

Question of the month Continued...

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Liberation Farm Owner Rob Whiteley:

“Obviously, the most important objective is to get it right--to come up with the most deserving horse or individual. Toward that end, I think that active horsemen, who are with the horses every day, need to be included in the process. With regards to the groups that are currently included, I think participation should be limited only to those individuals who are fully informed and keep up with day-to-day racing. I think when the voters who do participate are given instructions, I think those instructions should include a specific, unambiguous set of criteria, and that it is not simply some sort of popularity contest. Some provision needs to be set to include trainers in the selection process. With regard to the selection of Eclipse owner and Eclipse breeder, once again, I think voting should be limited only to the most knowledgeable and informed and therefore I think those categories best lend themselves to a selection committee. In addition, I think the criteria there should be quality rather than quantity, and the instructions to the committee should reflect that. The big issue with regard to owner and breeder is whether the award should go to quantity or quality. Frank Stronach is a deserving recipient, some years more than other years. Two years ago, I personally believe that Gretchen and Roy Jackson truly deserved an Eclipse Award, not for leading owner, but for leading breeder. With a broodmare band of approximately 25 or 27 mares they bred simultaneous Classic winners on two continents--a feat that will not likely be duplicated in another century. And a couple of years before that, John Gunther, with about 25 or 27 mares, bred the first and third-place finishers in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile [in 2005 with Stevie Wonderboy and First Samurai]. That is an astounding accomplishment in terms of probability. The odds of that accomplishment are approaching 500,000 to 1. Therefore I think some discussion is worthwhile to determine if the award should go to the person with the most horses or the person who accomplishes the most remarkable achievement.”



What do you think of the Eclipse Awards selection process and awards ceremony?

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