

TOP 3YO FILLIES WITH THE SHEETS

Q & A WITH MIKE MALONEY

HORSE *PLAYER* MONTHLY

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MATTIES ON
TOURNAMENTS

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In this issue:

Q & A with Mike Maloney – Page 1
OptixEQ's Pegasus Preview – Page 2
Meadow: Tournament Brouhaha - Page 4
Milkowski on Gulfstream – Page 6
2018 Horseplayer Wish List – Page 7
Top 3YO Fills with the Sheets – Page 12
Matties Talks Tourney Formats – Page 14
2017 Stats from o_crunk – Page 24

The Horseplayer Monthly January 2018 Issue

Q & A with Mike Maloney

*HANA board member Mike Maloney has a book available for purchase on the [DRF store](#). Titled as *Betting with an Edge: A Professional Horseplayer's Life in Thoroughbred Racing*, it details Mike's life as a professional horseplayer.*

Q: What was the impetus for you to write a book about your life in racing and betting philosophies?

A: I believed I had some ideas that would be helpful to other horseplayers out there. I also wanted to honor my dad and tell the story of our life at the racetrack.

Q: Beyond the entertaining stories, you focus on handicapping. You dedicated an entire section on proper ticket construction and strategy. Why do you find this such an important part of being a successful player?

A: Proper betting theory and ticket construction are important because they are the bridge between a good handicapping opinion and making a score at the windows.

Q: I found your chapter on track bias invaluable. It seems some casual players have such a difficult time recognizing it. How much time do you spend analyzing if there was, or what bias occurred on a day? Can your record keeping tips and notes work for the casual player?

A: Bias recognition, especially in real time, can lead to some of the best gambling opportunities in racing. It's worth the hour or so per day that I spend on it. More casual players can benefit from even a few minutes per day devoted to improving their bias skills, trip note work, and record keeping.

Q: Players can struggle with the mental game - losing streaks, etc - and you spent a good deal of time on discussing it in the book. Despite your success, and longevity as a player, is it something you have to work on each betting day?

A: Yes, maintaining a healthy and alert mental state isn't easy when you're betting 300 days each year. Learning not to ride the emotional roller coaster and to understand my strengths and weaknesses as a player have helped greatly.

Q: You've been a staunch supporter of the weekend warrior and growing the game.. Takeout rates are something you've voiced concern about. As a practical matter, does, for example, the 22% takeout rates on two horse exotics at places like Keeneland and Churchill change your play at all? Just how hard is it to beat those high rates in two horse bets?

A: Certainly any change in takeout rates impacts my betting immediately. The lower the net cost of a wager, the more I will bet. As racing has raised my cost of making a wager over the last ten years, my wagering has decreased by over 50%. The result of their pricing strategy is that I make less, the horsemen make less, and the tracks themselves make less.

Q: With so many short fields at so many racetracks over the last ten or so years, have you had a hard time finding bettable races? Have you found a way to attack shorter fields and do so profitably?

A: It may sound counter-intuitive but smaller fields often force me into the trifecta and supers. I might pass on a 3-1 payoff in the exacta in favor of a shot at 10-1 on a cold number in the tri.

Q: If there's one thing you love so much that you'd never change about Thoroughbred horse racing, what would it be? If there's one thing you'd want to change, what is it?

A: I want to end on a good note so I'll answer the latter first. While I realize that this is highly unlikely, with nationwide cooperation on improving racing's integrity level, and a new pricing model closer to the lower takeout of other gambling games, I think we could double our handle. Racing would also have a better product to market to a new generation of potential customers.

What I love most about racing is a triple dead heat. First is the game itself; the most-interesting gambling pursuit on the planet. Next are the people you meet in racing. From the bluebloods to the semi-degenerates, the animal-lovers to the quants, the sharpies to the schills. One thing is for sure, there's no lack of personality at the track.

My other favorite is the horses themselves. Two horses of any class level going head to head from the quarter pole to the wire. A young foal leaving mom to find his running legs on a Kentucky farm. No truer words were ever spoken than, "There's something about the outside of a horse that's good for the inside of a man."

