

Simulcasting affects distribution of area gambling dollars

By Steve Sipple
Staff Reporter

Simulcasting appears to be paying big dividends in the state in the battle for thoroughbred and dog racing gambling dollars in Nebraska and Iowa.

Through March 13, an average of 7,643 patrons per race day either attended the live thoroughbred racing meet at Grand Island's Fonner Park or viewed the races via simulcast in Lincoln, Omaha, Columbus, or South Sioux City. The bettors wagered an average of \$760,374 per day.

In comparison, Prairie Meadows in Altoona, Iowa, which began racing horses for the first time March 1, has averaged 4,471 fans who have bet an average of \$314,933. Bluffs Run, a greyhound race track in Council Bluffs, Iowa, has averaged 2,093 fans per session who have wagered \$247,865.

The combined Bluffs Run and Prairie Meadows averages are 6,564 fans per race day who bet \$562,798. That's 1,079 less fans per day and \$197,576 less wagered than at Fonner

Park and the simulcast outlets. Fonner Park's on-track figures are 3,780 and \$320,838.

Hugh Miner Jr., general manager at Fonner Park, said that while the current figures indicate Nebraska's thoroughbred racing industry is above par compared to Iowa's dog and horse racing figures, he isn't concerned about competition from the state.

"They're 300 miles from here," Miner said, referring to Prairie Meadows. "We're more concerned with keeping things in order here (at Fonner Park). I'm not a numbers cruncher anyway. I'm not going to worry what other tracks are doing."

However, Miner said simulcasting continues to help both his track and the state's entire race industry.

"You got to bring the product to the (bettors)," Miner said.

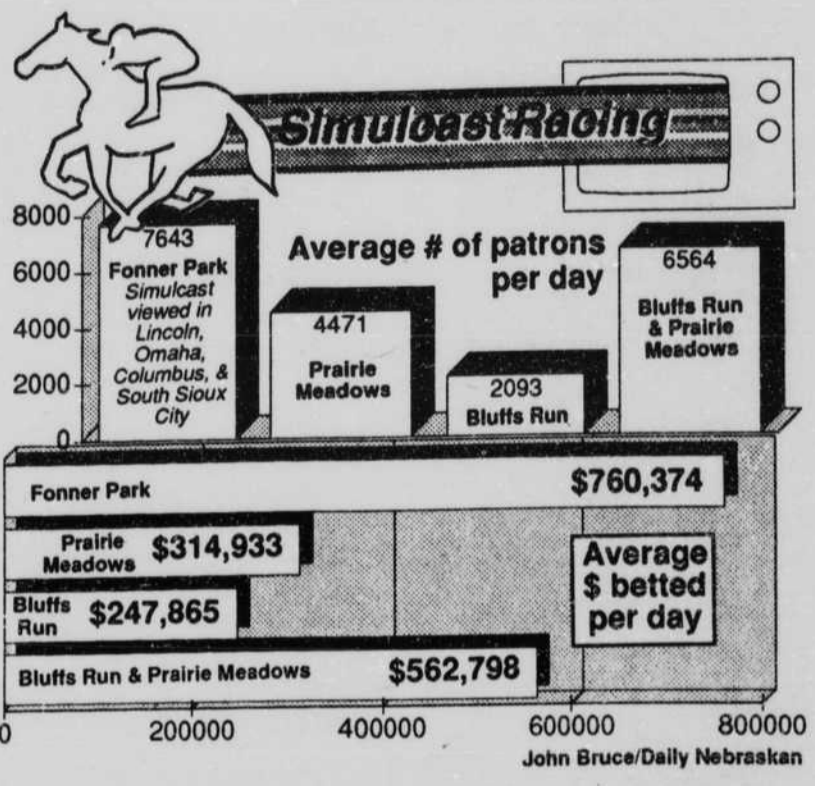
Miner said Fonner Park's daily attendance and mutual handle totals would be higher if not for cold temperatures that plagued the meet during its first few weeks. The meet, which began Feb. 16, lost two days earlier this year because of adverse

weather. Iowa's inability to simulcast its only thoroughbred race meet makes irrelevant comparisons between daily attendance and handle totals with Nebraska, said Stan Bowker, general manager at Prairie Meadows. Bowker said he expects his track's mutual handle figures to rise as people become more accustomed with betting. But the track's \$70.44 per capita wagering average is higher than what track officials anticipated, Bowker said.

