



*Showing the way*

15 July 2019

Dear Member

**Subject            2019 Hufglocken Grand National Saddle Horse and Rider Championships  
Debrief - Event Summary and Review**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The 2019 Hufglocken Grand National Saddle Horse and Rider Championships was held at the Sydney International Equestrian Centre (SIEC), Horsley Park, New South Wales, from Tuesday 26 March 2019 to Saturday 30 March 2019 inclusive.

In addition to the traditional Grand National saddle horse, rider and children saddle classes, the 2019 Grand Nationals also played host to Young Horses for the first time. The Young Horse classes were held outdoors on a grass arena, with a final each night on the indoor arena where the respective winner of each class presented for Grand Champion Young Horse. Tuesday night played host to Grand Champion Young Show Horse, and Wednesday night played host to the Grand Champion Young Show Hunter Horse.

Judges assigned to officiate were Georgina Maywood (UK), Sarah Kellard-Smith (UK) and Kevin McGuinness (IRE). Vanessa Everton (NZ) was assigned to officiate Young Horse classes. All judges were professional in every way and were an absolute pleasure to work with.

## **GRAND NATIONAL SUBCOMMITTEE**

For the first time, a formal subcommittee was created to deliver the Grand Nationals. To ensure a true representation across all States, the subcommittee comprised the Executive, Finance Subcommittee, and a representative from both South Australia and Western Australia to ensure a true representation of all States. Members of the 2019 Grand National Subcommittee were Tony Norris (VIC) - Chair, Steve Elliott (ACT), John Paget (NSW), Leanne McDowall (QLD), Roseanne Bowerman (NSW), Ian Stewart (NSW), Melissa Oven (NSW), Sean Aylett (QLD), Geraldine Crocker (SA) and Alison Laycock (WA).

Whilst the creation of a large subcommittee provided a true representation of all States, it did, at times, prove challenging to ensure that each person had an opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process. The influx of emails that supported this level of inclusion and communication did prove time consuming and, in hindsight, perhaps unnecessary.

Although a large subcommittee was challenging, its creation was absolutely vital in overseeing such a large and important event. The subcommittee must be responsible for the event and have the ability to make decisions regarding the delivery of Grand Nationals, and each person on the subcommittee must be allocated specific responsibilities to ensure a high degree of accountability. Having said this, having a subcommittee in place does not prevent the ability of those not on the subcommittee to offer and provide support.

Ultimately, the responsibility for delivering Grand Nationals sits with the executive. Grand Nationals is the signatory event of the SHCA and, if it does not meet expectation, the person held responsible is the President.

### **Recommendation**

My recommendations are

- (a) A Grand National subcommittee be created by the Executive that comprises people who have appropriate event management skills to deliver an event of this magnitude. Each member on the subcommittee should be assigned a particular responsibility, with the ability to engage other people to provide assistance as required. The chair of the subcommittee must be the President, who has ultimate responsibility for the success of the event.
- (b) The brand of Grand Nationals must be defined and protected. All branding must be consistent and controlled.
- (c) A long-term strategy is to engage a professional Event Management specialist

### **WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

Although the title of Grand Nationals includes the name of the major sponsor, it does not reference SHCA. Given that this is the flagship event of the Show Horse Council and vital to its brand, this is of significant concern.

The President undertook an initiative to actively promote the history of Grand Nationals and to recognise the success of competitors back to the inaugural Grand Nationals. The intent of this initiative was to look at the history of Grand Nationals and build excitement in the lead up to the 2019 Grand Nationals. This initiative took considerable effort but was extremely well received; however, a dedicated Grand National social media account would have been ideal whereby history could have been interspersed with advertising on behalf of sponsorship partners.

It is without doubt that Grand Nationals must have its own stand-alone website and social media accounts, and have a suitably qualified person assigned to this responsibility. It is extremely difficult to flood the SHCA website and Facebook with information and promotional material relating to Grand Nationals at the same time the SHCA is attempting to promote relevant updates and other SHCA events. This is a vital and important role not only in the lead up to events, but also intensely throughout the event. The importance of social media cannot be underestimated.

