



Mark Johnston's

By the time this Klarion goes to press, i.e. by close of play on April 30, there will have been 1,332 flat races run in Britain this year. And the 2019 Flat jockeys' championship hasn't started yet. How crazy is that?

This nonsense began 23 years ago, just as all-weather racing was taking off in Britain, as a move by a handful of top jockeys to ensure that they could ride abroad during the winter, in far warmer and more lucrative climes, without their chance of being British champion being compromised. It was hijacked and manipulated over the years by racecourses determined to get in on the action and marketing executives obsessed with "narrative" and finales. It is now a mess.

Who benefits? Certainly

COMMON SENSE REQUIRED

Year	True Champion	Crowned Champion
2018	Oisin Murphy	Silvestre de Sousa
2017	Silvestre de Sousa	Silvestre de Sousa
2016	Jim Crowley	Jim Crowley
2015	Luck Morris	Silvestre de Sousa
2014	Adam Kirby	Richard Hughes
2013	Richard Hughes	Richard Hughes
2012	Joe Fanning	Richard Hughes
2011	Paul Hanagan	Paul Hanagan
2010	Paul Hanagan	Paul Hanagan
2009	Ryan Moore	Ryan Moore
2008	Ryan Moore	Ryan Moore
2007	Seb Sanders	Seb Sanders
2006	Ryan Moore	Ryan Moore
2005	Jamie Spencer	Jamie Spencer
2004	Kieren Fallon	Frankie Dettori
2003	Kieren Fallon	Kieren Fallon
2002	Kieren Fallon	Kieren Fallon
2001	Kieren Fallon	Kieren Fallon
2000	Kevin Darley	Kevin Darley
1999	Kieren Fallon	Kieren Fallon
1998	Kieren Fallon	Kieren Fallon
1997	Kieren Fallon	Kieren Fallon

not British racing. Surely, not the betting industry? Maybe a tiny minority of jockeys, at the expense of others. I really can't understand it.

In fact, in the 22 jockeys' championships run on part of the year, the true champion (to my mind), the jockey who rode most winners in the calendar year, only differed from the crowned champion on five occasions. And I believe that, if we had run those championships on a calendar year basis, Silvestre de Sousa, Richard Hughes and Frankie Dettori would have made the effort, spent a bit more time in the UK and may well have still ridden more winners than Oisin Murphy, Luke Morris, Adam Kirby, Joe Fanning and Kieren

Straight Talking

Incentivising the owners

WHATEVER WAY you decide it, the jockeys' championship is a mere triviality. Important, of course, to the participants, particularly the winner, but it doesn't do a great deal for the sport. If, as I have suggested, we used it to drive behaviour and it resulted in some of our top jockeys spending a bit more time in Britain, that would be worthwhile but, at present, it is of very little significance.

If we structured it properly, we could encourage some jockeys to invest more of their time in British racing and that would certainly be a positive result.

The trainers' championship has even less impact on the sport, generates little or no betting turnover, and I can't imagine it helps swell the crowd at Ascot on Champions day, or increases TV viewing figures.

The championship which we could, and should, make more of, and which could have a dramatic impact on the sport is the owners' championship. And yet, it receives almost no attention at all. Like the manufacturers' championship in F1, the owners' championship could drive significant investment.

How many of you would know, without consulting our table, who was champion owner last year? Would you have realised just how successful Godolphin have been in this category?

If we could make the championship of utmost importance to the big teams, some would surely invest more to gain, or retain, top spot. There is so much we could do to promote the owners' championship at little or no cost and it could reap huge rewards. Why don't we do it?

The current leader is King Power Racing Co Ltd. I wonder how long they can stay at the top? I wonder how much it matters to them and how much it matters to others to ensure that they don't?

Fallon who deserved to be, but were not, crowned champion jockey in 2018, 2015, 2014, 2012 and 2004 respectively. Whatever the outcome, British racegoers would have seen a lot more of their champion jockey than they did.

Calendar

It is worth noting that it appears to be becoming more common for the true champion and the crowned champion to differ. This, I assume, is down to the "championship" having been chopped even further, to run now from Guineas day to Champions Day, and the continued expansion of all-weather racing.

It is time for the jockeys to take control of this, bring back a bit of reality, and insist, as the trainers eventually did, that their championship must run for the universally understood calendar year.

STILL keep going back and watching replays of the National Hunt Chase from Cheltenham. Declan Lavery's ban for his riding of Jerrysback was overturned, and rightly so, but I am still concerned by the stewards' initial reading of the situation and by Nick Rust's comments when viewing the race on Luck on Sunday.

Footage

It was from Nick Luck's show that we first learned of the jockey's intention to appeal when Rust said that he could not comment on the case as it was subject to appeal and yet, when footage of the race was being reviewed, and Luck said that the horse was "tired", Rust chipped in with "it's very tired". He had me shouting at the telly: "I thought you weren't going to

Last thoughts on the National Hunt Chase

comment, man! It's supposed to be very tired, it's coming to the end of a four-mile, Grade 2, chase at Cheltenham. All athletes are very tired at the end of a race." I was fuming.

Now, weeks later, it is the jockeys' use of the whip, or lack of it, which interests me most. Unfortunately, the footage of the race which I have does not show much of Jerrysback from the second last fence until close to the line, but there was discussion at the time suggesting that Lavery had ridden the horse out with "hands and heels", while his opponent, Damien Skehan on the fourth, Clondaw Cian, hit his horse twice between the second last and the last. Up until the second-last fence,

Declan Lavery had used the stick only once and I think this may have been the only time he used it in the entire four-mile race. I certainly think it is almost certain that he used the stick less than the jockeys on the other three finishers.

I have long argued that the purpose of the whip in a race is to initiate the flight response, the physiological pattern of events through which nature prepares the animal for running fast and seeks to minimise damage to vital structures during flight. I have used analogies such as a blackbird flying and squawking after a clap or a bang, slowing down, and then going again when the stimulus is repeated. Or the boxer coming out for the last round,

very tired, and the second slapping his cheek and saying, "wake up, keep your chin in, and look after yourself". The whip does the same for the horse: it initiates another "injection" of adrenalin and endorphins, and "calls up" all the body's reserves and safety mechanisms.

I'm drawn back to watching the National Hunt Chase, and would love the opportunity to view the head-on film, as I wonder if Lavery should have hit the horse again. Had he done so, would the animal have gathered itself, run straighter to the line, and appeared less tired to Nick Rust and the stewards? We'll never know, but we should be considering the possibility. It is, to my mind, by far the most important reason for retaining the whip.



Sheikh Mohammed



Princess Haya



Hamdan Al Maktoum

Champion Owner

2018	Godolphin
2017	Godolphin
2016	Godolphin
2015	Godolphin
2014	Hamdan al Maktoum
2013	Godolphin
2012	Godolphin
2011	K Abdullah
2010	K Abdullah
2009	Hamdan al Maktoum
2008	HRH Princess Haya of Jordan
2007	Godolphin
2006	Godolphin
2005	Hamdan al Maktoum
2004	Godolphin
2003	K Abdullah
2002	Hamdan al Maktoum
2001	Mrs John Magnier and Michael Tabor
2000	HH Aga Khan
1999	Godolphin
1998	Godolphin
1997	Sheikh Mohammed