

NOLAN, NILSEN Preview Keeneland THE BIG DEAL ON RUNUP TIMES Big Fig Gaps, Sucker Bets?



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The Horseplayer Monthly April Issue – Revised April 10, 2014

Welcome to the Track Ratings Issue

It's that time of the year again, and we're happy to present our 6th Annual Track Ratings.

Back in 2008, the Ratings were created for a few reasons. First, most of the data on the web or in print regarding takeout rates etc, were outdated, inaccurate or impossible to find; a horseplayer resource was needed. Second, it was important to shed light to racetracks and track management what horse bettors need to succeed, and enjoy the game more. The idea was suggested at Pacedvantage.com by a man named "Rook." Bill Weaver, an original HANA board member, tirelessly compiled the data, and wrote the algorithm. We thank Bill for his service, as the idea would never have gotten off the ground without his hard work.

This year the math behind the ratings was supervised by Mike Dorr. Mike is a horseplayer and freelance racing industry analyst. He earned an MBA in Marketing and Finance from Vanderbilt University's Owen Graduate School of Management and is currently a Director of Pricing for a wireless services firm headquartered in Nashville, TN.

How Are the Ratings Tabulated?

The ratings encompass several factors; all of which are indicative of hoseplayer "betting value" in some form. *Takeout Rate:* If the takeout rate is too high, horseplayers are paid fewer dollars when they win, which makes it more difficult to win long-term, and obviously, makes handicapping less fun. According to Richard Thalheimer's 1998 University of Louisville study, high takeout is the number one detriment to higher handles (elasticity of - 2.3). It was also the highest rated handle determinant in HANA's 2008 horseplayer survey.

Field Size: The second most correlated factor in the Thalheimer study is not coincidentally the second most weighted for the track ratings. Betting five horse fields is not interesting and almost impossible to win long-term at. Horseplayers respond to this rationally: By betting less money. It has been estimated at medium sized field levels (7 or 8), that adding only one horse boosts handle by about 5%.

Pool Size/Popularity: If pool size (handle) is huge, it means is popular with betting customers. As important, if not more so, a larger pool provides horseplayers with

liquidity. If a track offers a Pick 3 with a tiny \$1,000 pool, it often will pay less than parlay, costing horseplayers money and enjoyment. As well, a bigger pool at a big track tends to be made up of more casual money, which allows horseplayers to potentially find more value. This factor was tweaked and weighted slightly more from 2013.

Wager Variety: A track with win-only betting would not be as interesting to handicap, or potentially lucrative. Horseplayers demand choice. In addition, fractional wagering helps players dive into big pools that they have previously been priced out of.

Signal Availability: With internet betting now making up over a fifth of all betting dollars and growing, this is a lower weighted, but not unimportant factor. Tracks that choose to protect their signal anger customers because they need more than one betting account to enjoy the sport. As well, high signal fees stop smaller ADW's from giving a takeout break, along with rewards and innovations to their (both big and small) players.

The factors are run through the designed algorithm where racetracks are compared to each other in each factor, around a median and mean. A final rating composite is tabulated, which is a tracks' overall score.

Changes for 2014

There were two relatively minor changes for this year's ratings. The new methodology takes a similar but modestly improved approach to the track rankings.

Previously, for each category, we set thresholds such that tracks would fall into each level, getting assigned a whole number value of 0 through 4. This year, we looked at our mean, median and standard deviation for every category and assigned values based on the distance from the median, indexing at 0 for the minimum score.

The result of this is that some tracks can be rewarded for being exceptional in one or two areas. A good example of this would be Saratoga's per race handle, which is 6x the mean daily handle in North America, and 13x the median. We think this methodology more accurately reflects the relative "pool liquidity" that many horseplayers value, and they are obviously voting with their dollars.

The other major change we made is to weight the takeout scores by straight bet and exotic handle. Previously, WPS takeout was weighted as 1 of 10 potential takeouts contributing to the takeout score. This year, we multiplied the WPS takeout score by the track's % of straight bet *(continued on next page)* handle and the combined exotic score by exotic handle and summed the two to get a weighted composite.

Frequently Asked Questions

What about on-track customer service, quality of the food, or the racetrack experience?

The Ratings are based on betting value, with hard numbers that can be used to compare racetracks. It's logistically difficult, as well as subjective, to rate tracks on nonquantitative items. Keep in mind, approximately 90% of wagers are made off-track.

I don't like polytrack, did you take points off for the type of surface?

No. Track surfaces are hard to quantify via a ratings formula. Horseplayers decide what types of surfaces to play based on their personal preferences and betting dollars, which are a component.

What about the quality of racing? Number of stakes? Best jockeys and trainers? A turf course?

Tracks with turf courses get a boost with the field size component. In addition, complete tracks with high quality racing tend to get more handle, which as noted, was increased as a factor this year.

Are you advising me to bet higher rated tracks?

No. This is simply a horseplayer resource where you can analyze which tracks are trying to earn your business based on various customer focused factors.

Do you take suggestions?

We do. In fact, several tweaks over the last six years have been made through horseplayer and academic feedback. We also scan all relevant peer reviewed gambling literature to improve the ratings. If you'd like to offer any suggestions, please email <u>info@hanaweb.org</u>.



The Industry's Independent Nick Rating

Keeneland Tops Rankings

For the sixth consecutive year, Keeneland topped the 2014 racetrack ratings produced by the Horseplayers Association of North America.

"With no takeout rate on any bet higher than 19%, a large field size of 9.61 horses per race - which was up from the previous year - and a race office who focuses on carding competitive cards, Keeneland could not be unseated," said HANA President Jeff Platt.



Racing at Keeneland - photo by <u>Penelope P. Miller</u>, <u>America's Best</u> Racing

"For HANA to acknowledge Keeneland as the nation's No. 1 track for a sixth consecutive year is a great honor and tremendously gratifying for our team," Keeneland President and CEO Bill Thomason said. "We continually look for inventive ways, like our popular BETologists, to make wagering more fan friendly for our casual fans, while at the same time offer exciting opportunities for our seasoned handicappers. We owe a thanks to our horsemen too, who elevate our racing product with full fields of top-quality horses."



We've split this issue into a few parts.

First, the track ratings are covered from A to Z. We show you the big movers, who dropped, and who made changes to their menu that you might want to check out. We have interviews with top tracks like Kentucky Downs and Sam Houston. We also show you the tracks from 1 through 64, with a link to a sortable spreadsheet that you can use all year. Lenny Moon shares his thoughts on one of the top tracks.

Second, we preview Keeneland. We've got unique TimeformUS stats, a preview from Rich Nilsen, along with a kick-butt article about freshmen sires by Melissa Nolan.

Third, TimeformUS's Craig Milkowski talks about a bone of contention with figure players – runups. We then have a little fun, with short, pithy articles and snips, like Bruno DeJulio's take on the fact that "Nobody" is going to win the Derby, and JJ Hysell's excellent Top Five.

Fourth, our harness page is back again, with Garnet talking handicapping.

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Last, Big Mover Woodbine opens April 12th. They own the "Back Page" with scores of interesting stats to help you prepare for the meet.

The Top Five - At A Glance

1. Keeneland

Total Score: 3.35 Field Size: 9.61 Best Bets: Win, Horizontal's at 19% takeout in deep sequences

"A Value Players Paradise"

You know a track is doing right when even a guy or gal who does not like Polytrack says, "Keeneland is doing the right thing". It's hard to find a hole. If you like deep fields with shippers to try and sniff out a price, Keeneland has it. If you like larger than average, quality stakes fields, Keeneland has it. If you want to get paid when you win, because the takeout rates are solid, well, they've got that, too.

2. Kentucky Downs

Total Score: 3.31

Field Size: 9.96

Best Bets: Picking one, the 14% takeout pick 5; however, the whole betting menu scores the best in North America.

"The largest takeout decrease in North American history in 2012 fuels Kentucky Downs"



Kentucky Downs – photo from <u>kentuckydowns.com</u>

This southern Kentucky track with a short, boutique meet is making some serious noise and they are a fraction away from knocking their northern neighbor from the top spot. Mike Maloney, a professional horseplayer, sums it up nicely:

"Big fields and competitive racing are certainly part of the equation. But [track President, for an interview see page five] Corey Johnsen, unlike many track execs, understands it's good business to give your customers a fair chance to have a successful gambling experience. Do yourself a favor and check out Kentucky Downs."

Horseplayers have responded, in droves. 2011 handle was approximately \$900,000 per race card. In 2013, that number is approaching \$3,000,000.

3. Saratoga Total Score: 2.64 Field Size: 8.14 Best Bets: Lower takeout exactas, 15% Pick 5

"The highest handled, most storied racetrack on the Continent needs no introduction."

Saratoga moved up the rankings this year, primarily due to the implementation of the lower takeout pick 5, and added weighting to their excellent exacta takeout. Despite a lower field size than most in the top ten, that's clearly offset by contentious fields and monster pool size; in summer weekend's filled with some "dead money", giving sharp players not only great entertainment for their dollar, but good value, too.

4. Del Mar

Total Score: 2.58 Field Size: 8.79 Best Bets: 14% Pick 5, Win

"The Players Pick 5 is a welcome addition"

Del Mar, in previous years, had been ranked as high as seventh. This year they've moved up on the strength of the lower takeout 14% pick 5. That bet, along with the massive handle it brings in, moved their weighted takeout score up to a competitive level. Their win takeout is also solid, at 15.43%, and the meet grows in popularity each year. Players need to pay close attention to their exacta ROI, because that bet's takeout at Del Mar is well above the average of North American tracks.

5. Churchill Downs-Sam Houston Race Park
Total Score: 2.50
Field Size: 8.76
Best Bets: Takeout on Daily Doubles, Pick 3's, 4's, and 5's is
12%, lowest among the surveyed racetracks

Revised 4/10/14

In our original rankings Churchill Downs was rated number five, but with the <u>announcement</u> on April 10 that they will be raising takeout, they have plummeted to 22nd. Taking over Churchill's spot is Sam Houston Race Park, home of 12% rakes on Daily Doubles, Pick 3's, 4's, and 5's. For more information about Sam Houston Race Park, please see page 11 for an interview with Matthew Stahlbaum, their Director of Business Development and Strategic Planning.

Our Cover: We thank Frances J. Karon for the use of her lovely shot of the backside at Keeneland. You can read her blog, and see more photography at runroughshod.blogspot.com



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Corey Johnsen Talks #2 Kentucky Downs

In his first track visit, Kentucky Downs President Corey Johnsen bet \$2 to win on Power Reigh in the seventh race at Longacres and he paid \$5.40. Since then he has been a devoted fan/handicapper.

Prior to his senior year in college he groomed horses for a summer job at Centennial Race Track in Denver. He even wagered \$80 to win on a horse he groomed and won enough to pay for his remaining college tuition. Corey has qualified numerous times for the NHC Tournament.

HM: Kentucky Downs has ascended the last few years into a popular signal for bettors. What steps did you take that you believe were effective in attracting new business?

CJ: We want to be known as the "Horseplayers' Racetrack" at Kentucky Downs. To reach that goal it took a number of strategic initiatives. We started by lowering the takeout. Not only did we choose to use the lower takeout level in Kentucky, we lowered the takeout on our most popular wager, the exacta. At 18.25%, Kentucky Downs offers the lowest exacta takeout in North America. But, takeout is only part of the equation. Horseplayers are looking for value. We have worked very hard to make sure that our turf course in second to none in North America in terms of safety and consistency. Kentucky Downs offered over \$900,000 per day in purses and attracted full fields and quality racing. Our jockey colony was also second to none. We worked hard on offering more handicapping information over the internet and over our television signal. We will continue to improve that very important part of our marketing plan.

HM: Particularly the last two years your handle has been off the charts. Did you ever think this would happen so quickly and to this extent?

CJ: It is has always been our goal to offer racing that makes a difference. I feel like we offered top quality, entertaining racing, and I was thrilled that North America's horseplayers responded.

HM: What feedback have you gotten from bettors and horsemen the last two meets?

CJ: Horseplayers and horsemen were very complimentary of our last two live meetings. They remarked that they could not wait until next year. I believe that more of that group will point their bankrolls and horses to our 2014 season, which begins Sept. 6.

HM: We've heard rumblings about increasing race days. Do you believe an increase in dates will hurt your field size, or do you think it will enhance your meet?

CJ: We have wanted to increase race days, but understand that we are part of the Kentucky horse racing circuit. We

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do not want to negatively impact the other tracks in the state and understand that the Kentucky Horse Racing Commission has to make difficult race date decisions every year. That regulatory body understands that Kentucky Downs would like to race more days, and I am comfortable they will grant us more days when the time is right.

