

Security barns to stay in use for big event

By MATT HEGARTY

The past performances of horses participating in the Breeders' Cup typically receive intense scrutiny from handicappers intent on making a big score. This year, Breeders' Cup horses will also be under intense scrutiny from another group: backside security agents.

For the first time in the 21-year history of Breeders' Cup, all horses participating in the event's eight races will be required to be sent to one of three security barns at least six hours before post time of their respective races. In addition, a special security team put in place by the Thoroughbred Racing and Protective Bureau and Standardbred Investigative Services will be roaming Belmont's backstretch on the lookout for any untoward activities.

The procedures are part of a renewed effort by racing regulators and racetracks to attack the perception, real or not, that some horsemen are using illegal drugs to improve the performances of their horses. The New York Racing Association, the operator of Belmont, has been at the forefront of that effort since earlier this year, when it became the first Thoroughbred racetrack to require that every horse be isolated in a security barn on race day.

The association is not backing off for the Breeders' Cup, which has supported the security barn concept. NYRA has set up three security barns in order to accommodate the Breeders' Cup horses, with an additional barn set up to house the horses in the first two non-Breeders' Cup races on the card, according to Bill Nader, NYRA's senior vice president.

European horses, currently housed in Belmont's quarantine barn, will not be excepted from the security barns, Nader said, although the association and the Breeders' Cup discussed that possibility.

"It's a question of fairness," Nader said. "We realize the Europeans are something of a special group, but there's no way we wanted some-

one to have an advantage. So everyone has to move on race day."

Under the policies of the security barn, no private veterinarian can enter a horse's stall except in the case of an emergency, Nader said. A veterinarian employed by NYRA will administer all shots of furosemide to horses approved for the diuretic, which is used to treat bleeding. Furosemide, commonly known as Lasix, is the only legal race-day drug in New York.

The special backside security team is being funded by Breeders' Cup and the Racing Medication and Testing Consortium, a national industry group seeking to reform medication and security policies in racing. Similar teams have been put into action this year for the three Triple Crown races and other big stakes races.

Frank Fabian, the president of the TRPB, said the Breeders' Cup team will be the largest ever fielded, "in excess of 10 agents," although he declined to be specific. The agents, many of them in plain clothes, began arriving on Tuesday, Fabian said, and the full team will be patrolling the grounds as of Friday morning.

Fabian said the investigators have the power to conduct searches of barns and veterinarians' vehicles, although he declined to be specific about what activities the team will focus on. He said the main benefit of the team is its ability to keep potential cheaters on guard.

"Just the fact that you have these teams working, talking to horsemen, making the rounds, conducting searches, letting them know that you are there and vigilant, that has a huge deterrent effect," Fabian said.