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WATCH AND WAGER, LLC BRINGS HARNESS RACING TO THE FRESNO FAIRGROUNDS *Fresno becomes California's only approved harness racing venue*

FRESNO, CALIFORNIA – January 23, 2026: The Big Fresno Fair is excited to announce that harness racing will return to Fresno after a century-long absence through a new agreement with Watch and Wager, LLC, a California Horse Racing Board (CHRB) approved racing operator and the newest interim event at the Fresno Fairgrounds. On November 19, 2025, the CHRB unanimously approved 38 harness race dates for Fresno running from December 2026 through May 2027, primarily on Saturdays and Sundays, pending final race license approval for Watch and Wager, LLC, which is expected to be at the September 2026 CHRB Board meeting.

After careful evaluation, The Big Fresno Fair Board approved a two-year lease with Watch and Wager at its November 2025 meeting. The agreement designates the Fresno Fairgrounds as California's official home of live harness racing, increasing year-round use of the Brian I. Tatarian Grandstand. This expansion will offer in-person racing and wagering opportunities for the community and deliver significant economic benefits to the Fairgrounds and greater Fresno region. Races will also be broadcast worldwide via satellite, strengthening the Fair's existing satellite wagering program.

"This represents a significant step forward for horse racing in Fresno," said Christina Estrada, CEO, The Big Fresno Fair. "The return of harness racing continues our longstanding tradition of live horse racing that dates back to 1884, while also driving positive economic impact and community engagement. We look forward to sharing more details in the months ahead about how the community can take part in this exciting new entertainment option."

Harness racing is a dynamic form of horse racing featuring Standardbred horses that pull lightweight two-wheeled carts called sulkies, guided by skilled drivers rather than mounted jockeys. Horses compete at trotting or pacing gaits over a one-mile distance, beginning behind a mobile starting gate that brings the field smoothly up to speed. Known for its strategic precision, harness racing highlights the collaboration, strength and consistency of both horses and drivers.

"We are incredibly excited to continue the legacy of California harness racing at the Fresno Fairgrounds. We knew after our first meeting that the quality of the facility and the vision of The Big Fresno Fair Board and Management made it the perfect place for our horsemen and patrons. We are hearing from horsemen throughout the country and western Canada who are excited for the resumption of harness racing in California," said Ben Kenney, CFO and Chris Schick, General Manager of Watch and Wager LLC.





A comprehensive plan and timeline for track preparation and facility improvements are underway. Harness racing will complement the Fair’s existing events, supporting year-round utilization and improvement of the Grandstand and racing infrastructure.

“I want to thank Watch and Wager, our Fair Board, CDFA, CHRB and the Valley’s elected officials for their collaboration and support in making this milestone possible,” said Gary Chahil, President, Big Fresno Fair Board of Directors. “Our community has always shown up in a big way for horse racing, filling the Grandstand and creating an unforgettable atmosphere. Reintroducing harness racing strengthens the racing legacy and represents an important investment in the future of the Fairgrounds and the Central Valley. We’re excited to welcome fans back to the track to experience this renewed tradition!”

Watch and Wager, LLC, operated California’s only harness racing meet at Sacramento’s Cal Expo for 13 years. On April 25, 2025, Cal Expo announced that it would not renew the Watch and Wager contract, which would halt harness racing in Sacramento at the conclusion of the meet in May 2025. Cal Expo would later announce an agreement with Sacramento State to study the feasibility of converting the racetrack and grandstand into a football stadium.

More details on the harness race meet in Fresno will be available via the Fair’s website in July 2026.

About The Big Fresno Fair:

Founded in 1884, The Big Fresno Fair is the fifth largest fair in California and represents the 21st District Agricultural Association with an average attendance of 500,000, making it the largest annual event in the Central Valley. Beyond the annual Fair, the Fresno Fairgrounds hosts more than 250 events year-round, including concerts, community gatherings and sporting events, as well as offers year-round satellite wagering at The Starting Gate. Members of the Fair Board of Directors include: Gary Chahil, President; Frank Flores, Vice President; Jerry Pacheco, Secretary/Treasurer; Linda Mae Balakian Hunsucker; Terry Gonsalves; Annalisa Perea; Chuck Riojas; and Lawrence Salinas. Christina Estrada heads the Fair’s daily operations in her role as CEO. The 2026 Big Fresno Fair will run October 7-18. For more details, please visit www.FresnoFair.com.

About Watch and Wager, LLC

Watch and Wager, LLC is an entity of Webis Holdings PLC. Watch and Wager LLC is a national ADW (Advance Deposit Wagering) and operated harness racing at Cal Expo from 2012 until 2025 under license by the California Horse Racing Board. The team at Watch and Wager, LLC is headed by Ed Comins, President. The live harness racing meet is managed by Christopher Schick and Ben Kenney. The team combined has over six decades of experience operating Standardbred race meets in California and throughout the nation.

