



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

27 August 2009

### **BENCHMARK RACING AND MERIT BASED HANDICAPPING FROM 1<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER 2009**

After consulting extensively with the industry, Racing NSW will replace the ratings system of programming and handicapping from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2009 with a revolutionary and innovative system.

The BENCHMARK system will bring together the best elements and resources of modern regulatory handicapping, and private handicapping by form analysts working independently of the regulating authority.

Ratings will be superseded by a published BENCHMARK that denotes the weight each horse will carry at its next start, with each BENCHMARK point equalling half a kilogram.

"The BENCHMARK system is a very exciting development for racing in this State," said Racing NSW Chief Executive Peter V'landys.

Under the BENCHMARK system handicapping will be truly merit based. Immediately after every start, each horse will be assessed according to the true merits of its performances against the entire horse population racing in NSW. Accordingly, there will be no standard penalties.

The BENCHMARK assessment process will begin with a mathematical (computer-based) calculation from proprietary software developed by Racing & Sports Pty Ltd under contract to Racing NSW. The computation takes into account an exhaustive list of relevant factors such as the quality of the field, sectional and race times, state of the track, number of starters, weight carried, beaten margin and recent and historical individual performances.

The computer ranking is reviewed by experienced form analysts from Racing & Sports who then provide Racing NSW with a recommendation within 48 hours of each horse running.

Finally the panel of the Racing NSW Handicapping Department reviews the background to the recommendation, the race film and other race data, and confirms or varies the updated BENCHMARK for each horse.

A significant step in the start up process is that each horse will be re-assessed before 1 October 2009 using the Merit based system, which may position it higher or lower on the scale than its current rating. This realignment is necessary to launch the BENCHMARK system with allocations that accurately reflect the true merit of each horse relative to the entire NSW horse population.

In particular, Country performed horses will generally be re assessed on a lower range, with the result that they may effectively drop approx 5 - 8 points (2.5 – 4 kilos) from their current assessment when compared to their Metropolitan and Provincial counterparts.

Ratings races will be replaced by BENCHMARK races. The BENCHMARK figure published in the race program denotes the horse that will carry the minimum required topweight of 58kg in that event. Allowances apply for fillies and mares, and for 3-year-olds.

Horses that are assessed above the BENCHMARK number of the race are still eligible to compete, albeit with a higher weight, rather than be pushed to a higher grade as happens with the current ratings races.

“The BENCHMARK systems increases options for every horse as it can be nominated for more races on each program, then the connections can decide which race to contest after assessing its weight and competitiveness,” said Mr V’landys.

For example in a BENCHMARK race of 80 a horse with a BENCHMARK of 80 (with no allowances) will carry 58kg. A horse with a BENCHMARK of 86 (with no allowances) can be entered for the race and will carry 61kg i.e. 6 BENCHMARK points equals 3kg. Alternatively a horse with a BENCHMARK of 77 will carry 56.5kg i.e. 3 BENCHMARK points equals 1.5kg.

A filly or mare is given a 2kg allowance. Accordingly a mare with a 76 BENCHMARK will carry 54kg.

This is better illustrated by the full example below, for a BENCHMARK 80 race to be held in October, which takes into account allowances for fillies, mares and 3-year-olds.

Race Benchmark	<b>80</b>	Minimum Wgt	<b>53kg</b>
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Allowance for Fillies/Mares - 2kg	Allowance for 3YO – 2.5kg
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Horse	Sex	Age	Benchmark	Weight
Purple Prince	G	7	86	61.0 kg
Little Pip	F	3	82	54.5 kg
Exercise Pad	G	5	80	58.0 kg
Boutique Girl	M	4	80	56.0 kg
Harding's Boy	G	6	78	57.0 kg
Madeline	M	4	78	55.0 kg
George Regal	H	5	77	56.5 kg
Henrietta	M	5	76	54.0 kg
Rooster Boy	C	3	75	53.0 kg

(horse names fictitious)

1 Benchmark Point - 1/2 kilo

Racing NSW Chief Executive Peter V'landys and Deputy Chairman Alan Bell will host a series of information meetings for participants at all major centres in NSW.

All racing industry participants are invited to attend as per the following dates and venues.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Start Time</b>	<b>Racecourse</b>	<b>Region Covered</b>
Mon 31 <sup>st</sup> Aug	11:00am	Randwick	Metropolitan
	3:30pm	Broadmeadow	New/Gosf/Wyng/Hunter/Lower MNCRA
Tue 1 <sup>st</sup> Sept	9:30am	Kembla Grange	Prov & Upper South Coast
	1:00pm	Warwick Farm	Metropolitan
	3:30pm	Rosehill	Metropolitan/ Hawkesbury
Wed 2 <sup>nd</sup> Sept	2:00pm	Tamworth	HNWRA
Thur 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sept	10:00am	Wagga	SDRA
	3:30pm	Queanbeyan	SERA incl lower South Coast
Fri 4 <sup>th</sup> Sept	10:15am	Ballina	Upper NRRRA
	2:45pm	Coffs Harbour	Lower NRRRA/Upper MNCRA
Mon 7 <sup>th</sup> Sept	2:00pm	Dubbo	CDRA/WRA

For more information please contact Mr Peter V'landys, Racing NSW Chief Executive by phone on (02) 9551 7556.