HM: The past two years you have tried to improve your simulcast feed, with analysis, etc. Do you have any plans to try any other new things, presentation-wise for the vast amount of off track money which has entered your pools?



CJ: Our simulcast feed is critically important to our success. International Sound is our video company, and we are working with them to improve our graphics and overall video signal. Also, we plan to offer more handicapping information, with a daily preview by Gary West and John Lies prior to each day of racing. Finally, we want to offer more information via social media.

HM: You have always grass-roots marketed in and around Kentucky Downs. How has the on-track crowd been, and what's been working and not working? Any new plans for 2014?

CJ: In 2013, our live racing marketing plans made a difference. We don't charge an admission fee, so it is difficult to have an accurate attendance, but long-time observers thought we had the biggest crowd in recent history during one of our Saturday programs. We had many activities for families that were very successful. Coors sponsored a beer garden for adult racing fans. And, we cooperated with our Instant racing marketing plan to offer a mutuel voucher promotion that produced one of the most successful days in the history of Kentucky Downs. We plan to add to our promotional schedule. On Sept. 9-10, we will host our Hall of Fame event which raises money for the Permanently Disabled Jockeys' Fund. It will include a golf tournament, VIP dinner and autograph session. We are going to combine that event with our annual handicapping contest, which will be held on Sept. 10, so those handicappers that can arrive a day early can attend the VIP dinner with the Thoroughbred Hall of Famers. The 2013 VIP dinner featured Gary Stevens, Chris McCarron, Pat Day, Eddie Maple and Randy Romero. Watching old races and hearing their comments was one of the most enjoyable nights I have ever witnessed in my many years in horse racing.

2014 Ratings: Big Movers

Who rocked the Ratings and improved from last year?

Woodbine Racetrack Previous Rank: 43 Current Rank: 8

How does a track move from 43 to eight? Woodbine has always had decent field size, but they have vastly improved in several areas. It was a perfect storm.

First, their takeout score moved up due to drops in their trifecta and win takeout; the latter was reduced to be the lowest takeout in North America. Second, their signal fee score is night and day from several years ago: i.e. if you have an "ADW" account in North America, it is very likely you can play Woodbine racing. Third, they were recently approved for fractional wagering in the US, which made their wager variety score go from zero to hero. Lastly, due to these customer friendly moves, their handle is up, as bettors are responding.

Atlantic City Race Course Previous Rank: 23 Current Rank: 15

Atlantic City, buoyed by a massive field size and added wagers, moved up quite a few spots in 2014. The boutique meet continues to be a player in the simulcast arena, and there is a buzz that surrounds the meet, as New Jersey continues to try and find its way without casino subsidies.

Hastings Park

Previous Rank: 32 Current Rank: 19

Hastings moved up once again in 2014 as the track tries to develop a following in the marketplace. Low win takeout, along with 15% pick 3 and pick 4 takeout is a staple at the Vancouver, Canada oval. Hastings was not ranked in the top 50 as few as three years ago.

What Happened To Gulfstream?

Gulfstream of 2013-2014 is different than in previous years. Running an expanded meet (their battle with Calder has been highly publicized) field size has suffered (9.16 horses to 8.64), and in turn, handle per race has dropped. In addition, their higher than average trifecta takeout (26%), which is a highly bet pool, dropped them down from last year's number 3 ranked track, to this year's number 10

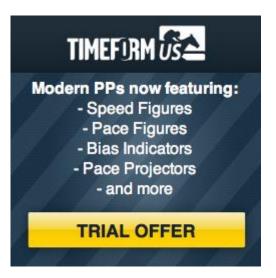


By Barry Meadow

Yes, rising takeouts are a big problem, but there are a couple of other taxation areas that may prove even worse for horseplayers.

For many months, Massachusetts players who collect more than \$600 on any bet—even a \$300 win bet on a 2-1 shot—have had 5% of their collected cash immediately withheld. This has driven some players to Rhode Island and New Hampshire and inspired others to ask for multiple smaller tickets (e.g., instead of betting \$200 on an 10-1 shot, they'd bet four \$50 tickets instead). Others, no doubt, quit playing altogether. Ironically, New Hampshire enacted a similar rule in 2009, only it was 10%--until horseplayers disappeared en masse and the state was forced to repeal the measure in 2011.

If the number \$600 sounds familiar, it's the threshold for federal reporting (though not withholding, where the number is \$5,000), and it's only for bets paying at least 300-1. And if you have losses during the year, you can deduct them at tax time against winnings, possibly getting back all or at least some of that score money. That's better than nothing, although if you win, say, \$80,000 on a pick 6--even if your net win for the year is zero--that \$80,000 is added to your adjusted gross income, which may have serious tax implications elsewhere on your return.



But back to our horseplaying brethren in Massachusetts. Not only do they get that 5% confiscated off the top of any \$600 payoff, but state tax laws do not allow players to deduct any losses. That means that if you win \$7,000 one day and lose the whole \$7,000 the next, the state taxes you on your nonexistent "winnings."

And if you think that's some crazy rule that typifies a place nicknamed Taxachusetts, you're wrong. Several other states--Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, West Virginia, and Wisconsin—have the same ridiculous law. And Kansas, beginning with its 2014 tax returns, has (continued on next page) joined this bandwagon of mathematical idiocy.

Why? Lawmakers figure that any anti-gambling rule is a free shot. They use words like "subsidies" and "loopholes" to describe the availability of deducting losses against wins. A corporation pays taxes on its net profits--revenues minus expenses. Not only can't horseplayers deduct their expenses from any winnings (unless they've declared themselves as full-time professional gamblers), but in these states they can't deduct their matching losses, either.

Adding to our problems are the recent approvals of source market fees (taxes on ADW's) by Pennsylvania and New York. As soon as Pennsylvania began charging a 10% source market fee last fall, rebate shops like MutuelsOnline, AmWager, and IdaBet closed the accounts of their Pennsylvania customers. Not that the state is any kind of gambling hotbed anyway, what with its tracks charging a takeout of more than 30% on some bets despite a slots subsidy that has totaled hundreds of millions of dollars. New York probably hasn't done itself any favors, either. The state has raised 2014 admission prices at Belmont and Saratoga and added the source market fees which discourage rebate betting, even though Resorts World Casino New York City has contributed tens of millions of dollars to racing coffers in the state since it opened in late 2011.

Then there's the surcharge in Illinois, passed a few months back. Remember how great that New York City OTB surcharge worked out? Oh yeah, New York's OTB doesn't exist any more.

Of course, we also have the states that have outlawed internet betting altogether, or restricted it only to out-ofstate tracks (the very tracks that locals have the least interest in).



While you can't find a lawmaker whose stated goal is to kill horseracing altogether, when you put all of this together--adding immediate withholding of even minor wins, eliminating deductions for gambling losses (even vs. winnings), putting the squeeze on rebate shops due to source market fees, adding surcharges, restricting internet gambling--the trend is clear. And ominous. sport by raising prices or by forcing people to visit their intown track instead of calling in their bets. Of course, we live in a country where one-third of Americans don't believe in evolution and Kim Kardashian pulls in eight figures a year.

Because we horseplayers have no active lobby, legislators feel free to pick our pockets. There's no political risk, for instance, to raise the takeout, even though it does nothing but harm the sport. Case in point: In 2010, despite dire predictions of disaster from horseplayers, California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed a bill to increase the takeout on two-horse bets to 22.68% (up 2%) and on threeor-more-horse bets to 23.68% (up 3%), with all the promised increased cash going to purses. Behind the bill were California's horsemen and tracks such as Santa Anita. Legislative analysts estimated that the takeout increase would generate \$200 million annually in increased purses. As it turned out, the racing board's report for the next fiscal year showed not an increase, but an actual drop of more than 5% in purses—since handle fell precipitously (which is what you might expect when you raise prices).

Ah, the lobbying business. It's no great revelation to report that people who contribute money to politicians do so because they expect that somewhere down the line, the favor will be returned. Lobbyists not only control much of the legislative agenda, but often write the laws themselves (much as a tutor might "help" a football star with his term paper). Horseplayers have no lobby. At all. Our own Horseplayers Association of North America may have a solid reputation as a players' advocate, but it's an allvolunteer organization that employs no lobbyists. The National Thoroughbred Racing Association (NTRA) boasts that it has spent \$3 million on lobbying efforts since 2002, except that is a pittance and it includes work on behalf of breeders, owners, racetracks, etc.; its Horseplayers Coalition, which is funded mostly by tournament players via a mandatory deduction, is supposed to represent players; it was formed in 2008, but a recent check of the Bloodhorse.com website showed not a single entry on that subject after that year. The American Horse Council has shown little interest in the plight of horseplayers.

All this will only get worse. Politicians and the groups that lobby them—owners, breeders, track operators don't seem to understand the basic math of the racetrack. If you make each bet more expensive by raising the takeout, players lose faster. If you make it harder for people to bet, they won't. If you torpedo rebates, you lose the rebate players. If you confiscate winnings, bettors have less to play with and thus the churn plummets.

Better gamble while you still can, in the ever-falling number of states that at least give you some chance to hold on to some of your money.

Barry Meadow has spent 40 years in the gambling world as a bettor, author and industry analyst. He is an advisory board member of the Horseplayers Association of North America.

Some legislators actually believe they are helping the

Big Mover: Woodbine Meet Tips

Brought to you by Horseplayersbet.com

Some horseplayers prefer the longer meets to the boutique ones. Familiarity with the jockey colony and trainer colony can give one extra confidence when wagering. Things like not having to deal with whether a horse prefers track A or track B, or surface A to surface B also become less of a concern during longer localized meets. Woodbine is attractive when it comes to these factors.

If you are a win bettor, you can't beat their 14.95% track takeout. Heck, if you can eliminate 1 out of six horses from being a winner, you can beat this bet. It is harder to than it sounds, but it is possible.

A few tips:

1. Use the hot jockey in exotics, especially one that seems to have today's track figured out. Woodbine can get windy, and moisture can affect track bias.

2. If a horse is shipping in from a dirt surface but prefers Polytrack or has Polytrack breeding, don't be scared to add up to three or four lengths on those dirt speed figures.

3. Look beyond the chalk. There are pretty good scores to be made at Woodbine, especially when the field size is adequate. You need to adopt a more mud against the wall attitude than look for sure things.



Woodbine is one of the best tracks out there when it comes to drug testing, which is important to many horseplayers. When you see a trainer hitting around 20%, it is because they are good at finding six-horse races.

Workout dates and times are as good as they get in North America as well. Times don't matter as much as frequency when it comes to handicapping layoff horses.

Don't be discouraged if you go 0-fer on a Woodbine card, especially if you play exotics. You are one hit away from turning a profit thanks to expected larger payouts which can frequently happen in Rexdale, Ontario.



Northlands Park Racetrack and Casino is preparing to once again open its doors for thoroughbred racing beginning May 2. Several changes to the wagering profile have been made to offer increased value for the North American horseplayer – including offering the lowest WPS (at 14.5 per cent) and Pick 5 (at 10 per cent) takeout rates of any racetrack.



Racing at Northlands Park

"Our guests are our number one priority and have helped us establish Northlands Park as a premiere horse racing venue in Western Canada," said Chris Roberts, Executive Director and General Manager of Northlands Park. "We are excited to reward our loyal guests by kicking off the 2014 thoroughbred season with improvements to the wagering format and the addition of new major events days at Northlands Park."

