



REPORT OF THE RACEGOERS CONSULTATIVE FORUM

2003-2006

03-06 REPORT OF THE RACEGOERS CONSULTATIVE FORUM

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1. Introduction

We are living through a golden era in Irish racing. In no other sport can we justifiably claim to be number one in the world. The resurgence in both national hunt and flat racing over the previous decade has been nothing short of sensational. 1989 marked the last occasion on which Irish trained racehorses failed to win either a Cheltenham Festival race or an English Classic. This is in stark contrast to the magnificent ten Cheltenham festival winners and two English Classic winners (to date) during this year alone.

Such a transformation cannot be attributed to chance. The development of Irish racing has occurred as a result of significant improvements in race programming, prize money, professionalism and general infrastructure. This has been assisted by the genuine commitment and involvement of Government. Indeed the fruits of previous capital development programmes are evident to all.

As racegoers we eagerly anticipate the future capital development programme which encompasses two flagship facilities at Leopardstown and the Curragh along with the launch of the first all-weather track at Dundalk. Each of these will add enormously to the profile of Irish racing, both nationally and internationally.

It is important, however, to take due note of one of the essential elements in the mix which constitutes Irish racing, namely the racegoer. In many respects the future prosperity of the industry depends on the participation and loyalty of racegoers. The Board of Horse Racing Ireland comprises of members nominated from various sectoral interests within the industry. It is somewhat unfortunate that, due to pressure of numbers, membership of the Board could not be extended to include a representative of the race-going public. The Racegoers' Consultative Forum was established to address that deficiency.

Whilst there have been many notable improvements in the quality of the racing product over the previous decade there should be no complacency as we move forward. Many suggested improvements and initiatives from this forum have already been considered and acted upon by the Horse Racing Ireland executive and other stakeholders. Indeed we are most grateful for their engagement with this process. However, a simple endorsement of prior achievements without some critical commentary or suggestions would be of little benefit. In such a context it must be stressed that the foremost objective of this report is to highlight the areas where shortcomings remain and attention is required.



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2. Summary

The Racegoers Consultative Forum (RCF), established under the Horse & Greyhound Racing Act 2001, consists of twelve racegoers from a broad range of backgrounds and locations. Its remit is to consult with and report to Horse Racing Ireland (HRI) regarding any aspect of the racegoers' experience. The function of the RCF is to act as a conduit between the racegoer and HRI. One of the key objectives set down by the Forum at its instigation was the staging of Regional Forums. These were seen as a means whereby various aspects of the racegoer's experience could be reviewed and suggestions for the future progress of Irish racing formulated and hopefully, implemented. The key criteria were identified as:

- Admission & Attendance
- Facilities at Racecourses
- Catering
- Quality of Racing & Racecards
- Media coverage of Irish racing
- Betting

In essence these key criteria might be distilled to 'quality of racing product' and 'value for money'.

3. Background

The RCF was established by HRI in 2003, some time after the implementation of the Act. The first meeting of the Forum was held in April 2003 with the direct facilitation of HRI. To date the RCF has met on 15 occasions in private session. It has also held public forums at six venues throughout the country. To minimize travel and expense a private meeting of the RCF was held prior to the public meeting at each venue. In chronological order these were:

South-West Region Adare, Co. Limerick	27/11/03
Kildare Region The Curragh, Co. Kildare	19/02/04
Western Region Galway City, Co. Galway	15/09/04
South-East Region Clonmel, Co. Tipperary	21/10/04
Meath, Westmeath, Louth sub-region Navan, Co. Meath	25/11/04
Leopardstown sub-region Goatstown, Co. Dublin	05/04/05

It is hoped to stage a regional forum in Northern Ireland in the near future.





