

Race-track bill allows tough drug testing

By Tom Henderson
staff writer

A bill which would revamp Michigan's horse-racing laws may require the licensing of all race-track employees and has provisions for drug and alcohol testing of everyone from the security guard in the lot to the person who pulls the pari-mutuel betting ticket from the machine.

Under Senate Bill 212, an employee could be sent home if he or she showed a level of .05 percent alcohol, half the level of the state's drunk-driving laws. An employee would be suspended for at least a year for three drug or alcohol offenses in a six-year period.

Currently, licenses are required of jockeys, owners, grooms and trainers. Under the bill, racing commissioner William Cabalan could at his discretion order the licensing of any and all race-track employees, including security guards, ticket takers, timers and pari-mutuel clerks.

THE BILL has passed the Senate and is awaiting action by the House.

Under its terms, an application for a license would imply consent to a breathalyzer, urine and other tests to detect alcohol and controlled substances such as heroin, cocaine and marijuana.

If a test showed drug or alcohol use, the employee would be suspended from duty and pay until the employee provided at a negative test result.

Other major terms of the racing legislation would reduce state taxes on the money bet from 6 to 4.5 percent, and would allow for simulcast betting of televised, out-of-state races such as the Kentucky Derby and Preakness.

"Track conditions are deplorable, the quality of racing has declined and we've got declining revenues."

— state Sen. Doug Cruce
R-Troy



"WE MIGHT HAVE in place by June 1 a law allowing the public to bet on out-of-state races," said sponsor Sen. Doug Cruce, R-Troy. Cruce said he was not certain about the chances of passage in the House. "What the political dictates are in the House, I'm not aware."

"The Service Employees International is the only group I know of opposing the bill. I assume the drug-testing provisions are part of their opposition. But I don't detect that their opposition will prevent its passing."

Richard Cordtz, the president of local 79 of the Service Employees International Union, which repre-

sents employees at both Hazel Park and Laidbrooke DBC in Livonia, was unavailable for comment.

"I would imagine there would be (union opposition)," said Ken Christopher, executive secretary of the racing commission.

CHRISTOPHER SAID that language in the new bill relating to the licensing of employees not currently licensed may be eliminated in the House version and in the final version.

He said that such language isn't necessary, that Cabalan could already order their licensing if he so chose. "The Senate just wanted to make

the language specific," said Christopher. "The existing language regarding licenses says 'including but not limited to' so we feel he's already got the power."

As for drug testing, Christopher said: "We're testing drivers and jockeys, now."

cent, which the racing commission claims is the highest by any state in the country.

"The amount race tracks pay in pari-mutuel taxes is something I've been interested in ever since I've been representing the Hazel Park area," said Cruce. "Track conditions are deplorable, the quality of racing has declined and we've got declining revenues."

Wagering in Michigan in 1984 totaled \$347 million, down 18 percent from the 1979 total of \$425.5 million, according to figures supplied by the racing commission. State tax revenues were down 27 percent, from \$28.8 million to \$22.4 million.

SIMULCAST BETTING would be allowed for major out-of-state races, provided tracks didn't reduce their program on days of such simulcast events.

The Kentucky Derby has already been run, the Preakness will be run Saturday and the Belmont is in two weeks, so betting in Michigan on Triple Crown races is unlikely this season.

Cruce said state bettors certainly will be able to bet on the Kentucky Derby next year.

Cruce also supported the reduction of the state's take from 6 per-

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