

MEADOW: THE FUTURE OF HORSE RACING

DERBY CONTENDER WATCHLIST

# HORSE *PLAYER*

MONTHLY

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JANUARY 2017

# PEGASUS PREVIEW!

WITH TIMEFORMUS & OPTIXEQ



**INSIDE NHC18** *with*  
**MATTIES & DAVIS**

**FAREWELL**  
*California Chrome*

EQUISPORT PHOTOS





## In this issue:

Comments Wanted on IRS Regs – Page 1  
Barry Meadow Discusses the Future – Page 2  
Matties & Davis Look at NHC18 – Page 5  
Pegasus World Cup Day Previews – Pages 6 & 7  
Nolan's 3-Year-Olds to Watch, via The Sheets – Page 8  
Five Point Checklist for Winners – Page 13  
Racing's Data Dilemma – Page 17

### The Horseplayer Monthly January/February 2017 Issue

## Let Your Voice Be Heard on IRS Regulations

On December 29, 2016 the Department of Treasury and Internal Revenue Service (IRS) issued newly proposed regulations relating to withholding and reporting with respect to pari-mutuel winnings. The 31-page Treasury document, entitled "Withholding on Payments of Certain Gambling Winnings," accomplishes the goals started and spearheaded by the NTRA more than two years ago. The effort to this point has included meetings between the NTRA and Treasury and IRS officials, visits to Washington by horseplayers, grass roots campaigns and direct contact involving thousands of industry stake holders, including bettors, as well as involvement by numerous Members of Congress, Governors and other elected officials.

The proposed regulations clarify 'the amount of the wager' to include the entire amount wagered into a specific pari-mutuel pool by an individual—not just the winning base unit as is the case today—so long as all wagers made into a specific pool by an individual are made on a single totalizator ticket if the wager is placed onsite. The proposed regulations would have the same positive results for Advance Deposit Wagering (ADW) customers and would not impact how those wagers are currently made.

The proposed regulations will positively impact a significant percentage of winning wagers, particularly those involving multi-horse or multi-race exotic wagers, and result in tens of millions of dollars in additional pari-mutuel churn.

The proposed regulations will undergo a 90-day comment period and it is conceivable that they could be in place prior to the 2017 Triple Crown. As was the case during a similar comment period in 2015 that attracted nearly 12,000 comments, the NTRA next week will establish a convenient and simple method for industry stakeholders to encourage enactment of the proposed regulations.

In its 31-page rulemaking document, the Treasury and IRS cited numerous specific examples provided by the NTRA as reasons for the need to modernize and also referred to the many comments it received from individuals in support of the proposed changes.

"This is a tremendous step forward in our ongoing efforts to modernize pari-mutuel regulations to accurately reflect today's wagering environment," NTRA President and CEO Alex Waldrop said. "The NTRA remains thankful

to everyone who has engaged in this process, including numerous industry stake holders, horseplayers, Members of Congress, Governors and other elected officials, especially Congressmen John Yarmuth (D-KY) and Charles Boustany (R-LA), who led the congressional effort. A unified message has gotten us to this point and we encourage everyone to continue to work through the channels we will be establishing as we seek to push these proposed regulations across the goal line."

The complete Treasury and IRS rulemaking document is posted on NTRA.com and can be accessed [here](http://www.ntra.com).

*(NTRA Press Release)*

To further this cause, the NTRA has setup a way for horseplayers to voice their support of the proposed changes, and we at HANA are asking our Horseplayer Monthly readers and members to take the time to do so.

If you go to <https://www.ntra.com/comment>, there is a form to fill out, including your name, place of residence, and e-mail. There is then an area where the NTRA has pre-filled some comments in support, but if you would like to change or add to that, you can.

"I'm primarily a win and exacta bettor. As a result I don't hit many signers," said HANA President Jeff Platt. "But on Aug 12, 2016 I played \$135 on a single horse to win its leg of a pick 5 at Saratoga. As fate would have it, the horse (Irish Jasper) won (paying all of \$3.90 to win race four), but a longshot won the final leg of the pick 5, and I collected a total of \$1,520.50 for my \$135 outlay. I had to "sign," and based on the W2G, the IRS thinks I won \$1,520.50 (more than 3,000- 1) on a 50 cent bet. But the reality is I collected roughly 10-1 on a \$135.00 bet. The current IRS regs for horseplayers are absurd. This is your chance to let them know about it."

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# What's the Future Hold for Racing?

By Barry Meadow

The Thoroughbred industry keeps complaining about declining handle and attendance, yet little has been done to fix some of the most obvious problems. Some require money—who will pay for a better system of transmitting bets, for instance? Others require somebody high up—in state government, on a racing board, in the executive suite of a racetrack—to take some bold action. Just read the proceedings at industry confabs, though, and you will discover that some of the sport's most influential executives actually believe that slogans (“Go baby go!”) and food trucks in the infield will turn the sport around.

Of course, as long as the higher-ups think that we horseplayers are a bunch of idiotic addicts who will put up with anything, don't expect much to change. It's not likely there'll be much done about late odds drops, high takeouts, or wrist slaps for drug violators. And betting exchanges, a game-changer overseas more than a decade ago, figure to remain a distant dream for U.S. players (except in New Jersey, where such betting is legal).

But let's look at some good news. Mandatory withholding regulations have gotten better for horseplayers. Before the Treasury Department and the Internal Revenue Service recommended revising the regulations in December (they are likely to take effect shortly after the 90-day comment period ends), if you invested \$1,500 in a pick 6 and collected \$6,000, you had somewhere north of 25% (depending on state regulations) withheld from the entire \$6,000, even though your winnings were only \$4,500. Now, if your entire bet was on one ticket at the track—though there is no such requirement for ADW's—you will be taxed on only the \$4,500 won. And that's below the \$5,000 withholding number, so you won't have anything withheld (though you'll have to pay tax on your winnings later unless you have offsetting losses).



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Overall, there figures to be much more money in horseplayers' pockets for a much longer time, and that can only help handle. And that's the second piece of good

news—handle seems to have stabilized. Wagering on U.S. races in 2016 was slightly above \$10.7 billion, an increase of 0.58% from 2015, despite a drop of 707 races (38,284 from 38,941). The handles on the sport's signature events—the Kentucky Derby and the Breeders Cup—remain strong.

Tournaments continue to gain in popularity. The National Handicapping Championship was set to award more than \$2.5 million in prizes in 2017, the largest yet. An estimated 627 players—the highest number ever—were scheduled to compete. Tournament sites, particularly online, have continued their momentum. Both [nhcqualify.com](http://nhcqualify.com) and [horsetourneys.com](http://horsetourneys.com) offer numerous low-cost opportunities to qualify for larger tournaments. [Derbywars.com](http://Derbywars.com) is a fantasy league tournament site which occasionally hosts NHC qualifiers. Another site, [horseplayersqualify.com](http://horseplayersqualify.com), is a feeder site for the big-bucks Horseplayers World Series.

However, these positives for the future are more than offset by disturbing possibilities in other areas. Among the changes we can expect in the not-too-distant future:

**The end of racinos.** While slots money has propped up several tracks—and now accounts for one-third of all industry purses—casino operators more and more are looking to get out of the racing business. Why, after all, should they be forced to pay any of their profits to racetracks, which are seen as little more than cash drains? And from another direction, state legislators are beginning to ask why racetracks should get any subsidies when that money could go to health care or education. Sooner rather than later, racetracks will have to stand, or fail, on their own. Type “decoupling horse racing” into Google and you will discover a number of scary stories about this.

**Trouble for ADW's.** The large number of advance deposit wagering services (ADW's) chasing after the same few dollars will probably result in some of them closing, particularly as tracks establish their own on-line betting services. And it's possible that your money may disappear when they close, because not every state mandates that account-holders' funds be segregated in an escrow account; in some places, ADW's could go under if a track suddenly closes its doors while owing settlement monies that were supposed to be used to pay the ADW's winning bettors, forcing the ADW's to join a long line of creditors.

**Rebate reductions.** It's estimated that 20% of nationwide handle comes from computerized robotic wagering teams, and many other players depend on rebates from micro-bet ADW's. But no track is interested in cutting its signal fees, and rebate houses are likely to be squeezed. More places may add source market fees, these assessments being high enough to eliminate rebates altogether for some players. As rebates decline, so will the  
(continued on next page)

handle of these teams, and individual players, leading to a downward spiral in total handle. And as handle drops, any particular bet will have more of an effect on payoffs.

**Smaller fields.** With economic conditions more uncertain these days, the horse-loving pizzeria owner or advertising executive who could afford to blow \$20,000 to buy a horse, and maybe run a yearly deficit after purses of another \$20,000 to maintain his purchase, now is scrambling to keep his business afloat or avoid being caught in the tsunami of downsizing. At tracks without racinos, the number of claims has dropped precipitously in the last few years. The market for yearlings is not what it used to be, and many small breeders have left the business altogether. The average field size in 2016 was 7.8, the second smallest mean since nationwide record-keeping began in 1950.

**The death of newspapers.** As newspapers continue to close and horse racing writers go the way of the telegraph operator, investigations of the sport will come close to disappearing. The industry magazines generally run puff pieces and the racing network hosts are relentlessly upbeat ("While Trainer Smith is currently 0-for-83, he's really a much better trainer than that"), so how is the public going to get balanced information on what is really happening in the game? If you expect serious coverage about how some veterinarians are recommending unneeded shots to run up the bills, or how even today grooms live in deplorable conditions at some tracks, good luck.

**Goodbye racetracks.** More tracks will close, and no new ones will open. And those that remain open will offer fewer days per year, with longer breaks in between meets. With fewer horses and less interest in the game, and the possible loss of racino money, who will argue that year-long racing at dozens of tracks is necessary? And with 90% or more of the money being bet away from the track, who needs these giant plants in the middle of urban areas? Look for more tracks to race on reduced schedules.

Racing will survive. It's still a great sport, and a great gambling game. But a few years from now, it may not resemble what it looks like today.

