

# EUROPEAN PATTERN COMMITTEE ANNOUNCES CHANGES TO THE 2017 EUROPEAN PROGRAMME / 01 FEB 17

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ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN PATTERN COMMITTEE



At its annual meeting held on Monday 23 January, the European Pattern Committee (EPC) considered a number of changes to Flat Pattern and Listed races in Europe for 2017.

The committee debated a full agenda, including applications from each country to make changes to Black Type races for 2017. In addition, the EPC considered, in depth, the ongoing project pertaining to the staying horse and how the committee could play its part in helping to safeguard the future of the staying horse in Europe. As such, a number of exceptional enhancements to the Pattern and Listed race programme for stayers across Europe have been approved for 2017. These include:

- Qatar Goodwood Cup at Goodwood (16f, 3yo+, 1 Aug) to be upgraded to Group 1
- Queen's Vase at Royal Ascot (3yo only, 23 June) to be upgraded to Group 2 and its distance altered from 16f to 14f
- Oleander-Rennen at Hoppegarten (16f, 4yo+, 14 May) to be upgraded to Group 2
- Loughbrown Stakes at the Curragh (16f, 3yo+, 24 Sept) to be upgraded to Group 3
- Eyrefield Stakes at Leopardstown (9f, 2yo, 28 Oct) to be upgraded to Group 3

- The creation of a new 3yo only 13f Listed race at Navan on 20 May
- Two new 14 furlongs 4yo+ Listed races to be created in Germany – one on 16 April and one on 13 August

These upgrades demonstrate the appetite from the EPC for this long-term project to enhance the stayers' programme, with a view to incentivising the breeding, owning and training of quality staying horses in Europe. The work has been led by a sub-committee of Britain, Ireland and France, which met a number of times during 2016 and whose work will continue during this year, with an aim to improve the stayers' programme further, including a particular focus on fillies and mares.

Brian Kavanagh, Chairman of the European Pattern Committee, said:

"The EPC has agreed that it remains vital, now more than ever, that Europe supports a strong programme for horses racing over extended distances. No other part of the world provides a meaningful programme of races for such horses and some appear to have almost given up altogether. Whilst the programme for stayers features some important races, it does not offer a Group 1 race over a distance in excess of 14½ furlongs between Royal Ascot and the Qatar Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe meeting. We agreed that it would seem sensible to have a European Group 1 over two miles in the summer, and the historic Goodwood Cup is well-positioned in the year, and was felt to be the obvious candidate.

"We also agreed that the overall stayers' programme needs to cement together well, with various other more minor gaps and enhancements which we've looked to address.

"A few years ago the EPC downgraded the Queen's Vase at Royal Ascot. The race serves a specific, and currently unique, purpose, but it was required to be downgraded automatically under the Ground Rules. This was an uncomfortable outcome, for all of us, but it helped to concentrate our minds on the need to develop greater depth to the pool of young stayers. The reduction in trip for the Queen's Vase should help to make it more of a target for a greater number of quality young horses.

"The European programme needs to be ambitious enough to capture people's attention and start to change behaviour, by making the breeding and buying of stayers a more attractive option. Our aim was to embrace a small number of meaningful enhancements to the Pattern for 2017, with scope for further developments in the years to come."

In addition to the changes to the staying programme outlined above, the EPC agreed that a fundamental component of this project of trying to safeguard – and encourage – the future of the staying horse is to not only enhance the programme for them but to ensure that we protect the existing races. As such, no 13f+ Pattern race in Europe is to be downgraded (unless voluntarily) before 2022 (i.e. protected for minimum of 5 years from 2017), with the position to be reviewed thereafter.

Additionally, it was agreed to try to increase the prize money for the Group 1 staying events wherever possible; the Qatar Goodwood Cup will increase in value from £300,000 to £500,000, while the Palmerstown House Estate Irish St Leger will be increased in value from €400,000 to €500,000. The objective is that all European Group 1 staying contests should become worth at least €500,000 as soon as possible.

