

Live horse racing at Fair Meadows Racetrack is a go for 2013. After six weeks of uncertainty sparked by a naming rights agreement between Expo Square and the Muscogee (Creek) Nation that has since gone by the wayside, the Oklahoma Horse Racing Commission voted unanimously Monday to permit the races. Fair Meadows Racing Director Ron Shotts said the racetrack would "absolutely" have a live horse racing meet next year. The races typically are run over 34 days in June, July and August. Earlier this year, Fair Meadows declined to sign the licenses required to run the live races in anticipation of a naming rights agreement with the Creek Nation. The Horse Racing Commission on Monday agreed to accept the signed licenses after the commission's deadline for returning them. "We are very pleased that the commission was able to take such prompt action on the 2013 license," said Debbie Schauf, executive director of the Oklahoma Quarter Horse Racing Association. "Now we are cautiously optimistic the fair board will work with us to produce the best meet we can have." The fair board on Nov. 1 voted without comment to approve a \$1.44 million a year naming rights agreement with the Creek Nation that included a provision ending live horse racing at Fair Meadows. The deal outraged horsemen across the state, who said it would devastate their industry. They also criticized the secretive nature of the fair board's decision, saying they should have been part of the discussions. At stake for the horsemen was \$6 million to \$8 million a year in purse money they had been receiving from the Creek, Osage and Cherokee nations as part of a compact with the state outlining the terms of racing at Fair Meadows and its effect on local gaming. The compact also called for Fair Meadows to receive \$2 million a year in lieu of having gaming machines at the racetrack. The racetrack was required to run 400 live races a year to be eligible for the funds. The controversy came to an end last week when the fair board rescinded the naming rights deal after learning that Shotts had signed contracts with the state's quarter horse and

thoroughbred associations agreeing to hold live races at Fair Meadows in 2013. Later in the week, Schauf and Joe Lucas, spokesman for the Thoroughbred Racing Association of Oklahoma, met with Secretary of State Glenn Coffee, state Secretary of Agriculture Jim Reese, and Steve Mullins, general counsel for the Governor's Office, to discuss the implications of ending live racing in Tulsa. "The governor and her advisers believe the horse racing industry has raised important issues concerning the closure of Fair Meadows, the future of racing in Oklahoma, and the compact and law governing payments into a statewide purse for Oklahoma horsemen," said Gov. Mary Fallin's spokesman, Alex Weintz. "Governor Fallin values the horse racing industry's contribution to the economy and will work with all interested parties to work our way through these most recent controversies." Kevin Canfield 918-581-8313

SUBHEAD: Officials say there "absolutely" will be a live racing season in 2013.

January – Expo Square officials begin conversations with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation on a possible naming rights agreement for exposition center. – **Expo Square** officials begin conversations with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation on a possible naming rights agreement for exposition center. **August – QuikTrip's** naming rights agreement with Expo Square expires; the deal paid Expo Square \$240,000 a year. – **QuikTrip's** naming rights agreement with Expo Square expires; the deal paid Expo Square \$240,000 a year. **September – QuikTrip** deal becomes month to month, with the convenience store chain agreeing to pay \$11,250 a month, or \$135,000 a year – **QuikTrip** deal becomes month to month, with the convenience store chain agreeing to pay \$11,250 a month, or \$135,000 a year **October – Fair Meadows** racing director signs agreements with the state quarter horse and thoroughbred associations agreeing to run live horse races in 2013 – **Fair Meadows** racing director signs agreements with the state quarter horse and thoroughbred associations agreeing to run live horse races in 2013 **Nov. 1 – Tulsa County** fair board, which oversees operations at Expo Square, votes without comment to approve a \$1.44 million-a-year naming rights agreement with the Creek Nation that includes a provision ending live horse racing at Fair Meadows. The agenda item makes no mention of

the horse racing provision in the agreement, nor does a press release issued by Fair Meadows after the vote. – Tulsa County fair board, which oversees operations at Expo Square, votes without comment to approve a \$1.44 million-a-year naming rights agreement with the Creek Nation that includes a provision ending live horse racing at Fair Meadows.

The agenda item makes no mention of the horse racing provision in the agreement, nor does a press release issued by Fair Meadows after the vote. Dec. 6

– The fair board votes to approve an amended version of the naming rights agreement clarifying which courts would hear legal disputes between the parties. At the meeting, a lawyer representing the state's horsemen's associations informs the board of the agreements that Fair Meadows' racing director signed with the horsemen agreeing to hold races in 2013.

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Dec. 12 – Fair board rescinds naming rights agreement and agrees to hold live horse racing at Fair Meadows in 2013. – Fair board rescinds naming rights agreement and agrees to hold live horse racing at Fair Meadows in 2013. Dec. 17

– Oklahoma Horse Racing Commission accepts Fair Meadows licenses to hold races in 2013.

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