

SESSIONS OF IFHA ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN PARIS

OSAF is pleased to share with the readers the transcription (and translation into Spanish) of the most relevant matters addressed at IFHA Annual Conference.

During the next few weeks, we will be publishing in our Newsletters some of the topics, such as:

- * IFHA Strategic Plan,
- * Gene Doping,
- * Harmonization of Rules
- * Betting

The video replay of the sessions are published and available in the original language (English) in IFHA website www.ifhaonline.org through the following link:

www.ifhaonline.org/default.asp?section=Resources&area=10&conf=52&cYr=2018



HARMONIZATION OF RACING RULES AND INFORMATION

**In the world of gambling,
horseracing has face**

**Dominic Beirne
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“In the World of gambling, the horseracing has – as the Asians say – a face. To maintain that face, harmonization of racing rules and information is important, because horseracing is a global product and in nearly all countries the number 1 customer is the punter. The punter is becoming more acquainted with global racing by betting into commingle pools - and commingle pools represent the single greatest growth opportunity, as well as an international product that provides local benefits. In jurisdictions with relatively small pools but reputable feature race meetings, commingling into Asia might yield pool sizes that were previously unimaginable.

As an acronym, face could stand for what punters need:

- F: Familiarity
- A: Awareness
- C: Consistency
- E: Experience

The global punter must be familiar with the rules by which the races will be run. Soccer fields are the same dimensions all over the World, and the rules are Universal. The global punter needs to be aware that if a horse is to run across the border, the rules under which it will be racing today will be the same rules under which it run in the previous starts, that its previous performances can be read in the same way as if it had performed today. He also needs to be aware of which rules are not harmonious across the borders.

The global punter must have confidence in the stewardship, that the sense of fair play that he has grown accustomed to, will be applied consistently whenever he bets. The global punter must have confidence that if he won't be blind sighted, that the rules under which the race is being conducted matches past experiences. Punters rely completely upon consistency, since every decision made requires looking upon the past and looking forward to predicting the future. It is essential to the punter that the horses record has been acquired on a level playfield, and that the field will be level again in tomorrow's race.

In this presentation, I will focus on some of the aspects where harmonization of rules needs to be made:

- * Protests
- * Drugs
- * Scales of Deductions
- * Excessive use of the whip
- * Spurs



As regards protest decisions, they vary depending

upon the American approach or the Category 1 approach favored by the Southern Hemisphere, Asian and most European countries.

Under Category 1, the responsibility is on the person who lodges the objection, to prove that the horse which is protested against caused a loss of ground that is greater than the beaten margin. It is only very occasionally that a horse that finishes in a minor placing is disadvantaged. Most of the times, it might have finished in a closer placing but wouldn't have beaten the horse the protest was lodged against.

Such problems in the system are much outnumbered by the fairness and effectiveness of Category 1 approach. Australian punters and owners have grown accustomed to and prefer Category 1 system. The Australian punter, betting into a commingling pool on an international race would be up in arms, losing the protest if the interference caused by his horse was minor and his horse would have won the race regardless of the interference such as the example shown.

Harmonization of protest rules across the globe would be a great step forward to ensure that the racing maintains the face.

Personally, I have great respect and acknowledge IFHA's undertaking the challenge to create a Committee to harmonize racing rules at a global level, especially given that the neighbors don't always have identical rules. In many countries, different States have different rules, and even within a single State different race clubs may have different rules. In Australia - a microcosm of the entire World - we have 8 States and territories. Controlling racing on a State level is big enough a task. In just one State in Australia, there are about 4 times as many races as there are in Hong Kong. A National approach to the racing rules is being made through the Australian Racing Board (ARB) but State-based local rules also apply. Generally speaking, though, Australian States are at the same level when it comes to rules.

Recently – however – two adjacent states took different positions on a female synthetic progestagenic drug under the product name “Regumate”, which later became banned in one State. It was a threat because owners could intend to cross the border and race their fillies and mares where a softer medication rule applied. If the performance of a filly might vary if she crosses the border, how can the punter have full confidence that the former performances can be relied upon.