* These takeout changes moved Northlands to 24th, from 35th



The Industry's Independent Nick Rating

LIVE THOROUGHBRED RACING











Tracks 1 – 32 (revised 4/10/14)

Track Name	Score	Rank	Field Size	WPS Handle/R	Exotic Handle/R
Keeneland	3.35	1	9.61	\$308,086	\$672,480
Kentucky Downs	3.31	2	9.96	\$85,113	\$173,509
Saratoga	2.64	3	8.14	\$427,391	\$1,002,203
Del Mar	2.58	4	8.79	\$374,948	\$857,691
Sam Houston	2.50	5	8.76	\$38,838	\$99 <i>,</i> 478
Belmont	2.44	6	8.01	\$304,634	\$710,996
Tampa Bay Downs	2.41	7	8.35	\$127,236	\$267,856
Woodbine	2.40	8	8.70	\$114,159	\$210,630
Turfway	2.33	9	9.13	\$54,819	\$118,968
Gulfstream	2.33	10	8.64	\$194,396	\$459 <i>,</i> 826
Retama	2.32	11	9.15	\$16,854	\$40,896
Santa Anita	2.30	12	8.29	\$328,019	\$764,801
Oaklawn	2.25	13	9.02	\$118,737	\$183,287
Aqueduct	2.17	14	7.57	\$213,789	\$504,972
Atlantic City	2.17	15	9.84	\$46,596	\$70,577
Colonial Downs	2.15	16	8.83	\$23,995	\$44,850
Delta Downs	2.11	17	9.00	\$46,219	\$106,903
Indiana	2.05	18	8.60	\$28,467	\$62,251
Hastings	2.03	19	7.12	\$23,717	\$41,235
Canterbury	1.99	20	8.36	\$26,437	\$38,123
Prairie Meadows	1.99	21	7.82	\$19,658	\$29,219
Churchill Downs	1.96	22	8.16	\$267,032	\$494,938
Ellis Park	1.96	23	8.15	\$47,672	\$91,197
Northlands	1.91	24	7.39	\$11,286	\$15,692
Arlington	1.89	25	7.91	\$111,438	\$202,794
Monmouth	1.89	26	7.56	\$141,411	\$265 <i>,</i> 634
Lone Star	1.83	27	8.29	\$36,832	\$67,588
CharlesTown	1.81	28	8.14	\$36,745	\$73,656
Evangeline	1.81	29	9.02	\$42,854	\$95,645
Sunland	1.81	30	8.93	\$27,198	\$64,944
Fairgrounds	1.75	31	8.14	\$87,856	\$170,201
	1.71	32	7.59	\$71,067	\$145,008

For full details, including takeout rates – please click here



Interview with Matthew Stahlbaum, Director of Business Development and Strategic Planning

Sam Houston in the top ten might've made people say "really?". When you look at the numbers, it's not a surprise. 12% takeout in horizontals (lowest in North America and probably the world), a very good field size, and a serviceable \$174k per day purses per card, assures a good number. It's clearly a track that is after your betting dollar.

Their 2014 Thoroughbred Stakes schedule is linked here: http://www.shrp.com/racing_live.html

HM: It's difficult for smaller tracks outside the large east or west coast venues, or historically attended tracks to get noticed. What steps are you taking to brand Sam Houston to players outside Texas? Have you had any success?

MS: We have taken several steps to build the brand of Sam Houston Race Park to players outside Texas. Last year we developed the \$400,000 Houston Ladies Classic (HLC) for older fillies & mares. We believed that there was an opportunity in the national racing calendar for this type of premier race. We also decided to enhance the day's race card by running our heretofore most expensive race, the \$200,000 G3 John B. Connally Turf Cup, as well as two other stakes races. The horsemen have responded wonderfully and the quality of horses and racing has been tremendous. As one may expect with such high quality horses, two track records were broken last year on HLC day. We feel strongly that players respond to quality and top-notch racing, so we introduced an all stakes Pick 4 for HLC Day.

Jason @jasonthejman	
	C 1

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My guilty pleasure of horse racing is Sam Houston. They treat the bettors right w/ low takeout pools, turf & dirt racing.

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It is not a coincidence that we have had the two best renditions of the Connally the last two years on HLC Day. Having four stakes races on the same card allows trainers to bring a whole contingent for one day of racing. This avoids one-off ships which can be a deterrent. Moreover, having the four stakes lined up allows jockeys that may come for one of the stakes the opportunity to catch more rides while they are on track. We feel this only benefits the quality of racing and, thus, the horseplayers – our customers. Julien Leparoux rode this year on HLC Day (won the Connally with Admiral Kitten) for the first time at SHRP.

Combining top stakes on one day has also had a positive effect on MAXXAM Gold Cup Day. Todd Pletcher sent his first horse to SHRP this year as Red Rifle set a track record. And, the horseplayers responded in handle. They also were able to see Rosie Napravnik win atop another Kitten (Always Kitten) for the Ramseys and Mike Maker. Artemus Kitten won the race last year for the same connections with Rosie as the jockey.



Actually, this effort to improve our product and enhance our brand to horseplayers across the country started in 2011 with a significant contraction of race dates. This contraction afforded us the opportunity to offer a higher daily purse level and attract more quality horses worth betting to SHRP. Horseplayers have responded and handle has increased each year since.

We have also actively sought TV coverage for our racing to reach horseplayers outside Texas. The HLC was broadcast by HRTV from on-track in 2013 and 2014, and we worked with TVG to expand their coverage of our day time race cards for Mondays and Tuesdays. Tuesdays were new this year for us, and we knew horseplayers outside Texas would be critical in making this move a success. Thus, we enlisted TVG's coverage to help ensure this was accomplished.

HM: Your 12% horizontal bets have the lowest takeout in the nation. We all know lower takeout bets take time to get noticed and tracks have to stick with them to succeed. Have you found that they have been building some momentum since you started them? (continued on next page) MS: Yes. Pick 4 handle grew over 56% during the recently concluded Thoroughbred meet. We recognize that takeout is a driver of handle. We also believe short-term promotional takeout rates will not have the desired effect due to their inherent short life. Thus, we have not only kept the 12% takeout, but we took it a step further by making all of our multi-leg wagers 12%. We believe that horseplayers would recognize this and bet accordingly. It did not make sense to penalize a daily double player in takeout while the pick 3 and pick 5 were at 12%. We believed the same bettors were betting the different multi-leg wagers. So, in turn, we believed harmonizing the takeout on all multi-leg wagers would increase handle by encouraging hedge bets in the different pools without being penalized in takeout. We also added rolling daily doubles to our menu as another way for horseplayers to take advantage of their opinions on multi-leg wagers.

HM: We've noticed on track handle at Sam Houston has been growing the last several years. What types of promotions and bettor outreach have worked for Sam Houston?



MS: Expanding on the points made above, we believe in technology at SHRP and the convenience it can provide. Last year, SHRP was the first track in Texas to offer mobile on-track wagering. This year we introduced the SHRP Mobile App with the start of our 2014 Thoroughbred meet. This App facilitates mobile wagering and provides video replays, live streaming, picks, as well as the ability to purchase admission and receive exclusive offers and communications. We believe this technology enhances the on-track experience and that our customers deserve these long-term investments.

Free admission on Monday and Tuesday is another specific program aimed at our on-track patrons. We wanted to encourage our local players to come out on our beautiful afternoons early in the week and bet our product.

Fred Faour, a local ESPN radio personality that enjoys and knows the game of horse racing, is also one of our featured celebrity handicappers. His radio show broadcasts live from SHRP every Friday.



Racing at Sam Houston - horseracingnation.com photo

For our more casual fan, we have had success with unique and fun promotions like Camel & Ostrich Races, Weiner Dog Races and Food Truck night. We see repeat attendance on Fridays with our \$0.50 beer promotion aimed at 21-34 year old guests.

HM: One of the most highly correlated factors with regards to handle growth is field size. Are you happy with your field size and horse population? is there anything you can do, or have tried to get field size up, so you are carding more bettable races?

MS: We were satisfied with the population and field size for the 2014 meet given what we know about the national decline in foal crops and even steeper decline in Texas foal crops. We face an un-level playing field as tracks in neighboring states have purses supplemented by gaming and generous breeding incentives that we cannot offer. What's ironic is that Texans are doing most of the gaming in these neighboring states. However, we are happy with the quality of horses that ran in this year's meet. We carded more allowance, optional claiming and maiden special weights this year based on the quality of horses that came to SHRP. We thank the horsemen for their support.

We do depend on shippers, and we are not happy that Louisiana still has some of the most lax medication standards in racing. More stringent requirements in Texas went into effect in March of last year and as a result it appears that shippers to SHRP were down considerably due to the different medication policies in place for the two states. Situations like these only make horsemen's jobs more difficult and the bettors suffer. We have all seen the Jockey Club report that cited actual or perceived medication abuses as a deterrent to handle. It's well past time for all states to come into line.



Tracks 33-64 (revised 4/10/14)

	_	_			
Track Name Louisiana Downs	Score 1.70	Rank 33	Field Size 8.25	WPS Handle/R \$43,250	Exotic Handle/R \$94,956
Presque Isle	1.65	34	7.67	\$30,316	\$55,908
Golden Gate	1.61	34	7.39	\$81,979	\$155,691
Beulah	1.60	36	6.63	\$19,091	\$155,691 \$47,389
	1.50	30	8.27	\$21,506	\$47,389
Will Rogers Downs Fonner Park		37	8.51	\$9,415	
	1.55				\$13,529 \$50,684
Remington	1.53	39	9.07	\$28,596	\$59,684
Delaware	1.52	40	6.99	\$57,090	\$109,600
Portland Meadows	1.49	41	7.74	\$16,783	\$37,752
Mountaineer	1.44	42	8.11	\$39,382	\$88,504
Laurel	1.39	43	7.84	\$56,844	\$114,624
Arapahoe	1.35	44	8.49	\$6,404	\$11,615
Pimlico	1.35	45	7.47	\$147,185	\$282,860
Calder	1.34	46	7.33	\$45,259	\$95,717
Finger Lakes	1.32	47	7.14	\$33,692	\$81,943
Thistledown	1.32	48	7.70	\$4,202	\$7,454
Penn National	1.26	49	7.61	\$39,521	\$81,184
Fairmont Park	1.26	50	7.42	\$19,377	\$30,020
Emerald Downs	1.25	51	6.66	\$36,049	\$53 <i>,</i> 876
Fort Erie	1.23	52	7.27	\$22,388	\$41,978
Fairplex	1.12	53	7.56	\$84,164	\$195,112
Turf Paradise	1.11	54	7.52	\$39,209	\$93 <i>,</i> 902
Fair Meadows Tulsa	1.10	55	7.29	\$3 <i>,</i> 090	\$5,875
Philadelphia	1.09	56	7.47	\$51,906	\$104,300
Zia Park	1.08	57	7.45	\$16,272	\$29 <i>,</i> 485
SunRay Park	1.04	58	7.61	\$4,211	\$7,771
Ca. Racing Fairs	0.99	59	7.29	\$53,921	\$99,880
Ruidoso	0.96	60	7.37	\$16,233	\$22,718
Albuquerque	0.83	61	7.41	\$6,063	\$11,202
Suffolk	0.78	62	7.24	\$29,603	\$60,553
Los Alamitos	0.73	63	6.40	\$31,575	\$76,398
Assiniboia	0.35	64	6.98	\$7,516	\$11,138

For full details, including takeout rates – please <u>click here</u>

What Is Run-Up?



<u>By Craig Milkowski</u>

Run-up is the distance traveled before the timing of the race begins. It gives horses a running start. The timing of the race doesn't begin until the first horse hits the point where the official distance of the race begins, commonly referred to as tripping the beam. This horse triggers the beginning of the electronic timing of the race.

Why does run-up lead to misleading times?

Obviously, the most accurate way to time horse races would be to do it from the gate and report the exact distance of the race. But that isn't how it is done. Instead, horses are timed from a running start. The effect of this is that every horse EXCEPT the horse that hits the beam first is timed using the official distance of the race PLUS the distance the first horse is ahead when it begins the timing. On the surface, this doesn't seem to be that big of an issue. After all, horses that trail at the beam do so because they aren't as fast as the leader. But when the situation is looked at in more depth, it becomes clear that it is problematic.

Here is an example involving two theoretical races at Santa Anita Park, both run at one mile on the dirt course. Santa Anita uses a very long run-up for these races in order to take the start farther away from the first turn. One hundred and seventy-two feet is the commonly reported distance of the run-up.



Santa Anita Park - photo by <u>Penelope P. Miller</u>, <u>America's</u> <u>Best Racinq</u>

Race 1: Horse A out-sprints the field early and trips the beam five seconds after the break from the gate. The next horse, Horse B, doesn't cross the beam until .30 seconds

later. The leader goes much too fast early, quits badly, and staggers home last, well back of the others. Horse B takes over the lead and wins the race. The final time is reported as 1:36.00.

Race 2: Horse C breaks alertly, but not as quickly as Horse A above. He trips the beam 5.30 seconds after the start. He wins the race wire to wire, and the final time is once again reported as 1:36.00.



This sort of thing happens every day in horse racing (though isn't always this extreme). OK, which horse ran the faster race, B or C? Or is it a tie? Both horses took 5.30 seconds to complete the untimed portion of the race (doesn't that alone sound ridiculous?), and both horses are reported as having run one mile in 1:36.00. Examine the entire race to answer the question properly.

