

Sports

9,000 participants helped make this year's Cornhusker State Games the biggest, most successful ever

By Jeff Apel
Sports Editor

The 1986 Cornhusker State Games closed with promises of continued expansion and future stability.

Dave McBride, the state games executive coordinator, said next year's games could be expanded to include racquetball and fencing.

While other sports are also being considered in the expansion, McBride said officials are also hoping to add to the games by changing the format of the opening ceremonies.

"We've done it the same way for the last two years," McBride said. "So we feel it is time for a change."

McBride said over all, this year's second annual Cornhusker State Games went very well.

By the time officials had stopped counting all the late entries they received, almost 9,000 Nebraskans had participated in the games with another 1,000 volunteering either products or services. Those numbers were up from the approximately 4,500 persons who participated in last year's first state games.

While the record number of participants posed potential problems, McBride said officials were fortunate to avoid any serious problems throughout

the three-day competition.

"We had a lot of little problems," he said. "But that is to be expected."

Financially, McBride said the games are showing enough stability that they will continue to be held for many years to come.

About 60 percent of the game's expenses will be paid by the various corporations which have chosen to be sponsors. The other 40 percent of the expenses will be paid for by entry fees, admission fees and private contributions.

McBride said had it not been for the cooperation and contributions received from several corporations from throughout Nebraska, producing the games would have been virtually impossible.

"Without those corporate sponsors," McBride said, "entry fees would have to be so much that it would really limit the number of participants."

McBride said the Nebraska State Games are holding their own when they are compared to other state games held in the United States.

New York, which has hosted a state games competition for nine years, continues to lead the other 24 states who currently conduct state games competition.

But thanks largely to a strong amount of support from the United States

Olympic committee and a high level of interest in participation, McBride said Nebraska is beginning to close the gap which separates its state games competition from New York's.

McBride said Nebraska's is one of the largest state games competitions in the country when the number of sports offered is compared to the state's population.

Nebraska also boasts a high state citizen to participant ratio, which McBride said is yet another indication the Cornhusker State Games will continue to thrive in the future. Next year's state games will once again be held in Lincoln, while the 1988 games will be held in the Kearney, Grand Island and Hastings areas.

McBride said state game officials will spend the next three to four months evaluating this year's state games to prepare for next year's contest.

Ideally, McBride said, officials would have enough surplus money in the bank so they could begin meeting some of the initial expenses for the 1987 Cornhusker State Games.

But if that doesn't happen, McBride said game officials at least hope this year's competition will break even.

"We will just have to wait and see what happens," he said.

Ak-Sar-Ben hosts major races Saturday

By Jeff Apel
Sports Editor

The ESPN television cameras won't be rolling when Ak-Sar-Ben celebrates its richest day in racing history with the running of the \$250,000 Cornhusker Handicap and the \$130,000 Breeders Cup this Saturday.

Tim Schmad, Omaha tracks public relations director, said he had been contacted by ESPN officials earlier this year about televising the Cornhusker Handicap live.

But because of a conflict created by the running of the Haskell Invitational, Schmad said ESPN scrapped its plans of bringing its television crews to Ak-Sar-Ben.

"They (ESPN) even tried to get us to change the date," Schmad said. "But we were firm on keeping our date set."

Schmad said Ak-Sar-Ben officials elected to increase the purse of this year's Cornhusker Handicap by \$100,000 in hopes of maintaining the races reputation as one of the country's finest.

While Ak-Sar-Ben is taking on the additional expense of hosting the race this year, Schmad said in the future the track may begin to look for corporate sponsors to support such races.

In a corporate sponsorship, local companies and businesses are asked to contribute money in order to increase the size of the purse.

"It's a coming thing," Schmad said.

Schmad said the field for the Cornhusker Handicap, a 1 and 1/8 mile race, has been set at seven horses.

Early entrants Northern Bid, Shamastic, Siberian Hero and Something Georgous have all scratched from the race.

But Ak-Sar-Ben officials received word earlier this week that Dramatic Desire, Honor Medal and Bad Wagon Harry will all join the field.

