

EDITORIAL

I have no doubts that we have “turned the corner” so far as our sport is concerned, maybe a few corners at that. We live in Britain a land with a maritime climate so the weather will always be a bit uncertain, but a good summer has fostered good racing with no major cancellations. There is an air of confidence manifested in the prices paid for good horses at the York sale. The message to consignors was clear, put a good, modern well bred horse, well presented on offer and it will bring a good price. If you don't do that, forget it. Outside forces such as the BHA are taking us seriously and projects in the pipeline such as the proposed tracks near Lanark and Chesterfield all bode well for the future. There are however issues to address. You all know what they are and they will not go away.

So far as integrity testing is concerned we are winning the battle. We have had two positives this year, one for a low classification, therapeutic drug, properly administered by a Vet, entered in the passport. The other for a known, high order potential performance enhancer. In the first case the trainer responsible admitted his guilt

and sanctions were applied in accord with our rules. What happened next upset a lot of people. The IHRC renewed the trainer's son's, trainer licence and the stable continued to race. I would say a number of things here. Firstly there is a world of difference between the administration of a therapeutic drug and something given just to improve performance and secondly we cannot tell the IHRC what to do. Some jurisdictions would not have taken the licence for the type of drug in question either. The BHRC is tough on drug use. In the second case the excuse of cross contamination was put forward. The drug found Clenbuterol was being administered to another horse in the stable. It was claimed, somehow, accidentally the horse which tested positive had ingested some of the medication. This is a credible defence. And not the first time it has been used in sport. So if you have a horse receiving medication be careful and do not think this excuse is a “get you out of jail card”. There have only been two positives for TCO2 (Milkshaking) infringements in British horse racing. The Gingell case in Thoroughbreds and the Taff case with us. We

continue to test as do all other jurisdictions. However based on advice from our friends in Australia and working with the BHA I am recommending we get an ISTAT machine, portable, easy to operate and effective that will allow on course tests for TCO2 thresholds. In minutes. This would give us a big edge. If your horse tested say 38mmols before a race you would have two options....accept the reading and the penalties or go to a full analysis programme at either HFL or LCH and if positive bear the likely costs. At a mere £3000 it might be a risk you would take...or maybe not! I hope this will be a joint initiative with the IHRC. It's early days but the net is closing in on any one wanting to cheat. I have recently been appointed Chairman of the World Trotting Council Committee on Integrity Testing. This position gives us a big advantage in working with all other leading racing jurisdictions. For the insomniacs amongst you, it is possible to see my presentation on You Tube, just enter World Trotting Conference 2013 and you will get there. Some of you think we are too zealous on the drug testing front. There are a pair of passive parties present who have no choice in the matter. The horse and the sport. Both of them can suffer hugely at the hands of the cheaters and by the way do you like getting beaten by someone you suspect of

“doping “ their horses?

If all goes to plan I would like the office, in the closed season to work with tracks, clubs and associations and promoters to develop regional promotional initiatives. To follow and learn from some of the good things Ceredrotian does. In the first instance we could produce leaflets...the sort you find at Tourist attractions , hotels etc, telling about the sport in Scotland, the North East or North Wales for example. We would however need the co operation of the tracks!

One thing we do need to address is Stewarding. We have some good Stewards, but sadly not enough. We need to recruit people who work for nothing, give up their leisure time, drive to races and enjoy getting insulted. I just can't understand why we don't have a line of people a mile long queuing up to do the job.

And so to handicapping! If anyone thinks Barry Delaney and me like the current system or are responsible for it, think again. It is a hybridised, bastardised marriage of convenience which started out as one thing and got hijacked by politics, quick fixes and avoidance tactics. Factorisations of earnings, mercy drops, runs to qualify for lifts and any number of things question

it's integrity. There is a separate article on the Delaney Garnett proposals. Which in short propose that we rely much more on Conditioned Racing and employ claiming races as well. This is driven by the aims of having “a race for every horse and every horse in that race having a chance to win”. We do not want horses moving back in the system and being classified out of competitiveness. That is neither fair nor reasonable. We want tracks and trainers to embrace our proposals but suspect that the only way we can get this moving is to take both these type of races out of the Handicap system. We have a lot of work to do on this project but our aim is that horses get good chances to race and win and that never again will someone say “my horse can't win I'm selling it as a rider” unless there is a genuine desire to retire the horse.

No one could fail to be impressed by the Wolverhampton meeting. Shane and Claire Fletcher are to be congratulated and it was great to see Claire's horse Shades of Grey win. Was the book named after the horse or the horse named after the book? The uber administrator, “She who must be obeyed” Jackie Maguire did a great job as did all racing staff and participants. However in the cool light of dawn and I

have not seen the books, I have come to the conclusion that it must have cost Shane and Claire over £20,000 to stage this event. A great summer evening, good crowd and generous sponsorship hopefully saw those costs met. It wasn't easy, bad weather could have hampered it and everyone should sit up and take notice at how difficult and costly it is for promoters to put major races on.

We are making progress we must build on it. Hopefully next year will see better racecards, produced by the office, entries probably being taken by the office, a wider offer of race types (Conditioned and Selling) being available, more and different venues available and a belief that just for once we believe in ourselves, our horse and our sport. And that we work together to get somewhere not settling old grudges , back biting or failing to simply work together. Lets see what happens!

Gordon Garnett