Race 1: The total time needed to complete this race from gate to wire was 1:36.00 seconds plus the five seconds it took to reach the beam, for a total of 1:41.00. Race 2: The total time needed to complete this race from gate to wire was 1:36.00 seconds plus the 5.30 seconds of "untimed" racing, for a total of 1:41.30.

Clearly, Horse B ran the faster race. In racing lingo, .30 is nearly two full lengths. Why are races timed with this arcane, inaccurate method as we approach 2014? At some point, isn't "We've always done it that way" just a tired excuse? And for that matter, why was it done that way in the first place?

Effect on Figure Making

It is important for figure makers to understand these differences. Many handicappers complain when races run on the same track and at the same distance are given different final-time figures. They complain that figure makers are just trying to fit races together like a puzzle. It is important to remember that the data used for the figure process is flawed. Many times it is wise not to trust the reported times when assigning ratings without a deeper look into how the time was recorded. This is just one example of the troublesome issues those trying to rate races come across. It isn't the only one. But this one is unnecessary and could easily be fixed–if the people running the sport were interested in fixing it.



So Far, Nobody!

<u>Bruno de Julio</u> has a little bit of fun with the Derby chatter this time of year.....

That's right the ultimate bridesmaid in the history of racing, 'Nobody' is going to win the Derby this year at Churchill Downs on the first Saturday in May 2014.

You've heard of 'Nobody'? It's who all the good threeyear-olds have beaten. 'Nobody'.

'Nobody' is trained by somebody, but that topic is for a later piece. Smart handicappers can pick 'nobody' in their past performances on first glance, just like the great KEY finish in the old South American past performances. "Further Information Unavailable"

In handicapping discussion there isn't a horse or a situation that 'nobody' hasn't been talked about. In fact, one can say 'nobody' is the most KEY factor in betting against a horse. Because he beat 'nobody', that pony takes so much verbal abuse.

'They', the single or multiple entities who have a stranglehold on who wins or loses races, often overlook 'nobody' and his chances, seemingly projecting a weak field behind a winner when 'nobody' runs second, and it doesn't even matter who's riding 'nobody'.

'They' are an enigma in themselves; 'they' are at every track; 'they' seem to have always an opinion. One wouldn't even know 'they' existed if 'they' weren't such blabber mouths about who or what they like today. 'They' can't keep a secret; 'they like their horse' in hushed tones.

"I heard 'they' like the two!" said a gambler at Gulfstream Park, the other day, while pointing his finger to the tote board as the two horse was flashing 9/5 first click off a 20-1 morning line.

"I heard 'they' like the four!" says the other gambler.

How do these people get this information? Is there a website called They.com that they visit? Do 'they' have an ROI or win percentage?

'They' have all the answers until the gates open and horses go flying down the backstretch, then it's come on two, or let's go five, along with my favorite horse of all time "What's he doing?" He runs a lot, almost every race, I think.

My favorite guy at the track is the guy that asks 'call me if you got something good.' I almost did the other day when I made Pasta & Fagioli from scratch. Even if you do give them a nugget, like "hey I like the three in the fourth;" they tell you that they like the two instead.

How do I get such a network of followers? I looked up 'they' on Twitter and I see nothing. I looked 'they' up on The Facebook, got zilch. I even called a major track, and asked for 'they'. I was really nervous, if they transfer me to 'they' what do I say? Does 'they' have a receptionist? Maybe it's a recording of what 'they' like? The operator tells me there's nobody here, so I asked if I can talk to nobody. Maybe 'nobody' knows who 'they' are or who 'they' like, I am sure 'they' don't like nobody.

So, all I can figure is that 'Nobody' is going to win the Derby this year, unless, 'they' come up with a last minute tout, which is surely going to be heard in every grandstand in the country on Oaks and Derby day.

Bruno is a bloodstock agent, horse owner-breeder, owns <u>Racingwithbruno.com</u> and races with partner Galen Ho'o and other partners in New York, Canada, Kentucky, Florida, etc.





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Roughly equivalent @TimeformUS / Beyer speed figures for those interested:

90-84 80-75	130-121 120-113 110-103 100-94	
60-55	90-84 80-75 70-65	

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Not clear who is responsible, but the March 2014 issue of Horse Player Monthly is absolutely phenomenal.

I've been a regular reader for months and it has been good, but March 2014 was just over the top. Jammed with both hardcore handicapping stuff as well as just fun stuff. I recall reading a note crediting the person responsible for the cover...a joke about there being no budget for desktop publishing....the cover was fabulous and gave the entire endeavor the feel of a professionally produced magazine. I printed it out and I'm proud to have it laying around on my coffee table.

Kudos to all involved and please let them know their effort is appreciated.

Regards,

Joe Diamadi Schwenksville, PA



I was chatting with a few of the horseplaying buddies at the simulcast joint the other day and we got talking about a big fig horse. You know the type, he or she ran a monster figure and it dwarfs everyone else in the upcoming field. We all wondered, are they good or bad bets?



Running the numbers through a database, the answer is, it depends.

For short prices (in this case, horses under 5-2), a horse who ran a fig 20 points above his or her challengers, with more than four lifetime starts, the numbers are not too bad over the past 15 months.

Data Summary	Win	Place	Show
Mutuel Totals	1020.50	1031.90	924.90
Bet	-1068.00	-1068.00	-1068.00
P/L	-47.50	-36.10	-143.10
Wins	276	395	402
Plays	534	534	534
PCT	.5169	.7397	.7528
ROI	0.9555	0.9662 2.61	0.8660
Avg Mut	3.70		2.30

By: Odds Range

>=Min	< Max	P/L	Bet	Roi	Wins	Plays	Pct	Impact
0.00	0.50	-19.30	222.00	0.9131	81	111	.7297	1.4119
0.50	1.00	-45.70	366.00	0.8751	96	183	.5246	1.0150
1.00	1.50	-31.80	240.00	0.8675	48	120	.4000	0.7739
1.50	2.00	31.60	146.00	1.2164	33	73	.4521	0.8746
2.00	2.50	17.70	94.00	1.1883	18	47	.3830	0.7410

95 or so cents on the dollar is nothing to shake a stick at.

When the prices rise, it's a red light, however.

For horses over 5-2, this same sample came back at a 12.5% win percentage, and only returned 60 cents on the dollar. These are probably the "funny big figs" that are faker than a three dollar bill. The sharp crowd knows they're fake, and the smart money is on others. When we see these horses go off at "value" odds, it is worth proceeding with caution.



TIMEFIRM us

Keeneland Spring Meet Trainer Ratings and Running Style results from the last five years

Trainer Keen	eland C	verall	Index	Trainer
Darrin Miller	95	60	35	Eoin Harty
Michelle Nihei	100	68	32	Kiaran McLau
Barclay Tagg	100	73	27	Chad Brown
John Hancock	59	35	24	Christophe C
Robert Hess, Jr.	86	62	24	Larry Lay
Sally Schu	79	56	23	John Pucek
David Kassen	95	72	23	Dale Romans
John Terranova, II	100	78	22	Timothy Han
Rick Hiles	86	72	14	Paul McGee
Kenneth McPeek	91	77	14	Gregory Fole
Tim Richardson	66	54	14	George Wear
Jonathan Sheppard	75	63	12	Neil Pessin
			12	Ronald Kinm
Claude McGaughey III	96	84		
Victoria Oliver	75	64	11	Joseph Cheel
George Arnold, II	75	66	9	Thomas Proc
Chris Block	100	91	9	D. Wayne Lu
Andrew McKeever	81	73	8	Daniel Peitz
Wayne Mackey	88	80	8	David Vance
Wesley Ward	100	93	7	Byron Hughe
H. Graham Motion	91	85	6	William Conr
Thomas Drury, Jr.	96	91	5	Brian Lynch
Doug Matthews	80	76	4	Michelle Lov
Albert Stall, Jr.	97	93	4	Josie Carroll
Mark Frostad	63	60	3	Charles LoPre
James Baker	64	61	3	John Dyer
James Dodgen	77	74	3	Lynn Whiting
Bernard Flint	81	78	3	Dallas Stewa
J. Michael Rogers	73	71	2	William Fires
Alex Clarkson	78	76	2	Jeff Barkley
Tevis McCauley	89	87	2	W. Bret Calh
David Carroll	78	77	1	Steve Margo
Eddie Kenneally	83	82	1	Don Mills
Michael Maker	97	96	1	Ian Wilkes
Todd Pletcher	100	100	0	Luis Jurado
Merrill Scherer	62	62	0	Wayne Rice
Walter Bindner, Jr.	63	64	-1	Malcolm Pier
Ronny Werner	71	72	-1	Eric Reed
Tim Glyshaw	75	77	-2	Tommy Shor
Edward Frederick	40	43	-3	Grant Forste
Mark Casse	84	87	-3	Jimmy Corrig
Ron Moquett	54	58	-4	Steven Asmu
John Good	65	69	-4	Wayne Mogg
Frederick Seitz	72	76	-4	Mark Hubley
Philip Sims	67	72	-5	Michael Tron
Roger Attfield	70	75	-5	James DiVito
William Mott	78	83	-5	Gennadi Dor
Angel Montano, Sr.	63	69	-6	Larry Demeri
Wayne Catalano	79	86	-7	Kellyn Gorde
Joan Scott	79	86	-7	Gary Gray
Philip Oliver	80	87	-7	Laura Bealme
Garry Simms	84	91	-7	John Booker,
Christopher Speckert	59	67	-8	Glenn Wisme
Dale Bennett	84	92	-8	Helen Pitts
Vernon Coyle	49	58	-9	Alice Cohn
Chuck Peery	67	76	-9	Carl Nafzger
Michael Matz	67	76	-9	J. Larry Jones
Eduardo Caramori				Tanya Boulm
	72	81	-9	
William Bradley Michael Temlinson	49	59	-10	Ryan Walsh
Michael Tomlinson	56	66	-10	Ingrid Masor
Michael Stidham	68	78	-10	Jeffrey Greer
Thomas Amoss	90	100	-10	William Denz
Neil Howard	51	62	-11	Claudie Gods
Jeffrey Thornbury	59	70	-11	Joe Woodard

Trainer Kee	neland O	verall	Index
Eoin Harty	49	61	-1
Kiaran McLaughlin	82	94	-1
Chad Brown	88	100	-1
Christophe Clement	80	93	-1
Larry Lay	40	54	-1
John Pucek	49	64	-1
Dale Romans	63	78	-1
Timothy Hamm	63	78	-1
Paul McGee	49	65	-1
Gregory Foley	57	73	-1
George Weaver	58	74	-1
Neil Pessin	34	51	-1
Ronald Kinmon	30	48	-1
Joseph Cheeks	65	83	-1
Thomas Proctor	69	87	-1
	34	53	-1
D. Wayne Lukas			
Daniel Peitz	55	74	-1
David Vance	57	76	-1
Byron Hughes	49	70	-2
William Connelly	52	73	-2
Brian Lynch	66	87	-2
Michelle Lovell	67	88	-2
Josie Carroll	57	79	-2
Charles LoPresti	77	100	-2
John Dyer	36	60	-2
Lynn Whiting	55	79	-2
Dallas Stewart	31	56	-2
William Fires	33	58	-2
Jeff Barkley	46	72	-2
W. Bret Calhoun	69	95	-2
Steve Margolis	54	81	-2
Don Mills	0	28	-2
Ian Wilkes	35	65	-3
Luis Jurado	38	68	-3
Wayne Rice	25	56	-3
Malcolm Pierce	41	73	-3
Eric Reed	34	71	-3
Tommy Short	10	48	-3
Grant Forster	27	66	-3
Jimmy Corrigan	31	70	-3
Steven Asmussen	53	93	-4
Wayne Mogge	26	67	-4
Mark Hubley	34	75	-4
Michael Trombetta	36	77	-4
James DiVito	50	92	-4
Gennadi Dorochenko	3	47	-4
Larry Demeritte	10	55	-4
Kellyn Gorder	48	95	-4
Gary Gray	24	74	-5
Laura Bealmear	0	54	-5
John Booker, Jr.	18	72	-5
Glenn Wismer	9	64	-5
Helen Pitts	2	58	-5
Alice Cohn		57	-5
Carl Nafzger		61	-6
J. Larry Jones	28	89	-6
Tanya Boulmetis			
	0	67	-6
Ryan Walsh	0	72	-7
Ingrid Mason	1	77	-7
Jeffrey Greenhill	2	80	-7
	0	79	-7
William Denzik, Jr.			
William Denzik, Jr. Claudie Godsey Joe Woodard	5	93	-8

Trainer Ratings. These ratings are on a 0-100 scale, and the goal here is to show you how a trainer performs overall, and how he/she performs in specific situations.

