

# Grading

**In the leaflet *Graded Races* published by The National Horseracing Authority of South Africa last year, it was stated that since discussions around the grading of races in South Africa began in 1977 there have been two distinct camps on the award of Grade 1 status to races:**

- Those that believe that Grade 1 races can only be run as Weight-For-Age events (strictly speaking the international requirement, except in the US and Australia)
- Those that believe that Grade 1 races can be run as handicaps, because of the *unique circumstances* in SA.

The latter has prevailed in SA, although there has been some tightening up of conditions lately.

It seems to me that there are two reasons why those in the latter camp are against the strict policy of awarding Grade 1 races only to WFA events:

1. Doing so would not give recognition to the quality of the horses participating in some events.
2. Doing so may make the marketing / securing of sponsorship for a major event difficult should that race be described as a *Grade 3* event for instance.

A shortcoming of the current grading system is that it tries to incorporate a significant amount of information in a single measure. It seems to me that the factors that need to be considered in awarding a grade may be summarized by two measures:

- a. The class and preparedness of the horses participating; and
- b. The equality of the terms at which these horses participate

I believe that it would be best to judge these measures separately and then classify a race as a combination of these two measures, thereby awarding it a *Class\**, according to the following table:

CLASSIFICATIONS		
Equality of terms		
A	AA	AAA
B	BB	BBB
C	CC	CCC
DDD		

↑ Quality and preparedness of horses

While I do not wish to pre-judge any races, I have for illustration purposes included what I believe the Class of a number of major races might be under the new system:

- The Cape Guineas might be awarded an AAA rating as it attracts the highest quality 3yo's at terms where the best horse generally has every chance of winning.
- AA ratings might be awarded to the J&B Met and Gomma Gomma Challenge, both conditions races whose equality of terms may be regarded as falling in the middle column, and which attract the highest quality of horses. The Vodacom Durban July and Canon Gold Cup may also fit into this category as these are essentially restricted handicaps.
- A rating of BBB might be awarded to the Green Point Stakes, run at WFA where the quality and preparedness of the horses participating may not be of the highest level.
- The Melbourne Cup and Golden Horse Sprint might be awarded A ratings, both attracting the highest quality horses at open handicap terms.

## GROUPINGS

Group 1
Group 2
Group 3
Listed

A grouping of Classes within the table, as illustrated by the shadings, may then be done for purposes such as awarding weights to conditions events like as the J&B Met.

I believe that the proposed revision of the grading system can unify the two camps and will result in a considerable improvement to many aspects of horseracing in South Africa.

It warrants serious consideration.

\* The term *Class* is preferred to *Grade*, which to the best of my knowledge is interchangeable with the term *Group* used in the UK, in the classification proposed above as the term *Group* is reserved for the grouping of Classes within the table.

*via email- Gregory Cort*