About the author-Barry Meadow is the author of *Money Secrets At The Racetrack*. For seven years, he published the newsletter *Meadow's Racing Monthly*. In 2014, he won the first-ever Ron Rippey Award for handicapping media. His newly revised website, [trpublishing.com](http://trpublishing.com), features a number of free handicapping articles. For information on his upcoming book, send an e-mail to [barry@trpublishing.com](mailto:barry@trpublishing.com).

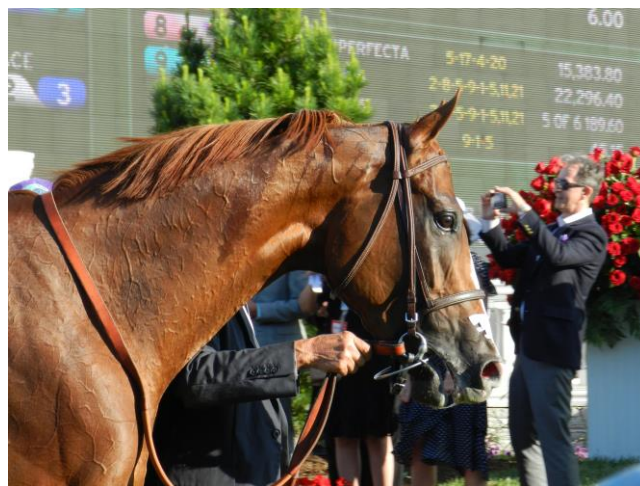
## Is California Chrome "Great?" Who Cares.



By [Jerod Dinkin](#)

One of the most popular subjects of sports writers, pundits, talking heads, and various parties on social media is to debate the relative merits of historically successful athletes. This is especially magnified toward the end of the careers of such athletes. While it's understandable to put these rare cases in proper context through an exploration of their accomplishments, what is unequivocally unfair is to debate their greatness or attempt to qualify their relative greatness amongst other great athletes (I use great in this case since that is the chosen term in the horse racing debate with respect to the all-time best. I'm not sure how or why this is the case as there are better adjectives, but great is here to stay).

California Chrome is a highly-accomplished animal that I enjoyed watching over the years. I feel zero need to place his stature in history in any comparative light. Doing so belittles either him or the other accomplished sorts because by definition an individual is putting one above or below the other. By ranking, listing, comparing, etc. we are projecting our own biases and subjectivity toward something we all know was undeniably incredible. In my mind, that undeniable physical experience is what is important, not the intangible discussion of relativity or the superficial need to define it that follows.



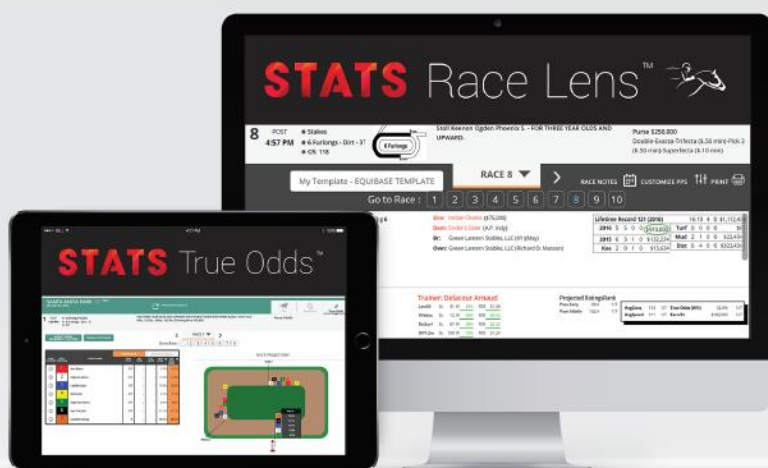
California Chrome - photo by [Penelope P. Miller](#), [America's Best Racing](#)

Great? What does that mean? I don't know and I don't care. I don't care if he was "worse" than Man O' War, it misses the point. I don't care who he beat. I know what I saw. I know what we all saw. And that should be more than sufficient because what we saw doesn't come around very often.



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# Matties & Davis Discuss NHC18

With this year's edition of the National Handicapping Championship ahead this weekend, we asked defending champion Paul Matties Jr. and third-place finisher and HANA Board Member Charlie Davis for some thoughts on last year's event and their feelings coming in to the championship this time around.

## Paul Matties Jr.

For the first time, last year's NHC was not tilted towards turf racing. When it started going that direction, I recognized that I had an opportunity that I didn't expect to have when I arrived in Las Vegas. That realization was the impetus I needed to become more focused than I ever have been in a handicapping tournament. Obviously, other things went my way as well, but I actually stopped live betting early on day two, which is something I never have done in a contest before, proving I was really in the moment.

Of course, I'm not expecting so many races to come off the turf again this year, so if I'm going to be successful again, I am going to have to perform better in turf races than I have done in other years. I've been concentrating on the results and replays of turf races around the country much more than I normally do over the last few weeks. I've already come up with 50-100 watch list horses that I hope fall into the entries on the weekend of the 28th and 29th in January. In addition, I've made some tweaks in my 7 1/2 furlong pace figures at Gulfstream, and I've been ignoring paces in where I think the time is wrong or is too slow to be relevant. With all that said, I'm still not overly confident about turf races in handicapping contests, because the underlying truth about turf racing is most of the time you are just speculating, and more specifically, speculating about the trips of today's race opposed to the trips of his/her previous races, and with so many players in this contest, somebody has to guess right a bunch of times in a row. It's just probability.

I've said this before but I really like the new format and hopefully, because of it, the mandatory turf races won't be the only determining factor. I've been discussing strategy with my brother, Duke, and my father, Chick, as well as my friend, John Nichols, and we have been discussing the importance of trying to make each cut. It's something I'm not going to lose sight of, and I will be fighting to make each cut, turning the big goal into a series of smaller ones. The ultimate hope is you can realize those goals by sticking to horses that you really prefer, like I did last year, instead of being forced into going to alternate picks because of the odds. Whatever the situation, I will be trying harder than ever to become the first repeat winner of the NHC. That would have a great ring to it.

## Charlie Davis

Coming in off a third-place finish last year, with several other high tournament finishes in 2016, you'd think I'd be feeling confident in my chances at the NHC. I don't feel any more confident than usual, though, as the tourney format values every choice the same, thus making it impossible to weight your opinions. In order for me to do well again, I'll need to handicap the races without mistakes, stick to the odds required for each pick, and get a whole lot of luck. I'll need to win some photos, beat some big favorites, etc. I know going into this tournament that that I'll need to be right more often than normal and that the odds will have to break in my favor.

Long odds definitely, and I wouldn't recommend betting me at the windows, but how do I prepare? Not a whole lot different than I do for a normal day of racing really.

1. Make sure I'm doing everything mentally and physically to be in the right mindset for a very long day of racing.
2. Look at the tracks I'll be playing to discern if there are any biases of note (post position, speed, etc).
3. Set a target and map out the prices and quantity of horses I'll need to hit in order to hit that target.

The preparation is so much different for this kind of tournament than it is for a big day tournament like the BCBC. I know people that spend days going through the pp's, and while I know that works for some, that's not optimal for me. I like to stick to my normal routine since I'll be looking at 50+ races each day.

To handle all of those races, the night before I'll create a spreadsheet listing every race included in the contest. I'll make a quick run through and cross off races I'm not interested in, note legit favorites and chaos races, and highlight the races I'm most interested in. In the morning, after scratches, I'll go back through that spreadsheet to see if anything's changed, and then I'll plan out my day.

My key piece of advice is to avoid the "what if" game. What if I played that 20-1 that wired the field? What would my score be if I'd played my top pick in that race? The time for second-guessing and strategy refinement is after the awards are handed out. There's nothing to be gained by second-guessing yourself, and it actually puts you in a negative mindset and makes you more likely to have a lapse in judgement in future races. Don't enter your "what if" totals into your spreadsheet to see what your score would be. Don't even do the math in your head. Make your decisions, with solid reasoning, and see what happens.

## TimeformUS Takes on the Pegasus World Cup



By [Craig Milkowski](#)

The Grade 1 Pegasus World Cup Invitational Stakes is taking place this Saturday, January 28th. It is the inaugural running of the race and is unique. Starting spots were bought well in advance of the race and not tied to any specific horses. It is an interesting concept. It replaces the former Donn Handicap, thus the Grade 1 rating was able to be inherited. Twelve starting spots were sold for one million dollars each, so of course the race features a full field of 12. The field looks to be dominated by a pair of 2016 Eclipse Award winners---Arrogate was the top 3-year-old male and California Chrome took the top older male as well as Horse of the Year. A look at each runner follows:

**Arrogate:** The winner of the 2016 Breeders' Cup Classic and winner of five straight races drew the rail. He exploded onto the scene by destroying the field in the G1 Travers Stakes at Saratoga in track record time. This was no phony track record either. The Travers has been run at a mile and a quarter since 1904. The track was fast but not abnormally so that day. The effort earned a 137 TimeformUS Speed Figure. Any doubts about the performance were put to rest in his next start, the Classic, when he wore down a loose on the lead California Chrome to win, this time with a 139. Arrogate is the best horse in the field.



*Arrogate winning the Breeders' Cup Classic - Bob Mayberger/Eclipse Sportswire/Breeders' Cup*

**Prayer for Relief:** I guess the field had to be filled out one way or another, and thus we get horses like this one entered. The 9-year-old horse hasn't won a race since taking the Tenacious Stakes at Fair Grounds in December

of 2013. He has lost 20 straight since that day, including being well back in his last four, finishing no better than fifth while beaten a combined 70 lengths. He was 96-1 in his last start, the G1 Clark Handicap, and ran to those odds.

