

Merger sensible for Texas

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Economic trends of recent decades, fluctuating crazily on foundations capable of changing from bedrock to quicksand in a flash, have prompted numerous corporations to bolster their ranks and secure their futures by joining forces with companies of similar interests.

Such mergers often produce strange bedfellows. Time-Warner, Chevron-Gulf, RJR-Nabisco and Chrysler-American Motors are among the notables.

Remember when the American and National football leagues teamed up in the 1960s? The resulting impact on the sport far surpassed organizers' greatest hopes.

Best of all, the public was well-served.

The recent marriage of Midpointe Racing and Lone Star Jockey Club didn't elicit such worldwide attention, but the public interest that will ultimately be served by the merger is expected to transcend the borders of Texas, providing a shot of adrenaline and renewed hope so desperately needed by a floundering national industry.

Midpointe's R.D. Hubbard and Lone Star's Jim Musselman and Preston Carter are, indeed, strange bedfellows. Bitter enemies during a year of legal warfare surrounding the lucrative Class 1 license for Dallas/Fort Worth, the men suddenly woke up one day and realized that, while their attorneys skirmished in the dust, their adjacent track sites remained empty meadows.

The threat of alternative gambling options for the financially strapped state loomed large and smug. And no one was getting any richer except the lawyers.

That the respective developers were finally able to put their sensibilities ahead of their egos was a feat in itself. Ideally, the combined strength of this newly created family of savvy and determined individuals will push things along, meanwhile hastening the resolution of lawsuits and challenges by rejected license applicants.

No family is totally devoid of conflict. Personality clashes between the new partners are bound to flare up occasionally. But those who envision a thriving future for the industry fervently hope this is one marriage that won't end in divorce, because no one wants major North Texas racing to become a ward of the state. There's just too much public interest at stake.

□ *Anne Lang is the Texas breeding correspondent for Daily Racing Form.*