



Newsletter

MONDAY, 16 JANUARY 2017

The David Allan Column

Pending: A boiling pot of exciting changes!



ON the domestic front, the sale of Highlands Stud from the Beck family to the Kieswetter family is a major step in sustaining and taking forward a proper institution, perhaps combining the stability of current prestige through greatly respected director Mike Sharkey with powerful new investment.

And more than likely, not so domestic an exercise either. Steps taken in a conservative and quality style do or will involve international horse properties and an operation seemingly modelled on the great global owner-breeding operations thus flying the SA flag very prestigiously.

A hobby horse of mine is north/south trade. Of course the main commercial focus of streamlining export protocols is selling to Hong Kong and other South-East Asian destinations.



However, a major loosening of protocols will reawaken discussion of shuttle stallions from UK and Ireland and greater movement of mares and their offspring. Breeding in the north to southern time and vice versa which we undertake somewhat now could expand beyond the realm of the extraordinarily well-funded.

At the ITBF Congress at Table Bay Hotel last week, the South African presentation of the latest AHS position was rightly hailed as extremely profes-

sional. In contrast to the rather aggressive diplomacy of earlier years, the team - superbly fronted by Dr John Grewer and Professor Ian Sanne - displayed the benefit of extraordinary scientific advances alongside full consideration for the concerns of importing countries.



Professor Ian Sanne.

For this correspondent, the role has been in goodwill exercises particularly in UK and Ireland. That role is now unnecessary at senior level, although it will continue informally at all others.

Hearing from greatly influential friends at ITBF that they were impressed with a presentation completely different in quality to anything that has gone before, all I needed to do was be deeply pleased and say no more. SA's Task Team has made comparable progress in another international presentation in Hong Kong and - whilst recognition and moral support from international bloodstock figures is important - it now falls to governments to deal with what we all hope is an end game that now carries real momentum. (cont p2...)



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Marinaresco attracts more support to win 2017 Sun Met

MARINARESCO, who drew steady betting support throughout last week, had his odds cut even shorter to 28-10 from 3-1. This, after he touched 4-1 after finishing fourth in the L'Ormarins Queen's Plate.

Legal Eagle, who drifted a few points last week, remained unchanged at 17-10.

The latest betting is:

17-10 (15-10) (14-10) (13-10) (15-10) (22-10)
Legal Eagle

28-10 (3-1) (33-10) (70-20) (33-10) (7-2, 4-1)
Marinaresco

9-2 (75-20) (4-1, 8-1, 20-1) **Whisky Baron**

15-2 (13-2) (6-1) (15-2) **Bela-Bela**

12-1 (16-1) **It's My Turn**, (18-1 (16-1) **Gold Standard**

20-1 (18-1) (16-1) (14-1) **The Conglomerate**,

22-1 (20-10) (25-1) (40-1) **Captain America**

25-1 (25-1) **Master Sabina**

40-1 and upwards others.

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DAVID ALLAN

Amongst many opportunities, it would become realistic to send (SAF) horses to race in UK – much the same as or in addition to sending a squad to Dubai. Such freedom to roam would gravitate to Dubai's prize money rather than UK's, unless at the very top. But what about seeing a young (SAF) bred romp home in a decent handicap at Newbury, Sandown or York?

In UK there is a lot of sporting ownership and a far greater focus on on-sale values of horses in the currently strong HiT markets, but for most of the past 56 years, ordinary prize money has been relatively low.

In 1961 the family jewels were given away when the government authorised the establishment of betting shops in High Streets all over the country but did not restrict ownership. Thus have various companies prospered without racing being sufficiently funded.

Meanwhile, the owners fund the existence of the horses and – being a broadly well organised single body – have been the prominent party in “taking on” the bookmakers over the years. Racecourses need to play both sides and look after themselves. Government is fed up with the failure to come together. More recently bookmakers have registered overseas thus avoiding some contributions and taxation.

Through inter alia the foundation of The Horseman's Group, progress has been made with the latest chapter announced at the weekend being potentially momentous.

The UK government has put in place, subject to review procedures, a new form of levy on those making profits from gambling on UK events by UK-based customers, whether registered in the UK or offshore. It encompasses pool betting, on-course -betting, betting exchanges and spread bets. It is based on 10% of profits over and above £500,000 thus providing a level playing field.

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It would be scheduled for April 2017 but is subject to an EU State Aid approval mechanism that could – as with many things EU – override the British Government as long as the UK has not yet Brexited. The crux may boil down to the 10% or the bookies lobbying it to a lower figure. As it stands, the levy would increase from 55 million sterling to 95 million.

Something like it will happen in which case racing will benefit substantially – not only in prize money but also in science and extra funding for equine welfare and the welfare of employees in racing. Such systems are enthusiastically in place already but more cash would be wonderful.



Mind you there is another threat. The UK government is taking steps to curb the proliferation in heavily promoted gambling on anything from football, flies up the wall or the machines that increasingly dominate betting shop turnovers as against racing. The legal maximum in shops is £100 a throw and the government is talking about lowering it to £2.

Whilst not affecting betting on racing, it would affect the profitability of many betting shops which might therefore close thus cutting off the (expensive) payments they make for the provision of images part of which add to the funding for racing. Of course the argument goes that if the shops close, the “hooked” gamblers will simply do it on line whereas there are mechanisms within shops to keep an eye on betting getting out of hand.

Something will come out of this exciting boiling pot after years of damaging confrontation. When it does, our liberated (SAF) horses may not only be able to romp home on a beautiful evening at Goodwood, not only become very valuable, not only improve their dam’s pedigree excitingly but also make some cash! - tt.

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