**Neolithic:** Promising horse improved sharply at the end of last year, the end of his 3-year-old season. He entered the G3 Discovery Stakes at Aqueduct in November with nothing more than a maiden win to his credit and ran a very good second. He earned a lifetime best TimeformUS Speed Figure that day of 122. He followed that with his second lifetime win in a Gulfstream Park allowance, winning by nine lengths and matching the 122. He has flourished in his three starts around two turns, accounting for both wins and the second in the Discovery. While he is promising, he will need a huge leap to be a contender in this field. His running style is most likely a negative in this field. He'll have to be used hard early to be in a contending position turning for home.

**Noble Bird:** There is a very good chance Noble Bird will be the early leader of this race. He is the only horse in the field other than the "big two" to have earned at least a 130 TimeformUS Speed Figure in his career. He gets very brave when left unchallenged on the lead. That is a very unlikely scenario in this race. Expect him to tire and finish well back once he gets confronted up front.

**War Story:** How can you not love a horse like War Story? He shows up for all the big races, gives his best, and has had nine trainers for heading into the Pegasus, his 18th career start. His last race was arguably his best, a romping win in Aqueduct's Queen's County Stakes with a 121 TimeformUS Speed Figure. He went wire-to-wire that day, only the second time he has led a race early in his career.

**War Envoy:** This 5-year-old horse may very well be the longest shot in the field. He is two-for-21 lifetime with both wins coming on turf. He is not in good form currently. Be safe out there.

**Shaman Ghost:** Solid runner that won the Queen's Plate at Woodbine as a 3-year-old in 2015 over a synthetic surface. Last year, while racing strictly on dirt, he won the G2 Brooklyn Stakes at Belmont and the G1 Woodward Stakes at Saratoga. Neither of those were particularly strong races for the class. He ran a 118 TimeformUS Speed Figure in the Brooklyn; 124 for the Woodward. Expect him to be middle of the pack in the run down the backstretch.

**Semper Fortis:** Newly turned 4-year-old is two-for-12 lifetime, winning a maiden and an allowance race as a 2-year-old. He has hit the board in four of his last five races without winning, and all of them earned TimeformUS Speed Figures spanning 108 to 113. He is consistent, just too slow to be any real factor here.

*(continued on next page)*



**Keen Ice:** The 5- year-old has a nice claim to fame - he beat Triple Crown winner American Pharoah in the 2015 Travers Stakes. He hasn't won in eight tries since and his lack of early speed often puts him at a tactical disadvantage. He ran second last out in a G3 at Gulfstream, but everything was against him that day. The track favored speed, the pace was slow, and it was only a one-turn race. He ran a distant third in the 2016 Classic behind Arrogate and California Chrome. That is a certainly possible to happen again here. When things break his way, he has put up respectable TimeformUS Speed Figures. His Travers win earned a 127 and his third in the Classic a 126.

**Breaking Lucky:** He won the second leg of Canada's Triple Crown in 2015, the Prince of Wales Stakes at Fort Erie. He came back a much faster horse in 2016, though he was only able to win one race, the G3 Seagram Cup over Woodbine's Tapeta surface. Four of his last six races have earned TimeformUS Speed Figures of 124+ on both dirt and Tapeta. He has tactical speed but has won from well off-the-pace also.

**Eragon:** This horse occupies the slot originally bought for 2015 Eclipse Award winning sprinter Runhappy. Why a spot was bought for him, who knows? The horse was imported for this race from Argentina. He has won his last two dirt races there with Timeform Ratings of 119. He seems overmatched in this spot and given the trainer, it is hard to think otherwise.

**California Chrome:** The two-time Horse of the Year drew the outside post for this rematch with Arrogate. This is a reverse from last time when Arrogate drew outside, while Chrome was able to secure the lead early from the four post and ride the rail all the way around. There is no way to spin this post as a positive, but given the talent gap between the top two and the rest of the field, he should be no worse than two- or three-wide as the horses enter the turn. He has consistently run TimeformUS Speed Figures in the mid to upper 130s and has earned all the awards he has ever received.

As a horse racing fan, it is tough to ask for much more than the two best horses squaring off for big money, and in this case the biggest pot we've ever seen in the United States. Only a couple of horses appear capable of filling out the trifecta and superfecta bets. Keen Ice should get plenty of pace to run into and is certainly a threat for the minor positions. Breaking Lucky is another than can make a run late and has the talent to beat the others. With two strong favorites, spreading in the race isn't a viable option. Trifectas and superfectas that key Arrogate and California Chrome first and second over Keen Ice and Breaking Lucky in third and fourth is the way I will go here, leaning more heavily on Arrogate winning.

## OptixEQ Previews the G3 La Prevoyante

By [Emily Gullikson](#)- check out [OptixEQ.com](http://OptixEQ.com) for more

#1 **QUIET KITTEN** (196 day layoff, large circle Q1 on OptixPlot), and #2 **GYPSY EYES** (Q2 small circle) both unfavorable plot positions and similar run style, given post position should run accordingly; both are below for distance and class and OptixFigs are below.

#3 **TRY YOUR LUCK** has two B grades racing in GIII, her better races are with PERFECT trips; could get that here, would expect value to make a play.

#4 **DESIREE CLARY** likely to take some money, have not been enamored with her races; grade wise, she is a bit below with B- in all North American starts; no value?.

#5 **STAY THE NIGHT** favorable OptixPlot position, and coming into this race off a TACTICS and PREP?, distance does not look to be an issue for her, lone B grade at 11F; value.

#6 **PROMOTIONAL** last race short comment is a bit exaggerated, and often leads to getting over bet. She ran in this race last year, the extended comment suggests 12F distance to be an issue. OptixPlot and Grades have some knocks as well; would not take a short price.

#7 **ARLES** lots to like from Plot and Grades (two B grades); would expect her to be one of the top betting choices and that seems logical.

#8 **LOBELIA** has been on fire this meet, the waters get deeper today; typically she is a large circle in Q4, today she is a small Q4 circle in relation to her competition; hard to make a case for her in this spot.

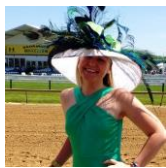
#9 **FLIPCUP** and #11 **PAIGE** enter this race for Mott both coming out of the same race on NYE; PAIGE awarded the victory scoring with inside trip and smart ride, not much out GALLOP- after the race suggests distance ability. FLIPCUP is a solid grinder does not really quicken but seems to stay as long as clear and pointed in right direction. Needs everything to go right to get the win (does have B at level) but could grind up and be used underneath.

#10 **WAPI** hard to make her a "top pick" off only NA start; to be fair she was held up behind slow pace and never had much of a chance as there was little change in running order; she continued out a long way past the wire and seems fair to suggest there is more upside. She is also positioned well on OptixPlot Impact TSD. She is one I will be taking a look at one the track and of course the board.

#12 **SUFFUSED** another likely betting choice for obvious reasons; she has class and proven at the distance, and OptixPlot is favorable; other than the post, can't knock.



## Discovering Young Prospects Using "The Sheets"



By [Melissa Nolan](#)

### Introduction

This time of year, as the calendar flips from the prior year to the new, it is difficult for anyone with a passing interest in Thoroughbred racing to not think forward towards "The First Saturday in May" when the Derby will be run and the Triple Crown commences. "Hope springs eternal" is a frequent mantra of the racing industry for good reason--in this sport there is always the next big race or burgeoning star just waiting for us to enjoy.

We know the BIG race comes in five months at Churchill Downs, but the horses that might make an impact on the Triple Crown trail and in the Classics themselves are still being sorted out. It will not be long before some of the contenders inevitably show they're pretenders as those bright new stars supplant them in the spotlight. How exactly to identify some of these progressive (or regressive) horses as they move in and out of form before everyone else is the value proposition for horseplayers leading up to Derby in the preps and in Future Wagers.

Luckily for players there is plenty of evidence that developing horses going into their 3-year-old season perform in predictable patterns that are much more identifiable at this stage of their careers than at any other. Doping out and recognizing those pattern horses and betting them without regard to prior notoriety and preconceived bias can be extremely lucrative this time of year as these horses are still relatively immature and are continuing to figure out how to run.

This development is what leads to such drastic changes in form and ability in horses relative to one another this time of year. The importance of form cycles in determining future performance capabilities was first theorized by Len Ragozin almost five decades ago as he noticed certain patterns began to emerge amongst horses with similar career arcs and schedules regardless of class.

These patterns were not so much dependent on the "fastness" of the figures themselves but on *how* those figures were achieved. For example, a "bounce" can be predicted with high likelihood one race following a very taxing effort whether that came by running a 2 or 22 figure. The quality of the animal matters less than how fit they are and how ready their body is for the next race, hence why the sooner a horse races following that big effort, the more likely it is to bounce. How big an effort is relative to every prior race the horse has run augurs for substantial regression in the near term.

"Bounces", "tops", and "pairs" are all part of a horse's organic pattern that is predicated on race fitness and these

conditioning moves are easily decipherable using Ragozin's performance figures on [The Sheets](#). While *The Sheets* have many competitors in a dense "race figures" market, no other products has so many diverse devotees and Ragozin adherents in the Thoroughbred industry range from horseplayers to trainers, bloodstock agents, jockey agents, sales companies and consignors.

Given their popularity and usefulness in identifying progressive runners, Horseplayers Association of North America have enlisted the help of [Ragozin Data](#) once again to give readers further insight into some of the 3-year-old colts and fillies who look to make an impact on the preps leading into the Triple Crown and G1 Kentucky Oaks.

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### Evaluations

We started this list with the baseline criteria that colts must have run faster than a 10 and fillies a 12 and edited from there. One striking aspect of our list was the number of "name" 3-year-olds compared to years past where there were plenty of obscure horses to discuss for readers (like Wildcat Red and Awesome Speed). Not this year—there are plenty of recognizable names on our list including some prominent horses with question marks going forward.

### 3-Year-Old Colts

**MASTERY**: It's no surprise that trainer Bob Baffert has another barn full of nice 3-year-olds this year but this bay son of Candy Ride might be his best prospect. Mastery certainly was highly thought of early on to the point that he was outworking G1 winner Klimt prior to making his first start.

