

“What should racing administrators in the European and Mediterranean region do to encourage greater participation in horseracing among young adults and, in particular, among students?”

By Kate Madden

Horse Racing among young people has grown in popularity over the recent years, but generally it is only during peak times of the season. Although students may have low budgets and low salary incomes, they tend to go all out for “the races”. In order to encourage more young people, particularly students to have a greater participation with horse racing as an industry, they need to be enticed.

Enticing students and young people can be difficult but one of the easiest way to do so is to convince them that they are getting value for every cent they spend. The following are three suggestions on how to encourage more young people and students to get involved: National Student Race Day, Student Marquee Areas, and Membership commitments.

Although student race days are very well known and gain a lot of traction from individual universities, there is no national student race day which allows students from all over the country to join. Ideally, a larger racecourse would need to be anticipated, for example in Ireland, the newly upgraded Curragh Racecourse which has a holding capacity of an outstanding 30,000 people. In most Irish universities, there are approx 20,000 students. That means if 15% of students from each of the ten universities in Ireland attended the race meeting, that would be an extra 30,000 people that could potentially attend more races. In order to encourage all of the university students to get involved, a student race would be very enticing. This could be where two members from each university dress up in their college colours and race as amateurs or in a bumper-style race. Obviously, the criteria for who could participate would be strict as they would need experience of racing thoroughbreds

professionally. This could be implemented at numerous meetings throughout the year to keep the interest and the spark alive among university students and young people.

Secondly, the idea of a Student or young person marquee at each race meeting where there is a designated area for under 25 year olds. Once they show a form of university ID or a legit form of ID proving that they are between the ages of 18 and 25, they would be accepted entry. This area at each race meeting could strongly encourage students to travel around to different race meetings, both nationally and internationally. A “Student Club” could be designed to entice students to become a part of a family that will belong in the racing industry long after their college days.

Finally, following on from the Student or young person designated area, a membership programme could also be put in place. If students were given an annual discounted membership rate which would regard them access to all racecourses and Student or young person marquees. Students tend to be on a tight budget which could sometimes prevent them from spending €20 or €30 on an entry fee to each race meeting, when they plan on spending the majority of their money inside the gates of the racecourse anyway!