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4. Key Recommendations

1. Establishment of a Racegoers' Charter stipulating minimum standards of facilities.
2. Family admission tickets to be widely available at a fixed price.
3. The raceday experience must meet the marketing expectation generated.
4. A single loyalty card should be applicable across all racecourses to reward regular racegoers.
5. Facilities for disabled racegoers and families must be improved.
6. Where capital development is taking place a small portion of funding should be ring-fenced for the upgrading of facilities for children and the disabled.
7. Information at racecourses to be far more widely and easily available.
8. There must be set standards of catering quality, at each racetrack, which are clearly defined within the Racegoers' Charter. These standards to be policed by an independent critic.
9. More snack food facilities should be encouraged at racecourses.
10. All on-course bookmakers must abide by the code of practice adopted.
11. A strong competitive betting ring benefits all. On-course bookmakers must offer the same betting terms as those operating off-course.
12. Tote Ireland must ensure that there is public confidence in it as a betting medium if it is to survive and prosper.
13. Racing information via teletext and SMS should be improved.
14. Radio coverage of Irish racing requires expansion and improvement.
15. The information available in all racecards should follow a set format and should be expanded to better serve the needs of the racegoer (particularly the regular patron).

Emphasis should be on getting the simple aspects correct before embarking on large scale investment in other areas. Racecourses, before applying for capital funding, should be able to clearly demonstrate that identified minor problems have been addressed and rectified.

5. Admission

COMMENTARY

Admission prices to the Racecourse were a consistent topic of conversation at all of the Public forums. Whilst the RCF are sympathetic towards those who felt that the price of admission was too high, it is crucial to bear in mind that the Racecourses need to be viable enterprises. Racecourse managers are under constant pressure to ensure that they are maximising the financial return from their courses. On the other hand it is vital that we should strive to ensure that the cost of admission is perceived as value for money. Price ultimately determines attendances at racecourses, and therefore admission prices are a key issue. The RCF are acutely aware that it is imperative that we constantly endeavour achieve maximum attendances, and that racegoers are getting good value for money.

PRICING

- 5.1 RCF would wish to see the establishment of a Racegoers' Charter, which would stipulate the minimum standards of facilities expected from Grade 1 to Grade 3 tracks. These must be listed (possibly using a star-rating) and conveyed to racegoers. RCF will arrange pre-season meetings with racecourse managers to establish and verify such standards.
- 5.2 A study of the 2005 entrance costs show a variation of prices from €12 - €30 at Grade 1 tracks, and €10 - €18 at the remainder. In the past the Racing Board did have control over admission charges but this is no longer the case. A flat-rate price must be set for each racecourse, based on the level of facilities offered and this should be agreed with HRI. An increase on the flat-rate price is justifiable only on the basis of higher quality racing.
- 5.3 Benchmarked against other sports racing cannot be considered as excessively expensive. However, many occasional racegoers noted that the price of admission was only one aspect of the overall cost of a day at the races. This should be borne in mind when setting admission prices.
- 5.4 Since its inception RCF has urged the abolition of reserved enclosures and welcomes the fact that this has become almost the norm.
- 5.5 At many public forums the belief was expressed that there should be more included in the admission price, which subsequently makes racegoers feel good about going racing. This could include anything from a free racecard with admission or a free bet with the premise that if people have a good experience then they will return.

REDUCED ADMISSION

- 5.6 OAPs are also an important part of the equation, as they have more opportunity than most other age groups to go racing on a regular basis. It is probable that this sector has supported racing for many years, and it is therefore fair that they be allowed to continue this support at a reasonable cost.

- 5.7 Student admission is a primary concern to RCF as it is so important that we ensure that the younger generation are offered an attractive incentive to come racing. Presently the costs range from €6 - €15, with €8 being the average. On the surface this seems like a reasonable cost, but it should be borne in mind that there were many occasions, during the public fora that the question of value for money for students arose. A fixed €7 admission price is recommended for normal student entrance.
- 5.8 A number of "student days" have been run, and these typically offer a package, which included entry ticket, a race card, food voucher, drink voucher, and a Tote voucher. These days have proved to be very successful and often add to the colour and atmosphere of a regular day at the races. RCF would recommend that more racecourses should experiment with this type of package.