Here, the first column is the trainer's rating at Keeneland. The second column is the trainer's overall rating. The third column is a ranking of trainers who excel at Keeneland to those who struggle. To learn more about trainer ratings, visit the <u>TFUS blog</u>.

Running Style. Below are results at Keeneland over the last five years by running style. To learn more about running styles, visit the TFUS blog.

Keeneland Synthetic Routes - Last 5 Years - 466 races - 4272 starters								
Running Style	Wins	Starts	Avg Win	Win %	Starter %	ROI (\$2)		
Closer	103	904	\$16.85	22.10%	21.16%	\$1.92		
Leader	16	139	\$14.10	3.43%	3.25%	\$1.62		
Midpack	194	1675	\$14.25	41.63%	39.21%	\$1.65		
N/A	22	231	\$20.69	4.72%	5.41%	\$1.97		
Plodder	33	379	\$15.67	7.08%	8.87%	\$1.36		
Speed	17	166	\$15.35	3.65%	3.89%	\$1.57		
Tracker	81	778	\$15.01	17.38%	18.21%	\$1.56		

Keeneland Synthetic Sprints - Last 5 Years - 747 races - 7095 starts								
Running Style	Win	Starts	Avg Win	Win %	Start %	ROI (\$2)		
Closer	114	1243	\$14.16	15.26%	17.52%	\$1.30		
Leader	15	125	\$13.16	2.01%	1.76%	\$1.58		
Midpack	232	2084	\$14.00	31.06%	29.37%	\$1.56		
N/A	135	1551	\$17.76	18.07%	21.86%	\$1.55		
Plodder	69	776	\$16.70	9.24%	10.94%	\$1.48		
Speed	34	231	\$15.19	4.55%	3.26%	\$2.24		
Tracker	148	1085	\$13.37	19.81%	15.29%	\$1.82		

Keeneland Turf Routes - Last 5 Years - 268 races - 2563 starts										
Running Style	Win	Starts	Avg Win	Win %	Start %	ROI (\$2)				
Closer	41	560	\$10.61	15.30%	21.85%	\$0.78				
Leader	3	94	\$9.07	1.12%	3.67%	\$0.29				
Midpack	103	943	\$11.21	38.43%	36.79%	\$1.22				
N/A	14	139	\$16.96	5.22%	5.42%	\$1.71				
Plodder	34	267	\$16.98	12.69%	10.42%	\$2.16				
Speed	7	105	\$6.89	2.61%	4.10%	\$0.46				
Tracker	66	455	\$18.42	24.63%	17.75%	\$2.67				

Keeneland Turf Sprints - Last 5 Years - 47 races - 424 starts										
Running Style	Win	Starts	Avg Win	Win %	Start %	ROI (\$2)				
Closer	5	46	\$18.20	10.64%	10.85%	\$1.98				
Leader	4	35	\$15.80	8.51%	8.25%	\$1.81				
Midpack	20	176	\$10.37	42.55%	41.51%	\$1.18				
Plodder	3	21	\$11.60	6.38%	4.95%	\$1.66				
Speed	2	25	\$11.80	4.26%	5.90%	\$0.94				
Tracker	13	121	\$18.98	27.66%	28.54%	\$2.04				

Seven Reasons to Tackle Keeneland

By Rich Nilsen for BetPTC.com

Gracing a picturesque stretch of Kentucky bluegrass that is surrounded by some of the country's most beautiful farms, Keeneland Racecourse is unique in its beauty and history. Visit Keeneland once and you will quickly see that it is an incredible social event. Every day, weekend or weekday, hundreds of co-eds, mostly from the University of Kentucky, make their way to their local track for an afternoon of partying. Visitors come from all over the country. Although they all make for a very crowded atmosphere, the hundreds of inexperienced racegoers present at Keeneland contribute to large wagering pools as well as the occasional overlay.

However, as handicappers, we require more than aesthetics when choosing which tracks to invest in. We shouldn't be playing a track just because it is glamorous or popular. As handicappers looking to turn a profit, we need solid reasons to tackle a track that could easily be dubbed "the Saratoga of the Midwest."

As Keeneland offers a unique meet, handicappers should first understand how the 16-day condition book is written. The racing cards cater to the high profile barns that ship in from out of state for the short meet. There are a few claiming races written, and the ones that are offer small purses in comparison to other tracks. The real reward to the Thoroughbred owner is winning a race at prestigious Keeneland.

The Racing Secretary does not card claiming races on the turf despite the fact that demand is high for these events. The only turf races are allowance events, maiden special weights and stakes. In addition to the winner's purse, a pewter julep cup is given to the winning connections of all such races. To many owners, winning a race at Keeneland is equivalent to getting multiple pictures taken at another track.

Let's look at a few of the valid reasons why we would want to tackle this oftentimes challenging meet.

1- Low Takeout

Kentucky racing offers one of the best takeout structures in the country. Straight wagers (win, place, show) are 'taxed' at only 16%, meaning 84% of the handle is returned to the betting public. Where it really gets good is with the exotics, especially multi-race wagers. All exotic wagers have a low 19-percent takeout, well below the national average. Compare this to the fact that many of the top tracks in the nation have takeouts of 23% or higher for wagers such as Trifectas, Superfectas, Pick-4's and Pick-6's. Keeneland is bargain hunting for the shrewd horseplayers who factor in the price of their wagers. This is one of the major reasons that Keeneland always ranks very highly in the annual HANA Track Ranking report.

2- Quality Racing

Keeneland offers a 15-day condition book this spring that is jam-packed with great racing. In fact there are 16 stakes races totaling \$3.75 million in purses. As mentioned, the racing cards cater to the high profile barns that ship in from out of state, so the condition book and daily cards reflect this. There is a stakes race nearly every day, always part of the popular late Pick-4 wager.

The Central Bank Ashland and Toyota Blue Grass are worth a hefty 100 points each to the winners on the Road to the Kentucky Oaks (G1) and Road to the Kentucky Derby (G1), respectively.

"Our number one goal is to provide the best racing program in the country," stated Vice President of Racing W.B. Rogers Beasley. "We are exceptionally proud of this schedule and the exciting racing and wagering opportunities it offers our horsemen and fans."

Five graded stakes, including three Grade 1 events, worth a total of \$1,625,000 will rank Toyota Blue Grass Day as one of the nation's strongest race cards. The undercard will feature the \$300,000 Madison (G1), for older fillies and mares going seven furlongs; the \$300,000 Jenny Wiley (G1), for older fillies and mares at 1 1/16 miles on the turf; the \$175,000 Commonwealth (G3), for older horses at seven furlongs; and the \$100,000 Shakertown (G3), for older horses at 5½ furlongs on the turf. Racing cards don't get a whole lot better than this.



Keeneland in the spring - photo by <u>Penelope P. Miller</u>, <u>America's Best Racing</u>

3- Turf Racing

Opened in 1984, the beautiful Keeneland turf course is one of the few sand-based turf courses in United States along with Churchill Downs, Tampa Bay Downs and Turf Paradise.

The Keeneland grass course consistently benefits closers. One must be an exceptional horse, or find the rare field (continued on next page) with absolutely no pace, in order to wire a turf field here. Most front-runners collapse at the $1/8^{th}$ pole while the winner is often seen making a sweeping, strong rally on the outside.

Always be on the lookout for runners from top turf barns such as Glen Hill Farm and Augustin Stables. It's surprising how often they will score at a price.

Finally, look for horses that have run well over this grass course in the past. These horses for courses often run well again at Keeneland, winning or finding their way into the exotics at a price.

4- The Trainers

Many barns point for this meeting and arrive loaded for bear. There are also many fine local trainers who fare exceptionally well during the short meet, and knowing who they are behooves the horseplayer. Every spring and fall, author and handicapper Art Parker updates his very comprehensive trainer database and he compiles the results in the bi-annual guide "Keeneland Winning Trainer Patterns."

Parker's digital book covers all the horsemen who have won races over the past eight Keeneland meets, and most importantly, how they did. Were the winners making class changes? Surface changes? What kind of work pattern did they have coming into the race? What jockey did they use and who were the owners? Parker details just how these horses were prepared by their winning trainer, providing players invaluable insight into the methods of these successful horsemen.

With Parker's book, for example, you'll learn not only how often trainer Tom Amoss wins with layoff horses (9 of his 17 winners), but also the workout patterns of those winning runners. Or how about local trainer Rick Hiles, whose three winners all sported the same handicapping pattern and won at odds of 9/2, 21-1, and 39-1, respectively. If a trainer has won at Keeneland, you'll gain insight into how they did it. It's a great guide for players that like to dive into the raw data.

Parker's "Keeneland Winning Trainer Patterns" is available free to members of BetPTC.com [enter promo code HANA when joining] or can purchased at my website, agameofskill.com.



5- Track Bias on the Main

Exploiting the Keeneland track biases used to be one of the many reasons that professional players salivated at the thought of opening day. The old dirt oval could be one of the most biased courses in the country and 'being tuned into it' proved to be very lucrative. Many handicappers believe that went out the window when management switched to Polytrack. That is not entirely true. The Keeneland Polytrack can oftentimes be very biased, especially when weather changes in the Bluegrass state.

One factor you can almost always rely on involves twoturn races on the dirt, specifically the 1 1/16-mile events. The starting gate for this commonly run distance is close to the first turn and the stretch run is short, ending at the first finish line, making it conducive to horses with tactical speed breaking from inside posts.



Fans line up to get into Keeneland for the 2013 Blue Grass Stakes - photo by <u>Penelope P. Miller</u>, <u>America's Best Racing</u>

6- Focus on the Premier Jocks

At meets such as Keeneland, it is not surprising that the high-profile riders win most of the races. The best jockey agents get the best mounts for their riders, and the result is a lot of victories for a select few number of jockeys.

The first few days usually set the tone for the remainder of the meet. Stay away jockeys who start off cold. These jockeys rarely recover from a poor start at Keeneland and will subsequently burn a lot of money.

7- Wagering Menu

If there is a wager you like, Keeneland pretty much has it. With rolling Pick-3s, dime Superfectas, and early and late Pick-4 wagers with guaranteed pools, Keeneland offers a comprehensive wagering menu. It's a far cry from one of the first times I visited the track in the late 1980s. In one race I liked two horses ridden by Pat Day and Randy Romero, respectively, and both were juicy odds of 8-1. Needless to say, this was a rare occurrence at this track for either rider. There was no exacta in the race, and I had to sit there in frustration as the future Hall of Fame riders ran one-two.

Summary

Keeneland offer the best of everything, from low takeouts to just overall great racing. If you are fortunate enough to attend this track in person, you'll likely enjoy a wonderful day of horse racing. Spending an afternoon in Lexington attending live racing can remind us why we fell in love with this sport in the first place. Best of luck this spring!

Freshman Sire Focus



Every year one unknown all horseplayers have to work around is the crop of new sires who have their first crop of foals now of racing age. It takes time for patterns to emerge but hints from a sire's pedigree, race record, and temperament can yield value for players who catch on early to the next Tapit or More Than Ready.

Here are a few Freshman Sires and pedigree patterns that I'll be keeping an eye on throughout this year. I'm also including insight from pedigree consultant and bloodstock analyst Pete Denk, who along with Kerry Thomas, will once again be publishing the "Patterns of Motion Kentucky Derby Report" available on Brisnet.com for \$20.

Early stallions: The sires listed below are ones that I think will have precocious and early two-year-olds who should be winning early and often at sprint distances.

MAJESTICPERFECTION: One of the reasons the owners gave for retiring this crack sprinter to Airdrie Stud is that farm's reputation for developing stallions, including this colt's own sire Harlan's Holiday. I worked for Padua Stables when the Sanans purchased Majesticperfection at the two-year-old sale, and I know how much the team thought of this colt and his conformation and raw brilliance.

These beliefs were validated when the colt was finally healthy and made a splash at Prairie Meadows in winning the Iowa Sprint in a stellar 1:07.24 for six furlongs. Shipped to Saratoga, Majesticperfection won the G1 Vanderbilt on the lead the entire way in 1:08.63 defeating G1 winners Bribon and Big Drama.

In addition to being top notch a physical specimen and sprinter, Majesticperfection also boasts a perennial leading two-year-old sire as his own. The recently deceased Harlan's Holiday is the sire if recent Champion Two-Year-Old Shanghai Bobby and the hot third crop sire Into Mischief, who himself had sired stakes winners Vyjack and Vicar's in Trouble. Everything seems set for Majesticperfection to enjoy a fast start at stud.