### **Recommendation**

My recommendations are

- (d) The title Grand Nationals be altered from the *Grand National Saddle Horse and Rider Championships* to simply, *The SHCA Grand Nationals* or *SHCA Grand Nationals*, with the naming- rights sponsor to be inserted.
- (e) A stand-alone Grand National website be created, similar to that of [www.hoys.co.uk](http://www.hoys.co.uk), and that all social media promotion for Grand Nationals be completed using the dedicated Grand National website and dedicated applications such as Facebook and Instagram.
- (f) A suitably qualified person be assigned and paid to oversee all branding and marketing aspects of Grand Nationals

## **EVENT COORDINATOR**

In October 2018, the SHCA Executive was left in a position where it was required to advertise the role of Event Coordinator. The SHCA received three expressions of interest. Interviews were then undertaken, from which an appointment was made.

The appointment did provide challenges. As there were no formal documents in place regarding the delivery of various aspects of Grand Nationals, it took time for the Event Coordinator to understand what was required. This placed considerable, and sometimes unreasonable, pressure on the Coordinator.

### **Recommendation**

My recommendations are

- (g) Short-term strategy is for monies previously invested in an Event Coordinator be redirected to areas such as branding and marketing.
- (h) Medium to long-term strategy is to engage a professional Event Management specialist who will oversee all matters pertaining to Grand Nationals for a full 12-month period

## **TRADE STANDS**

Maps that clearly detailed the measurements of SIEC were created by the Event Coordinator, and various trade stand configurations were developed. Trade stand opportunities at Grand Nationals should be openly advertised and traders encouraged to apply. In allocating traders, the SHCA should then give consideration to long-term supporters, sponsors and variety of traders which is ultimately controlled by available space, configuration of the trade stands and their location. Trade stand allocation should also be considered in areas other than the indoor arena.

### **Recommendation**

My recommendation is

- (i) A comprehensive review of trade stand space and trader opportunity to be undertaken with a view to refreshing the trade stand space, maximising the attendance of traders, and encouraging foot traffic to the trade stands.

## **SPONSORSHIP**

The 2019 Grand National subcommittee undertook a complete review of the sponsorship packages to determine what was included in the package and the true cost of each class. It was very evident that the sponsorship contributed very little to the cost of the class and that sponsorship was extremely undervalued.

The Young Horse classes were extremely difficult to attract sponsorship for and it took many phone calls and the support of some Affiliates to cover each class. On the other hand, the enthusiasm for sponsoring the traditional classes was so great that we could not commit to a number of potential sponsors who wanted to only sponsor the traditional Grand Nationals classes.

All SHCA Affiliates and Constituent Affiliates were approached to provide sponsorship, with most Affiliates happily providing sponsorship to Young Horse classes, Saddle and Rider Classes, Competitors BBQ, and Grand Champions.

To support our focus of 'members first', a decision was made to attract additional sponsorship for select classes. This was difficult as we had naming-right sponsors who had already committed to classes; however, we wanted to give back to our members and create additional prizemoney for the Top 5. We then developed a Top 5 cash sponsorship package for the Open Saddle Horse, Show Hunter Classes and Rider Classes whereby the money provided was given directly to the competitors. This was a great initiative and well received, although, on reflection, the class sponsor should have initially been given the first option to sponsor the Top 5 in addition to their class before seeking another sponsor.

### **Recommendation**

My recommendations are

- (j) Undertake a comprehensive review of costs and sponsorship packages and replace them with strong and financially viable partnership agreements
- (k) Complete a comprehensive survey of previous and potential sponsors to determine what type of information and inclusions they would seek in a partnership agreement
- (l) Investigate the ability to provide potential sponsorship partners with statistical information regarding all aspects of the Grand Nationals

### **CLASSES**

One of the aims of the 2019 Grand National Subcommittee was to continue to build upon the prestige of Grand Nationals. To support this approach, in addition to a Top 10, the subcommittee introduced a Top 5 whereby the Top 10 was called forward, and placings from 5<sup>th</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> were recognised. This was promoted in advance and extremely well received by competitors.

To continue with our approach of building upon prestige, it was decided to remove the 'Best Presented' from each class. As competitors competing at Grand Nationals level are always immaculately presented, and with the introduction of Top 5, we felt that the removal of this award supported our vision of building upon the prestige of the event.

Owner/Rider awards were maintained and presented to the highest placed horse ridden by the owner. The presentation of this award proved difficult as we chose to announce the highest placed owner/rider first so as to not take away from the excitement of the winner being announced. On many occasions, presenting this award revealed who the winner or the runner-up was going to be. Also, the true intention of the Owner/Rider class was lost as some horses were ridden by people who had leased the horse or had changed riders and were not actually the owner/rider.

