

TDN Q&A

Q&A with Rod Street, Chief Executive of the British Champions Series.

On Jan. 15, the European Pattern Committee announced a number of changes for 2015, several pertaining to the Autumn 2-year-old racing program in Europe. One of them was to move the G1 Middle Park S., to an earlier date, a fortnight before the G1 Dewhurst S., and also revert the running of the Dewhurst S. to its initial date, a week prior to British Champions Day. The moves will revive the option for juveniles to run in both Group 1 contests, and has been welcomed by the BHA and Newmarket Racecourses.



Rod Street
Racing Post

Since the inception of the QIPCO British Champions Series, the Middle Park S. and Dewhurst S. had been run on the same day, the so-called "Dubai Future Champions Day." In 2014, this card was held on the eve of British Champions Day, thus giving birth to Britain's "Champions Weekend."

This flagship event, which echoed such popular schemes as Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe weekend in France and the new Irish Champions Weekend, will effectively cease to exist after only one year. We asked Rod Street, Chief Executive of the British Champions Series, for his view on these changes.

TDN: What is your opinion on the changes announced by the Pattern Committee with regards to the G1 Middle Park S. and G1 Dewhurst S.?

Rod Street: It's a positive move. There was originally a one-week gap between Future Champions Day and British Champions Day and they were only brought together because we had to meet fixture list commitments given to the European Pattern Committee. We created British Champions Weekend to take advantage of that change, but both parties were happy with the original timing.

TDN: If this is a positive move from a race planning point of view, aren't you worried about a potential negative impact, in terms of marketing and media exposure, caused by the loss of a championship weekend for all age categories?

RS: We are not worried in the slightest. British Champions Day was created as a stand-alone event, promoting the premier races for 3-year-olds and up. We now return to a clean build-up to both events.

TDN: Will "Future Champions Day" still deserve its billing with the loss of the Middle Park, and what are the options currently being discussed with the BHA and Newmarket Racecourses to maintain this fixture to a very high standard?

RS: This is a matter for Newmarket Racecourses, but I understand their ultimate aim is to put together the best possible 2-year-old Autumn fixture list for the racecourse, which means moving races. I would imagine that their Future Champions Day will remain relevant and be of appropriate quality. In any case, Newmarket has the best 2-year-old program in the world. It's the home of future champions.

TDN: Are there other changes in the pipeline as far as the British Champions Series are concerned?

RS: We have already come a long way in four years, doubling the prize money on offer and receiving three race promotions from the European Pattern Committee--now giving us four Group 1 races and one Group 2. Our objective is to have all five races as Group 1's as soon as possible. This will underpin the day's status as one of the best racedays in the world and the finale to the British Flat racing season.

TDN: What is your overall assessment of the British Champions Series, four years down the line?

RS: The British Champions Series has inspired similar initiatives in Ireland and Australia. This reflects that, in an increasingly competitive international racing world, promoting the best races and events is the right strategy. We are pleased with progress so far, particularly with how British Champions Day has become so quickly established and attracted a long-term, valuable sponsorship with QIPCO.

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