OptixEQ Previews the Pegasus

By [Emily Gullikson](#), [OptixEQ](#)

This race rightfully centers around the four main contenders: #2 WEST COAST, #4 SHARP AZTECA, #5 COLLECTED, and #10 GUN RUNNER. Of those contenders, my lukewarm selection is #2 WEST COAST for reasons that are primarily based on a process of elimination.

#4 SHARP AZTECA will be racing at a new distance. He has legit speed, but that will be contested even if it is not a duel. The last few races have been aided by FLOW, and PERFECT trips something that seems less likely under this scenario.

The likely second wagering choice is #5 COLLECTED based on his second place finish to Gun Runner in the Breeders' Cup Classic. He projects to sit a good pressing/stalking trip here according to OptixPLOT. My feelings are mixed having watched this horse throughout his career. Lately, he has not looked the same to me in his morning workouts. It is also worth mentioning he is a horse that needs to be watched in the paddock and post parade for anxious behavior as he has a tendency to wash out.

#10 GUN RUNNER is no question the horse to beat. However from a gambling standpoint, I am negative on horses that have an OptixGRID filled with red (HARD, LONE, FLOW, PERFECT) keywords. Of course there is a scenario where he wins and likely receives those same keywords. At a short price, he just is not the pick for me.

#2 WEST COAST, like his stablemate Collected, is likely to sit a good tracking trip. I like that he has been freshened for this race. This nine furlong distance is more preferable to him than the ten furlong classic races he participated in last year. As a newly turned 4-year-old, there is some upside and improvement possible as well. His most recent workout was encouraging. He seems well-spotted and well-intended for this race and should give an honest account on Saturday.



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As a possible stab and upsetter, I would not discount #9 TOAST OF NEW YORK. Both of his G1 efforts in the Pacific Classic and Breeders Cup Classic were given B+ OptixGrades and triple digit OptixFIGS that are as good as any in this field. Yes, there were quite some time ago; and that compensation should come in the form of odds.

Incremental Racetrack Changes

Over the last ten or so years the racing industry, and how it presents races, has gone through some changes. These aren't big changes, no, but they're incremental.

You've heard, no doubt, racetracks now talking a great deal about field size and presenting better races. This concept was not pushed nearly as hard decades ago, as racing was a slave to the putting on races and they will come narrative. Southern California racing, along with the races at now defunct Bay Meadows, were the prime examples of that.

Yet another example I've seen, is the scheduling of races.

I remember years and years ago watching the Breeders' Cup, while at the same time watching Woodbine, which I played religiously when they were featured on Betfair. Without a word of a lie, the gates for a race at Woodbine and the Breeders' Cup Marathon sprung at *exactly the same time*. I couldn't believe my eyes, but it's the way it was. Many tracks were operating in a vacuum.

You've read complaints about the scheduling of races from bettors for years. These were not uncommon problems in the trenches.

Fast forwarding to today, I received a spreadsheet from a friend (thanks Mike) where he examined and detailed a lot about the BC races, including off times at other racetracks. [Here's the off time grid](#).

This, nowadays, doesn't look much different than it has for many years among the top racetracks in the UK. There was very little overlap between Del Mar, Aqueduct, Woodbine and Gulfstream, and supply was increased, to a customer base willing to play the races on an important day.

We see this incremental improvement elsewhere too. Gulfstream has maximized their reach with good results. Tracks like Canterbury who had myriad problems last season were forced to study them deeply and improved in 2017 (it's sad they raised juice back up or it really would've improved) and so on.

This concept, [firing bullets instead of cannonballs](#), is done in the corporate world all the time, and racing has been finally catching up.

So, the business has gotten better at maximizing reach. They've gotten better putting on better races. They, like Magna, have increased their audience by exporting to other countries. They schedule things much, much better to extract more dollars for customers.

But still, there is no real growth, and new customers are not responding. Handle over the last three years will be near flat, and when looked at with inflation, it's negative. Is the glass half full - firing bullets is helping the sport grow- or half empty - despite doing things much better than they were ten years ago, there's still no growth? Time will tell.

A grayscale background image of a horse race. Several horses and jockeys are visible, with one horse in the foreground being particularly prominent. The jockeys are wearing silks and helmets.

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Tournament Brouhaha

By Barry Meadow

The winners' purses for the 2017 Breeders' Cup Betting Challenge were delayed for more than a month because organizers believed that several players worked together to game the contest.

