



Newsletter

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The David Allan Column



There's Black Type and there's black type

REVIEWING THE SA STUD BOOK

On 25 July 2016, I published "THOROUGHBRED THOUGHTS", an article you can read [here](#).

There were three headline topics: the Sales Programme (*where progress is being made: we are still working very hard on it with the interests of both sales companies at heart as well as the industry at large*); the outreach of the sport and industry within South Africa (*my proposals were heard but got nowhere due to politics*); and the protection of our (crucial) Blue Book Part 1 status here in South Africa. The latter is today's topic.

BLUE BOOK

INTERNATIONAL CATALOGUING STANDARDS and INTERNATIONAL STATISTICS 2017

Maintained by
The International Grading and
Race Planning Advisory Committee (IRPAC)

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International Federation of Horseracing Authorities

The standards established by IRPAC have been approved by the
Society of International Thoroughbred Auctioneers

www.ifhaonline.org/standardsBook.asp

Recently, the SA Graded Race Committee announced the downgrading of a number of black type races in SA in response to urgings from the Asian Racing Committee. Thus will the next Blue Book reflect a helpful change.

The Blue Book is a bible. Every bloodstock consultant has its 335 pages available on-line for reference when built-in knowledge fails. It is maintained by the International Race Planning Advisory Committee (IRPAC) in cahoots with the Society of International Thoroughbred Auctioneers (SITA of which CTS and BSA are members).

South Africa is an original Part 1 member. But there are questions about the large number of black type races and their actual status. Not only South Africa, Dear Readers, but we are talking here about South Africa which, within Part 1, stands out.

Hong Kong has only recently been promoted to Part 1. European breeders not so happy about their products being exported to Hong Kong are less sceptical now that Hong Kong's international Group 1s can be unqualified "G1".

Korea – watch the rise of the Land of the Morning Calm - is up to Part 2 thus joining amongst others India, Singapore, Zimbabwe and Turkey. Turkey has controversial Presidential leadership and is constrained (by disease certification issues) from exporting its previously imported European bloodlines. Hmm. But the well known International Topkapi Trophy carries Prize Money of nearly 7 million rand. *(to page 2)*

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London architects Grimshaw won the competition to design a new racing theme park at Yeongcheon at racing-emergent Korea.

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Down in Part 3 we find amongst others Qatar and Saudi with plenty of money and the Czech Republic whose runners compete well in Germany and France. To quote THOROUGHBRED THOUGHTS on SA's status: *"But imagine if we lost that Part 1 cataloguing status. And five minutes later the AHS ban was lifted. Eesh!"*

In the next sentence, we remarked that USA/Canadian black type needs watching. Most of us have in-built knowledge of what is and is not proper black type in North America, but let's have a look at South Africa v. Canada. Each has similar total race numbers (3,790 v. 3,242 in 2016), albeit with a different range of dates for climate reasons.

SA and Canada have, respectively, 5.3% and 4.9% black type races. Looks similar? It isn't.

In Canada, the Blue Book shows that there were 44 Graded races and 21 Listed. South Africa 116 and 71. Blimey! How come the percentages are so close? Because where Canada makes up the difference is in having 102 non-Listed black type races. South Africa has none of those. This means that Canada has 102 races that can appear as Graded or Listed but only in a local sense.

A leaflet was handed out at a recent EFTBA Meeting in Deauville stating that a colossal 72.73% of South Africa's Listed races (48 out of 66 in the year analysed) fall below the standards (of horse, race, purse etc) to be called Listed. It also stated that Canada is at 50% (on smaller numbers), France on 8.49% below standard with GB and Ireland at 0%. Of course others were scrutinised as well. This kind of data – to which IRPAC and SITA are presumably privy – is not helpful, however precise it may or may not be.

Mash this information together and one must wonder if a further substantial downgrading of South Africa's lower (stake money) black type to "domestic" might actually be a very good move. The black type would survive in what is currently an almost wholly domestic market whilst shoring up our Part 1 status and earning international plaudits. Recent downgrades are surely a step in the right direction. Now is the time to knock our SA cataloguing into shape.

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How great is black type anyway? We all strive for it. Sales company selectors slave over it. We all look twice in skimming the top end of catalogue pages if it's there. But we are actually sceptical about a lot of it as it stands – in various countries.

Grade 1 Handicaps? A contradiction in terms? They are also in USA and Australia but that doesn't justify them. But again it is in the Listed area that we may see more clearly what I mean.

When buying yearlings, it is way more important for an agent to know the ratings of the dam's produce as opposed to the bare existence of black type. Other things being equal, a sibling of three 95 rated runners with no black type is more worthy than a sibling of a filly who squeaked 3rd in a Listed handicap off 78. Knowledge of the race programme or the family (and buying an in-depth sale guide) usually sorts that out, but I have seen visitors giddy about buying a black type filly for breeding that nobody else wanted at the price. Good luck to them because people at home may not know either but...well, I'm sure you get the point.



Canadian Racing's Hall Of Fame. Iffy black-type, great racing.

The iffy black type situation in Canada does not alter the fact that racing there is in great shape. Good to superb prize money and the legacy of Northern Dancer (CAN) and Nijinsky (CAN). Although the best example for worrying less about ordinary black type is Japan.

Where SA and Canada have their 5-ish percent black type races as above, with GB 4.6%, France 5.3% and so on, Japan has 1.4%. There, some of the best racehorses in the world are bred as a result of an enlightened subsidy of overseas mares, the success of Sunday Silence, Deep Impact and others plus strong public support as fans, punters and syndicate members i.e. outreach.

At CTS Emperors Select yearlings, a racy colt made a paltry R75,000 (with due respect to the shrewd buyer). Heaven knows why. He is a half brother to winners and a bit of black type and his fairly well known Gone West 2nd dam made US\$1 million to go to Japan where her children and grandchildren have won nearly 18 million rand equivalent. But zero black type due to that 1.4% figure.

Sometimes we need to look beyond black type, and to pay its lesser forms less respect. - tt.

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