FAMILY ADMISSION

- 5.9 The question of Family packages was another frequently raised issue at the forums. Racecourse managers have explained that on the occasions when "family tickets" were offered (with a typical cost of €25) the take-up was poor. A number of explanations for poor uptake range from
- lack of awareness of such tickets
 - lack of dedicated turnstiles (wider to facilitate buggy admission)
 - perception of poor value
- A flat admission fee, heavily marketed, of €25 for a family including 2 racecards is suggested by RCF.
- 5.10 It is well established that getting young people to go racing at an early age promotes a life long interest, therefore it is logical that parents be offered the opportunity to bring their older children, at a reasonable cost. There should not be a ceiling on age or numbers, and racecourses could endeavour to be flexible on such matters. The racing industry needs to keep looking to the future, and in order to keep up in this highly competitive market, the question of "family tickets", offering true value is a must.



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RACECOURSE MEMBERSHIP SCHEMES

- 5.11 Racecourse memberships and supporters clubs generally offer great value and such schemes encourage people to go racing on a regular basis. The cost of memberships ranges from €90 - €235. This type of patronage should not be taken for granted. It is important that the appropriate facilities (dedicated stands, car parking and catering particularly on the busier racedays) are provided. There were occasions at the public forums when it was noted by members that this was not the case. All racecourses should encourage the establishment and maintenance of supporters clubs.
- 5.12 There is a definite market for regional alliances, as per the model “Go Racing in Kildare” membership scheme. However, these arrangements are up to the individual racecourses in instigating alliances, which are workable for all concerned. Some racegoers suggested an annual fee to AIR, which would provide entrance to all racecourses throughout the country.
- 5.13 One must assume that junior memberships are not generally worthwhile ventures, since there appears (with some notable exceptions) to be a lack of them throughout Irish racecourses. This must be an oversight, as the RCF are very aware that the younger sector needs to be encouraged to patronise racecourses. Such reduced price membership should be provided to all under 25s, regardless of status, as it should promote lifetime loyalty.

6. Attendance

COMMENTARY

The majority of people who attend racecourses do so for social reasons and it is from this area that increased attendance is likely to come. Every effort must be made to ensure that the casual racegoer has a real fun day out in the hope that they will return. From the perspective of the regular racegoer and punter it is imperative that those attending a racemeeting are not at a disadvantage regarding information updates, betting opportunities etc. compared to the stay-at-home punter. This has not always been the case. To increase attendance figures RCF suggests a concentration of effort on pricing, promotion, educating and informing racegoers and simplifying racing. The level of attendances and opportunities to increase these were discussed at all of the forums held throughout the country and the following key factors were highlighted.

OCCASIONAL RACEGOERS

- 6.1 Racecourses with sub-standard facilities need to realise that racing has a great future but only if the experience can live up to the marketing expectation created. Much marketing effort and resources goes into attracting the occasional and first-time racegoer. Indeed 60% of customers are believed to be first-time racegoers or infrequent racegoers. Such effort can easily be undone by failure to deliver on the expectation generated.
- 6.2 Further suggestions to make racing more exciting include raising the profile of famous horses, jockeys, trainers including organising yard open days.
- 6.3 Occasional racegoers need guidance at the races. We recommend that educational tours be organised before or during racing. The RCF



The Curragh
Home of the
Budweiser
Horse Racing

Budweiser
Boyle Sports
Boyle Sports
Tattersalls
LANN O'ROURKE
Darby
Merrill

THE IRISH FIELD

JOCKEYS
Curragh

JOCKEYS
Curragh

ENCORE
Boyle Sports

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is pleased to report that at least two tracks have undertaken to provide tours with very good results. It is also recommended that the “Beginners Guide to Racing” be freely available at turnstiles.

- 6.4 Racecourses should aim to encourage young people to attend, as they are the racegoers of the future. There should be “Meet the Horse / Jockey / Trainer / Groom..” sessions with information on all aspects of race preparation and race riding.
- 6.5 To promote racing as a leisure pursuit and possible career amongst young people, a schools education programme run by HRI is recommended.

