

Artificial tracks OK for us

QUEENSLAND Racing chairman Bob Bentley yesterday brushed aside fears of an \$18 million blunder in ordering three artificial tracks.

Bentley said drainage problems that closed the Santa Anita Cushion racetrack in Los Angeles, California, last weekend would not be an issue in Queensland.

QR last year signed contracts for three Cushion tracks at an average cost of \$6 million and the Queensland Government contributed \$12 million.

The \$6 million shortfall comes out of QR coffers and Bentley hopes races on the Cushion track will be held in March.

In the US, jockeys declared the Santa Anita track was unsafe on Sunday and after track managers tried to fix the problem, the riders again inspected the surface and declared it unfit for racing.

I don't have any concerns about the track at Caloundra. The secret to these tracks is to stick to the advice of the manufacturers, Bentley said.

The tracks are fine as long as they are properly maintained.

Bentley said the Caloundra Cushion track would be ready at the end of the month but there had been a three-week delay in construction.

We asked them to rip up a 200 metre section because it was not draining properly, Bentley said.

Bentley said he believed the problem at Santa Anita occurred because the track had an asphalt base that had not been allowed to rest long enough.

The Cushion Track mixture clogged the pourous asphalt and there have been on-going drainage problems since it was installed last summer.

The company that installs the track, Cushion Track Footings, has agreed to install a new surface at the end of the Santa Anita meeting.

Cushion Track Footings installed the same surface at Hollywood Park in Los Angeles in 2006 and there have been no problems there.

Bentley said QR had researched what type of artificial tracks to install in Queensland and decided Cushion Tracks were the best option.

The climate in a lot of areas we looked at was too cold.

We needed an all-weather track and that was why we settled on Cushion Tracks.

The Los Angeles climate is similar to here, Bentley said.

Bentley said the quality of the silica sand used in Queensland was the best in the world and the tracks had a high-grade fabric base.

Toowoomba is scheduled to get a Cushion Track but club president Neville Stewart said it was yet to be decided where it could be installed.

Bentley said another Cushion track would be installed in Brisbane and Deagon had not been discounted.

The Goldmarket will be run under the banner of the Queensland Racing Quality Handicap at Doomben on Saturday and retain its listed status.

The Gold Coast Turf Club had threatened legal action unless the Goldmarket name was deleted because of sponsorship conflicts and QR said it was the best outcome for everyone.