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THE BLOG**

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Keep Prize-Money Simple, and Motivating for Owners – Some Thoughts on Prize-Money Distribution

“Tinkering around with minor percentages on prize-money distribution to owners misses the point. Owners need an allocation that is both motivating and felt fair. Fundamental changes are needed in order to attract and retain owners.”

I'm

only doing this blog because I was invited today by the ROA to complete a survey on *Owners' Prize-Money Distribution*. No problems at all with that, and I duly completed it. You may know that prize-money is currently allocated between owners of winning and placed horses in line with the following distribution:

	Flat	Flat	Jumps	Jumps
	Non-Pattern	Pattern	Non-Pattern	Pattern
	%	%	%	%
Owner of Winner	50.64	46.64	49.53	45.62
Owner of 2nd	16.78	19.06	16.41	18.65
Owner of 3rd	8.39	9.53	8.21	9.32
Owner of 4th	4.19	4.77	4.10	4.66

The first observation of course is that there doesn't appear to be any logic whatsoever between the various percentages, none of which are the same so there is no consistency between Flat vs. Jumps or Pattern vs. Non-Pattern races.

Equally it is worth noting that these percentages don't add up to 100% because an amount is taken out to split between trainers, jockeys and stable staff. I'm not going to address this subject in any detail today, other than saying that I've felt for a long time that the trainer percentage should be allocated much more to the grass-roots trainer. Do John Gosden, Aidan O'Brien, Nicky Henderson or Willie Mullins really need a percentage top-up to their already huge income from premium training fees? On the other hand, for many lesser trainers and their stable staff, this percentage is a lifeline without which they would probably go under.

Anyway, back to the prize-money distribution issue. Doubtless as a result of the ROA survey there will be some tinkering around with the percentages, but doesn't that really miss the point? Wouldn't it be so much better to have a prize-money allocation that owners can both understand easily and find motivating and "felt fair" and wouldn't need a calculator to try to work it out? The Owners for Owners proposal would be that any horse that finishes 4th in any class of race picks up a minimum of £500 (thereby covering most of the costs on most race-days of getting the horse to the track); the 3rd, £1,000; 2nd, £2,000; and the winner, £4,000 (plus the percentage of stakes as now). Obviously this would be an overall increase of prize-money in each race, and I would fund that by reducing the total prize-money for Group and Listed races, and reallocating it to the bottom of the pyramid.

Before leaving the subject, I am very appreciative of the way prize-money now goes down to 8th in some races, particularly on those race tracks run by Jockey Club Racecourses. Again I'd argue for setting a figure for 5th to 8th that isn't derisory, however, and then working up to the winner using the same principle as described above. I believe the current figure is £300, which isn't a bad starting point when you think that jockey fees and entry fees (and then only for the lowest grades of races) take up the best part of £200, before you even get the horse to the course.

Rather than tinkering around with percentages, it would be far more positive for attracting and retaining owners to have a fundamental change. That is what the leaders of racing need to focus on and press for, as a matter of urgency.