REGULAR RACEGOERS

- 6.6 At many of the regional fora, attendees recommended the upgrading of the standard of racing, particularly at provincial tracks. Racegoers at southern locations expressed a distinct preference for NH racing.
- 6.7 RCF notes the recent introduction of some trial loyalty schemes. Whilst it is difficult to establish how successful they have been, the racecourses which have instigated such schemes are to be commended. RCF would recommend a single loyalty card operating across all racecourses. This could provide valuable data on racecourse attendance to HRI and facilitate direct marketing and promotions.
- 6.8 Bounce-back schemes, whereby occasional racegoers are offered 2-for-1 or other incentives / discounts to go racing, should also be properly explored as they have potential to be very successful.
- 6.9 Racedays should be programmed in as attractive a manner as possible to maximise attendance.

7. The Racecourse Experience

COMMENTARY

The overall experience of a day’s racing incorporates everything from arrival at the racecourse in particular, receiving information, visibility of races, facilities and the overall atmosphere.

We believe that the raceday experience should be thought of as a journey starting with the signage for the racecourse itself, the parking and entrance, ticketing culminating with the overall experience and ability to enjoy that experience. There are generally two types of racegoer – the regular racegoer and the occasional racegoer. Both these groups have different needs on the raceday. Emphasis should be on getting the simple aspects correct before embarking on huge investment in other areas. Another area where there could be a marked improvement is ensuring staff are polite and efficient at all times and aware of the local geography at the racecourse.

At the various public forums the following issues / comments were raised regarding an individual’s experience of a day’s racing:

CAR PARKING & SIGNAGE

- 7.1 RCF notes that, in general, and with some clear exceptions, car-parking has improved. These exceptions include insufficient car-parking for members and particular problems at festival meetings. Furthermore access and egress at certain courses still causes huge problems. It was suggested that a colour-coded parking system, similar to that deployed at golf tournaments, could be used to improve traffic flow.

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- 7.2 The situation for disabled drivers and families with small children remains to be adequately addressed by many racecourses.
 - 7.3 HRI are to be commended on providing permanent standardized directional / informational signs on main approach roads to all courses. However, more prominent signs are required on racedays. There is a presumption that everyone should know which direction to take.
 - 7.4 The whole matter of racecourse signage needs to be properly addressed. At present signage around racecourses can be particularly poor. The lack of adequate signage and information boards particularly impacts on the occasional racegoer and visitor.
 - 7.5 Information relating to the day's racing such as non-runners, jockey changes, going changes and betting shows must be obvious and easily available in suitable locations. In some racecourses it was noted that information boards do not display the relevant information for all races.
 - 7.9 Seating at racecourses was a constant concern and the fact that racecourses do not provide enough extra seating, especially in the summer, when extra tables and chairs could be situated outside. It was suggested that seats in grandstands and around the parade ring would be advantageous.
 - 7.10 The visibility of racing was a concern and it was almost universal amongst people attending the various forums that a Big Screen is a must for **all** meetings. Indeed RCF recommends that racecourses consider the permanent acquisition / installation of big screens to enhance viewing. Furthermore viewing from grandstands should be easy and widely available to all.
 - 7.11 All racecourses must address a significant deficiency in information infrastructure. In today's age web / email access, wi-fi hotspots etc are commonplace in many locations but not on racecourses.
 - 7.12 Staff employed at a racecourse must understand clearly their function and role. A familiarisation with location of the facilities at the course should be provided to all staff. In particular, when dealing with the race-going public, they must endeavour to be polite, helpful and efficient at all times.

FACILITIES

- 7.6 Viewing areas for disabled should be included in all new stand structures and renovations. Where possible lift facilities would be recommended. Current viewing facilities should be improved and manned.
- 7.7 It was raised that proper facilities, especially for families, do not exist at the majority of racecourses. Some racecourses make a significant effort, with "Bouncy Castles", playgrounds and bands, and facilities to see other big sporting fixtures on the TV. It was stated that facilities and in particular, indoor facilities, need to improve for both children and ladies. A case in point was the presence of unsuitable high tables in certain racecourse restaurants.
- 7.8 It was commented on that in the UK you can obtain a seating pad for the day and that it would be a great commercial opportunity for advertising. It was also asked if a cover could be put up around parade rings for wet days.