As I give this presentation today, two things are happening: in the first place, the two Australian States which

happen to be the two bigger States in Australia, are dialoguing in an attempt to reach a harmonious outcome, but that doesn't look imminent. On the second place, British Horseracing Authority has banned Regumate. Therefore, there is an impact on fillies crossing the border racing in and out of UK, and it is going to be hard for the punter to measure and become accustomed in this new scenario. Harmonization is therefore required a.s.a.p.

Racing rules evolve overtime, often reflecting the prevailing culture.

Whichever country you represent here today, you're undoubtedly fully aware of which of your rules differ elsewhere. You're also aware that there will be often pressure for and against change from outside and within. Nations of seemingly equal intelligence may have diametrically opposed views and laws on racing rules. Even within some countries there are polarized and conflictive opinions.

The most polarized rules in racing relate to drugs, and the most polarized drugs in racing might be Steroids and Lasix. Steroids were banned in Australia back in 1989, though some countries may have some horses treated regularly with these drugs – though not as often as they would 10 years ago. Even so, there are significant differences internationally in the approach.

The culture in the USA accepts Lasix almost at a point of deeming it essential, and there's a 90% of runners which run with Lasix. Elsewhere, its use is restricted. Australian authorities come down really hard if a horse is found positive to Lasix. How can the global punter assess confidently the chances of an American horse travelling to Royal Ascot if its American performance is achieved with Lasix?

With horses shipped more frequently, it would be desirable that horses from every country are treated evenly. The global punter needs international harmonization on drug rules.

The rule regarding Scales of Deductions is relevant only in countries where bookmaking is legal and bookmakers are licensed, as it is the case in Australia. The scale relates to the appropriate reduction of the amount on a winning ticket after 1 or more horses are withdrawn from a race after the betting has started. Australia uses a different scale to the Rule 4 which exists in Britain. Rule 4 serves the punter very poorly in many circumstances. It would be preferable if harmony was reached by implementing a unique scale.

Harmonization of racing rules is more than having the same wording across jurisdictions. The interpretation and application of the rules are also important.

We can take the whip rules, for example. A rule was introduced by the Australian Racing Board (ARB) to allow protest in the event of a jockey exceeding the number of strikes permitted. Stewardship in Australia is a State matter, and each panel of Stewards may interpret and apply them differently. Since the protest ability of whip use was introduced in Australia by the ARB, only 1 protest has been upheld. That race was soon after the rule introduction, and in a race that initially finished as a dead end, and that one has been the only successful case. There have been many protests since, with narrow winning margins or dismissed, with the panel proclaiming that they couldn't be comfortably satisfied with the fact that the winner gained an advantage. In other words, stewards recognized that there is no tangible evidence to measure the benefit of the whip.

Interference can be quantified, but the benefit of the whip can't. Rather than penalizing the owner and the punters of the winner, the jockey is penalized, and in Australia it is done very severely.

The Australian rule to allow protest is still in place, and the threat remains that a punter betting from Sweden on an Australian race may be loose a bet on a successful protest on grounds that are completely foreign to him. Therefore, the ability to protest against excessive whip use needs level harmony.

This is going to be a busy Committee in the coming years, as there are too many rules which need harmonization. The two which first come to mind are jockeys wearing spurs. Spurs are illegal in Singapore and Hong Kong, for

example, but there are some spurs which are legal in Australia and many other nations.

Also, a horse wearing a hood in England in the waiting starting stalls but which is not going to race in them, might be scratched. That is not the case in Australia. So, if an Australian trainer that travels a horse to England and who is not aware of this rule (and the rules are strict) could have his runner scratched at the barrier and it would be a great shock having gone all that way for nothing.

But it's not just rules that need harmonization. The global punter wagering into commingle pools, in order to wager needs to read and to interpret different form guides: going descriptions - how well the track is - varies across the globe. In Australia, not too many years ago, we enumerated the going on turf from 1 to 10 and each number comes with a single word to describe it, such as "heavy 10", "soft 7", "good 4" or "firm 2". (<http://www.racingaustralia.horse/FAQ/Track-Ratings.aspx>)



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TRACK RATINGS

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Numerical Rating	Old Scale	New Scale	Description of Rating
1	Fast	Firm	Dry hard track
2	Good	Firm	Firm track with reasonable grass coverage
3	Good	Good	Track with good grass coverage and cushion
4	Dead	Good	Track with some give in it
5	Dead	Soft	Track with a reasonable amount of give in it
6	Slow	Soft	Moist but not a badly affected track
7	Slow	Soft	Rain affected track that will chop out
8	Heavy	Heavy	Rain affected track that horses will get into
9	Heavy	Heavy	Wet track getting into a squelchy area
10	Heavy	Heavy	Heaviest category track, very wet, towards saturation

Such an approach should be followed Worldwide as part of the harmonization of information. Australia provides six incremental readings from "dead 5" to "heavy 10", where UK and Ireland who have twice as much rain as Australia, just have 3.

