



op/ed

by bobby flay

However, in my opinion, if we are trying to make the Breeders' Cup Championships truly "World" Championships, then every Breeders' Cup race has to be a Grade I, no matter what sex they are.

Girls Can Run Fast Too...

Yesterday, the American Graded Stakes Committee announced their official upgrades and downgrades. I'm sure, if you looked carefully enough, you could make plenty of arguments about races that were rewarded for their importance and races that were penalized for their loss of impact. However, there is certainly one race that sticks out amongst them all. The committee decided that the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf, for colts, was worthy of a promotion from Grade II to a Grade I. I wholeheartedly agree and applaud this move upward. However, the female counterpart of that same race, namely the Breeders Cup Juvenile Fillies Turf, remains a Grade II.

Clearly, this is a short-sighted mistake that can only be labeled as sexist. In the year of 2010, the American Graded Stakes Committee needs to catch up with the rest of society and start treating our Thoroughbreds with equality.

Why in the world would anyone think the colt race is more important than the filly race?

Let's take a quick look at this year's editions. Pluck, the winner of the colt race, ran a courageous and exhilarating race. He had to overcome a bad start and, on the clubhouse turn, avoided a horse that went down in distress, and he still passed them all in the stretch like they were standing still. I know it is sometimes unfair to compare one race against the other, but when a committee is awarding grades that's exactly what they are doing.

So, here we go...The colt race was run in 1:36.98, and the fillies ran it in 1:36.61. By a loose estimation, that's about two lengths, which means that the first three finishers--More Than Real, Winter Memories and Kathmanblu--all could have finished in front of Pluck if they'd been in the colt race. Even more resounding was the results of the very consistent and reliable Thorograph sheet numbers--More Than Real ran five points faster than Pluck.

Moreover, the fields beaten by More Than Real and Pluck stacked up very evenly. There were four prior graded/group winners in each field.

I want to reiterate that I was wowed by Pluck's performance, as was the crowd at Churchill Downs that day. Ironically, as a new member of the Breeders' Cup trustees, I was honored to represent them in the trophy presentation to Team Valor and Pluck. Some of you will realize that as the author of this editorial, I am also the very proud owner of More Than Real. I was thrilled that day to win a Breeders' Cup Championship, no matter what the grade.