TOILETS

- 7.13 The standard of toilet facilities at numerous racecourses was frequently raised. As minimum standards there should be hot water in all toilet facilities. They should be clean and hygienic with enough toilet paper and hand-drying facilities. It is important that the toilets are checked frequently throughout the day to ensure these standards are maintained.
- 7.14 It is also imperative that a sufficient number of toilets are available at all racemeetings, particularly festivals.

FACILITIES FOR FAMILIES

- 7.15 Child-minding facilities and / or dedicated play areas at racecourses were recommended by the attendance at all forums. The installation of a dedicated play area would not be a significant cost in any capital re-development at a racecourse.



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- 7.16 Activities should be used to entertain people racing such as supervised activities for children, children's club, fun fair, racecourse tours and trainers being interviewed over the loud speakers.
- 7.17 A suggestion proposed was that a competition based on the outcome of each race be held to generate an interest for children in the races taking place.

HEALTH & SAFETY

- 7.18 Concerns were expressed that glasses had been discarded on a number of racecourses outside the bars, on steps and around the parade ring. There was also the problem of litter, especially in the betting ring. There was concern about young people drinking in the stands and that it affected the overall atmosphere of the day. Possibly, there is a requirement for security staff to monitor these issues to ensure that the race-day experience is not ruined by a minority of people.
- 7.19 It was mentioned that there were Health & Safety issues regarding the parade ring at some racecourses and that a double barrier was needed and this should be routine at all racecourses.

8. Catering

COMMENTARY

It is fair to say that the quality and presentation of food varies greatly from racecourse to racecourse. There seems little by way of a cohesive structure in terms of pricing or range of food to be provided at many of our tracks.

It is clear on visiting many of the tracks that even the provision of a decent cup of tea / coffee and a sandwich seems beyond the capabilities of some caterers. People seek quality at the racecourse, which put simply is food that is well cooked and well presented. Does price matter? Many racegoers express the belief that they are being overcharged for the food consumed. They see it as poor value. It is the belief of the RCF that poor value exists only when the fare on offer is of a substandard nature. The RCF is convinced that racegoers have no problem paying for food that is of a high quality.

CATERING CONTRACTS

- 8.1 There must be set standards for all tracks. The RCF suggests the introduction of a Racegoers' Charter of Catering. Failure to meet set minimum standards, as defined by the charter, should result in some form of sanction.
- 8.2 Quality must be the keynote in future franchise agreements. To this end a food critic should be deployed to monitor the quality and pricing at all tracks. This critic would provide an independent assessment of catering facilities at all tracks.
- 8.3 It is not acceptable for racecourse management to enter franchise arrangements and then abdicate responsibility for the quality of food on offer. The racecourse has a duty of care to its customers,





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especially loyal and longstanding customers. The RCF would further contend that a realistic standard franchise fee for tracks will bring long-term benefits.

- 8.4 Quality and pricing must be constantly monitored. Lack of control and inconsistency in both brings disenchantment and a consequent drop in attendances. Each franchise awarded must be on the basis of a fixed price menu which is consistent throughout the year.
- 8.5 It seems that Catering Companies are operating, too often, on the basis of providing minimum standards at maximum prices. Accepting that the overheads are high, it is not a sufficiently good reason to make the customer pay excessive prices.
- 8.6 Caterers must be urged to provide a healthy-option kids menu rather than the sole traditional offering of sausage and chips.

SNACK FOOD

- 8.7 Snack facilities vary greatly, depending on the course concerned. Much of the food is of a similar nature and lacks variety and flavour. There exists a definite need for greater variety in the snack food menu.
- 8.8 Quicker accessibility is also of vital importance. At the major meetings there must be an increase in the number of these outlets to cater for the increased numbers. Too often, it appears that racecourse management fail to take account of this. It is our belief that this should be one of the conditions in any contract entered into with catering companies.

- 8.9 Provision of more coffee and doughnut type facilities is a must at all tracks.
- 8.10 In summer, courses need to set up picnic areas with extra seating, to allow for family type picnics to take place.

DINING FACILITIES

- 8.11 For the customer who requires a restaurant type of facility, he / she is generally well-catered for at the races. Some reservations were expressed about price.
- 8.12 It is vital that food is of a high quality, service is efficient and that access to viewing and betting is of a high standard.

