

Pune racing season is all set to take off today

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In addition the general level of stakes in handicaps has been increased by five per cent and stakes in graded races have been boosted to attract the best horses to the turf.

In an ongoing bid by the Royal Western India Turf Club (RWITC) to attract more crowds and glamour to the sport, a novel concept of O Racing awards are also on the anvil 'on the lines of the Oscar, except that these will be for the racing fraternity.

We will have a jury that will be keeping scores throughout the season and at the end of it awards for the best filly, best trainer, best punter and so on will be given in a grand ceremony,' said Anil Seolekar whose Oxford Group would be hosting the awards.

Other than that entertainment, fashion shows and prizes have been planned to boost numbers at the course. Vivek Jain, chairman marketing and media working group, along with RWITC chairman Dr Cyrus Poonawalla, Zavaray Ponawalla and RWITC secretary Behram Engineer addressed a press conference where the highlights of the current Pune season were outlined. The races this year have sponsorships to the tune of 80 lakh which is a 25 per cent increase from last year.

Amongst the new entrants to the arena is Lufthansa that is also hosting a race day this season. This, said Jain, was to strengthen the airline's ties with the city following the start of its Pune-Frankfurt flight.

PRA Reality, Goel Ganga Developments, PiaggioVehicles Pvt .Ltd, Solaris Group, Diageo India, Acropolis Developments Yeravada Stud Farms , Panchshil Reality are the other sponsors of the major races to be held this season , Mr. Jain added. DNA will be the media partner of the RWITC, CNBC-TV 18 will be the official broadcast partner of the season, he added

BN Nanjappa, clerk of the course, further added that the race course facilities have been upgraded with more facilities added in the first and second enclosures. A long pending demand of sprucing up the jockey's room has also been addressed this year with the room renovated and made more comfortable, he said. Amongst the important races this year are the Independence Race Day, the General Rajendrasinhji Trophy, the Southern Command Race Day, the S.A Poonawalla Millions,

and the Nanoli Pune Derby.

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