### **Recommendation**

My recommendations are

- (m) Top 10 and Top 5 announcement and presentation remain unchanged
- (n) Owner/Rider presentations be removed from Grand Nationals. The focus should always be on the horse or the rider and their success
- (o) Owner/rider recognition be actively supported at state and local level

## **VOLUNTEERS**

Over 60 people volunteered at the 2019 Grand Nationals, representing every state. Many were people who have never volunteered at Grand Nationals before but were enthusiastic to be involved in one of the most prestigious horse shows in Australia. Tuesday and Wednesday of Grand Nationals saw classes in both the indoor arena and outdoor arena being run conjunctively, which required a large number of volunteers to run the classes and provide support behind the scenes. Volunteer payments of \$60 half-day and \$120 full-day were made. The increase in volunteers did result in an increased cost to the event.

With a large volunteer group who had not previously assisted at Grand Nationals came the need to provide additional support and direction. This was not adequately put in place and occasionally led to uncertainty and a couple of very minor errors. The advantage is that we now have a large pool of people with experience that can assist us into the future.

### **Recommendation**

My recommendation is

- (p) At Grand Nationals, a designated and appropriately qualified person be appointed as the primary point of contact and decision maker to be accessible at all times. Ideally, this should be the role of a Ringmaster/President.

## **CAMPING AND STABLING**

Although some interstate competitors were already present at SIEC, official bump-in for competitors commenced at 8.00am on Sunday 24 March 2019. In the past, competitors were not allowed to enter SIEC until midday, creating a long queue of cars and trucks waiting patiently. To eliminate the frustration of waiting, competitors were able to stagger their arrival, making it a much easier for wardens to facilitate stabling and parking.

Whilst every effort was made to look after requests made to the wardens in the lead-up to the event, it is difficult to ensure that all requirements were understood, and all requests met. Expert knowledge of the SIEC grounds is required, along with robust online capability that allows all information regarding truck size and weight, caravan size and weight, horse float size and camping requirements to be captured.

As every stable is checked by SIEC throughout the night to confirm stable occupancy, competitors using a stable as a tack room created problems as the stable was not paid for by the exhibitor but invoiced by SIEC. When stabling is at capacity, this becomes a problem.

### **Recommendation**

My recommendations are

- (q) Explore online capabilities that allows exhibitors to select their stable location and provide information regarding truck, caravan, horse float and camping requirements
- (r) Strictly prohibit the use of a stable as a tack room, with a strong consequence in place for those not abiding by the decision of the Stable Warden

## **LIVESTREAMING**

Australian Equine Network was set up to provide livestreaming from the indoor arena, with the ability to record and provide vision of Young Horse classes that were held outdoors on Tuesday and Wednesday to be watched later in the day. Livestreaming was extremely affordable at \$20 per day, which was discounted to \$15 on the last day of the event.

Whilst Hufglocken held the Grand National naming rights, we proudly partnered with the BARE Equestrian to provide a sponsored space for livestreaming. This worked extremely well in covering the hire of furniture with a stretch fabric screen promoting both BARE and Hufglocken placed behind the livestream hosts, Jeremy Roberts and Leonie Walsh.

Leonie and Jeremy did an incredible job in playing host over 5 days of livestreaming. Their knowledge of the sport and interaction with guests was professional and extremely well received. Feedback was received from those watching around the globe and this presence opens up the opportunity for the Grand Nationals to be more interactive with its viewers.

Universal Stables came on board as sponsor of a new initiative to provide an outdoor screen for those in the marshalling area. This initiative was extremely well received and appreciated by all competitors. This is something that needs to continue.

AEN registered 1,012 livestream customers who purchased the 5-day livestream package. An additional 90 users registered for Saturday-only access, totalling 1,102 registered customers of livestream. The group of 1,102 registered customers made 43,559 page views comprising:

- Australia = 41,373
- Hong Kong = 23
- India = 2
- Indonesia = 6
- Ireland = 46
- Japan = 7
- New Zealand = 1,879
- Papua New Guinea = 3
- United Arab Emirates = 23
- United Kingdom = 106
- United States = 91

In summary, 43,559 pages were viewed by 1,102 registered customers over 5 days, equating to 7.9 page views per registered customer per day. The average viewing time was 12 minutes.

The devices used to access livestreaming were:

- desktop = 8,037
- mobile telephone = 28,673
- tablet = 6,849

The average viewing time suggests that the viewers were watching Grand National streams for short periods of time and the high number of page views suggest that they were tuning in several times a day.