BAR FACILITIES

- 8.13 There should be proper stewarding of all egress areas to ensure that cups and glasses are not taken out to the stand area.
- 8.14 The use of plastic glasses and indeed styrofoam cups is both environmentally and aesthetically unacceptable.

9. Betting

COMMENTARY

Betting taxes and levies are a crucial source of finance for Irish racing. The income generated from such schemes amounted to €51.4m in 2004. Bookmakers, betting exchanges and the Tote must acknowledge the importance of Irish racing to their revenue streams and accordingly make a fair contribution to the maintenance and development of the sport.

BOOKMAKER BETTING

On-course bookmakers are an essential element of the mix that makes Irish racing such a great spectacle and product. As such they must be encouraged to attend racemeetings and provide an efficient and reliable service to punters. However, they must also be aware of their responsibilities to their customers and the general racing public.

- 9.1 The adoption of a code of practice by on-course bookmakers in October 2004 was welcomed by RCF. However this document has not been publicized or indeed made available to punters (many are unaware of its existence). Such a code must be on open public display at all racecourses. More importantly all on-course bookmakers must abide by the code. This is currently not the case.
- 9.2 The prohibition on single bets at racecourse SP shops should be reconsidered according to many contributors at forums. Given that punters are more likely to obtain better odds than SP in the betting ring, we feel that some easing of the current restriction would not be particularly detrimental to on-course bookmakers.
- 9.3 A general comment made at all forums was that bookmakers must be more “consumer friendly”. The introduction of a computerised ticketing system and electronic odds boards are laudable developments. However, in many cases bookmakers’ minimum stakes, terms (e/w or win only) and maximum limits are not clearly displayed. There must be a clear, consistent protocol for all bookmakers, policed by ring inspectors.

- 9.4 The location and function of the Levy Office should be clearly advertised to the public. Ring inspectors might be identifiable to the public by a label or badge.
- 9.5 Bookmakers betting without 1,2,3 or 4 horses might consider explanation and promotion of this bet as, in many cases, it is a unique on-course product.
- 9.6 Given that the vast majority of telebetting and off-course bookmaker shops pay double result (FPP & ROR), on-course bookmakers must consider offering the same betting terms. There is no incentive to punters having a bet at SP with an on-course bookmaker when more favourable terms are available if he/she places the same bet off-course.
- 9.7 Bookmakers must not be contributors to litter in the betting ring. Each bookmaker must be responsible for the correct disposal of winning or refunded tickets.
- 9.8 Percentage books of 140%+ on larger runner handicaps (with a conventional ceiling of 20/1 on outsiders) must be discouraged. It is suggested that ring inspectors would discourage bookmakers offering a book of >200% on any race.

TOTE BETTING

COMMENTARY

Tote Ireland plays a vital role in the provision of betting services and products to punters both on and off-course. The RCF wishes to acknowledge the way in which the Tote have engaged and consulted with the Forum in the provision of such services. In July 2003 a subcommittee of RCF produced a working document “Suggestions for Improvement in Tote Products & Services”. This document was divided into short, medium and long-term aspirations. Whilst many of these suggestions (return to 50c Jackpot unit, betting ceasing at off, rollover of all pools to next racemeeting etc) have been implemented we would urge Tote Ireland to re-examine this document and consider how other inconsistencies and problems highlighted might be rectified.

- 9.9 With televised coverage of Irish racing on At The Races (ATR), the Tote should have dedicated text

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pages available on this service. At a minimum the expected Tote dividends and Tote returns must be available behind the pictures.

- 9.10 Public awareness of exacta, trio, placepot and jackpot bets was not high, even amongst regular racegoers. This indicates a significant, untapped potential market for the Tote. The opportunity for a weekend / festival superbet should also be explored.
- 9.11 A common request at fora was for faster payout by the Tote. Indeed the re-instatement of dedicated payout windows, particularly at festivals, was also suggested.
- 9.12 The distribution of free tickets, particularly by the Tote to all account holders, was praised by many. Such marketing helps to draw attention to that day's racing and improves the attendance, atmosphere and excitement of a day at the races. Tote Ireland should consider extension of these promotional initiatives, particularly at a regional level.
- 9.13 One or two comments were made regarding the activity of children betting at racecourses. However, the vast majority of attendees expressed no worry concerning small wagering (€1 or €2) by children. Alternative proposals to sustain children's attention at the races included sweep-type draws or competitions in the racecards.

