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Letter

Safety measures at the Grand National

The Guardian, Wednesday 13 April 2011

All who love racing and horses will have been very saddened by the accidents which led to the death of Ornaïs and Dooney's Gate during the Grand National this year ([Report](#), 11 April). It was distressing for all of us to watch – those involved in racing care deeply for their horses. This is why horseracing has for many years worked closely with charities such as the RSPCA and World Horse Welfare. However, racing is a sport with risk, and the Grand National is the most testing race in Great Britain. Racing is open about this risk and works hard to reduce it.

TV viewers saw several welfare measures in action at this year's race. For the first time, two fences were bypassed to minimise the risk of further accidents and run-outs were introduced so that those horses that had lost their riders could run around fences rather than jump them. All jockeys had been told to dismount as soon as the race was over to allow handlers and vets to get water to the horses and prevent over-heating. The winning jockey, Jason Maguire, has been banned for exceeding the strict limits which the British Horseracing Authority, the sport's regulator, places on the number of times he could use his whip. We will certainly be reviewing our rules on appropriate use of the whip. Not everyone supports racing, and animal rights activists – whose stated agenda is to ban all use of animals in sport – are entitled to their views. The BHA believes the overwhelming majority of the British public want to see racing continue. We know the public also expects racing to do all in its power to reduce risk to horses. The BHA is

listening and is determined to ensure this happens.

Professor Tim Morris

Director of equine science and welfare, British Horseracing Authority



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