It is also important to keep in mind that there may also be groups of people who were watching livestreaming together by sitting next to each other watching the same device, for example, watching the livestream connected to a television or watching it together on a mobile telephone.

The ability for livestream costs to be offset by the purchase of the livestream advertising was introduced for the first time. Although this was only promoted with a short lead-time, we were able to sell advertising packages quickly. We also have the ability to play an advertisement up to 30 seconds each time a person logs onto livestreaming. This, for example, would equate to 41,373 advertisements for those in Australia.

Login advertising would be of particular interest to many sponsors and offers the SHCA significant marketing opportunities that must be explored as we seek additional revenue to offset ever-increasing costs. Ideally, this should be actively pursued by a suitably qualified person

## **Recommendation**

My recommendation is

- (s) A suitably qualified and paid person be assigned to oversee all livestreaming opportunities with the aim to maximise exposure and revenue. Also refer to Recommendation (d)

## **SATURDAY NIGHT OF STARS**

The format for 2019 was consistent with previous years in that each competitor for Grand Champion worked and the winner was selected by the three judges using the SHCA scoring method. At the conclusion of judging Grand Champion, the competitors re-presented as a group in the arena with their garlands and sashes, standing in an arch formation to present to all spectators. Short farewell speeches concluded the evening.

My view is that the Night of Stars appeared rushed and the background music was not uplifting and in keeping with the intent of the night. Competitors were given a set workout. As this is the competitors' moment of glory and time to shine, a free workout would have been more appropriate so as to allow the competitors to demonstrate why they were worthy Grand National winners.

The Night of Stars requires a complete overhaul and consideration given to the necessity of Grand Champion. Not all Grand Champion prizemoney is covered by sponsorship and many competitors feel that, whilst it is great to see all of the winners paraded, the award of a Grand Champion takes away from the prestige of winning at the Grand Nationals.

## **Recommendation**

My recommendations are

- (t) Undertake a comprehensive review of the Saturday night with a view to provide an event for approximately 3 - 4 hours that showcases our sport and celebrates a wonderful week of the Grand Nationals.
- (u) Ensure all Grand Champion prizemoney is adequately covered in any partnership agreement

## **SATURDAY NIGHT DINNER**

The Saturday night dinner is currently seen as an opportunity for the SHCA to thank sponsors for their commitment to Grand Nationals and allow sponsors to be joined by paying guests who would like something more formal to enjoy the parade of winners. The dinner is extremely costly to host in its current format, and the cost of a free dinner to some sponsors reduces the true dollar value of their sponsorship. This year, the dinner area was covered by a fully sponsored marquee, a first for Grand Nationals.

## **Recommendation**

My recommendation is

- (v) Saturday night dinner be completely overhauled and replaced by an event that allows more people to participate and celebrate the event at an affordable price

## **ADMINISTRATION OFFICE**

Competitor numbers and all camping information was available from the Administration Office at the SIEC Riders' Retreat. The proximity of the administration team to the stables and camping worked perfectly.

The Indoor Arena Administration Area played host to general enquires and was used to coordinate all ribbons, garlands, rug and trophies. Being such a large event, the Indoor Arena Administration Office was also a point of contact for volunteers and often became congested. The office was also the primary contact for payment and dinner/event tickets.

### **Recommendation**

My recommendations are

- (w) Administration Office open at SIEC Riders' Retreat for first days of event, then move to indoor arena
- (x) Administration support clearly understand their roles, responsibilities and escalation

## **ENTRY CLOSING DATE AND PAYMENT**

All monies must be paid prior to the event. The administration and volunteer fees must be paid per horse and not per entry as it is evident that competitors are joining forces in submitting entries which avoided paying various fees. This seems to be an anomaly with SAMMS and needs to be tightly managed with any future online portal.

Entries closing mid-January instead of New Year's Eve was very well received and supported our 'member first' approach by limiting outgoing costs to members during the most expensive time of the year.

### **Recommendation**

My recommendations are

- (y) Administration Fee and Volunteer Fees to apply per horse
- (z) Grand National entries close mid-January

## **ARENA MANAGEMENT**

The indoor arena was overseen by the Ringmaster, Assistant Ringmaster, Chief Ring Steward and two supporting stewards. This approach limited and controlled access to the judges throughout the show and ensured that a consistent and very transparent approach to management of the arena was maintained.

