

Published at 12:01AM, April 14 2011

Horse racing is a sport with risk, although the relevant authorities are trying to reduce that risk considerably

Sir, All those who love racing and horses will have been saddened by the accidents which led to the death of Ornaïs and Dooney's Gate during the Grand National this year ([Simon Barnes, Sport, April 11](#)).

Those involved in racing care deeply for their horses. This care and concern is why horse racing has worked closely with legitimate animal welfare charities. However, racing is a sport with risk, and the Grand National is the most testing race in Great Britain. Racing is open and transparent 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. Viewers will also have seen the winning jockey, Jason Maguire, jump off after the race and his horse cooled with water. Because of the unseasonably warm weather, all the jockeys had been told to dismount as soon as the race was over in order to allow handlers and vets to get water to the horses and prevent over-heating. This preventative measure happened to all the horses, not just the winner.

In addition, Mr Maguire has been banned for exceeding the strict limits which the British Horseracing Authority, the sport's regulator in Great Britain, places on the number of times he could use his whip. We will certainly be reviewing our rules to ensure that we have the balance right between appropriate use of the whip and stopping unacceptable use.

Professor Tim Morris
Director, Equine Science and Welfare, British Horseracing Authority

8 comments

[Newest](#) | [Oldest](#) | [Most Recommended](#)
[Nigel Brodrick-Barker](#) April 15, 2011 16:36

I am sure we are all happy for the jockey who has now come out of his coma. He also merits consideration.

[Recommend](#) [Reply](#)

John Hatch April 14, 2011 16:39 Yes, but you and your fellow runners probably just ambled to the finishing line at your own pace.

I am hoping that, for next year's Olympics, the marathon rules will have been changed so that competitors can be spurred on to give of their true best by being whipped by their trainers. Obviously, if a few drop from exhaustion, this will be regrettable; but surely a small price to pay to convince patriot supporters that the runners have been making every effort to meet the government's target for medals.

[Recommend Reply](#)

Ann Lyon April 14, 2011 10:54

Given that it was a hot day I am not surprised that the winning horse (and others) needed to be cooled down with buckets of water. Years ago I ran a half-marathon in similar weather and was only glad to join other finishers in a conveniently located ornamental pond! However, I find it alarming that the horse was in such a state that he needed oxygen.

[Recommend Reply](#)

John Hatch April 14, 2011 08:39

Do you think so? As long as the horse had passed the winning post before collapsing, I wonder if the TV cameras would have been quickly pointed elsewhere until a vet could be conjured up to assure everyone that the horse had probably suffered a heart attack which could have happened at any time. That sort of thing.

[Recommend Reply](#)

Karen Wood April 14, 2011 07:55

There might well have been some 'ugly scenes' if those expecting to collect their winnings had been disappointed. However the scene would have been much uglier had the winning horse collapsed and died just past the finish line. I for one will now end a family tradition of an annual bet on the National.

[Recommend Reply](#)

Alan Hawkes April 14, 2011 02:57

If it is acceptable to have fences so high that a number of horses are likely to die trying to surmount them, does this not suggest that the horses owners and the race organisers are less than caring? If the owners were sent on an assault course with the statistical likelihood of some deaths among their number would they be comforted by the thought that the assault course designers "care deeply" about them?

[Recommend Reply](#)

John Hatch April 14, 2011 00:53 I suggest that the main concern of people watching the Grand National was not the welfare of the horses but whether or not they were going to win any money on their bets.

Had the winning horse been disqualified, because the jockey had whipped it excessively, I fear there would have been some ugly scenes.

The wonderful feature of horse-racing is the way that, after the horse and jockey have won the race, they are elbowed aside for the owner of the horse to collect the prize.

Formula One should perhaps go more this way and stop this nonsense of drivers standing on winners' podia (being sprayed with champagne). Instead, there should be a short, dignified ceremony where the registered keeper of the vehicle steps forward to produce the log book, a certificate of insurance, and the MoT; and then duly collects his cheque.

In golf, Tiger Woods and his caddy would be despatched to the staff canteen while the owner of the clubs came forward to collect his prize money and announce who he would be allowing to use the clubs in the next tournament

[Recommend Reply](#)

Karen Wood April 13, 2011 22:54

I am not sure how caring deeply for the horse can be squared with flogging it mercilessly with your whip when you know the animal is exhausted. I confess to not being a huge fan of racing but have always watched the National, however even I commented as I watched that he was being very free with his whip. Perhaps it is time for overuse of the whip to result in disqualification of the horse not just a temporary ban for the rider. After all the ban is after the event and does not affect the result so is of little deterrent value. If the horse only won because its jockey flogged it, perhaps the best horse did not win only the best whipped.

[Recommend Reply](#)

© Times Newspapers Limited 2013 | Version 5.5.0.3(115739)

Registered in England No. 894646 Registered office:

3 Thomas More Square, London, E98 1XY

[My Account](#) | [RSS](#) | [Classified advertising](#) | [Display advertising](#) | [The Times Whisky Club](#) | [Encounters Dating](#) | [Sunday Times Wine Club](#) | [Privacy & Cookie Policy](#) | [Syndication](#) | [Site Map](#) | [FAQ](#) | [Terms & Conditions](#) | [Contact us](#) | [iPhone](#) | [Android smartphone](#) | [Android tablet](#) | [Kindle](#) | [Kindle Fire](#) | [Place an announcement in The Times](#) | [Sunday Times Driving](#) | [The Times Bookshop](#) | [Times Tutorials](#) | [Times Currency Services](#) | [Times Print Gallery](#)