"Canterbury Downs (in Shakopee, Minn.) averaged only \$77 per capita the whole year in 1984-85, their first year," Bowker said. "Ours will go up throughout the year."

Both Bowker and Miner agreed that Prairie Meadows and Fonner Park aren't in competition for patrons. But Tim McNeil, director of publicity at Bluffs Run, said Ak-Sar-Ben's simulcasting of Fonner Park's races affects the dog track.

At Ak-Sar-Ben on Thursday, 1,840 patrons bet \$238,911 on the Fonner Park races. At Bluffs Run, 1,714 bet \$199,586.



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NU golf hampered by youth, weather

By Jeff Apel
Senior Editor

Despite seeing his Cornhusker men's golf team finish 14th in the 15-team South Florida Invitational last weekend in Tampa, Fla., Nebraska Coach Larry Romjue refused to be discouraged.

Romjue said he wasn't discouraged about Nebraska's finish because the Cornhuskers have not had the benefit of practicing outdoors. He said that lack of practice hurt Nebraska throughout the tournament.

Nebraska opened the 54-hole tournament by recording a 313 total on Friday, then registered a 292 total on Saturday. The Huskers closed out the tournament by tallying a 312 score on Sunday.

The Huskers' 917 total was 51 strokes behind North Carolina, which won the tournament with an 867 total. South Florida finished 2nd with an 872 score, followed by Central Florida with 874, Kentucky with 875, Florida Southern and South Alabama with 884 and Tampa with 888. Kansas finished 8th with an 891

total, while Memphis State and Virginia Tech tied for 9th with 902 scores. Stetson University of Deland, Fla., finished 11th with a 903 total, followed by Michigan with a 907 mark, Jacksonville with a 908, Nebraska, and Florida International with a 933.

The most disappointing aspect about the tournament was Nebraska's third-day total of 312, Romjue said. He said he expected the Huskers to do better after they recorded a 292 total on Saturday.

"We played very poorly the first round, then came back and shot very well the second," Romjue said. "I thought we would shoot well during the third round, but we didn't. We ended up only showing up once out of three rounds."

Romjue said Nebraska was bothered by its lack of practice and a different type of course throughout the tournament. He said the Florida course gave Nebraska trouble because its greens had a different type of grass than is found in the Midwest and the fairways were thin -- meaning they didn't have a lot of grass.

Romjue said Nebraska was also hampered by its youth. Two of the Huskers five players that participated in the tournament -- Kurt Gerstner and Mike Troy -- are in their first year at Nebraska.

Gerstner, a transfer from Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Va., finished in 69th place with a 231 total. Troy, a transfer from Butler County College in El Dorado, Kan., finished 79th with a 239.

Nebraska's top finishers were seniors John Dinnebic and Mike Rack, who tied for 56th place with 229 totals. The Huskers' remaining competitor was Jeff Rafferty, who finished in 81st place with a 241 total.

South Florida's Mark Turlington was the individual medalist with a 212 total.

Romjue said he is confident Nebraska will improve once the weather allows it to practice outdoors. The Huskers' next competition is Friday, when they travel to Montgomery, Ala., to compete in the Southeastern Intercollegiate Tournament.

Romjue said Nebraska will prepare for the tournament by attending classes. He said the Huskers will not practice because they can't get outside.

Romjue said the weather will prevent Nebraska from reaching its full potential until after spring break.

"After vacation, that's when I'll make a real evaluation," he said. "I know they're capable of playing. They just haven't reached their potential yet."

Ohio St. wins; Nee says NU never reached potential

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Nebraska, which outshot the Buckeyes 52 percent to 48 percent in the first half, never regained the shooting touch in the second half.

After Johnson's basket pulled Nebraska to within 43-39 in the opening minute of the second half, Ohio State exploded.

The Buckeyes scored 15 points to Nebraska's four during the game's next six minutes to run out to a 58-42 lead with 12:51 remaining.

But the the Huskers retaliated with a 15-6 run to cut the Buckeye lead to 64-57 on a basket by Johnson with 7:21 left in the game.

However, Mateen, who led the Buckeyes with 20 points, scored Ohio State's next 10 points to enable the Buckeyes to pull away for the win. Ohio State connected on nine of 11 free throws down the stretch to seal the victory.

Owens, a freshman from Mansfield, Ohio, scored a career-high 18 points for the Huskers.

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