

23rd August 2023

## **Program Notes – December to March 2024**

The December to March Program Grid is the pinnacle for a Tasmanian horse to showcase its quality throughout the Tasmanian Summer Racing Festival.

36 feature races including 11 Listed, and 4 Group 3s, unfolding over 24 meetings across our three racing venues. Additionally, racing resumes on delightful King Island where we have 7 meetings throughout this period.

The Feature Race Grid remains similar to previous years with a few key changes that we feel will enhance progression and opportunity. Some new initiatives have been introduced, some have been kept and others have been adjusted, to give Trainers and Owners more choices through the 2023-24 Tasmanian Summer Racing Festival.

We will begin with a commitment we made in June 2023 to bring Class 2 races back into the program grid. As stated, this was a decision based on data and to help horses advance through the grades and not stagnate through Benchmark racing.

It is early days, but we are looking forward to seeing how this transpires through the August to November period. To give trainers clarity and confidence of this new initiative, Tasracing will continue to program Class 2 races throughout the December to March grid to give these horses plenty of opportunities through our feature time of year and into the Autumn period.

Several feature races have been altered throughout the Tasmanian Summer Racing Festival to give trainers more variation and paths to progress horses to their targeted races.

Starting with the biggest change to the feature grid, Tasracing and Magic Millions have made the decision to change the date of the 2YO and 3YO/4YO Magic Millions races to Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> February to give better progression and options for all horses.

The change has had a knock-on effect on the grid in many ways, with the \$150k Listed Gold Sovereign Stakes effectively swapping dates with the Magic Millions, putting it back where it belongs in the Launceston Cup Carnival on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> February.

Altering the Magic Millions, not only allowed for better progression for 2YOs but allowed Tasracing an option for a new initiative for 4YOs.

A 4YO 1600m Hcp has been programmed on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> February to provide not only an option for horses from the MM Race, but an age option for all 4YOs within the carnival.

The race not only gives a 4YO an aged handicap race, but a TASBRED Bonus will be allocated, giving the winner a chance at \$35k in prizemoney on the penultimate day of the Tasmanian Summer Racing Festival.

This initiative is something Tasracing and Tasbreeders are very excited about and believe trainers will be very supportive and enthusiastic of the concept.

4YO racing is something Tasracing is keen to develop further in the future. This race is the start of potentially more initiatives for races throughout this age group.

3YO Feature Racing remains similar to previous seasons with only minor changes made to race conditions. The Launceston Guineas, Strutt Stakes and 3YO Trophy will be run under Set Weight and Penalty conditions for the 2023/2024 season after previously being run as Set Weight events. The alteration is designed to give greater variation between our feature 3YO Races.

The program for Open Aged gallopers has had a slight variation from previous seasons. The only change is the decision to push the \$125k Listed Tasmanian Stakes and Brighton Cup to Late December. This change, albeit only a week, allows both races to be used as a platform to other feature races during this time of year. Something that was much more difficult to achieve with the later date.

Longford has recently upgraded their chute with a 100m extension allowing trials to now be run over 800m.

The bonus with this extension, is that whilst trials can now be run over 800m, Tasracing can also utilise that distance to add two new races to the Longford card on January 1<sup>st</sup>.

An 800m BM68 and a BM60 2400m allow 2 new races and distances on the program. The 800m event will carry prizemoney of \$25k and provide a great spectacle for patrons on the day.

Finally, the Group 3 \$150k Bow Mistress Stakes has been run and won for the very last time. The race, which is named after outstanding mare and multiple *black type* winner Bow Mistress, will be renamed for the 2023-2024 thoroughbred racing season in honour of our recent Group 1 star.

The 2024 edition will be the inaugural running of the Group 3 \$150k Mystic Journey Stakes, a fitting accolade for one of Tasmania's best ever racehorses.

Across the Feature Race Grid, I am excited to see what these alterations and new changes do to the Tasmanian Summer Racing Festival. Ultimately, we want the best racing over this period, and we hope these new initiatives and amendments give you plenty of options to find suitable targets for your horses.

If you have any queries regarding the December to March Program Grid, please contact Blayne Hudson on 0406 179 281.

***Thoroughbred Code Lead  
Blayne Hudson***