

# Sport

## Owners put off by fear of being conned

### EXCLUSIVE

#### Racing

Mark Souster Racing Writer

Racing's governing body plans to conduct a review of the buying and selling of racehorses in Britain and will solicit opinions from the bloodstock industry about possible dubious practices, *The Times* can reveal.

The British Horseracing Authority has written to leading stakeholders in this country with its concerns about evidence of "unsatisfactory" experiences for owners. Its letter, dated August 4, said it wants to see "fair, transparent and responsible practices in place to remove significant actual and perceived barriers to new owners" joining the sport.

There is no suggestion that the BHA is sitting on a mound of evidence on specific cases. However, it feels that with huge sums of money swilling around in the industry there is potential risk, especially for the unwary.

The letter, signed by Nick Rust, the chief executive, states: "On reviewing and updating the BHA's regulatory risks for racing in Great Britain, the board has prioritised a review of the buying and selling of bloodstock and racehorses." The BHA's motive is a concern that the number of individual owners is dropping and it believes that prospective buyers may be put off by the thought of being conned.

The figures show a decrease in sole ownership by 15 per cent since 2010. This has been offset by an increase of at least 1,000 in the number of horses in

training with leading owner and breeding operations.

The sales process is governed by a code of practice drawn up 11 years ago but sales rings and auctions are not regulated by the BHA. It is understood that not one complaint has been brought to the BHA's attention under this code. This could be interpreted in two ways: there is not an issue or there is a creed of omerta which prevents anyone from speaking out.

Rumours suggest that the anecdotal evidence surrounds agents encouraging individuals to buy horses at an inflated price, from which they then receive a cut, or of bidding off, whereby false bids are made. However, Tattersalls, which holds the leading yearling sales in the world, firmly rebuts the notion of impropriety in the ring. It is due to meet the BHA at the end of the month.

"Integrity is at the heart of everything we do and has been for the past 251 years," Jimmy George, the marketing director, said. "We are not aware of any individual cases of dubious practices. If we were, we would act on it."

The Racehorse Owners Association had a survey among its members last year to investigate the drop in owner numbers. "Unscrupulous behaviour by agents was not on the radar," Charlie Liverton, the chief executive, said. "That is not to say that it does not happen but we have not had owners saying they have been done over in the sales ring."

● Enable, the winner of five group one races this season, will stay in training next year with the aim of repeating her Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe victory.

£107m

Amount spent on unraced yearlings at Tattersalls sales last week



Hardaker will miss a second straight World Cup

## Hardaker faces cocaine ban

### Rugby league Christopher Irvine

Zak Hardaker, the disgraced Castleford Tigers full back, faces a ban of up to two years after testing positive for cocaine.

Hardaker has been provisionally suspended, costing him his place in Castleford's team for the Betfred Super League Grand Final on Saturday, which the Tigers lost 24-6 to Leeds Rhinos, and his spot in England's squad for the World Cup in Oceania this month, which was announced yesterday.

Castleford left him out of the Grand Final for a "breach of club rules". But now it has emerged that he failed a drugs test after a Super 8s game against Leeds last month. His Castleford future will only be determined after the outcome of the case. "I would like to apologise to my team-mates, staff and all fans for my enormous error of judgment," the 25-year-old said in a statement. "I was given an opportunity

by this great club, and in what has been one of the most important weeks in its history I have let everyone at the club down. For that, I truly apologise.

"Finally, I would like to make it clear that in no way did I, nor would I, ever take a substance with the intention of enhancing my performance."

He misses a second World Cup, having been thrown out of England's 2013 squad over a nightclub incident.

Wayne Bennett, the England head coach, has selected Sam Burgess as one of seven NRL-based players, along with his brother Tom, whose twin George was omitted along with Sam Tomkins.

**England World Cup squad** J Bateman (Wigan), K Brown (Warrington), S Burgess (South Sydney), T Burgess (South Sydney), B Currie (Warrington), L Gale (Castleford), J Graham (St George Illawarra), R Hall (Leeds), C Heighington (Cronulla), C Hill (Warrington), J Hodgson (Canberra), J Lomax (St Helens), J McGillvary (Huddersfield), M McMeeken (Castleford), S O'Loughlin (Wigan, captain), M Percival (St Helens), S Ratchford (Warrington), J Roby (St Helens), S Taylor (Hull), A Walmsley (St Helens), K Watkins (Leeds), E Whitehead (Canberra), G Widdop (St George Illawarra), G Williams (Wigan).

## Bobsleigh chief disciplined for racial slur

### Bobsleigh

Martyn Ziegler Chief Sports Reporter

The body which funds elite sport has admitted that it has lessons to learn from the crisis in British Bobsleigh after confirmation that a team member was sacked for racist behaviour three years ago and the new head coach, Lee Johnston, was disciplined after making derogatory remarks about black drivers.

It can be revealed that a team mechanic was dismissed for racist behaviour in 2014. Johnston, who was made head coach last month, was warned about his future conduct shortly before. Johnston was accused of telling Toby Olubi, a member of the squad: "I knew you would be late because you are black." Later in the same training session in July 2013 he said: "Black drivers do not make good bobsleigh drivers."

According to *The Guardian* the comments were reported by Henry Nwume, another black athlete, to the chairman of the British Bobsleigh and Skeleton Association (BBSA) and to UK Sport in an email in March 2014.

A spokesman for the governing body said: "UK Sport was aware of these allegations at the time and sought assurances that it was being appropriately dealt with by the BBSA. A number of years have passed and no concerns were raised with UK Sport relating to the same individual that would have indicated a need to intervene in the recent appointment process.

"We are introducing changes across the high performance sport system that will improve governance, culture and leadership standards. There are clearly lessons for UK Sport and the sport to learn from unresolved concerns of individuals which we accept."

Two weeks ago, the organisation criticised the financial management of the BBSA after its chief executive, Richard Parker, resigned. Mica McNeill, the women's bobsleigh team driver, created a crowdfunding campaign and raised more than £30,000 after funding for the women's team was cut.

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