Mastery ran to those workouts in his first start in late October when he won by 4 1/4 lengths, going six furlongs in 1:09.40 and earning an 8.75 Rag number in the process. That figure is good enough to win many 2-year-old stakes, and that's exactly what Mastery did next out in the G3 Bob Hope Stakes. Once again showing good speed, the colt did regress slightly to a 9.5 that day but made another move forward in his next start in mid-December when winning

*(continued on next page)*

the G1 Los Alamitos Cash Call Futurity with alacrity, running a new top of 7 in his first time going two turns.

This son of Candy Ride could not have made a better impression starting his career and furthermore has never *not* run fast. Mastery's 1.75 point forward progression over three starts is more than acceptable, especially since he started off so much faster than all but a handful of others from this crop. There is every reason to expect that this colt should train on especially given his sire and trainer. Looking down the line, my only concern might be that his female family gets the best of him in regards to wanting to truly go a route because broodmare sire Old Trieste is decidedly sprint-oriented.

We can cross that bridge when we get to it, and after all, Mastery's trainer did win a Triple Crown with a colt similarly bred with endurance from the sire and speed from the dam (American Pharoah's broodmare sire is sprinty Yankee Gentleman). For the moment, though, Mastery looks legit and has been as fast on paper as he looks in winning. Any forward movement in the short term makes this colt a *serious* Triple Crown prospect and I'm eager to see what this son of Candy Ride can do with his talent in the coming months.



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**EL AREEB:** I didn't know much about EL AREEB before the G3 Jerome, but I sure know about him now. It was impressive how kindly El Areeb rated in second outside favored Takaful before asserting his authority when assuming the lead on the turn and drawing off in the stretch to win with alacrity by 11 1/4 lengths.

The Jerome was the third straight victory for this grey son of Exchange Rate from five starts and his first race around two turns, although his prior sprint races were no less impressive. El Areeb has really put it together following his first start in early-June where he was fourth on a deep rail in a 4 1/2 furlong Parx MSW. Off until late September, El Areeb returned in a 5 1/2 furlong off-the-turf race over a sloppy Laurel racetrack with a second-place rallying effort in a field of 12 behind a horse who went on to be stakes placed.

His current win streak began when he won a MSW two weeks later by 8 1/4 lengths while running a 9.75 on The Sheets in just his third start. It was also the first time the colt had been ridden for speed. He went gate-to-wire that day and used the same speedy tactics to annex the six furlong James F. Lewis III Stakes at Laurel next out by 5 1/4 lengths in mid-November.

That little stakes win at Laurel prior to the Jerome is actually El Areeb's highest rated race, having earned a new top of 8.25 that afternoon; he regressed ever so slightly to

8.5 (essentially a paired top) in the Jerome as a newly turned 3-year-old.

El Areeb's paired top in the mid-8's is extremely competitive on The Sheets for this group of 3-year-olds. He not only is one of the few horses to have paired fast tops, but his is also a form pattern (pairing 2-year-old top in first race at 3-year-old) that is extremely strong for projecting a big performance and probable new top in his next race.

Further bolstering his credentials for continued progression towards the Classics is his advanced athleticism and stout female family. This must have always been a good-looking colt because he made \$100,000 at Keeneland September in 2015 as a yearling in Session 7. Purchased by Eisaman Equine to pinhook, El Areeb did not disappoint when they sold him five months later at the OBS March 2-year-old Sale.

After breezing an 1/8th in :10, the colt was hammered down for a final bid of \$300,000 by his current owners MMS Stables, who placed him in the barn of trainer Cathal Lynch. Lynch has done a nice job of managing El Areeb as he made the somewhat tricky transition from 2-year-old in training prospect into professional racehorse.

The speed El Areeb shows is probably attributable to his now deceased sire Exchange Rate, like Hard Spun and War Front, a son of speed-influence Danzig. His Jerome win where he seemed to re-break at the top of the lane is perhaps indicative of the stamina his dam has imparted on her prior foals to race, all of whom were best routing regardless of sire.

We'll have to see down the line exactly how good the NY 3-year-olds colts are this year, but it appears the circuit already has a good one in El Areeb; his connections should have a fun time with their fast grey all season long.

### 3-Year-Old Fillies

**ABEL TASMAN:** This filly is a neat prospect and could really assert herself as a 3-year-olds based on how she really came on in that latter part of 2016. Abel Tasman's win in the G1 Starlet from off-the-pace while running down American Gal in space was very impressive, and it will probably be quite a while before she's 12-1 again as she was that day.

The Starlet was actually the third straight win for Abel Tasman, yet she's never gone off lower than 9/2 odds. It was also the third different racetrack and third different distance over which she's won. That's pretty solid versatility for a filly who debuted in late August and has only made four starts.

Abel Tasman is a filly who's made major improvement in form going from a 24.25 to a 7 in the span of three starts before finishing her season with a 9.5 in the Starlet. Typically that's a bad sign, especially for a filly, but I'm willing to give her a pass in this case considering her trainer Simon Callaghan tends to "give them one" first out (he had one first time starter win in 2016) and her figure in



the debut wasn't necessarily indicative of her ability.

With that perspective, Abel Tasman really went three-for-three with figures of 13-7-9.5, a very strong start. The 7 she ran off the layoff at Del Mar going seven furlongs was tied for the best Ragozin figure of the filly crop and is the only one to have run two single-digit efforts. Another confirmation of her class is the fact that two runners in the Starlet have already come back to win.

This Quality Road filly does not possess a ton of speed but has enough to put herself in good spot before she kicks away to victory. Her dam was relatively sprinty as was her granddam, but this is a strong filly-producing family which no doubt imbued Abel Tasman with plenty of innate class. While her pedigree seems to be best up to middle distances but Abel Tasman is clearly comfortable going two turns and any pace in front of her will only help her prospects.

The more I looked at *The Sheet* of Abel Tasman the more I liked her and hope she validates some of the high expectations I have for her 3-year-olds prospects. Likely early season targets for the filly include the G3 Santa Ysabel at Santa Anita on March 4<sup>th</sup> or the G3 Honeybee at Oaklawn on March 11<sup>th</sup>; both races are 8 1/2 furlongs and offer 85 points for the Kentucky Oaks.

### Conclusion

The horses discussed above are all very interesting prospects going forward and we hope ones that prove fruitful for bettors to follow into the Triple Crown season. While there are no guarantees that these 3-year-olds will continue on, the patterns and ability they have shown thus far portend very good things to come in both the near term and into the future. *Happy 'Capping!*



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*About the author - Melissa is a lifelong racing fan who attended her first two Derbies before she was 10 years old. She has dedicated much of her career to the horse industry, including working for prestigious operations such as Padua Stables, Hagyard Equine, TVG, Ken McPeck, and Kentucky Thoroughbred Association. She currently works as a Marketing professional and Social Media consultant and resides in Lexington.*

## Investing in Customers & Product? You Bet!

If you say the words 'more investment' to racing people in the US it usually means one thing -- increasing a purse. In other parts of the world, investment means investing in customers, and the product itself.

The New Zealand Racing Board's strategy is something that's eye-opening. They have the same problems as anywhere - fewer customers, falling purses, a bad calendar/scheduling of racing for consumption, etc - but to fix them [here is the plan for 2017-2019](#):

PROJECT	INVESTMENT
Customer & Channel Strategy	~\$30-37 million
Offshore Betting	~\$0.5-1.0 million
Optimise the Calendar	~\$1.0-2.0 million
Fixed Odds Betting Platform	~\$29-35 million
<b>Total</b>	<b>~\$60-75 million</b>

This is a \$60-\$75M investment in customer initiatives, because, "quite simply, in order to grow Net Profit, we need to drive even greater customer growth. The onus is on us to remain relevant with our customers in a rapidly changing, highly competitive international market." NZ Racing brings in \$150M per year. This investment represents 17% of total industry revenue. This is tantamount to, for example, racing in California announcing that they're investing \$331 million over three years in customers (2015 figures).

"Multiple reports, some going back decades, have identified the systemic issues in the industry. Long-term under-investment, both in NZRB and the wider industry, has been a key cause of these challenges. We are now faced with systems and infrastructure so outdated, and sometimes even redundant, that our ability to operate in a competitive, vibrant industry is severely hamstrung," the report says.

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### NYRA Now to Debut Next Month

The New York Racing Association's new app NYRA Now will be coming out in February, and it represents a big step up over the current NYRA HD app.

NYRA Now will start out on Apple and Android, but before the beginning of the Belmont Park Spring Meet, it will expand to PS4, Xbox, and Roku, among other platforms.

Users, fans, and horseplayers will be able to watch races in high definition from a variety of camera angles, along with replays of recent and historic races. Writing for the Paulick Report, Ray Paulick compared NYRA Now to what you would see from mlb.tv.

For more information, click [here](#).

### Oaklawn's New Pick 5 Proves Popular

Oaklawn Park replaced their pick 6 wager (known as Classix) with a pick 5 this year, and immediately saw the impact that decision made as on opening day the wager was up 794.4% all sources and 175.3% on-track.

"One day does not make a trend, but it was eye-catching," Bobby Geiger, Oaklawn's director of gaming and wagering, said. Our CLASSIX, it just lost its steam over the years. The off-track players, we know that they prefer, or like to play, the Pick-5. We didn't know what to expect on track because we've never offered one here. But clearly, they took to it."

Additional details on this story are available [here](#).

### Speaking of Oaklawn...

Another new wrinkle this year at Oaklawn Park is a takeout reduction in the show pool for on-track players.

"We are in a unique situation," Geiger said. "A significant number of our attendees every season are still relative newcomers to the sport or have never been to a race track before. We want to increase their opportunities to cash tickets, put more money in their pockets and create a more fun environment for them."

"We believe one of the biggest challenges in racing is attracting new fans and getting them to return," Geiger

said. "Racing and its terminology can be intimidating. Plus, if a first timer gets caught up chasing more complicated wagers, there is a good chance he or she will spend that entire first day at the races and never enjoy one of the best parts – the thrill of picking a winner and cashing a ticket."