And this is news to whom?

Here's what happened:

While the BCBC nominally required bettors to make at least \$600 in bets on five races on the Friday Breeders' Cup card, and at least \$900 on five races on Saturday, players who skipped races were penalized points, not money. Therefore, players could keep their \$7,500 betting bankroll intact (there was also a \$2,500 entry fee per person) while biding their time for one big plunge.

And that's what many players did. You don't win these contests by betting small money on many winners. Instead, experienced real-money players understand that they have to go all in (or almost all in) on something very, very long. If there are 400 entries in a contest, your chances of winning are something like 1 in 400. However, if you make one giant bet on some 30-1 shot instead—and by giant I mean pretty much your whole bankroll, not just a crummy \$1,000 or so—you cut your odds to winning the tournament to maybe 1 in 40.

And if you have two entries, you cut your odds even further. And if you have two and your friend has two, and you don't overlap by betting the same horses, you're even closer to victory.

So, over the years, players have ignored tournament rules about collusion. After all, are you "colluding" when you ask your buddy his strategy? Or handicap the races with him? Or make a decision on what to bet based on a collective group plan? Tricky questions.

A number of players signed a letter accusing several participants of collusion, and Breeders' Cup officials then hired a law firm to conduct an independent investigation. Their report cleared winner Nisan Gabbay (who picked up the \$300,000 first prize in addition to his real-money total of more than \$176,000) and his tournament partner, Ken McFarland, of improprieties. The two own a limited liability company to manage their tournament winnings. In the BCBC, Gabbay bet nothing on the first day while McFarland's entry went south. With his bankroll still relatively pristine with two races to go, Gabbay bet \$4,000 on 14-1 winner Talismanic in the next-to-last race, then hit the \$17 Gun Runner-Collected exacta--\$15,000 worth--to up his total to more than \$176,000, enough to win the contest. While it's a pretty sure bet that the pair mapped out a plan together, the report concluded that this didn't give them an unfair advantage.

Not so lucky was ninth-place finisher Eric Moomey, who was disqualified. The report revealed that he and Roger Ball, who each had two entries, combined forces to cover every horse in the Juvenile Fillies with no overlapping

wagers among the four separate entries, as well as all European entries except one in the Juvenile Turf, again with no overlapping wagers. They made all these bets on the same four wagering machines, nearly at the same time. The report concluded that combining four separate entries to create a larger bankroll, then using that bankroll to wager on more horses in a single race, gave the pair an unfair advantage over those players who had only one or two entries.



Complaints about other players were dismissed.

Contest results—since deleted from the Breeders' Cup website—show that of the 413 entrants, more than half wound up with a final total of \$0 from their original \$7,500 bankrolls. (Some players also ponied up \$2,500 for the entry fee, although many others qualified via low-cost feeder events). Only 89 entrants wound up with more than their original \$7,500 stake. If a player had two entries, chances were good that he blew his entire \$15,000-\$20,000 stake for the weekend. How many people do you know who can afford to lose this kind of money?

From the time thoroughbred tournament play began in the 1970's, players have tried to figure out how to win contests, which is different from determining who is the best handicapper.

These are two completely different skills. For example, in a tournament, it might be a smart play to bet a 20-1 shot who really should be more like 35-1. In daily play, it would be a sure ticket to bankruptcy.

Well-heeled players have long played multiple entries. For instance, while many tournaments restricted any individual from controlling more than two entries, Joe Blow would fill out two entries—along with two more each by his wife Sally, his cousin Jimmy, and his brother-in-law Bobby. Sometimes not only would Joe make all the selections, but at some tournaments nobody checked to see who turned in the contest forms, and Sally and Jimmy and Bobby might be a thousand miles away. So with only a couple of races to go, Joe could cover every longshot, rather than having to take a shot with one.

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Sometimes players would split—you get half of my winnings and I get half of yours. We each might play our own entry, or we might discuss how best to use our entries to maximize our gains.

