



BRITISH HARNESS RACING CLUB

E-ditorial November 2011

The idea behind an E-ditorial (Electronic Editorial) is to give you up to date information as quickly as possible and not a replacement for the soul searching gems of English prose I call editorials in the Calendar. There are a number of issues I think you might be interested in and give brief details below:

Integrity Testing

We now have an extensive and interesting intelligence network in place. People are telling us things and acting on that we sent some blood samples to the French Lab LCH in July. What came back was not what we were looking for but what appear to be extremely high levels of Endogenous substances. Substances naturally present in the horse (and all of us for that matter) but at levels which appear very alarming. This was followed up by extensive discussions at the World Trotting Conference in August and a meeting at the head quarters of Cheval Francais in Paris on 29th September. What transpired there is that in the short to medium term a threshold for this substance needs to be established (a bit like the 36mmol for TCO₂), and research needs to continue to establish what is being used to achieve these high levels. A meeting with the British Horse Racing Authority was held a few days ago, where in their opinion what we have found is a potential Game Changer. They are now in touch with LCH in France to take this matter further. I have done a report on this which has gone to the major Harness Racing jurisdictions of the world and the support to resolve this problem is very impressive. In the words of Midlands owner Louise Fresson, it seems as if we are on to something. I think we are!

I am convinced that by using the horses for courses analogy, and using particular Testing Labs as opposed to just one, we can have the most effective testing system in the world and do it cheaper than we are doing at present. That seems a win win situation for all of us. Except of course those who want to win by cheating.

I would urge all of you to support the proposal that we raise money by taking a percentage of prize money. We think 3.5% as opposed to a flat fee. You have my recommendation but the choice is yours.

Handicapping

Always contentious it was not easy when we had a handicapping panel, but it's more difficult now the Council has to do it. The latest proposals in brief from the Council are:

Widen Bands by around 10%. Grade 12 would go from £12,000+ to £16,500+

Increase the amount available for lifts

Introduce something I put forward a year or two ago but which the Irish dub the Mercy Drop where you can apply in writing with reasons to have a horse regraded.

Sire Stakes

It came as somewhat of a surprise to learn last Saturday that the Sire Stakes programme chaired by Barry Delaney is to close after 2012. WE SIMPLY CANNOT ALLOW THIS TO HAPPEN. My strong recommendation is that the BHRC take this on board, setting up a separate branch a trading company possibly to administer this programme. I would also suggest that we revisit the format to have a two tier system where poorer horses do not have to lock horns with a two or three year old Rhyds Fivestar .And a reduced two year old programme, but an extension into four year old and up races.

Election

I am not at any price going to use the website or anything else of the BHRC to fight an election. I will not say here nor in any meetings, ÷vote for me, don't vote for George Harrisonö. That is not my style. I am however disappointed and hurt at a lot of the things being said about Kirsty and Sarah in the office. I can stick up for myself. It does however seem strange to me that I am the subject of a veritable hate campaign from some quarters which seems to get stronger and stronger as the advances we have made on integrity testing grow from strength to strength. Very strange.

I will be at Tir Prince with Barry Delaney Wednesday evening 16th November, the Scottish Harness Racing Club on Sunday 20th afternoon and EVHRA Meeting on Thursday evening 24th November, where Barry and I will be pleased to bring you up to speed with what is happening, answer questions and ask you a lot of questions as well. The meeting I held in Wales on Sunday 6th November billed ÷Fireworks with the Chairmanö was very interesting.

We are all saddened to learn that sometime after the AGM Robert Thompson will probably resign as Regional Steward. He can be extremely outspoken, bad tempered, self opinionated and irritatingly right. He is despite all these essential qualities one of the most honest, dedicated and conscientious men I have ever met in my life. It has seldom been a pleasure working with him, but always an honour.

Best wishes

Gordon Garnett