#### **Further upgrades and additions**

In addition to the staying race enhancements above, the EPC also approved upgrades for three other Pattern or Listed races, as well as the creation of four new Listed races in 2017, as follows:

#### **Further upgrades:**

- Mooresbridge (1 May, Naas, 4+, 10f) upgraded from Group 3 to

## Group 2

- Alleged (9 April, Naas, 4+, 10f) upgraded from Listed to Group 3
- Princess Royal (29 September, Newmarket, 3+ fillies & mares, 12f) upgraded from Listed to Group 3

### New Listed races (2 in Britain, 2 in Ireland)

- 14 May, Curragh, 3+, 5f
- 3 June, Musselburgh, 3+ fillies & mares, 7f
- 22 September, Ayr, 3+ fillies & mares, 5½f
- 8 October, Navan, 2yo, 5½f

### **Downgrades**

Furthermore, 4 Pattern races and 6 Listed races were downgraded by the EPC following their 2016 renewals. This included the unfortunate demotion of three more Group 1 races in Italy.

The full list of downgraded races is as follows:

### Pattern downgrades

- Premio Vittorio di Capua (24 Sept, Milan, 3+, 1600m) downgraded from Group 1 to 2
- Gran Premio del Jockey Club (15 Oct, Milan, 3+, 2400m) downgraded from Group 1 to 2
- Premio Roma-GBI Racing (5 Nov, Rome, 3+, 2000m) downgraded from Group 1 to 2
- Premio Chiusura (12 Nov, Milan, 2+, 1400m) downgraded from Group 3 to Listed

### Races losing Listed status

- Investec Woodcote (2 June, Epsom Downs, 2yo, 6f)
- Grand Prix du Lion d'Angers (15 July, Le Lion d'Angers, 3yo, 2000m)
- Sachsen Preis (15 July, Dresden, 3+, 1900m)
- Silbernes Band (15 October, Cologne, 3+ 3850m)

- Gobierno Vasco (20 August, San Sebastian, 3+, 1600m)
- Gran Premio de la Hispanidad (12 October, Madrid, 3+, 1600m)

Speaking about the further downgrades to the Italian Pattern, Brian Kavanagh said:

"It is extremely unfortunate that the quality of Italian racing continues in a downward spiral. We intend to engage in conversations with the Italian Ministry in order to ascertain how other European nations might be able to help and to offer advice where possible. Italy obviously has a lengthy and rich history within horseracing and breeding, and it is a sad loss to see the programme of Group 1 races there reduce from seven to one within the space of four years. We truly hope that circumstances will see this situation turn around in the future and that Italy will as soon as possible respect the 90 days limit for the payment of prize money."

#### **Quality Control / Races at Risk of Downgrading in 2018**

Europe sets the high watermark around the world in terms of quality control of its Pattern and Listed races. In accordance with the Ground Rules – which have been strengthened a number of times in the last ten years – races that consistently underperform are identified as at risk of being downgraded, after which the host racecourse is put on notice that if the race fails to achieve the required performance rating then it could be subject to downgrade the following year. Under certain circumstances the downgrade will be automatic, with no opportunity for debate, and under other circumstances (depending on ratings) the race's fate for that year will be the subject of a majority vote.

As a consequence of this monitoring, 16 races comprising eight Pattern races (one Group 1, three Group 2's and four Group 3's) and eight Listed races have been identified as being at risk of downgrade in 2018.

#### **Timing alterations and name changes**

Alongside the upgrades and downgrades, further minor alterations were made to the Black Type programme in terms of the switch of timing and/or venue for a number of races, particularly in the light of the impending redevelopment of the Curragh.

#### **Other matters**

The EPC agreed to nominate Phil Smith as Europe's co-chairman on the World's Best Racehorse Rankings Committee, Phil's existing three-year term being due to expire at the end of January. The IFHA Executive Committee will be asked to ratify the proposal. Asia will nominate the other co-chair.

The committee also commenced a piece of work looking at the use of the fillies' allowance across the European nations and whether there was scope for greater consistency.