"This year, we hope to improve the on track experience by providing a financial incentive to participate in show wagering – the easiest bet in racing. Unlike a trifecta where a person has a one in 720 chance of winning in a 10-horse race, the show pool gives players three chances in 10; you cash a winning ticket if your horse finishes first, second or third."

"We are in a unique situation. A significant number of our attendees every season are still relative newcomers to the sport or have never been to a race track before. We want to increase their opportunities to cash tickets, put more money in their pockets and create a more fun environment for them."

More on this story is available [here](#).



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### William Hill & Caesars Join Forces in Iowa

Simulcast wagering will once again be available at the Horseshoe Council Bluffs Casino in Iowa after William Hill and Caesars Entertainment partnered for a new state-of-the-art venue adjacent to the casino floor. Regulatory approval is needed, but assuming there are no problems, it will be open prior to the 2017 Derby. Council Bluffs is located across the Missouri River from Omaha, Nebraska, and is a popular tourist destination.

"We are excited to expand into Iowa and proud to partner with Caesars Entertainment to bring back pari-mutuel simulcast wagering to the Horseshoe Council Bluffs Casino. We look forward to creating a first-class experience for all racing fans in the Greater Omaha area to enjoy," said Joe Asher, CEO of William Hill US.

More information on this story is available [here](#).

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# There Is a Difference

By [Jonathan Stettin](#), [Past The Wire](#)

One of my pet peeves in racing is when bettors criticize a jockey, usually after losing a bet for a *bad ride*, when it was actually a *bad trip*. For those who don't know or differentiate, there is a distinct difference between the two. One is avoidable, one isn't.

I think in discussing this topic we should also remain cognizant of a few key things. First and foremost, being a jockey is no easy way to make a living. It is a tough demanding life, physically, emotionally, mentally, and even dietary. There are no guarantees, no off seasons, and the competition gets tougher with more success and recognition. Staying on top is as hard as or even harder than getting there. Then you have to factor in how difficult it is to control a 1,200 pound animal, who can be nervous, quirky, unpredictable, and headstrong, at speeds of 35-40 mph when you weigh maybe 110 or 115 pounds. This is no easy task. You also have to realize jockeys have to make split second decisions, and their decisions, in addition to the decisions of other riders, all can impact how a race is run, and ultimately the outcome.

It is easy to get critical of a jockey after a losing wager. It's almost second nature. Many who do so never bother to stop and evaluate if it was in fact a poor ride, bad decision, bad racing luck, or just a bad or rough trip. The other thing people tend to do, and I guess they do so because they are wagering money, is get way too hostile in their critique of a jockey following a truly bad ride. Remember, we all make mistakes. Michael Jordan missed plenty of shots; nobody is perfect or should be expected to be. There is a classy way to critique a ride and on the flip side, there is a classless way to do it as well. Considering all these riders put on the line, how difficult their job can be, I think we should be polite and professional when critiquing a ride. Cursing and blasting is not the way to go and only serves to alienate riders, many of which are happy to interact with fans and bettors alike on social media platforms. I see no reason to drive them away. That interaction is good for the sport. I have actually seen people "brag" and "boast" about being blocked by riders after insulting them.

This mentality is not good for the sport, even if these individuals brought big handles to the table. I'd also, as a gambling man by nature, would bet *most don't know the difference between a bad trip and bad ride*, let alone how to address either. Athletes are subject to criticism, more so when one's own money is involved, but don't lose sight of how hard it is to be a jockey, the sacrifices and the danger. Try talking professionally about a bad ride or decision as opposed to hurling insults. It keeps the lines of communication open, and is better for the game we love.

The normal inclination when a horse wagered on loses is to look to blame someone other than oneself for making the wrong selection. This is not to say we can't and don't lose when making the right selection, and that is indeed a frustrating pill to swallow, but in this game learn to swallow it you most certainly will. Usually the jockey is first in line to blame, and this is not exclusive to bettors. I have seen trainers, assistant trainers, owners, and just about everyone else do it. Sometimes it is indeed rider error, or bad judgement, and at times it isn't. Knowing the difference helps in evaluating the performance of the horse in question, and that can only help going forward.

When we see a rider saving ground on the rail in a two turn race, and his horse appears loaded for bear, it is frustrating when they are behind horses and as opposed to waiting to see how things develop, they move up willingly, only to snatch their horse back up when they reach the horses in front of them. I always wonder when I see this why are they moving now, there is no place to go, and it is early. Horses generally have one to two moves a race in them, so what are they thinking? This move usually results in checking and losing momentum. I view that as a bad ride, I'd prefer my rider waited and played it by ear. On the other hand, if the pace is slow, and they feel they can take advantage of that and go for it early, and they can squeeze through and make the lead, that's another scenario altogether. If the hole closes it is a bad trip. If it was never there, or they did not have enough horse to shoot through, it is a bad ride. I try and watch all those types of things. It helps in understanding the result of the race, and helps gauge performances and anticipate future ones. We need every edge we can get, and race watching can often provide one. Decisiveness can also be key. If you are going to go, then go and commit. Don't go, take back, then go again. You will likely run out of moves and horse.



Jonathan Stettin wants you to note the difference between a bad ride and a bad trip – photo by [Penelope P. Miller](#), [America's Best Racing](#)

Bad rides can also involve being on the worst part of the  
(continued on next page)

track when there is a bias, be it an inside or outside one, and can also involve going to the front on a closers' track and vice versa. Sometimes you have no choice though, some horses cannot be taken out of their game, some can. As a bettor you have to learn those nuances and use them to help you evaluate what happened.

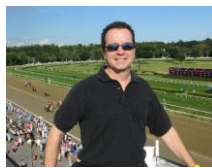
Sometimes a ride and trip can be going perfectly and you get cut off, or are forced to check because a horse in front stopped abruptly. The check may look and even be drastic, and cost a lot of ground and momentum, but was it the rider's fault? That is the difference between a bad ride and a bad trip.

Another frustrating thing is when jockeys don't seem to ride as hard for place or show as they do for win, and sometimes seem to stop trying altogether. This is a delicate subject. Yes it is frustrating when this seems to happen, but remember you aren't the one with your life on the line on the horse's back. We have to give the benefit of the doubt here to the rider. They know what they feel, and know what is underneath them at least most of the time.

Grass rides are particularly criticized today and most of the time it involves riders sitting off slower than par or usual paces. We seem to see it a lot in New York and Florida for some reason. It is frustrating when you use a horse with speed, or tactical speed and they are far back off 25 and 50 splits. It feels like you can "mush" your tickets right then and there. I have discussed this with a few riders. Andy Serling points it out often, and most of the time, it is a legitimate question. In speaking with riders, I learned a little about why it happens, and why it seems more prevalent in New York and Florida. First off, those colonies are similar, especially Florida in the winter, when the New York riders are there. Today, the common consensus is the European grass horses are better. In Europe they say the last move usually wins on the grass. They are less concerned with pace, and early speed and more so with a late burst. Young riders hear this and are taught it and develop that style. Our racing and courses are different, so is a good portion of our training. Accordingly, those tactics are not quite as successful here as they are overseas. Riders need to read the Form and be aware of the pace projections before just falling into that trap and leaving their mount too much to do or overcome. Smart riders have put horses on the lead and taken advantage of this mindset and won races they might not have otherwise. Their backers usually do not complain then.

When you watch a race, win or lose, try and differentiate if a horse got a good ride or a bad one, or a good trip or a bad one. Try and identify why. I even put it in my Formulator notes, which is invaluable. It is a tremendous help going forward and will elevate your game regardless of what level you are at.

## Five Point Checklist for Winners



By Rich Nilsen, [gameofskill.com](http://gameofskill.com)

Experienced handicappers know that the fine art of handicapping is not a science. It is more than a numbers game because humans and animals are involved. Horses are flesh and blood. They feel good on some days, not so good on others. Jockeys and trainers are humans and they make a variety of wise decisions and equally poor mistakes.

However, all too often, we fall into the trap of looking for the "magical" number or method to produce winners. There is no such thing. Playing the horse with the fastest speed figure last race will not work. Playing a certain post position will not work. Wagering on your favorite jockey will not work.

What works is having a proper procedure for handicapping the races. What I present here is a suggested five-point checklist.

### Distance/Surface

One of the most underrated, yet one of the most relevant factors with horses is the distance of the race. Just like Olympic runners, horses have their own preferred distances. One of the biggest traps that handicappers fall into involves subtle differences in distance, e.g. 5 1/2 furlongs versus six furlongs.

These "small" changes in distance can be extremely important. The Derby (G1) highlights this fact every year. Horses who win going away at nine furlongs are sometimes found huffing-and-puffing at the Derby's ten furlongs.



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The surface of the race can be just as important, be it on the turf or an "off" track. How a horse will perform at six furlongs on a fast track may be quite contrary to how he  
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will run at eight furlongs (one mile) on an "off" track. This may be obvious to the veteran players, but one of the first questions a handicapper should ask is, "Is this horse suited to the distance and surface of this race?" If not, we are probably looking at a vulnerable runner or at least a horse you don't want your hard-earned money.

#### Ability

The handicapper has more questions to ask. Is this horse capable of winning this race? Has he already been defeated numerous times under the same conditions? For example, if this is an allowance race for "non-winners of two races other than," check to see how often the horse has lost this at this level. In my opinion, if a horse has lost this type of race five or more times, chances are he will not win today. It would take some type of serious change, for example a trainer switch or equipment change, for me to consider a horse who is a proven loser at the level. In general, proven losers are bad bets.

On the same thought, we must ask, "Is this horse fast enough?" The BRIS Speed Ratings, which are my preferred figures of choice, are very useful for identifying contenders and pretenders. Remember to keep in mind the distance and surface when analyzing speed figures. So what if the horse ran a 45 in that nine furlong turf race last time out? Today, he is going six furlongs on the dirt. What was the figure the last time the horse ran under similar circumstances?

