Racing boss optimistic as industry reels

BYTIM RICHARD BYAIT WAITER

Most of the horse racing industry cheered Gov. John Engler's decision against expansion of casino gambling into Detroit, even though Engler also opposed slot machines at race tracks.

"The poweror's decision can't be taken as a negative to racing," said Nelson Westrin, the state racing commissioner. "We've known from the beginning the governor understands the importance of horse racing to agriculture. When I was appointed thy Engler in 1993), he gave me the charge to go out there and get this industry together.

"Racing was concerned that a casino in Detroit, along with the casino in Detroit, along with the casino in Detroit, along with the casino in Ostroit, and in the casino in Detroit, along with the casino in Ostroit of Ladbroke DIK in Livonia, Michigan's only thoroughherd running track. Long said Engler's June 27 promises of other help to racing may be "too little, too late." Ladbroke DRC has yet to announce whether it will go shead with the mid-July Michigan Mile, for 45 years the state's richest stakes race.

Ladbroke wanted to go full tilt

state's richest stakes race

state's richest stakes rice.
Ladbroke wanted to go full tilt into casino and slot machine gaming. After a casino in Windsor opened in May of 1994, wagering at Michigan rice tracks plummeted 11.2 percent and track attendance 14.5 percent. Ladbroke's

wagering handle fell 16.4 percent.
Northville Downs' handle stayed stable, but attendance dropped by percent. Hard Park's handle fell 13 percent and its attendance tracks are 80 percent of the industry.
Westrin, of Grand Louisia.
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Westrin, of Grand Louisia.
The side of the rescing commission or when Engler tapped him to head the office in Livusia. He views his office not only as a regulator but as a unifying force to bring together the sometimes commission of the same tracks in countries and parcers horsemen, and quarter horsemen, atandand hred trotters and paccrya horsemen, and quarter horsemen, as well as suppliers and unionized track employees.
Westrin will bring them together July 10. He hopes to have program to present to the Legislature in September. Here are expression on an interview several days after his bosa came organized to the stable of the possibility of eliminating the provide of the possibility of eliminating the horse ladustry "may not survive." Does that mean 77,000 racing breed equine will be about? Or will one segment go down?

Westrin: "At this paint in time, that's speculation. There's no question the theroughbred track has been losing \$10 million of \$11 million for some time. Ladbroke has indicated it may close for business. But they haven't made

Q. What is simulcasting and how could that help?

Westrin: "Simulcasting is where you bring in a TV signal from another track and show it simultaneously with the running of the race, and people can bet on that.

"Michigan currently allow and the racing commissioner track per year, and only one per day. That is the most restrictive law in North America.

Westrin a office had been allowing Ladbroko DRC to simulcast To race = 25 times three meetings. But Northville Downs and horsemen sued Ladbroke and the racing commissioner. Wayne Gircuit Judge Marvin Stempien ruled for Northville Downs, confining Ladbroke to 25 simulcasts per year.

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