EXCHANGE BETTING

COMMENTARY

There was limited discussion on the subject of betting exchanges at the later forums.

- 9.14 The vast majority of participants at forums were in favour of this extra betting medium.

- 9.15 To minimise the possibility of fraud and deception RCF would like to see a Memorandum of Understanding with betting exchanges agreed with either the Turf Club or HRI.

10. Media Coverage

TELEVISION COVERAGE

COMMENTARY

The importance of media coverage (in particular televised coverage) in the promotion, education and engagement of Irish racegoers cannot be overestimated. Indeed the BHB Racing Review Part II (2003) highlights the statistic that horse racing has the highest conversion (29%) between those who watch television coverage of a sport and those who attend that sport.

A number of public forums predate the return of regular (daily) televised coverage of Irish racing and the loss of such pictures was highlighted by a number of contributors at those forums. This is in marked contrast to the enhanced TV coverage since its return (May 2004), which has received good feedback.

- 10.1 There have been a number of instances where Irish coverage on ATR has been demoted due to a clash with two UK evening meetings. RCF suggests an alternative video stream be available by a "red button" facility (used by Sky and other channels) as a solution. This would also resolve the problem of a split-screen due to clashing races.
- 10.2 There was universal applause for the magazine programme, Go Racing, which showcases Irish racing so effectively. Indeed the growing audience figure of 1.4m reflects the popularity of the programme. Some voices expressed a preference



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for more betting-related information but the difficulty of recording a TV programme in advance was acknowledged. Suggestions for promotion of race attendance through television included eve of major events programmes, which could be marketed as “Clash of the Titans”.

stress that handicap ratings when revised be updated frequently online rather than some weeks later. Such ratings are not publically promoted either by the Turf Club or HRI. Recent publication of post race reports and performance warnings are welcome initiatives.

- 10.3 A number of racegoers urged the re-introduction of dedicated pages within Aertel text for each race on a racecard. It was also stressed that the time of the first race be readily available on a single Aertel page.

- 10.8 RCF would suggest that racing results be easily available by text. This was seen as particularly useful to those not having access to other information sources eg those traveling.

OTHER MEDIA (PRESS,RADIO,WEB)

- 10.9 Most public meetings recognised the favourable and significant press coverage afforded to horse racing in general and again there appeared to be little, if any, contentious issues relating to this matter.

COMMENTARY

Other media did not feature prominently as topics of discussion at forums although some people raised a number of minor matters for discussion.

- 10.4 A number of racegoers found difficulty in getting racing information, particularly results via radio sports bulletins. In the few instances where such results were given, the sole information provided was a rapid listing of winners, in many cases without SPs or further detail. One suggestion for RTE sports news was that the Tote might sponsor such results and highlight the jackpot result as a “pick 4 bet” in a similar manner to the Lotto results.
- 10.5 The reduction in radio coverage of Irish racing is seen by many as a significant backward step.
- 10.6 Internet information was raised on only one occasion. The person concerned had quite positive comments concerning the content, navigation and usefulness of www.hri.ie.
- 10.7 All punters are entitled to the most up-to-date information available. In particular RCF would

11. Racecards

COMMENTARY

The racecard acts as the principal conveyance of information for racegoers, and as such it is an integral part of the raceday experience. RCF recognise that the racecard must accommodate both the regular and occasional racegoer. Whilst it is understood that the needs of both different types of racegoers cannot be completely fulfilled in a single document, a balance between the two to satisfy both should be possible. A professional, consistent and legible publication is required. A centralised, standardised system for the preparation of racecards should be considered by HRI.