Improving form is another essential factor. A horse may be a few points slower than other rivals, but if the horse has undergone a positive change (e.g. returned sharper since a layoff), he may be fast enough to win today if he appears to be "on the improve" or has a good reason to improve.

#### Connections

Both the trainer and jockey are important, although the trainer, in my opinion, has a much stronger influence on the outcome. Knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the conditioners at the track is of extreme importance to serious handicappers. When runners change barns, via a claim or just a trainer switch, they will usually either improve or decline in form. Predicting this beforehand can give the handicapper a tremendous advantage.

Trainers specialize with certain maneuvers. Occasionally, you'll see a trainer who is five percent or lower with first time starters. But, then the same trainer is 15 percent or higher with second time starters! His or her runners are not pushed in their debuts, but they are ready to fire in their second starts. Knowing this little nugget is essential to the serious horseplayer.

Jockeys are very important when it comes to rider switches and running styles. Certain jockeys tend to perform well when riding horses with a particular running style. Make it a point to notice how the jockeys on your circuit are winning. Are most of the wire-to-wire winners ridden by only a handful of jockeys? This is vital to know when analyzing rider switches. Some of the best longshot winners have been a result of a positive switch to a jockey

who utilized the horse's running style.

#### Pace and Track Bias

The pace scenario of the race in question, as well as the prevailing track bias, go hand in hand. Handicappers should be in tune to the general bias at the track from their own notes and observations or from reliable sources that offer online reports. In other words, what type of running style and post position is preferred for this race? Does the runner fit this profile?

Serious handicappers will compare this knowledge to the recent track bias. If anything has changed during the course of the week, they will compensate for this change. For example, the inside posts may be ideal at this track, but if a sudden change in track bias has occurred (due to weather or other circumstances) then the astute handicapper will be the first one prepared to adjust...and consequently, profit.

Horseplayers should analyze each horse's running style in respect to the track bias and the expected pace scenario. Is there a lone speed horse on this speed-biased racetrack? If closers are winning, then who has the best finishing kick? Is the favorite a stone cold closer on a speed-favoring oval? There are numerous scenarios, but the point is clear: Compare the horses in the race to what is winning on this racetrack.

#### Value

Finally, demand value at the windows and don't opt for a horse in your wagers just because he is lower odds and "should" win. A fellow horseplayer recently told me that he found an outstanding longshot based on solid trainer stats, but he only used the horse underneath in the exactas. Who did you think he use on top? He used the favorite who was ridden by the leading "big name" rider, because he felt that this horse would probably win. Of course, the longshot rolled to victory and the favorite finished second. The disgusted handicapper failed to cash on the race, even though he had pinpointed an excellent longshot. Sounds ridiculous, but haven't we all committed similar mistakes?

In summary, a handicapper's best bet will pass the following checklist:

- 1 – The horse is suited to the DISTANCE and SURFACE.
- 2 – The horse shows the ABILITY to win today's race.
- 3 – The horse has positive connections, especially in regards to the TRAINER.
- 4 – The horse fits the PACE scenario and TRACK BIAS.
- 5 – The horse offers VALUE on the tote board.

The ideal wager does not come along in every race or every day, but a horse worthy of "best bet" status should meet the above criteria. Best of luck!

*Rich is the founder of the educational site, [AGameofSkill.com](http://AGameofSkill.com), and serves as Director of Player Services for [BetPTC.com](http://BetPTC.com).*



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# Pick 6 Deja Vu?

By [Rich Halvey](#), [Halvey on Horse Racing](#)

Most horseplayers remember the Breeders' Cup Pick 6 scandal from 2002 in which a programmer at Autotote, Chris Harn, along with two friends, figured out the flaw in Autotote's system to be the sole winner of a \$2.57 million Pick-6.

Once I saw the structure of the ticket – 1 X 1 X 1 X 1 X ALL X ALL – I immediately thought something was fishy. I talked to a number of other horseplayers and there was unanimity. No way was this a bet any experienced horseplayer would make.

I happened to be friends with a high-ranking executive at Autotote, and I talked with him on the Sunday after the BC. At that time he gave me the company line and guaranteed me that the system was 100% foolproof and secure. I told him to start looking because someone had pulled a fast one.

Now I don't know how much I had to do with pushing the investigation that ultimately revealed the scheme, but it pointed to an important lesson. Most horseplayers might not understand exactly how the software works, but they can spot a canard eight furlongs away.

On Thursday December 8 Gulfstream's 20 cent Rainbow 6 was hit for \$71,145.66. The Rainbow 6 is only paid out when there is a single unique ticket sold with all six winners. On days when there is no unique ticket, 70% of that day's pool goes back to those bettors holding tickets with the most winners while 30% is carried over. The structure of the ticket that hit the bet was five singles to an all in the last leg

**8/1/8/1/1/all**

and was bought through TVG for \$2.40. Was it deja vu all over again?

The horseplayer reaction was a little different this time. Some players noted there are syndicates that buy a large number of small tickets, and perhaps this was one of those. Other players noted that at least two of the horses in the first five legs were suspicious as singles – Bionsway went off at 11-1 and Latent Princess was almost 10-1. Only one of the horses, Policy Portfolio, was a short priced favorite. The other two singles were 5-1 and 3-1. The big separator came in the last race when 42-1 Maria and Beto won.

Given that we had seen a similar situation in the not too distant past, it was fully on TVG or Gulfstream Park to immediately investigate and report to the public. If the play was generated by computer and was part of hundreds of separate tickets, this should show up pretty quickly. Since the ticket was purchased at TVG there should be a

history of how many tickets were played, as well as whether this player regularly played such tickets.

Based on anecdotal evidence, and given the changes made by Autotote after the 2002 scandal, the weight of horseplayer opinion is that there is no scandal. But still, given the unusual construction of the bet, the betting public needs an explanation. Even if TVG or investigators up the line were sure there were no shenanigans, the chatter on the ticket went on for a week afterward, far too long in my opinion.

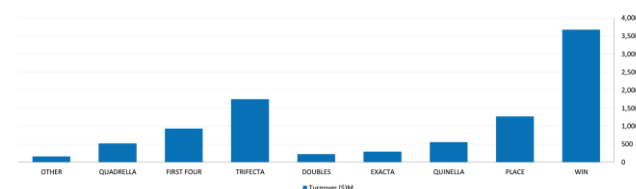
**When something smells, even slightly, it is the responsibility of racing to immediately address the issue.**

Racing cannot afford to let instances where there is a wisp of smoke spiral into out of control speculation. The integrity of the sport is under attack from a variety of fronts, and the last thing racing needs is a message that says, fool us once, shame on you, fool us twice – well who cares. Many horseplayers believe they are treated with disdain by the industry, mainly because there is never serious pushback from bettors when there is a scandal. A little grumbling, and the hard core go right back to playing. I hope there is nothing to the Gulfstream Park Rainbow 6 payout, but the longer we don't get a definitive answer, with clear evidence, the worse it is for racing.

## Betting Down Under Is a Bit Different.....

In North America about 20% of betting volume, by you the customer, is win betting. In Australia.....

CHART 13. PARI-MUTUEL BET TYPE



Although Australia racing has always been partial to win betting, it's been exacerbated over the last few years, with the introduction, and corresponding popularity of fixed odds betting.

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# Racing's Data Dilemma

If you want to dive into an interesting discussion in horse racing, bring up past performance and other general racing data.

"It should be free!"

"It's like a restaurant charging for us to look at the menu!"

"The NFL doesn't charge for box scores, do they?"

From solely a customer perspective these arguments make sense. If someone is betting \$100, racing in some form (tracks, purses, ADW's, taxes) gets back about \$21, which is a sky-high margin in just about any business. Why make people pay for something they need to use to give you their money?

What is conveniently left out is that data in horse racing is a revenue source, and a pretty big one. Some of this money is used for good things; just look at the work the Jockey Club and other alphabets do for the sport, legislatively and otherwise.

This, like many political discussions we seem to have nowadays, tends to inflame passions. People dig in, and positive discourse takes a back seat. I don't want to go down that rabbit hole here. What I would like to do is talk a little bit about the way the current business world is moving, with data, open systems, and the like, and offer out an opinion about why I think – in the bigger picture – this is a discussion that racing needs to have.

In the data-rich web world, it all begins with something called "API's" – Application Programming Interfaces. API's are a set of protocols for how to exchange information, or request online services from a company or web-based tool. This allows software to interact with each other easily, enabling developers to enhance third party tools (among other things).

A promotional banner for Stats Race Lens. The top part has a red background with the text "STATS Race Lens™" in white, followed by a small horse icon. Below this, on a dark background, is the text "Special Offer for NEW Customers" in white, then "Get a QUARTERLY Subscription for the Price of a MONTHLY Subscription!" in white, and "That's over \$150 in savings!" in white. At the bottom, there is a white button with the text "SHOP NOW" and a white text box with the text "Promo Code: SRLQ129H".

Although difficult for regular people like many of you and me to understand (I'm a marketer, not a programmer),

examples of API usage are everywhere. When you use your Facebook ID to log into other sites it's allowed to happen because Facebook's API is open, and the website you are trying to log into has built an app using it. When you click a tweet button from an online story you're reading, it's because of access to Twitter's API. Commercially – and in the bigger picture – this open access is much more than simply a tweet button or login. From the new book, [\*The Inevitable: Understanding the 12 Technological Forces that will Shape our Future\*](#), the author, Kevin Kelly writes:

"When a company opens part of its databases and functionality to users and other startups via a public API, as Amazon, Google, eBay, Facebook and most large platforms have, it is encouraging participation of its users at new levels. People who take advantage of those capabilities are no longer a company's customers; they're the company's developers, vendors, laboratories, and marketers."

If you've ever booked a flight on Expedia from outside Expedia's website, you've used a third party using Expedia's API, and this is common - [90% of Expedia's revenue](#) comes from third parties. Salesforce generates [50% of its revenue](#) from developers who have accessed its API. When you're on a blog researching iPod's and see an ad generated by eBay, you're not alone - [eBay receives 60% of its revenue](#) from such techniques.

