



GCSE

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UNIT 1 (READING)**

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Resource Material

Calls to ban National after two horses die

The Grand National was last night facing growing calls for it to be banned after two horses died in this year's race, and just 19 of the 40 starters finished the race.

The gruelling four-and-a-half-mile event claimed the lives of two horses, Ornaïs, with a broken neck at the fourth fence, which is 5ft high, and Dooney's Gate, who died from a broken back at Becher's Brook, the notorious fence which has a 7ft drop. Both horses fell on the first lap to gasps of horror from the 70,000 crowd at Aintree.

We've heard claims over the years that the course is being made safer, safer, safer. No, it's not. The Grand National should be banned. It's a deliberately hazardous event. It is challenging to horses and riders and predictably lethal.



The tightly-packed field, long distance and crowd noise means it is extremely dangerous for horses. It's a depraved spectacle on a par with Spanish bullfighting. It is animal abuse. Horse racing is a bloody, ruthless business. Hundreds of horses are raced to death and many more suffer permanent injuries. But of all the races, the Grand National is the most dangerous. There is no such thing as a harmless flutter. Every person who bets on the race is gambling with the lives of horses. When the ground is dry – like this year – more accidents tend to happen. Falling on dry ground is like landing on concrete. This race is a national disgrace and it should have no future in a civilised society.

As we approach racing's national day of shame, there is one thing you can bet on, and that is the horses will definitely suffer, if not die, during the Grand National. The annual race, which is one of the key events in the racing calendar, has seen the deaths of countless horses over the years as they compete over one of the most gruelling and demanding courses in racing history. The fences are very big and horses are exhausted when they have to jump so many obstacles, but I don't see a solution by altering the fences. It is hugely distressing, but sadly, not surprising that there were two fatalities this year. There have been seventeen deaths at the event in the past sixteen years, so surely it is time for common sense to prevail.

Whatever you do with the Grand National, you can't avoid horses being killed. The answer really has to be an outright ban.

by Andrew Tyler



Images: Getty Images, Press Association Images