Pete's Notes: "They look very strongly built and fairly athletic. I expect them to be hard-trying and fairly early developing, speed types. Sprint to middle distance. They warrant some attention out of the box." **MUNNINGS:** Late-running sprinter by Speightstown won on debut at Saratoga with an appreciably impressive performance that was a glimpse into his vast talent. After a third in the Hopeful and a second in the Champagne, both to Vineyard Haven, Munnings would return at three to win the G2 Woody Stephens and defeat older horses in the G2 Tom Fool before finishing his career as a four-yearold with a win the G2 Gulfstream Sprint Championship. Munnings is out of a classy dam by Holy Bull, La Comete, who herself is a half-sister to G1 winner Icon Project and multiple graded stakes winner on turf, Lasting Approval. His interesting speed over stamina pedigree with some turf inclinations through his sires and female family leads me to believe he will have early runners successful at sprint and middle distances and especially on grass. Pete's Notes: "The Munnings yearlings and two-year-olds I have seen look like little Speightstowns. They are balanced and they consistently have nice strong hips. They should have speed, and although the sire was a sprinter, I could see them getting a mile. He is one of the new sires that I predict could produce winners early and often."



MIDSHIPMAN: Champion Two-Year-Old colt of 2008 who defeated both Munnings and Pioneerof the Nile in that year's Breeders' Cup Juvenile at Santa Anita over the synthetic surface. Unable to overcome training interruptions, the colt missed much of his three-year-old season and didn't make it back to the races in 2009 until September where he won an allowance on dirt at Belmont and then shipped back to Santa Anita and ran third in the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile once again over the synthetic track. Midshipman retired at four after winning one of two races in Dubai (once again over the synthetic surface) for Godolphin.

I think his oft-interrupted schedule combined with dubiousness surrounding his synthetic track wins made Midshipman relatively hard to market as a stallion even with his esteem as a Champion two-year-old. His first crop of only 71 foals makes him a less potent in terms of raw (continued on next page) quantity of potential runners but I think he's worth watching based on the recent success of another son of Unbridled's Song, Old Fashioned, who finished 2013 as amongst the leading Freshman Sires.

The precocity of Old Fashioned and another perennial leading two-year-old sire by Unbridled's Song, Songandaprayer, leads me to believe Midshipman has sneaky potential to be an important two-year-old sire going forward, and especially on synthetic tracks due to the fact his own sire has many progeny who are proficient over the synthetic tracks as well as his own proclivities towards that third surface.

Pete's Notes: "They get over the ground ok and look like sprinter-milers. Not too big, and they have some athleticism. Optimistically you could view them as Unbridled's Song light, but they'll need to prove they have some class on the track."

Additional freshman sire considerations: The stallions may yield hidden value as they were known for success on one surface or as an older/younger horses and may pass along more recessive inclinations that create value in the odds.

DISCREETLY MINE: I'll admit I wasn't much of a fan of his while he was racing but I changed my tune when I saw him at a Lanes' End Farm Stallion Open House. He's a very "handy" horse of good medium size and well-balanced. Though he probably is best known for winning the 2010 G1 King's Bishop and G2 Amsterdam Stakes at one-turn at Saratoga, Discreetly Mine was also a Kentucky Derby contender who stretched his talent out to 8.5 furlongs to annex the 2010 G2 Risen Star.



Discreetly Mine – Melissa Nolan photo

Given that he's by Mineshaft and out of a Private Account mare, sprinting proclivities probably weren't at the top of his connections' expectations but perhaps it shouldn't have come as a surprise seeing that Discreetly Mine's dam Pretty Discreet also produced cracking miler Discreet Cat as well as the dam of nice middle distance racemare Awesome Maria.

I wanted to include Discreetly Mine because I'm interested to see how his progeny develop and if they are as versatile as their sire. In terms of betting his first crop this year, my approach will be to eschew his early starters in favor of those who get going as the distances increase.

The tendency might be for people to see "sire was G1winning sprinter" in pedigree write-ups and think his babies will be early and sprinty but the Mineshaft influence means the value comes by waiting until late summer when his two-year-olds begin to stretch out.

Pete's Notes: "Handy, speed-minded types that seem just ok to me. I'll make them prove their ability/class before I am betting on them consistently."

SUPER SAVER: This 2010 Kentucky Derby winner wasn't initially amongst the stallions I wanted to include but based on Pete's bullish impressions and recent two-yearolds in training results, I knew he'd be important to include. The biggest attribute Super Saver may have going for him is his female family, and especially his second dam Get Lucky, which has been nothing short of prolific in the commercial sales arena and this active pedigree has another nice representative in current Kentucky Oaks hopeful Got Lucky. Furthermore, Super Saver has had 19 two-year-olds in training go through the ring this year and they must be nice looking because their average sale price has been a robust \$226,997.

As a two-year-old, Super Saver broke his maiden in his second start going one mile at Belmont Park and then promptly wheeled back to run fourth next out in the G1 Champagne S. while rank and on the pace. He finished his two-year-old season by winning (and setting a stakes record) in the G2 Kentucky Jockey Club at 8.5 furlongs at Churchill Downs in his first two turn attempt. After a slow start to his three-year-old campaign, Super Saver won the Kentucky Derby over a sloppy track to give his deceased sire Maria's Mon his second winner in that American classic. Super Saver retired later that season after never regaining his early season and two-year-old form.

As a runner, Super Saver had classy speed and it will be interesting to see if that trait is passed along to his runners. Additionally, since he stands at the grand stallion station WinStar Farm, you know Super Saver received excellent support and a book of classy mares. I'll be bullish on his runners out of the 2yo sales and if the results mirror what we saw in the auction ring, I won't hesitate to bet his babies throughout the year.

Pete's Notes: "Consistent two-turn bodies and distance minds. The sire won the Derby, and I'd say the Derby dream is still alive for his progeny. I'd be looking to bet them as the distances increase in August and beyond. I would also give them a chance to run well in two-turn turf races." **DESERT PARTY:** Similar to Discreetly Mine, Desert Party did his best work sprinting at Saratoga, though he's by a distance-inclined sire who won at 9+ furlongs on dirt in the United States. Winner of the G2 Sanford Stakes at two for Darley Stables, Desert Party was shipped to Dubai to prepare for the Triple Crown and after two wins at Nad al Sheba his form began to tail off as evidenced by a second in the UAE Derby and and 14th place finish in the Kentucky Derby.



Desert Party – Melissa Nolan photo

Off for the remainder of his three-year-old season, Desert Party was shipped back to Dubai and reappeared at age four to take another stakes at six furlongs. Shipped back to the United States in summer 2010, the son of Street Cry took the Donald LeVine Memorial H. at Philadelphia Park in his final start.

Out of the Tabasco Cat mare Sage Cat, Desert Party entered stud in 2011 at Darley at Jonabell for a \$10,000 fee. Interest with the KY breeders must've waned because the horse was shipped to New York in recent seasons and will stand at Sequel Stallions in 2014 for \$7,500. His yearling average price is \$64,367 and his two-year-old average price is \$55,437. Of note is that the auction sale price for his colts is significantly higher for his colts than his fillies: \$51,006 versus \$40,494 overall. Perhaps he's a being perceived as a "colt" sire and those horses might be nicer at this point in time than his fillies.

Once again the value with this stallion's progeny will be in not betting them early in their two-year-old year but rather as they begin to stretch out. Likewise, Street Sense, another son of Street Cry, has sired numerous runners on turf and it will be prudent to see if Desert Party follows a similar pattern. Expect success in the NY-bred ranks with Desert Party sons and daughters as they go two turns for the first time.

Pete's Notes: "He bloomed out early on the track. Expectations weren't too high, but his first-crop yearlings pulled good prices in relation to his stud fee. I have seen a number of strongly made horses by Desert Party. He will be on my radar as I'm handicapping the two-year-old races."

QUALITY ROAD: This brilliant runner is an interesting proposition because he had world-class talent but by a stallion, Elusive Quality, not necessarily known as a sire of sires. The best sons of Elusive Quality at stud thus far are Smarty Jones and Raven's Pass, so prospects are far from certain that Quality Road will be successful as a sire, but the type of brilliance he possessed is hard to ignore. This colt was brilliant from six to nine furlongs and set three track records (two at Gulfstream and one at Saratoga) during his racing career. Not only did he win a sire-making race in the Metropolitan Handicap, he won a variety of graded stakes ranging from the Amsterdam to the Woodward to the Florida Derby. Never tried on grass, Quality Road's female family is full of classy grass winners so the potential is there for turf proclivity. Additional considerations with this sire are the foot issues that plagued him throughout his career as well as mental idiosyncrasies such as the fit he threw before the 2009 Breeders' Cup, leading to a gate scratch, and his wellknown aversion running on the rail and inside other horses.

Expect Quality Road progeny to be speedy, solid up to middle distances, and grass-inclined. With his two-year-old in training average price currently at \$197,225, expect his runners to be relatively early and precocious.

Pete's Notes: "They seem to have big, long two-turn bodies, and they share a lot of mental characteristics of Quality Road. I think they will be speed-oriented, forward types, but will they have the sire's running ability?"

LOOKIN AT LUCKY: Son of Smart Strike, Lookin at Lucky was a dual Champion Male at ages two and three and the winner of five G1 races with three of those (Norfolk, Cash Call Futurity, and Del Mar Futurity) coming as a two-yearold. Also of note is that Lookin at Lucky was not only a G1 winner in two different seasons, but help also won at the top level on both dirt and synthetic surfaces. Things were beginning to look a little dire in terms of Smart Strike being known as a sire of sires but another son of his, Curlin, has really come on strong in 2014 with winners like Palace Malice over a panoply of surfaces. Given these facts, I'm waiting to bet Lookin at Lucky's progeny at longer than sprint distances and especially on turf. I would not expect his horses to be early developers. Pete's Notes: "I liked him as a racehorse, and I was very excited to see his progeny, but honestly I have been a little underwhelmed. There was one good looking one at the Barretts two-year-old sale, but I felt like I should have seen more quality in his yearling crop. Maybe all the good ones are home-breds...or maybe they won't look pretty but will prove to be runners, like his sire Smart Strike."

Best of luck with your wagers and I hope these stallion points coming in handy with the fast approaching twoyear-old racing season. Happy 'Capping!



1. Conquest Titan

Although he has just nine Derby points, he remains my top choice as he'll get one more chance in the Arkansas Derby. A jockey switch to three-time Kentucky Derby winner Calvin Borel suits this colt's late-rallying running style. The son of Birdstone has worked well since returning to the tab at Palm Meadows after finishing fourth in the Tampa Bay Derby. If he makes the field, there's legitimate concern about fatigue after two taxing races in a threeweek span for this lightweight colt, but I foresee a favorable pace scenario for him in this Derby and he is the ultimate horse-for-course at Churchill Downs.

2. Tapiture

Although he came up short to Hoppertunity in a bumpy stretch battle in the Rebel Stakes, this son of Tapit showed true grit with the way he handled that very physical test. The Rebel was a solid educational experience for this colt, who is athletic, agile, and continues to mature. A good performance in the Arkansas Derby will answer questions about his ability to stretch out. He's also proven on the Churchill Downs surface and boasts a running style suitable for the anticipated lively pace on May 3.

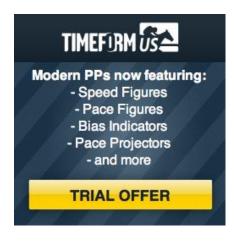
3. Constitution

I've held this son of Tapit in high esteem since his debut, in which he overcame a troubled start and won after a heated pace duel. Since then he's showed nothing but talent and potential.



Constitution after his Florida Derby win - photo by <u>Penelope P. Miller</u>, <u>America's Best Racing</u>

He didn't want to settle early in the Florida Derby, but it appeared more of an initial distaste of being nestled in that inside spot on the rail than an aversion to rating; it was a much-needed learning experience. While I believe the strength of the Florida contingent took a hit with the loss of Top Billing to injury, this colt beat some very talented foes in the Florida Derby, including the plucky Wildcat Red. I like his pedigree for the 10 furlongs as well.



4. Ring Weekend

While the "talk of the Tapits" centers on others, this could be the under-the-radar contender that puts the sire's name in lights. The Tampa Bay Derby winner has improved with each race and has the advantage of a solid foundation as a two-year-old. As expected from a Graham Motion trainee, he's performed well on all three surfaces, but he appears to favor dirt. The gelding delivered an outstanding work over the deep Calder surface on March 28 and, in an unusual but very astute move, will likely have his last prep on that track in the Calder Derby on April 5. That's a standout pedigree with a solid stamina influence in Cryptoclearance on the dam side.