Sure having more people sell your product for you is great, because more reach is never a bad thing. But sometimes brand new business models and new ecosystems are created from opening up an API. Business finder and rating's website Yelp plots its location "stars" on [Google Maps through Google's API](#) rather than making their own set of maps. Google Maps were something the Mountain View Corporation really didn't know what to do with for some time, but it is now [projected to add \\$1.5 billion in new revenue](#) to Google's bottom line in 2017. What if horse racing's raw data - updated frequently - was available like eBay's back end is?

Theoretically it could create the same ecosystem we see open access API's create elsewhere. Third party software creators could be developing new platforms to wager. They'd likely create many new handicapping products to offer to the market. Much of this would be created and offered for free – at first – and these products would be marketed by these creators. By opening up the API, the data itself would improve, and horse racing would become even more data rich, at little cost. Remember, as Kevin Kelly wrote, these people are your "laboratories". For existing horseplayers, products like these could keep them engaged, betting more, and doing it more frequently.

Charlie Davis, last year's third-place finisher in the National Handicapping Championship and every day horseplayer, is already exploring some of these limited

*(continued on next page)*

opportunities. He uses his own data, uploads it into [IBM's Watson](#) (which is open API), and crunches it to uncover new angles.

"I find that a lot of handicappers are stuck in their ways. I like to apply concrete math to angles to find out if they work," Charlie said via email. "I love seeing what the computer comes up with since it has no preconceived ideas. It takes all emotion and bias out of the picture." Charlie's biggest problem is finding enough raw data, at an affordable price.

"Raw data, ala the big sports leagues would be fantastic. I fully believe that [through using systems like Watson] given enough data for any market I can find new angles, be it horses, greyhounds, or snowmobiles," he typed. This is not the way of racing, but it is the way of the sports leagues. With legalized gambling on sports on the horizon, investments into sports data companies (using open API's or opening their own already) are prevalent. One of the largest was a [\\$44M influx by Mark Cuban into Sportsradar](#).

Third party Daily Fantasy Sports sites, with their data hungry customer base, are also seeing stout investment. You can see this phenomenon first-hand. Type some sports or sport-data related searches into google, and you will see pages and pages and links and links; and a plethora of companies and individuals offering out data and platforms. Conversely, in a few months the Kentucky Derby will be raced. 15 million people will be watching on television, and perhaps some of them would like to handicap the horses for the finest two minutes in sports; just like others may want to handicap and bet this weekend's divisional NFL games.

If they type "Kentucky Derby Horses" into google, these are two stories that pop up on the first page of the search results.

[The Kentucky Derby and the Slow Death of Horse Racing - The Atlantic](http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2012/...kentucky-derby...horse.../256621/)  
[www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2012/...kentucky-derby...horse.../256621/](http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2012/...kentucky-derby...horse.../256621/)  
The problem is poor marketing. The problem is that no one outside of horse racing remembers who won the Kentucky Derby five years ago.

[Death and Disarray at America's Racetracks - NYTimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/25/us/death-and-disarray-at-americas-racetracks.html?...all)  
[www.nytimes.com/2012/03/25/us/death-and-disarray-at-americas-racetracks.html?...all](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/25/us/death-and-disarray-at-americas-racetracks.html?...all)  
In 2008, after a Kentucky Derby horse, Eight Belles, broke two ankles on national television and was euthanized, Congress extracted promises ...

Perhaps in the future – with more data, a modern data ecosystem, and open API's – these stories will be not on page one for potential customers, but be bumped to page 50.

I sincerely hope racing has an honest and frank discussion about data and API's in the coming years.

## More Horse Racing on YouTube & Dailymotion

By [Cangamble](#)

Watching horse racing movies and TV sitcoms/episodes with horse racing themes can be a great way to be entertained and even reinvigorate your love of the game. Here are a few movies, TV episodes, and horse racing YouTube channels that are available right now that can be viewed free of charge. IMDb descriptions and ratings are provided for the movies and TV episodes:



### TV SITCOMS/EPISODES

The Addams Family Splurges-

The Addams family hopes to vacation on the moon, but needs to raise a billion dollars. Using Gomez's new supercomputer, the family schemes to make the money by betting on horse races.

7.0 Rating:

<http://dai.ly/x56ybm5>

(Bewitched) Three Men and a Witch on a Horse-

After Endora gives Darrin a gambling addiction, she makes sure his horse will lose the race. Sam convinces the horse to win. 4.4 Rating:

<http://dai.ly/x2scv73>

(Bewitched) The Horse's Mouth-

Samantha turns an escaped racehorse into a human. 7.1

Rating:

<http://dai.ly/x2ggi2l>

The Three Stooges Playing The Ponies-

The stooges are cheated into trading their restaurant for Thunderbolt, a washed up race horse, and enter the horse racing industry. 7.6 Rating:

<http://dai.ly/xqlrxe>

(The Lucy-Desi Comedy Hour) Lucy Wins a Race Horse-

Lucy tries to convince Ricky to keep a racehorse they won in a contest, even if it means running the horse herself in a race to win enough money to pay for the horse's upkeep.

Rating 8.1:

[https://youtu.be/7E4Cr\\_irDRY](https://youtu.be/7E4Cr_irDRY)

*(continued on next page)*

(The Twilight Zone) The Last Night Of A Jockey-  
A washed-up jockey gets his wish while waiting for the results of his race fixing hearing. 6.7 Rating:

<http://dai.ly/x55tybr>

(Twilight Zone) A Most Unusual Camera-  
When three dum-dum crooks get ahold of a camera that takes pictures of the future, they set out to make a quick fortune (at the racetrack) with their new toy.

7.7 Rating

<http://dai.ly/x58d24z>

#### MOVIES AND DOCUMENTARIES

The Longshot-  
Four "losers" borrow money from gangsters to bet on a "sure thing", but lose. The gangsters go after them to get their money. Rating 5.4:

<https://youtu.be/bXOo21NhgFo>

Two Dollar Bettor-

An honest bank employee gets hooked on horse racing, and starts to embezzle bank funds in an attempt to recoup his losses. Rating 6.3

<https://youtu.be/NN4sC2Y41y4>

Racing Blood-

Frankie, a young jockey, buys a broken down horse for \$4.85. It becomes a fast race horse. When he tries to enter it into a race he runs into the shady dealings of trackside racketeers. Rating 4.5

The Trainer's Edge-

Produced in the 1990s... Sports commentator Gil Stratton talks with professional trainers and jockeys who explain how to "read" a horse to determine if it's ready to win.. Charlie Whittingham, Bill Mott, Wayne Lukas, Ron McAnally, Chris McCarron, Bill Shoemaker, Jack Van Berg, Laffit Pincay and others are featured..

<https://youtu.be/15UjGDSVRT8>

#### YOUTUBE CHANNELS DEVOTED TO HORSE RACING

Horse Racing Channel-

A vast collection of thoroughbred stake races and documentaries from past to present:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/Partymanners2>

Harnessdom-

For harness racing fans, this channel contains stakes races from the past:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/harnessdom>

Horse Racing Replays-

Over 2,000 stakes races. This channel updates recently run stakes races in a very timely manner:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZoXu6u5P8KTnC6EqmcrhAQ>

# In the Money

By Vin Rogers

It was August, 1978: temperature 92, humidity 80%. Ed Smith (a fictitious name) and his wife Mindy were attending a yearling sale at Ocala; they wanted to buy a racehorse. Ed managed a small barn in Maryland; perhaps eight or ten horses; nothing like Pletcher, Baffert or Zito, but not the end of the line, either. His barn housed two or three steady allowance types, one minor stakes filly, four claimers, and a groom who had nowhere else to sleep.

Any horseman will tell you that you mustn't fall in love with the first horse you see if you're looking to buy. It's easy to do, happens often, and usually ends badly. But they did fall in love; and why not? Hip #155's breeding and confirmation were certainly acceptable, though not exceptional, but he was a charmer; an athletic-looking, steely grey colt with bedroom eyes, perky ears and a nuzzler to boot. He was irresistible. He went at auction for a mere \$1500. Since he had no name when purchased, we'll simply call him "Max."

I was deeply involved with horses as well at that time. I'd joined a syndicate of 45 dreamers, and our team purchased ten yearlings at an earlier auction in Lexington. All ten were vanned to Ocala where they would soon be enrolled in racehorse kindergarten. Ocala is, of course, horse country par excellence. It's home to some of the finest training facilities in thoroughbred racing, and an acknowledged Mecca for yearlings.

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Ed, too, had made the decision to ship his new purchase to Ocala, and Max showed up one afternoon at the same facility our syndicate manager had chosen for our horses.

One morning, while I was watching a coal black filly being pampered by a groom old enough to have picked Seabiscuit's feet, a forty-ish, baseball-capped, binocular-laden guy stopped to admire the filly. We introduced ourselves, chatted, and he suggested coffee - I agreed.

Ed and I were together at Ocala for about a week. The

*(continued on next page)*



babies were learning how to become racehorses and we were there every morning at trackside to monitor their progress. I was content to be an observer, but Ed, a trainer himself, took a proactive role in Max's education. Max was, in every way, a perfect gentleman; popular with exercise riders, grooms, vets and farrier. He wasn't a spectacular mover, but was focused and efficient; worked three furlongs in a comfortable :38, 4, out in a leisurely :52.

A few weeks later, school was out; time for Ed to ship Max home, get him acclimated to a new barn, continue his training, and eventually, if all went well, look for a suitable spot for his racing debut. That opportunity came in mid-May; a 5 furlong sprint, \$12,000 Maiden special for state bred at a major Eastern track.

With steady if not spectacular works, Max was a respectable 12-1 at post time. He finished fourth; the chart read "Dwelt at gate." His second race resulted in a fifth place finish; chart read "Clipped heels at 1/4 pole." Third race: no "dwelt," no "clipped heels," good start. Max ran in mid-pack and closed for third.

