



16

Howard Wright



NO-ONE has a monopoly on bright ideas, and some pop up in unexpected places: Last week's European Pari-Mutuel Association conference, and a presentation by Jean-Pierre Kratzer, chairman of the Swiss Racing Federation, provided one such example.

Speaking on the funding of horseracing in Europe, Kratzer was at his most informative when referring to the decade-old Swiss tote tie-up with the French pari-mutuel system.

Kratzer used the mutually beneficial funding mechanism to advance a plea for other European horseracing nations to co-operate on cross-border pool betting, which he said would provide "a unique chance to guarantee the survival of the horseracing sector in Europe".

He had in mind smaller countries or those whose racing is "in the red", such as Sweden, Germany, Austria and Belgium, as well as Switzerland. But he also probably struck a chord with the UK Tote's representatives at the gathering.

As far as pari-mutuel betting is concerned, the UK is among the minnows, but it is beginning to swim in bigger pools through the introduction of new bets.

The latest, the Super7, was modelled on Sweden's V75, itself a perfect example of where the Kratzer vision could be employed for the benefit of UK punters.

Never mind that the bet is staged on seven Swedish trotting races. A typical Saturday pool, on which declarations are made on the Monday and betting opens on the Wednesday, is around £7.8m. Payouts for seven winners of the televised event have been as high as £3.2m.

Compare that with the UK national lottery, which last Saturday drew a jackpot of £5.58m and paid £1.39m to each of four winners. The attraction of being able to bet

Cross-pool betting in Europe an obvious attraction

through the UK Tote into Sweden's ATG pool becomes obvious.

Further appeal comes from Harry Boy, a quick-pick method of betting based on a combination of favourites and longshots, which can be adapted to include a mix of lucky dips and personal selections.

Purists and so-called professionals might not like the idea, but who cares, if novices and numbers fiends want a bit of the action in Sweden and can use the commission-driven UK Tote to get it?

The pros could still find themselves being drawn in, even if Dave Nevison continued to be critical of Tote policy in his Betting Masterclass.

By the way, The Fly on the Wall calls to sympathise with Nevison in his recollection of Super7 misfortune with late-jinker Topless at Taunton, which cost him a £200,000 pay-out.

Still, The Fly points out that one punter's bad luck is someone else's good fortune, and he muses whether Nevison paused to wonder who collected £111,677 from placing the unusual amount of £111 at 999-1 with Betfair on the eventual winner Pangbourne.