Schmad said he expects the field also includes Gate Dancer, Smiley and Ingot's Ruler and Smiley, who are trying to figure out the betting public because of his Nebraska roots. The five-year-old horse will retire to stud after this race.

season, is trained by Columbus native Jack Van Berg.

Gate Dancer is expected to receive a stiff challenge from Smile, a four-year-old who has won \$1,074,910 in his two and one-half year racing career.

Schmad said three of the remaining five horses — Gourami, Dramatic Desire and Bad Wagon Harry — all possess the potential to knock off Gate Dancer or Smile.

Gourami has won five races in a row since being claimed for \$100,000 earlier this year in California. Dramatic Desire finished second in a major stakes race in Minneapolis, Minn. earlier this year and Bad Wagon Harry finished second to Gate Dancer in last year's Cornhusker Handicap.

The remaining horses in the field, Ingot's Ruler and Honor Medal, are being touted as the long shots.

"It's going to be a tremendous race," Schmad said. "Every horse in the field has a shot at winning it because of the quality of the horses involved."

Schmad said in the \$130,000 Breeders Cup race, either Oriental or North Sider will be the early favorites of the field which could reach a full twelve horses.

Oriental is an import horse which is racing for the second time at Ak-Sar-Ben, while North Sider is trained by D. Wayne Lukas. Lukas, who rarely personally appears at Ak-Sar-Ben, is consistently one of the country's top trainers.

Schmad said even with the two races being held on the same day, Ak-Sar-Ben officials aren't expecting any records in attendance or mutual handle.

The track, which has been hurt this year by the competing Bluffs Run dog track in Council Bluffs, Iowa, is down 29.5 percent in mutual handle and 23.8 percent in attendance.

Schmad said the Omaha track also includes Gate Dancer, Smiley and Ingot's Ruler and Smiley, who are trying to figure out the betting public because of his Nebraska roots. The five-year-old horse will retire to stud after this race.

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Paul Vonderlage/Daily Nebraskan

Jackie Joyner officially opens the Junior Olympics track and field championships by addressing the crowd at Nebraska's Ed Weir track.

Joyner opens competition

By Jeff Apel
Sports Editor

The 20th annual Junior Olympic track and field championships officially got under way Thursday with the completion of the opening ceremonies.

Jackie Joyner, who recently became the first athlete in the heptathlon to pass the 7,000 point barrier when she compiled a world-record 7,148 points during the Goodwill Games, was the featured speaker for the ceremonies.

Joyner, who also earned a silver medal in the 1984 Olympics, said she could recall when she competed in the Junior Olympics.

"This is where I got started," she said.

Joyner said the Junior Olympics would give each of the athletes, who came from 15 regions of the United States, an opportunity to meet people. While growing up in East St. Louis,

Ill., Joyner admitted it was a struggle for her to maintain the competitive schedule she would need to be a world-record holding athlete.

But thanks to the Junior Olympics and her parents' cooperation, Joyner said, she had the opportunity to compete in various track meets as a youngster.

"This (the Junior Olympics) is just the beginning," Joyner said.

Joyner said now that she has captured a silver medal in the Olympics and a world record in the heptathlon, she is setting her sights on the 1988 Olympic games.

There, she said, she would like to win a gold medal.

Nebraska chancellor Martin Massengale also spoke during the ceremonies.

Massengale said a record number of athletes are expected to compete in this year's Junior Olympic track competition.

Approximately 4,300 athletes are expected to compete in the competition at Nebraska's Ed Weir track.

Massengale emphasized that whether the athletes game in first, second or third in any events they would all be winners.

The game of life is competition, Massengale said. "I'm sure you are going to learn," he said.

Other speakers at the opening ceremonies included Lincoln city councilman Dick Johnson, who said Lincoln residents wished each of the competing athletes the kind of inner satisfaction that comes from doing your very best. Nebraska Lt. Gov. Don McGinley also addressed the crowd, saying if it weren't for the age limit he himself would be glad to throw himself into the competition.

Cornhusker track team member Angela Thacker was the torch bearer for the ceremonies.



1985 Preakness winner Gate Dancer