Ed, Mindy, and their team of grooms, hot walkers, and exercise riders wanted a win. Ed tried a change in riders, a change in distance - he added and subtracted blinkers. Results? Three more starts, no wins - but in the money every time.



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Advice came from many quarters; mostly "Why not drop him into a maiden claimer?" But this Ed could not do; Max had become a family pet - his kids adored him. He could not take the chance of losing him via the claiming box. The Ed barn brain trust met to discuss their horse's future. He'd had seven starts; in the money five of the seven. They concluded that Max, as lovable as he was, was at best an ordinary runner with an unfortunate tendency to prefer racing with and among horses rather than duking it out alone either in front or in the rear. Mindy handled the barn's books, and in a quick review of Max's monetary history, pointed out that he had earned \$14,625 so far in his freshman year with his five in the money performances.

"And how much has he cost us so far?" asked Ed. "I mean everything; feed, vet, workouts - how much?" Mindy turned to her books and calculator, clicked away, and reported that Max's total expenses for the racing year were not quite \$3,650.

"You sure?" asked Ed. "Check those numbers again."

She did - they were indeed correct. Two weeks later, Max was entered in another maiden special - this time for a \$16,000 purse.

It's the day of the race; Max is brushed, combed, and polished for the occasion. The barn's blue and white silks almost glow in the afternoon sun. His rider - I'll call him Joe - arrives. Ed puts a fatherly arm around the diminutive jock, and they confer for an animated five minutes or so. Ed gives Joe a leg up, and Max heads for the track. Max is 4-1 on the board (the public can't resist backing a horse that has finished in the money six times).

The race goes off, Joe positions Max fifth from the rail, comfortably surrounded by runners on either side. At the eighth pole, Joe clucks, Max surges forward, passes two horses, and finishes a respectable third, earning about \$1,000 for his connections.

Max raced til he was five (an injury kept him off the track during his 4-year-old season). He never made it to the winner's circle. He was a perfect 0-for-32, but his lifetime earnings box showed \$56,000. Indeed, the grey charmer had more than paid his way in each of his competitive seasons. But, perhaps wisely, was never asked to face winners.

Max's story reminds me a little of the infamous Zippy Chippy.

Zippy became a national phenomenon during his 14 years of racing. Despite royal lineage (parented by Compliance and Listen Lady and a blood relative to Northern Dancer) he had lost 99 consecutive races when he went to the post for the last time on Friday, September 10, 2004, at the Northampton, Massachusetts fair.

A huge crowd showed up; he was everyone's sentimental favorite and was bet down to 7-2. The Zip never made a move and finished last; now a perfect 0 for 100. But Zippy's dismal record had brought both notoriety and big bucks to his connections. Max was never in Zippy's class; hard to beat no wins in 100 tries. Yet, he had followed a similar path, proving that mediocrity could indeed be made to pay off.

The legendary Vince Lombardi famously taught that "Winning isn't everything - it's the *only* thing."

Not always.



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## Q & A with...



Gabe Prewitt, Director of Operations and Track Announcer at Pompano Park

**Q:** Handle has been trending upwards at Pompano Park of late, what do you think is the main reason?

**A:** I think it is very difficult to pinpoint a single reason, as it is almost like baking a cake, if you miss one ingredient, it can ruin the entire thing. We truly care about the numbers, and we sweat the details. We try to race at the most opportune times, both by hanging strategic post times throughout race nights and by choosing the best nights of the week.

We have tried a lot of things that have worked tremendously, and many things that did not. The absolute best suggestions I get are from our patrons on track and on social media. I can learn a lot more listening to my guys that play regularly than I can from anyone else. If someone is kind enough to reach out to me to discuss the racing or an issue, I always make time to respond and consider their suggestion.

Furthermore, we have been blessed with a very competitive racing product and a top notch driving colony with familiar names from many different jurisdictions across North America.

**Q:** Your 12% takeout pick 4 has been doing well. What's been the evolution of that bet, and do you hear from players that they're playing it regularly now?

**A:** A few years ago, we weren't on many horseplayers' radars across the country. We were routinely missing \$2,500 guaranteed pools as recently as two years ago. We wanted to make a splash with the lowest takeout in the industry, and I believe that we have made our impact and the players have responded. If you listen to our broadcast on any type of regular basis, you are likely well aware of the fact that we promote it as our signature wager and always mention the takeout and guarantee for any particular night.

Also, we were never satisfied as the momentum started to build. When we started to routinely hit our \$5,000 guarantee, we opted to bump it to \$7,500. After we began hitting \$7,500 on a regular basis, we bumped it to \$10,000,

and I am proud to say we are able to offer a \$20,000 guarantee each and every Sunday at the current time. And believe me, if I am convinced we can raise the bar any higher we will be doing so in the near future. A lot of my Twitter followers seem to play the Pick 4 on a regular basis, and many have made some nice scores which is always good to see!

**Q:** Most harness tracks have had a horse shortage. Is it the same at Pompano? What are you doing to ensure you card bettable racing?

**A:** This is the first year where this has been a major problem for us in Florida, but we have certainly felt an impact from prior seasons. We are doing our best to work within the parameters, and it does appear that the cards are getting stronger with many horses beginning to return to the races to begin their 2017 campaigns. I think it is extremely difficult to fill five nights per week anywhere in the country, and obviously we don't get anyone shipping down to Florida for overnight racing this late in the season. Our race office has done a tremendous job given the shortage, and I plan on turning into John Calipari in the off season and recruiting as many people as possible for the 2017-18 season. Who wouldn't want to come spend the winter where it is 80 degrees and sunny every day? There is no substitute for not having full and competitive fields!



*Racing at Pompano Park – Skip Smith photo*

**Q:** You're a horseplayer as well as track executive. Do you think that helps you in your job?

**A:** There is NO QUESTION it is a huge asset. Whenever I get a complaint or suggestion, I know exactly where the person is coming from as I have likely been in the same situation. Hardly a night goes by that I do not get a 'bad beat' story on Twitter! There is no substitute for experience when it comes to wagering, and I do think a lot of players respect the fact that I am on the home team.

*(continued on next page)*

**Q:** You use your Twitter feed to talk to players, announce carryovers etc. Has that been a good medium for you? Do you enjoy it?

**A:** I absolutely love interacting with the twitterverse. I have found it to be extremely helpful in getting the word out on carryovers, or other fun things that may happen on a nightly basis. As you likely know, I do not tweet out results/prices/times that you see a lot of these tracks send out EVERY single race. That is the exact sort of thing that I would not want to see as a horseplayer/follower. I try to mix things up and keep it interesting. I have had several people comment to me that they followed and/or played the races on a given night solely because they saw something on twitter. That is always good to hear!

**Q:** When can players bet Pompano, and is there anything you think they'd need to know to help them out?

**A:** We are currently racing five nights per week, Saturday-Wednesday with a 7:20 first post each evening. As a horseplayer, I would remind new players to Pompano that post five wins at nearly a 25% clip as it starts right in behind our Hummer starting gate which really seems to provide a nice advantage. Also, you will get very familiar with the name Wally Hennessey, who is by far and away our leading driver and takes a LOT of money each race. There is no question you can hardly overlook him in any given race, but you will find many situations where the public seems to 'overbet' a particular horse just because Wally is on.



*The familiar blue, white, and yellow colors of Wally Hennessey – Skip Smith photo*

Otherwise, feel free to reach out to me on Twitter with any specific questions and I will be glad to try to help. We appreciate everyone that supports our racing product, and all of the new players we have picked up over the last couple of seasons! #SendItIn

# McNair on a Roll

By [Garnet Barnsdale](#)

There is no hotter driver in Canada – or maybe anywhere – right now than 27-year-old Doug McNair, who has opened up a big early lead in the Woodbine Racetrack driver standings, and playing many of his horses can be lucrative for punters.

Coming off a week where he won at a 30% clip (11 for 37) capped off by hitting consecutive Grand Slams on the Friday and Saturday cards that included wins in both top classes, McNair says his confidence is soaring right now, and for any driver that is paramount to success.

“Confidence and momentum is big for a driver,” he stresses. “When you are winning, it keeps going and when you are losing, you can’t seem to do anything right.”

McNair is doing plenty right this year, including taking home the top prize of \$10,000 U.S. for winning the Miami Valley Drivers Challenge earlier this month by beating 29 of his peers in a three-day event raced over the Ohio five-eighths of a mile oval.

“Everything is just clicking right now, I’m getting a lot of good drives. It makes a difference when everybody uses you and everyone is using me right now.” Indeed, McNair seems to be winning for anybody and everybody so far at the Woodbine winter meet, steering 55 winners from 227 starts which translates into a stellar 24% win rate. Closest to him in the standings is perennial leading driver Sylvain Filion, who trails by 20 wins as of end of racing on Saturday, January 21st.

One of the more potent betting angles at the winter Woodbine meet has been to play horses that McNair is piloting for the first time, or at least on a driver change from the previous start. Last week, the angle returned a positive R.O.I of 14% as McNair won with 5 of 15 horses that he did not drive in their previous start. But there have been other far more lucrative “first-time McNair” results earlier in the meet, punctuated by Cheyenne Ford’s win at odds of \$55.70 to \$1 on December 19th.

A closer look at this angle reveals that it is one of, if not the single most profitable angle at this meet so far if you consider every horse that had a driver change to McNair from its’ previous start. Since the start of the Woodbine meet in mid-November, McNair has driven 32 winners from 122 starts piloting horses that had a different teamster in the start previous. The 32 winners represent an impressive 26% strike rate under these circumstances, but the Return on Investment is even more impressive. Several of these horses (in addition to bombs-away winner Cheyenne Ford) have paid handsome mutuels which have added up to \$481.70. That number represents an average win price of \$15.05 and a R.O.I of \$3.94 (+97%) on every \$2 if you bet every single one of these driver changes to McNair horses blind.

Clearly, McNair is on a roll at the moment and the bettors’ best friend at this meet. Whether he is driving a favorite or longshot, he says he tries to put every horse in a position to win and it has been paying off, obviously.



# BIG POOLS

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