The outdoor arena was overseen by a Chief Ring Steward and two supporting stewards who were very effective in controlling the classes so as not to clash with the indoor arena. This worked well, maintained confidentiality and allowed for a high level of transparency that was vital to the success of the event.

### **Recommendation**

My recommendations

- (aa) Persons assigned to oversee Grand National arenas and judges be limited and restricted

## **PRESENTATIONS, AWARDS AND PRIZES**

Unfortunately, due to a misunderstanding with the printer, 'Thank you for coming' was printed on the rosettes presented to competitors that did not make Top 10. This was obviously an extremely regrettable error and did not support the message of inclusion and encouragement that we wanted for the event. As the rosettes provide SHCA with an opportunity to include a simple and positive message, we should take advantage of this.

Top 10 sashes or rosettes were presented to all competitors who were selected in the Top 10. Top 5 competitors were awarded sashes or rosettes that placed them 5<sup>th</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup>. Top 10 sashes or rosettes only need to be presented to those that are not in the Top 5.

The garlands photographed beautifully and looked great on the horses. Having said that, I am not convinced with the appropriateness of riders being presented with garlands that cross their shoulders or are used as arm bands. The winner's sash should be the focus of the class winner; however, this is lost with the size of the garlands and the 'extras' that are being presented. Sometimes, less is best.

We commenced the event by placing rugs on horses as part of the presentation process, and due to a safety concern with one horse, we made the decision to stop placing rugs on horses during the presentation phase. Whilst rugs look great on horses, safety becomes a concern when the horses become excited by the crowd noise as they exit the arena. Rugs can be presented in such a way that sponsor details on the rugs are clearly identified. Photographs can also be taken post event with the horse wearing the rug in a calmer environment, away from the noise and excitement of the indoor arena

Three Awards Stewards were assigned to both the indoor and outdoor arena. The Awards Stewards were invaluable; however, some sashes were placed upside down and there was confusion as to how some were to be pinned.

### **Recommendation**

My recommendations are

- (bb) Undertake a review of all garlands, sashes and rosettes with the prestige of Grand Nationals to be reflected in the quality of the sashes, rosettes and garlands
- (cc) The multitude of colours replaced with very traditional and classic colours, or colours that are consistent throughout the whole event
- (dd) Enquiries be made to create a SHCA and Grand National specific plaque/medallion that can be used to pin sashes and kept as a memento.
- (ee) Awards Stewards at Grand Nationals to be provided with training to confirm how sashes, rosettes and garlands are to be presented
- (ff) Complete a risk management review of rugs being placed on horses during the presentation at Grand Nationals to determine if appropriate

## **MEMBERS' FEEDBACK**

In 2019, member feedback of Grand Nationals was encouraged and actively promoted. This was extremely well received and lots of fantastic feedback, suggestions, ideas and improvements made. Although members were encouraged to provide Grand National feedback directly, some Grand National related questions were included in the SHCA Member Survey #1. The SHCA Member Survey #1 attracted over 900 responses, a fantastic representation of our members' views.

The results of the SHCA Member Survey #1 and the 2019 Grand National Feedback Register are attached.

## **Recommendations**

My recommendations are

- (gg) Immediately announce inclusion of the Runner-Up of Children's Saddle Classes as a qualification
- (hh) Undertake a survey of all members regarding the expansion of pony heights into 3 divisions
- (ii) Undertake a survey of all members regarding the expansion of hack heights into 3 divisions
- (jj) Undertake a survey of members to include an additional Shetland Class at the Grand Nationals
- (kk) Undertake a survey of all members to divide the age group of older riders
- (ll) Undertake a survey of all members regarding the future of Grand Champions on Saturday night

## **SUMMARY**

The 2019 Hufglocken Grand National Saddle Horse and Rider Championships was an extremely successful event that was organised and delivered in a very short time frame. The intention for 2019 was for the subcommittee to deliver an event that was extremely inclusive and competitor friendly with a 'member first' focus, adding a few changes along the way to make it interesting.

I am satisfied that our intention was successfully delivered; however, there are a number of lessons from the event that need to be considered for future Grand Nationals. Grand Nationals requires changes that are refreshing and innovative in order to maintain its prestige on the Australasian Show Horse calendar. It must be seen as a competitor-friendly, member-first event that is the pinnacle for every show horse and rider.

Should you have any questions regarding this report or Grand Nationals, please feel free to contact me.

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