



## WAGERING AND PURSE RECORDS FALL AT ZIA PARK 2023 MEET

(December 21, 2023 – Hobbs, NM) The 19<sup>th</sup> season of horse racing at Zia Park was a record setting one on several fronts with new standards set for average daily handle, purses and safety on the racetrack during the 30-day mixed Quarter Horse/Thoroughbred meet.

An average daily handle of \$830,371 was up 72% from the 48-date meet in 2022 to set a new track record and was the highest daily handled recorded by a racetrack in the state of New Mexico since 2010. Live handle was up an equally impressive 47% from 2022. Five of the tracks ten all-time highest daily handles were recorded in 2023 and all coming in the last 15 days of the meet.

Purses were a big reason in driving the average Thoroughbred field size to nearly nine horses per race (8.91) versus last year's 7.45 per race figure. Quarter Horse average field size was 9.03 horses per race. Average daily overnight purses totaled \$344,067, both a track and New Mexico record. Total average daily purses, including stakes, was \$432,767.

Racing safety also set records with only two racing catastrophic injuries the entire meet resulting in a rate of 0.74 per 1000 starters – the lowest ever recorded for Zia Park and nearly 50% lower than the national average for dirt races as published by the Jockey Club's Equine Injury Database. There was one training catastrophic injury during training which began October 1.

“From all metrics the meet was a great success – records set for wagering, purses and in safety as well,” said Lauren Barrows, Vice President and General Manager, “we thank all our guests, horsemen and racing participants and team members for having a part in delivering those impressive numbers.”

Meet leaders on the Quarter Horse side were James J. Gonzales, II (trainer), Noe Garcia, Jr. (jockey) and Elliot L. Bachicha (owner.) On the Thoroughbred side, Todd Fincher won his third straight training title while jockey Luis Fuentes secured his second straight leading rider title. The leading Thoroughbred owners were J. Kirk and Judy Robison.

### **For further information:**

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