



The MFHA Team Chasing Committee
Annual Conference
Cheltenham Racecourse - Wednesday 1st May 2013 at 2.30 p.m.

Minutes

1. **Apologies.**

Apologies were received from Rowan Cope, Nicky White, Tom Gittins, David Selby and Heather Moody.
2. **Minutes of Annual Conference on 2nd May 2012.**

The minutes of the 2012 Annual Conference were approved.
3. **Chairman's report:**
 - a. **Review of the 2012-2013 Season.**

The Spring season was extremely difficult for both event organisers and competitors, predominantly as a result of the extremely wet and cold weather and ground conditions. However the Chairman thanked the organisers for agreeing to rearrange their events at short notice, and it was agreed that a successful season ensued albeit with lower numbers of competitors than would normally be expected during the Spring season.
 - b. **Committee Appointments.**

Howard Pauling has retired from the Committee after many years but he confirmed that he will continue as a Course Inspector. He was thanked for his invaluable contribution to the sport.

James Buckle will stand down as Chairman following completion of the Annual Conference, but will remain on the Committee.

Philip Cowen has been elected Chairman for the next 3 years.

Allen Brown, Rosie Vestey, Debbie Topping and Fred French retired by rotation. They all offered themselves for re-election, and the Committee has unanimously appointed each of them for a further 3 year term.
 - c. **Update on important Committee matters.**

To be dealt with under other items on the agenda.
 - d. **British Team Chasing – the brand and our identity.**

A new British Team Chase (BTC) brand, logo and emblem was displayed, which had been adopted by the National Committee at their earlier meeting. It will be circulated to all event organisers, and should be used wherever possible on all National Team Chase literature, event schedules and programmes in the future. The artwork will be made available via a new Drop Box account.
 - e. **The British Team Chasing website, and social media.**

The new website has been up and running since October 2012 and has been received very positively. The domain name of www.teamchasing.co.uk had been purchased by the National Committee, and thanks were expressed to both Mick Hawkins and Roy Pendleton for the professional and friendly way in which they assisted with the construction and development of the new site, and in the transfer of all information and data from the old site. The ultimate cost of the new website, including the domain name acquisition, was reported by Philip Cowen at about £7,500, which was well within the agreed budget of £10,000. The site contains quick links to the main Social Media sites including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr. It does

not require considerable management time, and is currently generating in the region of 300 - 350 individual user hits per week. It will be administered by Equine Affairs, who have developed the site. It is hoped that the new site will help to attract new sponsors and competitors to the sport. In discussion about the site:

1. It was commented that some of the dropdown boxes were confusing and some links did not work. Philip Cowen emphasised the importance of ensuring that any users browser automatically refreshes at each visit, to rectify this perceived fault.
2. The "Course Walk" section of the old site have not been transferred for technical and security reasons. It was noted that this feature was useful for competitors, and particularly those who are new to the sport. Further consideration will be given to a future upgrade of the site to accommodate such a facility.
3. It was suggested that a Forum on Facebook is not as user friendly as the previous ('Vbulletin') message board as all messages appear on a single page – albeit that it was noted that such an arrangement / appearance does bring alternative benefits in terms of 'audience engagement'.
4. The importance of up-to-date "Team Profiles" was reiterated, and Jane Carley agreed to liaise with all Open Teams to ensure that profiles were correctly and professionally recorded for all teams.
5. A facility will be developed to enable companies to advertise on the site for a relatively modest sum of say £250 -500 per year with logos, brands and links from the site.
6. There was discussion about the possibility of a section for classified adverts, such as "Horse for Sale" etc, but this was not considered to be of primary importance by attendees at the meeting.
7. Event Organisers and competitors were in favour of being able to make online entries, subject to a robust and secure arrangement being developed. Philip Cowen agreed to research options in more detail with Equine Affairs.
8. A request was made for a 'Latest Uploads' page as a quicklink for navigation around the main site. This will be put to Equine Affairs.

4. Levels of competitive interest in the Sport.

This has been pretty much static over the last few seasons and unfortunately this spring was very difficult because of weather conditions with most equestrian sports suffering.

5. Promotion of the Sport to a wider audience.

Jane Carley was appointed in Autumn 2012 to assist with PR for the sport as a whole, and she has achieved good coverage not only in Horse and Hound but also in other equestrian and rural magazines such as Horse and Rider, Central Horse News and the Farmers Guardian, as well as a number of regional publications. Jane was widely applauded for her efforts. She has tried to obtain coverage in the wider media and national newspapers, but with only limited success. Horse and Country TV provided excellent coverage at The Cotswold event, and are interested in doing more in the future which Jane will coordinate. The Championship can be promoted not just as an equestrian event, but also as a great day out with a "Country Fair" theme. There is some excellent video action on the website, which demonstrates the appeal of the sport to potential new sponsors.

6. The British Team Chasing National Championship

Dominic White reported on the 2013 National Championship at Heythrop. The Sponsor commented that they had been very well looked after and the day had offered good sport. It had proved to be not just a Team Chase but a family day out. In particular the interlude with gate jumping during the lunch time slot had been a huge success.

Despite the date change the gate entry had been 50% up on the previous year, although team entries were down. 7 out of the 9 teams who started the Championship completed the course satisfactorily and Dominic detailed a number of ideas for further changes to improve the course for next year. It was agreed that Dominic would liaise closely with representatives of the National Committee in driving the event forward to an enhanced level.