CONTENT / LAYOUT OF CARDS

- 11.1 A colour format (i.e. jockeys silks) should be standard. Distinguishing caps should be declared at declaration stage and indicated on racecards.
- 11.2 At present there is not a standard format for cards. This should be addressed and RCF suggests that races 1-7 (6,8) be listed concurrently without any interspersed items. Race conditions to be separately included towards the rear of the card.
- 11.3 The following sections should be included in every racecard :
 - How to read the card.
 - Racecourse map with a clear simple layout of course and facilities.
 - Competitions (if relevant) must not be printed on the reverse of a race page.
 - Racecourses staging family racedays should consider a dedicated competition for children.
 - “At a glance” pages with a complete listing of races for all Irish meetings, including a dedicated page for placepot/jackpot purposes.
 - A list of future race dates, not confined to the particular course.
 - A page for suggestions / comments.

INFORMATION

A racecard is foremost a source of information for racegoers. However, many cards at present are lacking large amounts of relevant and useful information, particularly for regular racegoers.

- 11.4 The three most recent runs by each horse are normally given as the form guide. However, the handicap rating (where relevant) for each run is not included. This should be rectified. Also for conditions and pattern races official ratings should be included. Such figures should be adjusted for weight or alternatively the weight-for-age scale should be included with the card.
- 11.5 Times should be included on all racecards, be they faster (+) or slower (-) than a standard. Median or standard times and perhaps a record time could be included for each course / distance.
- 11.6 Other desirable information includes course / distance / ground / left or right hand going preferences.
- 11.7 Mares in foal must be clearly identified.
- 11.8 First-time blinkers, cheek-pieces or tongue-straps should also be distinguished.

PRICE / AVAILABILITY

- 11.9 An upper price limit of €3 should apply to all racecards. There should be no exceptions. Indeed the number of pages of advertisements for festival meetings should lead to a reduction in their price. Racecourses might encourage sponsorship of racecards, particularly where a single organisation is sponsoring the entire card.
- 11.10 The situation whereby racecourses run out of racecards is inexcusable. This is still an occurrence at some.
- 11.11 A single black and white printed page (150g card) of all the day's races, produced by HRI, should be available without cost, as an alternative to the racecard.



REPORT OF THE RACEGOERS 03-06 CONSULTATIVE FORUM

Appendix 1

HORSE & GREYHOUND RACING ACT (2001)

PART 2 SECTION 9

Section 9 of the Act sets out the requirement for Horse Racing Ireland to establish a Racegoers Consultative Forum as follows:

1. HRI shall establish a forum to be known as the Racegoers Consultative Forum for the purposes of consultations relating to the operations of HRI in the context of developments or desired developments in the horseracing industry generally as they affect the race-goer or service or facility user.
2. The Forum shall consist of so many members as may be decided, from time to time, by HRI and shall include representatives of horseracegoers clubs, racecourse supporters clubs and organizations operating in the interests of racegoers or other interest groups affected by the decisions of HRI or who use the various facilities and services provided by HRI.
3. The Forum shall be established under such terms and conditions determined, before its establishment, by HRI, following consultations by the Minister.
4. The Minister may appoint two members to the Forum.
5. HRI shall have regard to any opinions expressed by the Forum on any matter affecting the interests represented by the Forum which may be reviewed by HRI.
6. HRI may publish any opinion or report of the Forum.
7. HRI in respect of its appointments to the Forum and the Minister in respect of his or her appointments to the Forum shall ensure, in so far as is practicable, an equitable gender balance.



REPORT OF THE RACEGOERS 03-06 CONSULTATIVE FORUM

Appendix 2

RACEGOERS CONSULTATIVE FORUM MEMBERS & CONTACT DETAILS

GREATER DUBLIN

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KILDARE REGION

The Curragh, Punchestown & Naas.

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SOUTH-WEST REGION

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SOUTH-EAST REGION
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SOUTH-EAST REGION
Mr John Fleming



SOUTH-WEST REGION
Mr Billy Loughnane



SOUTH-WEST REGION
Mr David O'Connor



NORTHERN REGION
Ms Siobhan Tolerton



WESTERN REGION
Mr Tony Browne



STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE
Mr Faolan Sweeney

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