5. Hoppertunity

Each time this Bob Baffert-trained colt runs, it's as if he's shouting for more and more distance. He was running well late once out of traffic to finish fourth in the Risen Star and followed that up with an eye-catching win in the Rebel over some talented foes. He doesn't have the two-year-old foundation like many other contenders, and he'll likely go into the Kentucky Derby off three grueling races in a twomonth span, but Baffert's Bodemeister took a similar path and was a valiant second in the '12 Derby. There's so much to like about this son of Any Given Saturday.

J.J. Hysell has covered the Triple Crown trail and horse racing since 1997. Hysell founded a website dedicated to covering the pursuit of the Triple Crown in Spanish and English that received interest worldwide.

As a handicapper, Hysell has a proven record when it comes to the Triple Crown trail, with the Kentucky Derby winner ranked in the top two for the past five years. Hysell pegged the Derby trifecta in 2011 and gave out the exacta and the winning five-horse superfecta box for *The Courier*-Journal in 2013.

You can follow here on twitter <u>here</u>, or read her excellent blog <u>here</u>.

The Harness Page

Identifying Bad Favorites in Harness Racing



By Garnet Barnsdale

One of the dynamics that sets expert handicappers apart from their not-so-expert opponents at the windows is the ability to identify a bad favorite and either to avoid wagering on it, or hopefully go one further and capitalize by betting against it and cashing. Here's a couple of recent examples of bad favorites and why they should have been avoided at the windows.

Exhibit "A"- Missevil - raced on Friday, March 7 in a NW2 pace at Woodbine Racetrack. Certainly in this nondescript field the undefeated daughter of Armbro Deuce's form stood out. Winner of her only two lifetime starts, she broke her maiden at first asking in 1:55.1 on January 20. Missevil drove to the top in the third quarter and cruised home a two and three-quarter length winner in good time, considering that on that night the mercury dipped to a frigid -15 degrees Celsius.

Missevil's return race 11 days later was even more impressive than the first as she blasted off cover coming off the home turn and parlayed an impressive :27.3 kicker into a stellar 1:53.4 clocking while pacing away from her overmatched rivals by five and a half lengths.

On March 7 Missevil was facing a similar group to the one she had destroyed in her last start and had by far the fastest winning mark of the group. Are you convinced yet that at 6/5 you were basically stealing money by just walking up to the window and calling out Miss Evil's number? You shouldn't be, and here are two big reasons why.

First, Missevil had missed 35 days of action between starts. She was a judges' scratch on February 14th due to a stable error and again on February 21st due to weather, and second, on March 7th she also drew the dreaded 10-hole.

So while you're looking at this filly's obviously superior past performance lines, and before you head to the windows to get some of what appears to be "free money," you need to consider these very important factors. First; how fit will this filly be having missed five weeks with nary a qualifier on her card? Second; considering she drew the 10-hole and hasn't shown much gate speed in her previous starts, where will she be positioned early and how will it affect her chances – in more basic terms: what kind of a "trip" can we expect her

to get?

My thought process was thus: This filly obviously possesses a great deal of natural talent, but she's missed five weeks of racing. While it's entirely likely that she has no physical ailments, nothing keeps a racehorse fitter than racing. She might be a bit short tonight, but even more likely, she may not be asked for her absolute best effort having missed so much racing and drawn poorly. The connections know they have a really nice filly in their barn; would it make a lot of sense to blast her off the gate from the 10-hole in only her third lifetime start considering a 35day gap between starts, or, is it more likely that a patient approach would be taken for this start?

These are the questions seasoned handicappers ask prior to making a wagering decision in a case like this. As you may have guessed by now, I avoided wagering on the over bet Missevil, who missed the board. As expected, she was not asked for her best, immediately dropping to the back and trailing the field by 17 and three-quarter lengths at the half. She did display her abundant talent in the back half of the mile, closing 15 of those lengths and pacing home in :54.4, including a sparkling :26.4 final quarter.

It is quite possible that when Missevil returns in a week 6/5 would be an absolute gift of a price; but on this night it certainly wasn't. In fact, the way she raced was quite predictable considering the handicapping factors mentioned above.

Exhibit "B" also races at Woodbine and is an almost identical study. On March 15, the five-year-old son of Kadabra named Six Bax moved (dropped?) from a NW3 class - where he had been facing some pretty good trotters like Rockin With Dewey and Photo Mass repeatedly – into a NW \$6000 L5. It seemed many punters were viewing this move as a "drop" in class, as Six Bax was taking plenty of tote action. The gelding had a productive year in 2013, winning seven times, but had only one third to show from five 2014 races. Still, he had shown a likely return to form with some much better efforts in his two most recent starts and the wagering public was onto him, sending him off at 7/2 when the wings of the gate folded open.

Here's the problem from my perspective: again, this is a racehorse that missed almost a month of racing, having last been behind the gate vs. opponents on February 17. The questions I ask myself as a bettor are this:

1) If this horse is getting closer to his best effort, why miss 26 days of racing?

2) Am I prepared to accept the price being offered under the premise that he is fit enough to win this race?

3) How do I know for sure this race is the connections' "target"; by that I mean with the time off will this horse be expected to offer up 100% effort or will he "need" a start to get just that much fitter – in "race shape" as they say? (continued on next page)

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My answers shook out something like this:

1) I don't really care WHY he missed three and a half weeks of racing. These days, especially considering the shrinkage of both purses and dates in Ontario, I expect a fit and ready horse to race frequently – if not every week most weeks. For me to consider a horse that was off that period of time they'd have to be a top echelon stakes horse, even then I'd be looking to try to beat them likely.

2) Heck NO! 7/2 on a horse that missed almost a month is a terrible proposition, especially one that hadn't even won a race this year up to that point.

3) We don't know one way or the other, but, as stated in response #2 as bettors when the subject horse is a low price we are far better off in the long run assuming that the horse will "need" this start and avoiding him at the windows.

As things turned out, Six Bax left the gate quickly and tucked into the two-hole behind a "down the road" winner named I'll Be There. Six Bax got no closer than two and a half lengths from the leader, gapping the pocket the entire mile and finally finishing fourth, 10 lengths behind the runaway winner, which would suggest he indeed "needed" the start.

Epilogue: Six Bax returned a week after the March 15 start we dissected above in the same class and demolished his foes by moving first-over and drawing off to win by more than four lengths at a very generous price of 5/1. It seems those that entrusted him with their wagering dollars the week previous under far flimsier circumstances had abandoned him when it was much more likely that he would be competitive with the "tightener" under his belt.

From a wagering standpoint, Six Bax had gone from a poor prospect "underlay" one week to a possible "overlay" the next; or at the very least, the 5/1 offered on March 22 was fair value considering his merits and current fitness level. Miss Evil also returned a week later on a seven-day rotation and easily dispatched her foes off an equally powerful first-over display of dominance, winning as the 2/5 chalk.

What's the moral to all this? As in any other walk of life, before going to the window to make a bet we should be using the information in a horse's past performances as a sort of "caveat emptor" exercise, or in simpler terms, never accept a short price on a horse that may end up shorter...from a conditioning standpoint that is.

About the author - Garnet has been an avid fan, handicapper and bettor of harness racing for almost four decades. He is an honors graduate from the Humber College School of Journalism (1988) and contributes to various print, broadcast and web media. Garnet is a cohost of North American Harness Update which airs every Friday night (9 p.m. Eastern) <u>here</u> and his Woodbine/Mohawk selections can be found here.

2014 Handicapping Challenge Details

HANA Harness is pleased to announce the initial Gold Sponsors of this year's handicapping contest along with the handicappers and rescues they are representing in this year's event.

This year's Grand Circuit 'Shoot-Out Handicapping Contest is being sponsored by prior year sponsors, The Hambletonian Society, Meadowlands Racing & Entertainment, Tioga Downs, and Vernon Downs. New this year to the Gold Level Sponsorship level is *DRF Harness* and Northfield Park. Thanks to the sponsors which have already committed, at least \$3,000 will be distributed to Standardbred rescues as a result of this year's contest.

Additional sponsorships, primarily at the Silver and Bronze levels. are still available. Whether a racetrack, horsemen's group, or a provider of services related to harness racing, HANA Harness welcomes your sponsorship of this contest. 100% of all funds are directed to approved Standardbred rescues. For further information regarding sponsorship opportunities, you may send an email to allan@hanaweb.org.

In addition to the initial gold level sponsors, the contestants for the 2014 HANA Harness Grand Circuit 'Shoot-Out' Handicapping Contest presented by The Hambletonian Society, DRF Harness, Meadowlands Racing & Entertainment, Northfield Park, Tioga Downs, and Vernon Downs have been named.

This year we have a mix of handicappers of all age groups, from teens and up; some returning and first time contestants. Along with the names of the handicappers is their primary relationship to racing, how they finished in their last HANA Harness Contest (if competed before), and the standardbred equine rescue they are playing for in this year's contest. For complete biographies of the handicappers, you may <u>visit the contest website for</u> additional information.

The first leg of the 2014 Grand Circuit 'Shoot-Out' is scheduled for April 26, 2014 when the finals of the George Morton Levy Memorial Pace and the Blue Chip Matchmaker Series will be contested at Yonkers Raceway. A complete list of contest days <u>may be found here</u>.

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Putting Horseplayers First?

Yes, It Really Does Work!



By Lenny Moon

When you think of horse racing in America the first thing that comes to mind is Kentucky. Kentucky is home to the biggest race in America, the Kentucky Derby, and home to the most prestigious breeding operations. Kentucky breds dominate the biggest races year in and year out.

Kentucky is also home to two of the most important race tracks in America, Churchill Downs and Keeneland. Both attract large fields and offer player friendly takeout rates. For those reasons and many others both tracks annually rank at the top of the HANA Track Ratings. Recently however it is another Kentucky track that has caught my (and many others) attention. That track is Kentucky Downs.

If you haven't heard of Kentucky Downs or haven't bet a race there it might be because the annual meet consists of only five racing days. At first glance you might think it's just another fair meet with bottom level claimers, small purses and small mutuel pools. It's the polar opposite.

With an influx of cash from Instant Racing machines the purses at Kentucky Downs have grown to be among the highest in the country. The result has been an increase in field size from 8.77 in 2011 to 9.56 in 2012 to 9.96 in 2013.

Kentucky Downs, like Keeneland, has some of the lowest takeout rates in the country. The Pick 5 has a 14% takeout rate, Win/Place/Show have a 16% takeout rate, Exacta's have a 18.25% takeout rate and all other wager types have a 19% takeout rate.

As expected when takeout rates are low and fields are large the wagering handle has skyrocketed (although you'll find many race track operators that don't agree even when the data proves it). The year prior to the changes mentioned above the handle decreased 17.85% but in the last two years it has increased year over year by 43.98% and 69.30% respectively. That's a trend any race track would be envious of.

On top of all of that Kentucky Downs also offers industry low minimum wagering amounts across the board with \$0.10 Superfecta's, \$0.50 Trifecta's, Pick 3's, 4's and 5's and Super High Five's, \$1.00 Exacta's and Daily Doubles and \$2.00 for Win/Place/Show.

Looking for diversity? In 2012 horses that last raced at 30 different tracks competed at Kentucky Downs and in 2013

horses that last raced at 32 different tracks competed at Kentucky Downs.

Looking for uniqueness? Kentucky Downs has the only European style turf course in the country with undulations and a non-symmetrical layout.

With the large fields, growing handle, diversity of horses and the uniqueness of the course it's no surprise the average win mutuel topped \$13.00 in each of the last two years. It's one of the few opportunities during the year to get the best of everything. Like anything new it might be a little intimidating and jumping in with both feet without being informed about how the track plays and how to handicap such a diverse set of horses could lead to an unprofitable experience. Fortunately I've got you covered. In an effort to help those that have never wagered there and also to show my support I created a blog last year dedicated to both. I updated it before and during the meet and plan do so more often this year. It is my way of giving back to a track, which unlike most, puts the horseplayer first. You can find it here:

<u>http://supportkentuckydowns.blogspot.com</u>. Be sure to bookmark it and check back in September for live updates during the 2014 meet.

Horseplayers across the country complain that track operators put us last and for the most part that is true. Kentucky Downs is making its' mark on the horse racing industry by doing the opposite. This is evidenced by the information provided above and by the HANA Track Ratings, which have moved Kentucky Downs from 29th in 2012 to 5th in 2013 and 2nd in 2014. With a little more support from you, the horseplayer, Kentucky Downs can give the reigning king, Keeneland, a run for its' money this year.

