



From the Executive Corner

Soaking Up The Sun

by DOUG BURGE

“California horses rule the day,” was the headline of Frank Carlson’s article in the Jan. 29 *Miami Herald* that reported on this year’s Sunshine Millions. With Florida-breds winning the vast majority of the races during the first three years of this \$3.6-million event, it was extremely gratifying to see our California-breds show their class and prove they can successfully compete with their counterparts.

As the chart below illustrates, even with 25 less runners, Cal-breds won five of the eight races and earned over half the purse money offered that day. With the built-in disadvantage facing Cal-breds (nearly 100 percent of participants in Florida races having to ship), the total number of runners has—and probably always will—continue to favor Florida-breds as many of them are stabled in California and thus very few horses have to ship west to represent the Sunshine State. Also, even with the lucrative purse money offered in the eight restricted races, only the top two to three Cal-breds in each division typically ship across country.

Therefore, the current point system which awards second and third place finishes will almost always favor the state with the most runners. The point system should be reviewed to eliminate this bias.

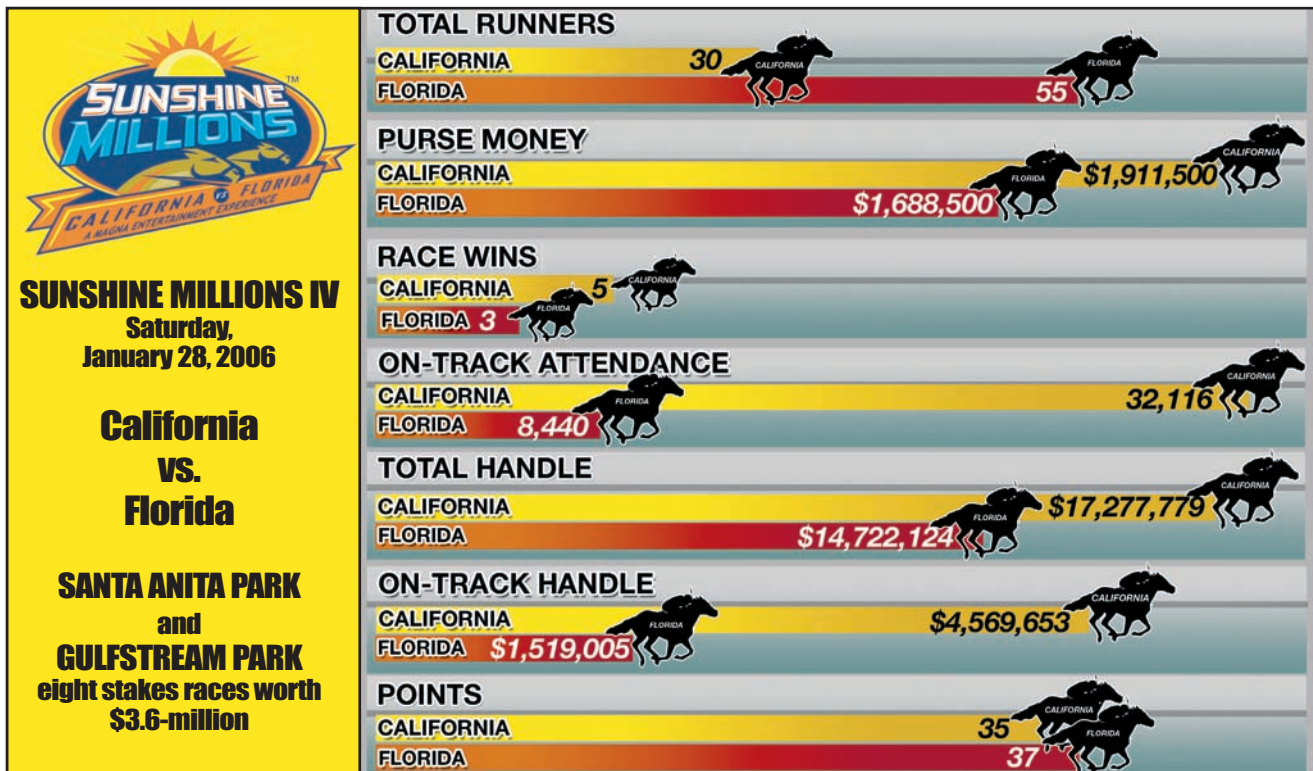
With that said, the richest day of state-bred racing is indeed a tremendous showcase for both Cal-breds and Florida-breds. The on-track handle increased significantly

at both Santa Anita Park and Gulfstream Park, with the attendance at the former location nearly doubling. Added to this, was the great national exposure generated on television by both NBC and HRTV.

From the outset, the goal of Sunshine Millions was to further increase the worth and demand for Cal-breds and Florida-breds, and to show the rest of the country the quality of horses who are bred in these two states. There is no doubt that we have accomplished these goals.

Originally, there were a few naysayers who believed that this series significantly favored Florida and would lessen the value of Cal-breds. I have seen no evidence of that. Even with the shipping disadvantages mentioned earlier, the value of Cal-breds continues to remain high. Just ask the owners and breeders who recently put a total of almost \$2-million into their pocket.

This was the last year on our current contract with MEC (Magna Entertainment Corporation) and the Horseman’s groups in California and Florida, and thus we will begin working diligently to execute a new contract in order to continue such a valuable event. There may be some restructuring to improve the economics for each of the entities involved; however, I am optimistic that we will be able to continue to showcase the top horses bred in both these two great states.



SUNSHINE MILLIONS IV
Saturday,
January 28, 2006

**California
vs.
Florida**

**SANTA ANITA PARK
and
GULFSTREAM PARK
eight stakes races worth
\$3.6-million**