

## Gulfstream tries to block rival's attempt to add 24-hour card games

By John Holland

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A petition to bring around-the-clock card games to Broward County racetracks has a surprising opponent: Gulfstream Park Racing & Casino.

Gulfstream is siding with state regulators trying to keep the Mardi Gras Racetrack & Gaming Center from doubling its card room hours of operation. The two racetrack casinos, which sit about two miles apart on U.S. 1 in Hallandale Beach, have jostled for business since voters approved slot machines at Broward racetracks in 2004.

Attorneys for the state Department of Business and Professional Regulations, which oversees pari-mutuels, argue state law limits card rooms to 12 hours total per day. Mardi Gras counters it has two distinct card room licenses at its dog-racing track and therefore can be open all the time — 12 hours daily under each permit.

Mardi Gras officials also said the changes are needed to help everyone compete with the Seminole Tribe's booming casinos in Hollywood and Coconut Creek.

A final hearing on the issue is set for this morning before an administrative judge in Tallahassee, whose decision is binding.

Gulfstream, which has separate licenses to operate thoroughbred and quarter horse racing, argued for the regulators' position.

"The proposed rule is a valid interpretation of [state statutes] and is not arbitrary and capricious," Gulfstream attorney Cynthia S.

Tunncliff wrote in a court filing.

Representatives of the county's other race track card rooms, at Dania Jai-Alai, in Dania Beach, and The Isle Casino & Racing at Pompano Park, in Pompano Beach, did not enter the fray.

On Wednesday, Tunncliff said it's unclear whether a change in regulations would apply to Gulfstream and its two horse-racing licenses. Therefore, Gulfstream officials want to keep Mardi Gras from expanding.

"Gulfstream feels that this could put them at a competitive disadvantage," Tunncliff said.

Mardi Gras President Dan Adkins said the changes are needed to overcome a competitive disadvantage all Broward casinos have with the Seminole Tribe. He wouldn't comment on Gulfstream's stance.

Local tracks pay more than half their revenues from slot machines and poker to the state, while the tribe contributes 10 percent of its first billion dollars in profits and slightly higher percentages above that.

The Seminoles plan to add blackjack and baccarat games this summer, something banned from the other local tracks. The tribe's casinos operate around the clock and are virtually free of state oversight.