

# Horse racing group sues Isle Casino in Pompano for more of slots revenue

The horse breeders, owners, drivers and trainers who fought for Las Vegas-style slot machines at The Isle Casino & Racing at Pompano Park now want the gambling devices temporarily unplugged.

The Florida Standardbred Breeders and Owners Association has filed a harshly worded lawsuit against the racetrack casino, alleging that Pompano Park officials refuse to give the horsemen their fair share of the slots revenue. The association – representing about 600 horsemen – wants the state to revoke the harness track's slots operating license until a revenue sharing agreement is in place. The track debuted 1,500 slots last month.

„In short, [Pompano Park]'s conduct is quite obviously motivated by one factor – greed,“ according to the lawsuit. „[Pompano Park] apparently believes that it can force the standardbred horsemen to accept whatever paltry sums it offers and is intent on reaping for itself the gigantic profits that slot machines promise to generate.“

For years, the association has had a negotiated contract in place with Pompano Park dictating how much the track pays the horsemen. The most recent three-year agreement expired Tuesday.

Pompano Park's general manager Douglas Shipley said he expects it will be „business as normal“ at tonight's races. He said he's confident that a new agreement will be reached, but was disappointed the association chose to file suit.

„We had a program that theoretically would have doubled their

purses in one of the highest [slots] tax environments in the country and that was unacceptable to them," Shipley said.

Filed in Broward Circuit Court, the association's suit alleges that Pompano Park had offered the horsemen 4 percent from the first USD 100 million in slots revenue and 2 percent of any additional revenue. That pales in comparison to the national average for racetrack casinos, said Jeffrey Schneider, the association's attorney. The association points to Gulfstream Park Racing & Casino, a thoroughbred track, that is giving its horsemen 8.25 percent of its slots revenue.

„We certainly think if [Pompano Park officials] had their druthers that they would be a casino first and horse racing would be ancillary," Schneider said.

The association's March 12 lawsuit also names the state Division of Pari-Mutuel Wagering as a defendant. The standardbred horsemen argue that they aren't provided the same rights as thoroughbred horsemen. Under state law, Gulfstream Park Racing & Casino had to negotiate a slots revenue sharing agreement with its horsemen before debuting the machines. There wasn't a similar provision for standardbred horsemen.

David Romanik, Pompano Park's attorney, said a judge has no power to impose the terms of Gulfstream Park's „bad deal" with thoroughbred horsemen on Pompano Park. The association's equal protection argument is flawed because different pari-mutuels – including jai-alai and dog racing – operate under different state regulations, Romanik said.

A spokesman for the state Division of Pari-Mutuel Wagering said Tuesday that the agency does not comment on pending litigation.