Monitoring the opposition's bankrolls throughout the tournament has been another popular strategy. Let's say you were far back with one race to go. You would calculate what payoff you would need in the final race to take the lead, then bet that horse whether you thought he had any chance to win or not. Of course, somebody above you might bet that same horse, but maybe nobody would. This strategy has proved popular both in real-money tournaments (where one big bet could win the contest) and mythical-bet tournaments (where, depending on the number of races and size of the field, you might have to hit several wacky ones). As in a Santa Anita tournament years ago in which only one of the 295 entrants bet a 42-1 shot in the last race of the contest, a simulcast from Golden Gate--and guess who won the \$25,000 first prize? The most notorious of these stories was probably the 1997 Sports Haven Handicapping Challenge where the 19 top finishers all made maximum bets on a \$213.80 winner.

What's new is not the strategies, but the crackdown. These tournaments have never been about who outhandicaps whom. Instead, they're about who has a big bankroll in the first place (to enter many tournaments, including possibly flying to several on-track events), who fearlessly bets huge in real-money events (possibly because some or all of the betting stake was contributed by outside sponsors), and who's not afraid to go 0-for-the-whole-tournament in an attempt to take down the big money.



In a 1996 report called *Tournament Strategies*, I wrote, "If a wide enough bet variation is permitted, perhaps even just one longshot will get you all the money. In tournaments where you can bet virtually anything you want, it pays to take a shot by betting your whole bankroll on a single longshot in one race." And that's what just about every real-money tournament player does these

days—take a shot with something bizarre, hope to get lucky, and pray that nobody else has landed on the same crazy exacta or trifecta. The second-place finisher in the BCBC, for instance, played a bunch of wacky daily doubles and hit a \$100 daily double combining \$65.40 winner Stormy Liberal with \$135.40 winner Bar of Gold that paid \$2546.40 for \$2; his second-place prize was a nifty \$225,000.

The tournament scene has undergone big changes recently. The Daily Racing Form has its own circuit now, all online, with winners of small events qualifying for its own World Championship of Handicapping and/or the Horse Player World Series. The rival tour, the National Horseplayers Championship, is connected with the National Thoroughbred Racing Association, the Form's former partner. On-track and some online tournament sites such as horsetourneys.com and derbywars.com funnel qualifiers for some of their larger tournaments to the NHC (these online sites also offer events with small entry fees which do not offer seats at the big-money tourneys).

Most events use mythical bankrolls or require tiny bets (e.g., \$2 to win on each pick). They may not be as exciting as a real-money tournament where every race offers a chance to dial up some giant score, but they're exciting enough for most players, and a lot less risky.

If you're interested in playing a tournament, study the rules. Generally, tournaments are tests of nothing more than short-term luck. So what? If you win one, you can brag. And if you win a big one, you can brag forever.

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, features a number of free handicapping articles. To be notified about his upcoming book The Skeptical Handicapper, send an e-mail to barry@trpublishing.com requesting to be on his mailing list.

Horseplayer Alert!

Regular Horseplayer Monthly contributor Vin Rogers has a book available for order on Amazon that was published this July.

Titled *Horseracing From the Inside Out: Owning, Training, and Betting Thoroughbreds*, it is available for purchase [here](#).



About Time for a "Change" at Gulfstream



By [Craig Milkowski](#), [TimeformUS](#)

Horseplayers who encounter 7 1/2 furlong races on the grass at Gulfstream are being kept in the dark about a couple of fundamental facts: The timed part of the races is being called "about" 7 1/2 furlongs when in fact it is exactly 7 1/2 furlongs, thus making the clockings misleading. And the official race charts are often no longer printing the run-up distance, which means horseplayers will not know the actual distance of the horse race from gate to wire. How did this happen?



Horses racing on the turf at Gulfstream Park - **photo by [Penelope P. Miller](#), [America's Best Racing](#)**

First, some background:

- Turf races at Gulfstream Park at the published distance of 7 1/2 furlongs have always been a bit of a mystery. There are many different rail settings used on the wide course, and also many different run-up distances. Run-up is the distance in feet the lead horse runs before the actual timing of the race begins.
- From 2009 through November of 2017, the 7 1/2 furlong distance was run nearly 800 times at Gulfstream. In those races, over 100 different course set-ups have been used.
- For example, the rail at 120 feet with a run-up of 384 feet has been reported in the official Equibase charts on six occasions. For this article, that is considered one set-up. The many set-ups are used to save the turf course from overuse as much as possible. It isn't

easy on handicappers, but at least it is done with a worthy purpose: giving horses the best ground to run on.

