

June 12, 2012

Randy Klopp  
President IHBPA

Shortly after noon today, Tuesday, June 12, 2012, I received a letter from Mike Brown on IHBPA letterhead, along with approximately 49 signatures attached, in my office, complaining about the condition of our track.

Fair enough; if there's a complaint about it we want to hear it and address it.

Several things about this letter are troubling, however, and I want to clear the record. First, the letter said "there have been multiple conversations on this topic, with no relief." While I personally have received nothing but compliments—not one single complaint—on this track from Thoroughbred connections for several weeks, I am aware that just yesterday, Monday, June 11<sup>th</sup>, our track superintendent, Jim White, had a conversation on this matter with Randy Klopp and Tom Amoss—no one else. While it is true that two conversations is "multiple conversations," for clarification, it is only two, and only on this very Monday—just yesterday.

Jim acknowledged those complaints and has been working to address them since he got them just yesterday.

While your letter specifically states, "the condition of the main track at Indiana Downs is currently dangerous to the health and well-being of the equine athletes..." I'd like to point out that your letter was delivered very shortly after training hours were concluded on Tuesday, June 12.

The "dangerous" condition for horses that you have complained about is clearly not serious enough that a discussion about closing the track for training on Tuesday took place with me so that we could address and rectify any credible equine safety, health, or well-being problems that may actually exist with the track. Instead, notably and purposefully, the IHBPA delivered its letter and signed "petition" right after training was completed. If the track is truly "dangerous," why not halt training to prevent injuries and fix the safety problem you allege.

Was canceling racing for Tuesday night, June 12, discussed or considered by the IHBPA, or as a group did you decide that you were going to go ahead and expose your horses to this known "danger" that is claimed? No one contacted anyone at the track about canceling. How dangerous is "dangerous?" Will the 49 trainers who "formally state" that the track is dangerous be scratch their horses Tuesday, or will they simply roll the dice with their equine athletes' well-being—as well as with the human athletes' well-being aboard them—as they did Tuesday morning?

If you actually race your horses under the conditions you have outlined, I assume IHBPA's assertions have no credibility—particularly that you "care about the condition of our horses." Who would truly care about the condition of their horses and then train or race their horses on a track that they "formally stated" is "dangerous to the health and well-being" of those same horses?

Your organization's letter is inconsistent with, and at odds with, its actions.

The form attached to this complaint says in very large letters, “Ever since QH trials.” That is what everyone signed off on, whether they actually know what they signed or not. The trials were just this past Friday night, June 8. The track is closed on Sundays. That means Saturday and Monday were the alleged problems, and maybe you can add Friday night’s races...I’m not sure, since we don’t actually do anything different for QH races anyway.

Adding to my surprise and confusion, your inconsistent letter also states, “the situation has become much worse this week.” Which is it...since QH trials as it states, or is this just a tee-off-on-the-track-in-general letter? Knowing there has been no such alleged conversations other than two just yesterday, that’s how it reads to me.

I was here Saturday night, Monday morning, and Monday night in the paddock, on the track (literally), in the barn area, and around several dozen horsemen, some of whom signed this complaint, and not one person said a word to me. Not one. I would just add here that some of the folks I addressed and was around are far from bashful about presenting concerns to me, yet not one person said a single word to me about the track or their horses’ welfare.

Since the signed complaint I received states specifically “since the QH trials,” I would like to make two points: 1.) again, we don’t do anything different to the track for Quarter Horse races—trials, stakes, or other; nothing was changed for that day regardless what some may think; 2.) one of the people that signed your complaint wrote, “On Mondays.” They underlined Mondays—plural—with an “s.” There has only been one Monday since the QH trials that triggered this “complaint.” Is it only since “QH trials,” as your signed complaint specifically says, or not? Is it every Monday? Was it only this Monday—then not Saturday and Friday, too, since the QH trials? Was it okay today, a Tuesday? It doesn’t make sense, and it is not consistent with your already inconsistent letter.

Another person wrote, “ONE ROUND AND PARKING EM IS A JOKE.” Maybe you can help decipher that code for me as well. We renovate the track in the middle of training each morning, for the first time in three years. We also renovate the track before every single dirt race we run here. How many times does someone think we should go around with water trucks, tractors and harrows to renovate a track? How much time do they think we have? Please help me understand that comment. Does the IHBPA want yet another policy revision for track renovation?

For the last three years (and almost every other year here) we did not renovate the track during training at all. Renovating during training or not renovating then have both been situations decided at the complete and total discretion of the IHBPA; we have done whatever you have requested. Do we now need to make multiple laps to suddenly make the track safe for horses...when it required absolutely no renovation whatsoever before 2012? Tell us what you want from us and we’ll do our best to deliver...as we always have.

The last point from your letter I will touch on is working the track all the way to the outside. I assume that is for training hours, but it doesn’t say. We will gladly accommodate that.

I would like to remind the IHBPA, and let the IHRC know concurrently, that the main catalyst behind renovating the track during training this year at all came from a request by a jockey in a meeting in the track kitchen before the meet began. He made the case about equine safety, we then consulted with HBPA leadership—which had discussed the issue with us previously—and that is when a decision was made to renovate during training. Now, after nine years of almost no renovation during training ever, on any part of the track, and well over 2/3 of the way through this current flat meet (only one month of four remaining), we are asked to address a safety concern over track renovation on the very outside of the race track, where horses primarily walk and jog slowly. We’re glad to accommodate this, we just don’t understand how that constitutes a “safety concern” only after ten years.

You requested a productive response. Jim started addressing the two concerns that were raised to him Monday, on Monday, and he will continue to do so. That is your productive response.

As to relief, I hope you get whatever you consider is relief. From the total dichotomy between your group's letter and its own actions, to the vast inconsistency between what the letter I received says and what has, and is, actually happening, I doubt there is a consensus among your group what relief is.

Finally, I would like to point out, for the safety record, that in speaking with Executive Director Gorajec just yesterday, Monday, June 11, we discussed what an excellent safety record Indiana Downs is having in 2012. It is on track, after 40 of 60 days, to be the safest in our history, and that rate is approximately 100% better than the national average.

Sincerely,

Jon Schuster  
General Manager  
Indiana Downs