



# For The Record

by DOUG BURGE

As detailed in this February 2006 issue of the *California Thoroughbred* magazine, 2005 was a tremendous year for California-breds. All together, 18 individual Cal-breds won 22 graded stakes races across the country last year, including a record seven grade I winners. These grade I victories came in such prestigious races as the Hollywood Gold Cup, Apple Blossom Handicap, Triple Bend Invitational Handicap, Bing Crosby Handicap, Test Stakes, Hollywood Futurity and Malibu Stakes.

Another noteworthy statistic is that all but one of the seven grade I winners were by California-based sires. The current stallion population, driven by the lucrative awards program and racing opportunities, continues to be one of the best in the history of the state. In fact, 34 sires ended the year with progeny earnings over \$1-million, and 17 of these stallions had earnings in excess of \$2-million. Outside of Kentucky, no other state can boast such accomplishments.

If the first two weeks of the year are any indication, 2006 could yield similar, if not better, results. In early January, Brother Derek and Proposed, both by the hot young sire Benchmark, took the grade II San Rafael Stakes and grade II El Encino Stakes. Benchmark was California's leading sire of two-year-olds in 2005, and is also high-

lighted in the leading sires feature story included in this issue.

In order to develop a young horse and achieve the graded status mentioned above, it is important that numerous racing opportunities exist. Graded stakes victories are typically the result of a racing schedule that gives a horse the confidence and foundation to gradually progress to the top. The Cal-bred racing program is without a doubt one of the best in the country and continues to offer ample opportunities for all categories of horses.

As one can see from the chart below, figures for 2005 show that nearly 500 restricted races were made available to Cal-breds with total purse monies of over \$21.6 million. With an emphasis on quality, 83 percent of the total restricted purse money is paid in maiden allowance, allowance and stakes races. Also, the average purse paid in the 493 restricted races was nearly \$40,000.

The CTBA remains very active in working closely with the racing offices and the TOC (Thoroughbred Owners of California) to ensure that the restricted racing opportunities are offered, and then filled with sufficient entries. Racing in California is extremely dependent on Cal-breds, and such a high quality program will continue to yield top caliber horses and even more graded stakes winners of the future.