Lenny Moon is the founder of <u>Equinometry.com</u>, a site dedicated to educating horseplayers of all levels about handicapping, betting and handicapping contest strategy and about issues within the horse racing industry that directly affect horseplayers such as takeout rates and lack of transparency by industry organizations. Lenny has been a serious horseplayer for the past fifteen years and a serious handicapping contest player for the past five years. In addition to writing for Equinometry.com and the HANA Monthly Newsletter Lenny also writes for <u>Derby Wars</u> and <u>Horse Racing Nation</u>.



HANA would like to take a moment to congratulate Christian Hellmers on his recent victory in the Horse Player World Series. One of the stars of Esquire's "Horseplayers" television show, Hellmers pocketed over \$269,000 for his victory at the Orleans Casino in Las Vegas.

For full details and a listing of the top ten finishers, please <u>click here</u>.



Ultimate Woodbine Stats Pack

Woodbine - Sprints, 2013

"If they go too fast on the front end, they can be run down. The track plays fair."

Track Weight Analysis CPace 123 CompoundLate 123	Actual Winners 314.00 320.00	Expected Winners 340.84 341.28	Actual/Expected Ratio 0.9213 0.9376	Win Roi 1.0486 0.6892
	Actual	Expected	Actual/Expected	
Run Style Analysis	Winners	Winners	Ratio	
E	111.00	120.17	0.9237	
EP	54.00	50.40	1.0714	
P	194.00	195.29	0.9934	
S	209.00	225.20	0.9280	
NA	77.00	80.94	0.9514	

Approximate Track Weight: 3.00 (Plays Fair)

Sprints, By Rider, 2013

BY RIDER sorted by wins Run Date: 3/19/2014 4:20:08 PM								
			WIN	WIN	WIN		PLACE	PLACE
UDM PT	AYS	WINS	PCT	TMPACT	ROT	PLACES	PCT	ROI
****		******	*******	******	*******	*******	*******	
CONTRERAS LUIS	423	76	0.1797	1.498	0.748	141	0.3333	0.728
DA SILVA EURICO R	322	73	0.2267	1.8897	0.8101	130	0.4037	0.8707
STEIN JUSTIN	278	53	0.1906	1.5888	1.1703	86	0.3094	0.9065
HUSBANDS PATRICK	191	49	0.2565	2.1381	1.1403	77	0.4031	0.9696
CAMPBELL JESSE M	304	43	0.1414	1.1787	1.048	84	0.2763	0.9679
WILSON EMMA-JAYNE	318	39	0.1226	1.022	0.8327	87	0.2736	0.8239
BOULANGER GARY	267	34	0.1273	1.0612	0.809	71	0.2659	0.8358
PIZARRO TYLER	187	32	0.1711	1.4263	1.1626	49	0.262	0.7917
CHERNETZ SKYE	299	30	0.1003	0.8361	0.7346	63	0.2107	0.7321
MORENO OMAR	201	26	0.1294	1.0787	0.9204	52	0.2587	1.0256
KABEL TODD	230	24	0.1043	0.8694	0.7457	51	0.2217	0.8078
MCALENEY JAMES	159	20	0.1258	1.0486	0.8296	34	0.2138	0.6764
BAHEN STEVEN RONALD	216	18	0.0833	0.6944	0.6935	45	0.2083	0.9104
RAINFORD MICHELLE	83	15	0.1807	1.5063	0.794	25	0.3012	0.8331
MORAN DAVID	217	15	0.0691	0.576	0.7876	40	0.1843	0.8993
BRIDGMOHAN JERMAINE	90	14	0.1556	1.2971	0.5967	19	0.2111	0.5456
GARCIA DAVID	169	14	0.0828	0.6902	0.5817	35	0.2071	1.0151
WONG TOMMY	163	12	0.0736	0.6135	0.7641	24	0.1472	0.8871
RAMSAMMY EMILE	158	11	0.0696	0.5802	0.5063	24	0.1519	0.5225
OLGUIN GERRY	167	10	0.0599	0.4993	0.6434	27	0.1617	0.5964
RYAN SHEENA	133	10	0.0752	0.6269	0.8331	23	0.1729	0.7853
MOORE MATT	162	7	0.0432	0.3601	0.1972	17	0.1049	0.6105

Sprints, By Rail Position, 2013 - Possible Slight Inside Bias

Rail	Pos	P/L	Bet	Ro	i Wins	Plays	Pct	Impact
1	-12	28.30	1286.00	0.900	2 84	643	.1306	1.0890
2	-33	30.90	1286.00	0.742	7 84	643	.1306	1.0890
3	-31	15.80	1286.00	0.754	4 83	643	.1291	1.0760
4	-48	36.00	1286.00	0.622	1 73	643	.1135	0.9464
5	-60	00.00	1276.00	0.529	8 67	638	.1050	0.8754
6	-20	04.40	1246.00	0.836	08 C	623	.1284	1.0704
7	-37	78.40	1072.00	0.647) 65	536	.1213	1.0109
8	1	15.00	814.00	1.018	4 48	407	.1179	0.9831
9	-16	61.10	580.00	0.722	2 37	290	.1276	1.0635
10	- 9	94.90	394.00	0.759	1 16	197	.0812	0.6770
11		2.30	238.00	1.009	7 12	119	.1008	0.8406
12	18	34.20	164.00	2.123	2 9	82	.1098	0.9149
13	- 4	41.40	96.00	0.568	в з	48	.0625	0.5210
14	-2	20.50	46.00	0.554	3 3	23	.1304	1.0873

Sprints, 2013, By Running Style

By: Running Style

Value	P/L	Bet	Roi	Wins	Plays	Pct	Impact	
0 15 30	-608.50 78.60 -117.10	1994.00 698.00 700.00	0.6948 1.1126 0.8327	113 55 45	997 349 350	.1133 .1576 .1286	1.3137 1.0718	E EP P
45 60 75	-295.70 -934.30 -325.00	2138.00 2932.00 918.00	0.8617 0.6813 0.6460	154 176 49	1069 1466 459	.1441 .1201 .1068	1.2009 1.0008 0.8899	PS S SS

Woodbine Turf 2013

By: Running Style

Value	P/L	Bet	Roi	Wins	Plays	Pct	Impact	
0	-160.60	358.00	0.5514	14	179	.0782	0.7121	Ε
15	36.80	134.00	1.2746	12	67	.1791	1.6306	ΕP
30	-58.00	168.00	0.6548	9	84	.1071	0.9755	Ρ
45	241.10	806.00	1.2991	45	403	.1117	1.0166	PS
60	-204.60	824.00	0.7517	48	412	.1165	1.0607	S
75	47.00	424.00	1.1108	26	212	.1226	1.1166	SS
90	-79.40	254.00	0.6874	9	127	.0709	0.6452	U

By: Rail Position - Inside Seems Better Than Out

Rail	Pos	P/L	Bet	Roi	Wins	Plays	Pct	Impact
1	-35	.70	304.00	0.8826	25	152	.1645	1.4974
2	-120	.10	304.00	0.6049	16	152	.1053	0.9583
3	-7	.10	304.00	0.9766	20	152	.1316	1.1979
4	-97	.60	304.00	0.6789	13	152	.0855	0.7787
5	13	.10	304.00	1.0431	23	152	.1513	1.3776
6	-50	.70	298.00	0.8299	17	149	.1141	1.0387
7	-23	.30	290.00	0.9197	16	145	.1103	1.0046
8	-89	.30	250.00	0.6428	9	125	.0720	0.6555
9	-19	.30	216.00	0.9106	8	108	.0741	0.6744
10	223	.70	164.00	2.3640	8	82	.0976	0.8882
11	128	.40	102.00	2.2588	5	51	.0980	0.8926
12	-55	.70	72.00	0.2264	1	36	.0278	0.2529
13	-22	.10	34.00	0.3500	2	17	.1176	1.0711
14	-22	.00	22.00	0.0000	0	11	.0000	0.0000

BY Turf RIDER sorted by wins Run Date: 3/19/2014 4:28:14 PM												
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			WIN	WIN	WIN		PLACE	PLACE				
	AYS	WINS	PCT	IMPACT	ROI	PLACES	PCT	ROI				
* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *	***************************************											
CONTRERAS LUIS	127	25	0.1969	1.7926	0.985	40	0.315	0.8413				
WILSON EMMA-JAYNE	105	22	0.2095	1.9073	1.4767	38	0.3619	1.1286				
DA SILVA EURICO ROS	A120	19	0.1583	1.4412	0.8658	43	0.3583	1.0479				
STEIN JUSTIN	114	13	0.114	1.0379	1.0377	23	0.2018	0.7833				
KABEL TODD	91	10	0.1099	1.0006	1.1231	20	0.2198	0.917				
CAMPBELL JESSE M	105	10	0.0952	0.8667	0.6957	17	0.1619	0.56				
OLGUIN GERRY	49	6	0.1224	1.1144	1.3959	10	0.2041	0.8847				
MORENO OMAR	63	6	0.0952	0.8667	0.5119	9	0.1429	0.4206				
PIZARRO TYLER	61	6	0.0984	0.8959	0.6066	14	0.2295	1.2434				
CHERNETZ SKYE	68	5	0.0735	0.6692	1.6199	8	0.1176	1.0809				
BOULANGER GARY	82	5	0.061	0.5554	0.3939	15	0.1829	0.5872				
MORAN DAVID	67	4	0.0597	0.5435	0.9201	9	0.1343	0.7366				
BRIDGMOHAN JERMAINE	30	4	0.1333	1.2136	1.6933	9	0.3	1.585				
BAHEN STEVEN RONALD	41	4	0.0976	0.8886	1.0256	9	0.2195	1.3207				
MCALENEY JAMES	46	3	0.0652	0.5936	0.9815	6	0.1304	0.8511				
MOORE MATT	26	3	0.1154	1.0506	0.6538	3	0.1154	0.3038				
WONG TOMMY	25	2	0.08	0.7283	3.672	3	0.12	1.348				
WEBB NICK	19	2	0.1053	0.9587	1.7632	3	0.1579	0.8105				
CALLAGHAN SLADE	6	2	0.3333	3.0345	2.0083	2	0.3333	1.0833				
VANDEN BERG BRITTAN	Y10	1	0.1	0.9104	0.9	1	0.1	0.72				

"Form" Ruled 2013 on the Green

By: "Form" Rank

Rank	P/L	Bet	Roi	Wins	Plays	Pct	Impact
1	180.30	322.00	1.5599	26	161	.1615	1.4703
2	3.90	306.00	1.0127	26	153	.1699	1.5471
3	139.70	310.00	1.4506	26	155	.1677	1.5272
4 5 7 8 9 10	-102.40 -136.30 -167.00 24.90 -172.00 -103.90 32.80	292.00 320.00 282.00 286.00 262.00 224.00 164.00	0.6493 0.5741 0.4078 1.0871 0.3435 0.5362 1.2000	12 14 10 16 8 10 7	146 160 141 143 131 112 82	.0822 .0875 .0709 .1119 .0611 .0893 .0854	0.7483 0.7966 0.6457 1.0187 0.5560 0.8129 0.7772
11	33.40	98.00	1.3408	3	49	.0612	0.5574
12	106.60	68.00	2.5676	4	34	.1176	1.0711
13	-5.70	22.00	0.7409	1	11	.0909	0.8277
14	-12.00	12.00	0.0000	0	6	.0000	0.0000

Beware Early Speed on Poly in April

By: Calendar Month - Poly Sprints, Top Early Figure

Month	P/L	Bet	Roi	Wins	Plays	Pct	Impact
1	0.00	0.00	0.0000	0	0	.0000	0.0000
2	0.00	0.00	0.0000	0	0	.0000	0.0000
3	0.00	0.00	0.0000	0	0	.0000	0.0000
4	30.30	80.00	1.3788	11	40	.2750	1.2106
5	-30.70	122.00	0.7484	14	61	.2295	1.0104
6	6.30	66.00	1.0955	10	33	.3030	1.3340
7	-0.40	90.00	0.9956	10	45	.2222	0.9783
8	24.10	94.00	1.2564	13	47	.2766	1.2177
9	-25.10	86.00	0.7081	9	43	.2093	0.9214
10	-39.60	86.00	0.5395	7	43	.1628	0.7167
11	-22.70	84.00	0.7298	8	42	.1905	0.8385
12	-25.50	58.00	0.5603	5	29	.1724	0.7590



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