Race Class descriptions are difficult to interpret from one country to another, in great part due to various conditions of entry that the Race Club may impose on the race. But it is confusing for the punter in Sweden that in Australia a Class 6 race is a higher grade than a Class 1, when in most parts of the World the opposite applies. A global understanding of Race Class qualification and quantification is greatly enhanced if official overall ratings are available. Many jurisdictions publish these ratings.

But overall ratings are a summary of the horses' form. When I see a form guide that shows a rating next to a performance, it would be more informative if the rating was the former rating relative to that race start.

The organ that provides performance data is the BHA (British Horseracing Authority). In May 2017 they began publishing performance rating for major races, and just a few months ago they began expanding to provide all runners performance ratings.

Dominic Gardiner-Hill from BHA is the person to congratulate for facilitating the following benefits: Stewards can now better judge if a horse has improved or gone backwards, and by how much (and perhaps inquire as to why). Trainers may be better informed as to the progress of their horse. Bloodstock agents and their clients can evaluate

their stock more accurately. Jockeys can judge better on which horse to ride, and commingle pool benefits internationally as they are able to make better informed judgements and bet accordingly and confidently.

I asked my colleague, the best-selling racing author Nick Molden, if there's a common theme that is the same in the most famous racing countries, and he confidently replied that it was whether or not the customer has to pay for data. Many countries provide free data very well, such as Japan or Hong Kong, the main nations with the highest tote turnover. If you travel to racing there, you will find punters with their heads down, doing math, scanning statistics and charts. They have all the data they need to make informed decisions. They can discover the body weight, view the videos of the horses training, and pretty much everything down to the trainer is known to the punter, and that's all for free.

Countries where racing is booming are providing accurate, free, vast information. Countries which don't provide that aren't booming.

To quote the great advertising referent John Gables "The more you tell, the more you sell". Importantly, free information is far more accurate than paid for information, due to regular use of feedback that alerts providers of errors that may get properly edited.

What information do you think should be provided? I think the information provided by the Hong Kong Jockey Club should be considered a "Gold Standard". Along with raceday bodyweight, it would also be helpful if body length, height and inches around the chest were provided a couple of times throughout the horse's lifetime, to give the global punters a better idea of the horse. Some punters like to know the shape of a horse and the weight it is carrying.

Another improvement would be to have a run-on footage: to extend the filming of a race at least 12 seconds after the race, as the horse runs past the post. There is much to learn from that analysis, and gives a lot of confidence on the horse's next start, as you can see if he's really tired or full of energy.

Also, the stride data: length and frequency. There is room for improvement here, and this improvement can be achieved by standardizing the run-up in American racing, which can vary from a few feet to hundreds of feet, and may even vary at a single meeting. It impacts on the race times, and when we do an analysis of race times it is a challenge. Providing accurate race distances will also mean an improvement: going through the trouble of timing the races to the 100th of a second may be pointless when the race distances are out by tenths of meters, which may occur when a false rail is out or when the stalls are pushed forward to avoid a wet patch.

This is an equation I have been preaching for many years in my presentations in Australia.

Information + education = satisfaction

The uneducated punter has a need for instant gratification. He rarely blames himself, and prefers to blame the outside as the cause of his loss: bad weather, bad training, bad luck or whatever.

As Barbra Johnson wrote, "The loser sees a problem in any answer. A winner sees an answer in every problem". When I watch punters in Asia, working hard to select their bets, I see punters who are satisfied, who will stay in the game longer - which is what you want. Such punters are betting on themselves.

As racing administrators, the more you harmonize rules and information, the better you become at solving the equation above for your punter, your number 1 customer. And ensuring that horseracing is the gambling activity that truly has Face.

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