Director.

PADDOCK FACILITIES AND OPERATION: Facilities are bad. Operations were a little loose the first night, but they were okay after changing gateman.
TRACK CONDITION, CARE, HAZARDS, OBSTRUCTIONS, ETC: The track is very slow, does not get much care. It is narrow and reported to be long. There were a couple of bad spots at the head of the stretch, they were spongy and dangerous. It was necessary to dig out a place about 10 feet long, 5 feet wide and 4 feet deep in order to find the seepage that was causing the trouble. We then filled in with rock and gravel. This seemed to take care of it.

STABLES AND HORSEMEN'S FACILITIES: They have about a hundred stalls on the grounds. Most all of them are very bad. The balance of the horses racing at the meeting are vanned in from Gorham and Cumberland, Maine.

MANAGEMENT: There seems to be no general manager. A few of the directors are around, but no one knows how to manage a race meeting.

PUBLICITY DEPARTMENT: There is no one in that capacity. They do hardly any advertising.

MISCELLANEOUS: The meeting is not going well insofar as handle (sic) and attendance is concerned. Part of this I am sure is due to lack of management. Very poor facilities to offer to the public. The grandstand is very old and uncomfortable, bad toilet facilities, parking lot and roads full of holes, poor racing, and loss of public confidence. Again I must report the racing bill in the State of Maine is very bad and does not give management much of an incentive to spend money just to race such a few days.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN MAINE

1. The officials need to bear down and do a job under Rule 18, Section 1 (a) and (b) -- inconsistent and unsatisfactory racing.

2. Eliminate double dashes as much as possible.

3. Improve tracks and facilities.

4. The pari-mutuel board, particularly at Cumberland, is hard to read and slowly operated on a manual basis, contributing to delay and undermining public confidence. Improved pari-mutuel boards (small automatics if possible) would be a great improvement in Maine.

5. The Maine law needs revision so that management can be made and can afford to operate on a decent level. Short meetings have resulted in poor operations with neglected plants, weak publicity, low purses, low-grade horses -- all of this resulting in poor racing. The facilities for the public, except for Gorham, are far below standard. The law should permit longer dates at tracks that are well located and improved, with liberal aid to the fairs so they will not be hurt.

6. There is a dire need for cooperation and unity. I find a lot of talk, gossip, track rumors, and back-biting. Nothing of consequence can be accomplished unless everyone works together, that is, the Commission, Steward, Judges, Race Secretary, management and the other officials.

Arthur A. Eilerman /s/  
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FIELD REPRESENTATIVE

(Copy of a report transmitted to the State Racing Commission by a representative of the U. S. Trotting Association, June 11, 1956)