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CHAMPIONSHIP POINTS

JON PULLIN of ARC e-mailed me in response to my comments on All-Weather trainers' championships in last month's Klarion and put me right on the current state of affairs. (See his e-mail, facing page)

It doesn't change the fact, however, that there have been various All-Weather trainers' and jockeys' championships dating back long before we had racing on Good Friday and they came in different guises – including, I am sure, at least, one that was a handicap (dependent on the size, or perceived size, of each trainer's team).

It is also clear that I am not the only one to be confused about the start and finish dates and how these championships operate. As I said last month, the Racing Post published a leading trainers' table based on prize-money throughout the winter when the championship, as far as ARC was concerned, was based on winners. Even now, if you look at the 'Statistics' section on the Racing Post website, the AW Championship table for trainers is based on prize-money won and William Haggas is at the top.

And it is not only the All-Weather championships that are confusing. Ryan Moore recently said that he didn't know what the jockeys' championship was anymore. He doesn't know when it starts and he doesn't know when it finishes.

Before going any further I should, of course, congratulate this year's Champion All-Weather Trainer. It would be churlish not to. I am pretty sure it was Mick Appleby. I looked in Saturday's Racing Post – the day after All-Weather Champions day took place at Lingfield – but I didn't see the trainers' or jockeys' championships



The Queen presents Joe Osborne of Godolphin with the trophy for Champion Flat Owner in 2017

mentioned. There was a report from the meeting on page 20 but, as far as I could see, no mention of champions.

Keith Melrose did write a short piece in the Racing Post on the Friday, told us that Luke Morris was home and hosed as

particularly annoying to ARC as they put a lot of effort into it and I think there are significant cash prizes for the leading trainer and jockey. Personally, I don't really approve of racecourses incentivising trainers to campaign

owners' horses in a way that might not be in the best interests of the horse or the owner, but I must confess that I have not declined the money when I have won it myself. I have, however, either given it in its entirety to our staff or have used it to

buy a piece of equipment which would be of direct benefit to the owners and which I might not otherwise have purchased. I have never taken any for myself, nor has it added a penny to the company's bottom line, and I can honestly say that the prize on offer has no influence whatsoever on how I campaign

Make the champion owner title the most sought-after crown in British racing

champion jockey, and said that Archie Watson and Mick Appleby were 'nip and tuck' for the trainers' title. But the next day, no result. Presumably there was no betting on it and so the Racing Post deemed it of no interest to the majority of their readership.

This lack of coverage must be

owners' horses. I assume there was a prize this year but I don't know for sure and I have no idea how much it might have been.

I wonder what it means to Mick Appleby and Luke Morris to win these championships. Do they feel they get significant kudos? Does the title of All-Weather Champion bring more owners or more rides? I'm sure, for Luke Morris, having all those winners added to his total for the year would be far more beneficial.

I was in Dubai when Jon Pullin's e-mail came in and I asked our editor, Gerry Hunt, to have a look into the history of All-Weather championships for me. He could find nothing of relevance but, during his search, he stumbled on an intriguing article on the Racing Post website entitled "Let Mark Johnston loose on the jockeys' title – he'd sort it".

Interesting

Gerry was most disgruntled to have to pay 30 quid to join the Racing Post Ultimate Club, for one month, in order to source the article, especially when he discovered that it dated from 2016, there having been no indication of this before joining. But I found the article very interesting and I am not aware of having seen it before.

The article was written by Nick Godfrey in August 2016 and, as I say, I don't recall seeing it then. Perhaps it never saw the light of day in the actual paper and may have only appeared on the website. It may have been vetoed by the editor for being too complimentary to yours truly!

Nick Godfrey credits me with leading the way when the parameters of the trainers' title were finally changed to include prize-money earned over the whole calendar year and suggests that it is a pity that I was not asked to define the jockeys' championship.

It is indeed a pity as, if I was asked to define the parameters for choosing Britain's champion jockey, I would leave self-interest out of it just as I have always done when stating my beliefs on how the trainers' championship should be decided. Nor would I consider the interests of Ascot's Champions day; Doncaster's November Handicap or Lincoln meetings; or even racecourses collective self-interest. I would not give consideration to the interests of individual jockeys who, by their own choice and for very obvious reasons, spend much of the year riding in other jurisdictions. I would not tweak the championship in an attempt to fix the outcome.

I would set the parameters of all championships with the best interests of British racing in mind and to try to drive the behaviour of the jockeys in a way that best suits and promotes British racing as a whole. In short, I'd have it based on winners ridden, on all surfaces and at all levels, throughout the calendar year.

Nick Godfrey considered this possibility and looked at how that change might have affected the jockeys' championships from 2009 through to 2015. He demonstrated that, based on the actual figures for those years, if the champion was calculated on annual winners, Silvestre de Sousa would have been replaced as champion in 2015 by Luke Morris and Richard Hughes would have been replaced twice, in 2012 and 2014, by Joe Fanning and Adam Kirby.

But that, of course, is not what would have happened. Silvestre de Sousa and Richard Hughes would have modified their riding plans to try to win. So would many other jockeys and the beneficiary would have been British racing, especially All-Weather racing and meetings which now fall outside the totally arbitrary dates placed on the current jockeys' championship. The top

Dear Mark,

I write further to the above article (March Straight Talking) relating to the leading trainer in the All Weather Championships (AWC).

For clarification, the AWC is now in season 5 and has had a leading trainer category in all seasons, all of which have been based on the number of winners. You were successful in Season 1 with 68 winners, and in Season 4 with 42 winners. The methodology for determining the winner in this category has not changed throughout the period and always runs from the start of the AW Championship season, until the end of racing on Good Friday.

I trust this clarifies the position however if you require further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

I would like to thank you for your continuing support of the Championships and wish you every success for the finals on Friday.

Kind Regards,
Jon

jockeys would not ride in Britain throughout the year – lucrative retainers and superior prize-money abroad would see to that – and all popular jockeys would need to plan for their own breaks and rest periods just as Luke Morris, Adam Kirby and Joe Fanning do now.

IT is easy to see how some jockeys would invest more time and effort in trying to win the overall champion jockey title, to the benefit of British racing, but this pales into insignificance in comparison to what owners might invest if only the industry concentrated on making the champion owner title the most sought-after crown in British racing. It wouldn't be hard to do and would cost very little when compared with the sums that Great British Racing, ARC and others have poured into marketing the current, comparatively pointless, championships.