

Changes to Australia's Richest Goat Races!

Shake the dust of the carts and get ready to go goat racing because Australia's richest goat races are gearing up to be a highlight of this year's Tree of Knowledge Festival held in Barcaldine over the May Day long weekend.

While anything can happen in these goat races which see these wily beasts harnessed to carts and driven over 100m by their riders, the organising committee have made a number of important changes to the event to ensure the programme runs as smooth and fast as it possibly can on the day.

"We have reduced the number of races individual goats will be eligible to enter but this will actually ensure a greater spread of the prize money and will streamline how the meeting will run," said Mr Tom Lockie, one of the main organisers of the event.

This year goats will only be able to be nominated in one of the three big races, one of which will be a ladies race, but all of which will have equal prize money and pay out to sixth place.

"This will effectively mean 18 goats will take away prize money whereas in previous years, some goats were able to double up and a lot more went home with nothing," said Mr Lockie.

These three races are yet to be named for they will carry the name of their major sponsor which the committee is currently in the process of finalising.

Similar to last year, the six fastest times from these three races will then have the opportunity to line up in Australia's richest goat race, The John deGroot Australian Goat Racing Cup, which carries a total prize money of \$2,000.

Mr Lockie said the changes were necessary due to an increased interest and number of nominations in the races, last year they received nearly 40 nominations and this year they are expecting to have a significant amount more.

"We've already had enquiries from as far a field as Sarina, Rockhampton and even Victoria, and there's a hell of a lot of people getting into goat racing around the Barcy region, so we had to look for ways to streamline the running of the event to ensure that Tree of Knowledge Festival goat races retain their reputation of being the biggest and the best in Australia!" said Mr Lockie.

Even so the committee has ensured that the kids have not been forgotten.

They will still have a run in the led Billy Goat Rumble, but this year the heats will be held as finals and first past the post of each heat will receive \$100 first prize.

"Last year we had heats and finals in the Billy Goat rumble and we gave out prizes to sixth place, so we are giving out the same number of places just cutting down on the number of events and therefore to achieve this," said Mr Lockie.

"If anyone is interested in having their business or organization attached to any of the Tree of Knowledge Festival Races then they should contact as soon as possible in order to secure their sponsorship," said Mr Lockie.

Plans are also underway to sell a race book raffle this year.

“Every year we get a lot of local business who want to support the goat races with “in kind” donations,” said, Mr Lockie.

“This year we thought we would give the crowd the opportunity to win these.

“Each program will carry a unique number and in between races the prizes will be drawn and given out to the owner of the corresponding race book. This should generate a lot of interest because race book purchasers could find themselves in the draw for up to 20 or 30 prizes, some of which could be pretty valuable.”

Mr Lockie said anyone interested in nominating in the goat races need to secure a nomination form which outlines the details of how the events will be run as well as safety and other compulsory equipment requirements.

Nomination forms will soon be available from Mr Tom Lockie, 46511221/ 0427465122, the event coordinator, Andrea Lingard on 46515636 or by visiting the festival website www.treeofknowledge.com.au



Photo supplied by Diane Merchant

Fast and furious action at Barcaldine’s 2009 Tree of Knowledge Festival Goat Races



Photo supplied by Diane Merchant

Barcaldine Regional Councillor, Garry Bettiens receives some media attention before the commencement of the Celebrity Sprint at the 2009 Tree of Knowledge Festival goat races, Barcaldine