

## **BET On It**

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The Triple Crown season is a whirlwind for people in the Thoroughbred industry, especially when you're right in the middle of it.

I was in the middle of it over the course of the past two months as the leader of the Big Event Team (BET), the "super security" force brought in to supplement backstretch security efforts at the Triple Crown event tracks.

The program is the brainchild of, and is funded by, the Racing Medication and Testing Consortium (RMTC), and is administered by the Thoroughbred Racing Protective Bureau (TRPB).

The team featured between five and seven seasoned investigators, most of whom spent three or four days patrolling the backstretch areas of Churchill Downs, Pimlico Race Course, and Belmont Park.

The team was on-site for the Toyota Blue Grass Stakes (gr. I) at Keeneland and used that experience as a stepping-stone to the Kentucky Derby, Preakness, and Belmont Stakes (all gr. I).

When we first stepped foot on the Keeneland and Churchill Downs backstretches, some horsemen were startled. When told, however, the BET was there to ensure the proverbial "level playing field," they certainly made BET members feel welcome.

The same was true of the track security departments. Although early communications with track security directors were critical to ensuring everyone was aware of the BET's capabilities and focus, occasionally track racing investigators or security personnel didn't fully appreciate the benefit the BET brought to their facility.

That soon changed, and as each track had only a limited number of seasoned investigators, they, too, were excited about our presence and willingness to help. We told everyone who asked where our funding came from, but more people were familiar with the TRPB than the RMTC.

Besides the horsemen and the track security departments, representatives of outside security firms turned to us for assistance on occasion. Because many of them were not accustomed to working around horses or in stable areas, they would occasionally ask for guidance.

Recognizing these security firm representatives lacked the specialized skills acquired by BET members through years of trackside experience and specialized training, BET members provided guidance and served as a valuable resource to this additional security force, whose responsibilities included logging visitors in and out of the barn area as well as patrolling the shedrow.

We are sure our presence prevented some questionable things from happening. On one occasion, we noticed a veterinarian's assistant heading into a barn with two

syringes in hand. When he and the vet noticed us approaching, they turned around, got in the vet's truck, and drove off.

It was reassuring to find that the blood-gas tests from the horses competing in the Triple Crown all came back clean.

One of the biggest challenges with the BET program involves the difference in medication rules from state to state. Just like horsemen, we also must review local rules when we arrive at a site before we can enforce them.

Those of us who have been around horse racing for a long time greatly appreciate the RMTC's efforts in the development of a uniform policy for medication rules and the success the organization has had in getting 27 of 40 states to comply.

Nothing epitomizes the overwhelmingly favorable response to, and widespread acceptance of, the Big Event Team over the past two months than the requests already received for future events. It looks like the team will be on site for the Hambletonian at Meadowlands, the Haskell Invitational Handicap (gr. I) at Monmouth, and the Breeders' Cup World Thoroughbred Championships at Belmont.

I think our experiences over the past few months have made one thing perfectly clear: horsemen universally embrace the concept of added security on the backstretch.

The Racing Medication & Testing Consortium, while still in its formative years, is to be commended for proactive initiatives in the area of backstretch security. So too are all the individuals and organizations who have lent their support.

Let's keep the ball rolling.