

Re-inventing an age-old sport for a new generation

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Horse racing has been around for hundreds of years and it hasn't changed much - now's the time to re-imagine it, but how?



It all started last week with a horse called Speedbreaker outrunning two Johannesburg traffic officers. Yes, it was a stunt, but also a launchpad to reveal the radical re-invention of horse racing.

GTH (Global Team Horse Racing) is the re-imagined format of traditional horse racing; It's fast-paced, team-based, easy to understand and fun. This isn't your normal day at the races and it's taken South Africa by storm.

Angus Campbell, marketing director of GTH, explains: "While there are still successful international signature horse racing events like the Melbourne Cup, The Kentucky Derby, The Dubai World Cup, and the Durban July, the truth is that horse racing, like all sporting entertainment businesses, needs rejuvenation to appeal to modern audiences. GTH is a racing revolution, it's a new and improved product changing the perception of what a day at the races is. We offer a faster, easier to understand and entertaining version of traditional racing."

"We're addressing the post-Covid generation who want something different. Fans want to get out, be in the fresh air, in a safe environment with their family, and that's exactly what GTH provides."

This new approach is certainly appealing to a local market with GTH winning the prestigious Event of the Year award last year at the Hollard Sports Industry awards ceremony, beating events like the Rugby World Cup Sevens final.

"Many sporting disciplines have introduced new ways of delivering their sport to an audience – think of the SA20 cricket tournament – and it has been very successful. We are disrupting, and innovating in a market that desperately needs it," Campbell said.

This is how GTH works:

- Teams of 10 compete in head-to-head race meetings and score points per race. The two highest scoring teams battle it out in a grand finale.
- Eight runners compete in each race (4 per team) balanced with the horses matched according to their ability.
- Races take place over 2.5 hours (far quicker than a normal 6-hour meeting).
- The final race sees double points on offer for both teams, resulting in race meetings going down to the wire.

“This format celebrates the grandeur of horse racing but in a way which has not been experienced before. It’s all about the incredible feats of these magnificent horses and their superb jockeys. It expands the soul of horse racing,” Campbell said.

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