

Finley launching FATE initiative to help racing

By Jennie Rees
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Courtesy of Courier-Journal.com

Terry Finley, the president and founder of the **West Point Thoroughbreds** ownership syndicate, this afternoon put on what he billed as a live Webinar on the state of the industry.

More than 100 people viewed the address on line, with others on the telephone and some of us on both. While Finley is always good for a comment on just about any industry-related issue, what I found most compelling was an initiative he's launching called FATE.

"We do have a chance to capture all new fans, an all-new group of fans, a new group of bettors," Finley said. "We have an opportunity now to really make this business bigger and stronger.

"And with that, I'm very excited to introduce a new initiative in our business called FATE. In front of all of our challenges and everything we have going that is on the negative side, the great thing about it, and the reason I love the business, especially right now, is that our fate is in our hands. We control our destiny. Remember that word fate. It stands for Find A Thoroughbred Enthusiast.

"Everybody who works and is associated with West Point Thoroughbreds - all of our partners, all of our trainers, our staff, everyone on our team - I'm going to task them with the following mission: Between today and the time they break on the first Saturday in May in the 2009 Kentucky Derby, I'm going to ask everyone associated with us to introduce at least three people into our great business."

Finley said the preferred method would be to bring those folks to a race track "and to buy them lunch, and introduce them to the Racing Form and the program and all the other aspects of the magic we live every day. We've got to transfer that magic to other people."

But also, he said, it could be something as simple as sending them racing website links. "Things that captivate our attention when we're not at the racetrack," he said. "We're in a data-driven industry, and there's so much we can transfer.

"But what we've got to do is make that connection. What I'm quite frankly tired of is everybody knocking the racetrack and knocking the NTRA and Breeders' Cup (suggesting) that those entities are not making new fans. Every time you point a finger, you've got three fingers coming back at you. What I'd suggest to you is, if you derive an income, or you derive any pleasure whatsoever from our business, make it a point and mandate and obligate yourself to bring at least three people into our great business.

"There will be more details to follow. But just think the viral effect of that and what it does. We have hundreds of thousands of people across America that in one shape or form are affiliated with the thoroughbred industry. Just think if everyone of us brought in three more people in the next eight weeks, our business would be in a lot better spot. And then it just goes from there and there."

Finley said one of the challenges is that "it's not an easy industry," that "everything emanates from a person walking up to a betting window or picking up a phone to make a bet."

He said no matter how many millions of bucks the Breeders' Cup and NTRA might spend on marketing campaigns, there's nothing like a direct connection to get someone to "get" racing (at least this is my interpretation of what he was saying.)

"I said, 'Why don't we take it upon ourselves?' Finley said. "I will tell you, I'm a Republican, but I admired the way Obama conducted his election and the grass roots and the internet and all the other things he did to transform himself from a 300-1 shot 18 months ago to the person who is going to deliver the State of the Union address tonight in front of 100 million people. So it can be done."

