Mathematics made simple

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OW, before you get into the serious mathematics, statistics and graphics of James Willoughby’s column, I’ll give you an equation that you can all understand: average number of runners per race = (number of horses in training x average number of runs per horse) / number of races. Simple, isn’t it? You would certainly think so, but maybe it depends on whether you are an owner, a trainer, a BHA executive, or a racecourse manager, because the racecourse managers and the governing body just don’t seem to be able to grasp it.

The BHA are intent on clamping down on the number of non-runners and have sought support for their proposals on the back of claims that non-runners have a serious impact on the public’s enjoyment of the sport, and on those substantial international revenues generated by the use of 48-hour declarations which we continually hear about, but never see any evidence of.

Personally, I don’t think it is about that at all. It is actually about media rights money, field sizes, and failure to come to terms with the effects of that simple equation I started with. Greed drives the betting industry’s hunger for more races every year and the racecourses’ desire to meet that demand. Deep down they must know that there aren’t enough horses to service that fixture list, or enough owners willing to pay for them, but an even just less chance of winning than they might have elsewhere, whose fault is that? Should courses be running races where the field size or stalls position means that some participants have little chance of winning, or even significantly less chance than others? If you think your horse has no chance of winning, should you be forced to use up one of your precious runs which, on average, cost owners more than £3,000 a time?

If, for some reason, whatever the reason, a race has become so unattractive to an owner or trainer, should the racecourses and BHA not first be looking to themselves to see where they are going wrong, rather than look at measures to force trainers to run when they don’t want to? They need to keep going back to that equation. To get bigger field sizes they need to encourage owners to buy more horses, to run them more often, or there needs to be fewer available races. The BHA’s new measures don’t address any of those issues. All they do is alienate the very people who could help them to solve the problem.

THE PROBLEMS that we encounter with social media and internet trolls has been brought to the fore again by the death of Permian at Arlington earlier this month and is dealt with in James Willoughby’s column, misconceptions are self-made. Mathematics made simple, and handicaps worth £80,000, £50,000 and £30,000 on a single Saturday.

I hate to admit that I started to wonder how they can possibly do it but perhaps I have been brainwashed by 30 years of listening to racecourses pleading poverty and blaming poor prize-money on others. Maybe they could all do as well as Chelmsford. Maybe they could all do better than they do now.

I think it is time to wise up. The misconceptions are self-made. One got very upset that she should be considered in the same category as this other person. She has, however, stopped sending me mail, at least for the time being.