7. The Open and Intermediate Leagues

These again ran well but the Committee will review the points system, and in particular points in the Intermediate League for “new” teams completing an Open as the current system tends to skew the figures in the early part of the league season towards teams which are in reality Open Teams. The Committee will consider changes at their November meeting, and implement them for the 2013/14 League competition.

8. Sponsorship arrangements.

Coombe Farm Wines have confirmed to James Buckle that they will continue to sponsor both the Intermediate and Open Leagues, for which the Chairman expressed the sport’s grateful appreciation to Ben, Mark and Rosie Vestey.

The Chairman also confirmed that Material Change will provide the same level of sponsorship to Open events in the 2013/14 season as for the previous season, and that they will sponsor the National Championship in March/April 2014. He also reiterated that they would be very flexible about co-sponsoring alongside other complimentary companies, where such opportunities could be identified. The meeting thanked James for his continued support and the generous investment by the Directors of Material Change.

Retraining of Racehorses (“RoR”) provided special prizes and a contribution at the National Championship to ex-racehorses, which they have agreed to continue in 2013/14. RoR and Di Arbuthnot were thanked for their support.

It was noted that the Goring Hotel’s previous contribution has not been replaced, and therefore the sport needs to find a new National Sponsor to ensure its long term viability. The National Committee emphasised that they believe that there are now sufficient building blocks in place to attract significant corporate support, and attendees were asked to put any suitable companies forward to Philip Cowen, James Buckle or Rosie Vestey in the first instance. However, for the 2013/14 season it was likely that we would have to retain the sponsorship contributions to Open events at the same level as in 2012/13.

9. Course Design and Construction

There was a consensus that the sport needs to continue to engender the “Corinthian Spirit” of cross-country riding, with the Open courses being big and challenging whilst also being safe, properly inspected and with events being run to fully compliant standards. However we must also encourage participation at both Novice and Intermediate level – and properly-constructed and well-presented courses were essential in our attempts to broaden the appeal of the sport.

The feedback from regular competitors and the majority of comment is very positive.

The new Open event at the Worcestershire was discussed in some detail, and was universally welcomed. The Chairman and Organiser’s were thanked for their efforts. There had been some concerns expressed by one team about a particular hedge with a ditch behind, and it was noted that the Committee’s comments would be considered by the organiser for subsequent years.

10. Administration of Events

Events were encouraged to announce split times during commentary and use “professional” and knowledgeable commentators. It was agreed that commentators should wherever possible mention the current ‘national ranking’ of both Open and Intermediate teams during their round, in accordance with that team’s current league position and its (current season) results.

It was noted and agreed that Jonty Evans, Ben Way and Ed Holloway were all considered to be in that bracket. Local commentators for Open events were particularly discouraged by the National Committee. Contact details for commentators with a good track record will be published on the website.

The importance of well-presented, professionally organised and timely prizegivings was re-emphasised. A full on-course commentary of the prizegiving is considered desirable, unless another class is being run simultaneously in which case the commentator of that class should make spectators aware that they should attend the prizegiving to support the sponsors of the event.

11. The Rules, including display at each event

There will be no changes to the Rules ahead of the Autumn 2013 season.

It was noted that a number of events had published “abbreviated rules” in schedules/programmes – which the Committee did not feel was appropriate for reasons of transparency and clarity. The full set of rules need to be prominently displayed at all events and included in full within the programme. A single page pdf document will be made available in the Drop Box facility for event organisers.

12. Medical, Veterinary, Safety and Welfare issues.

It was commented that the costs of medical cover had increased substantially (doubled?) over recent years but it has been agreed that the requirements which were stipulated in the rules should not be changed as this may compromise safety. There are a number of “new” providers of medical cover, and details should be made available to event organisers and if possible published on the website.

The use of fluorescent tabbards for event officials at the Heythrop event was an excellent idea and was being recommended to other events by the Committee.

13. Recognition Fees, Course Inspection Fees and Sponsorship Levy.

These are to remain the same for the forthcoming season, and will be used for the general benefit and promotion of the sport.

14. The Accounts – to be tabled.

The accounts were tabled, reviewed, discussed and approved.

15. Dates for 2013—2014 Events.

The dates for Autumn events have been agreed, circulated previously and are now available on the website. The Spring dates have not yet been finalised but will be published in the Autumn.

16. Any other business.

- a. It was suggested from the floor that all teams completing an Open should receive rosettes to recognise the achievement.
- b. The ongoing Safety Review will be concluded at the earliest opportunity and hopefully in advance of the Autumn season. The panel who are considering current rules and guidelines in this regard are Philip Cowen (Executive Chairman), Jonathan Clissold (BE Safety Officer), Netty Nevill (BTC Senior Course Inspector), Mike Felton (former BTC Committee Member and Director, Point-to-Point Authority) and Tony Berry (current BTC Committee Member). It was suggested that any matters of material importance which Team Chasing supporters wished to put forward for

consideration by the sub-committee panel, should be submitted directly to Philip, Netty or Tony in the first instance.

17. Date of 2014 Annual Conference.

This will again be at Cheltenham Racecourse on the same day as the Hunter Chase meeting. The Directors and Executive at Cheltenham Racecourse were thanked by the Chairman for their generosity in providing the facilities.