- It could, however, be done better. For example, the set-up I mentioned could be timed as a one-mile race with a much shorter run-up distance: 54 feet. This would be a fairly normal run-up for most tracks. Gulfstream itself consistently uses shorter run-ups for many of its races. But as things stand, the situation is unfair to horseplayers. After all, the run-up is an untimed portion of the race. There is no good reason to list an unnecessarily long run-up and then time less of the race than the course set-up allows.
- What's more, there have also been questions about the length of the run-up distances reported by Gulfstream Park. Due to the unique turf course, it is impossible to approximate run-up with the naked eye as you can do at most racetracks. Indeed, in July of 2017, Equibase stopped reporting the run-up of these races due to concerns over accuracy. Timing of races from the gate proved that the run-up portion of the races was taking much longer than would be expected for the listed run-up distances. The fact that the official provider of data for all racing in North America couldn't come to an agreement with the racetrack to sort this out is disheartening.

And now the story gets worse:

The newest Championship Meeting at Gulfstream Park began in December of 2017. While doing my work as the speed figure maker for TimeformUS, I noticed that the run-up distances had returned to the official charts. I was hoping that they were now trustworthy and that they were now being reported accurately. A commander I had during my time in the Air Force once told me something I've learned to value: "Trust, but verify." And while doing further research, I found something as troubling as misreported run-up distances: The 7 1/2 furlong races were now being reported as "about" 7 1/2 furlongs.

The use of "about" distances is nothing new in horse racing. The label is sometimes used when the physical layout of the course does not allow an exact distance to be run. It is also used when the timing system in place is not set up to time a course properly. For example, if the rails are at 20 feet on the turf course but the timing system is set up for the course with no temporary rails, the timing system is still used, and we get times for distances that are longer than the exact distance. About distances are not ideal, but in most cases they are at least understandable.

Trakus is the official timer for Gulfstream Park. Its charts list the time and the exact distance each horse ran at various points during a race and at the finish. When I saw

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the new label applied to these races, I assumed the distance being used for timing had changed. It was no longer going to be exactly 7 1/2 furlongs. It would be "about" 7 1/2 furlongs: meaning a distance less than or greater than that but still reasonably close. But my assumptions proved incorrect. I learned that nothing had changed. The official times from Trakus for the new designation are for the exact distance of 7 1/2 furlongs, just as they were before. The reported distance traveled by the horses for the new "about" designation is consistent with other races at the same distance without the label, both at Gulfstream and at other tracks that use Trakus. There is no reason for these races to be called anything different. They are run over the same distance and timed the same way as they have been for several years.



Why has Gulfstream Park has chosen the route it has chosen? Why isn't it being made clear to horseplayers that these "about 7 1/2 furlong" races are really much closer to mile races, and often times even more than a mile? I don't have the answers to these questions.

It is unfortunate that we horseplayers still have to deal with things like run-up distances (especially ones longer than half a furlong) and "about" race distances in 2018, but at least we've learned to live with them. However, this new situation is worse. Gulfstream Park has decided to call a distance "about" when in fact it is nothing of the sort. The reported run-up distances still don't match reality when checked against the clock via video editing software. And Equibase has once again stopped publishing many of the run-up distances furnished by Gulfstream Park. We deserve to be treated better by a racetrack that offers arguably the best horse racing in the world at this time of year. All we want is accurate data. We'll take it from there.

About the author - Craig Milkowski is the chief figure maker for TimeformUS. We have published several articles and had timing and industry Q & A's with Craig throughout the history of Horseplayer Monthly. Those articles and Q&A's are available in our archive, which you can access by clicking [here](#).

2018 Horseplayer Wish List

By [Craig Johnson](#)

It's a New Year, so it's time to break out my horseplayer wish list for 2018. Some of these are my own; others come from discussions and random comments from social media. Most advances in Thoroughbred racing, need six alphabet soup committees, so I will keep these expectations reasonable in the hopes that some of these could happen and enhance the user experience.

1. Coordinate Race Draws - The draw for the Pegasus World Cup was held on a Wednesday, the Breeders' Cup a Tuesday, the Kentucky Derby a Monday. The Fairgrounds Saturday card draws almost nine days out.

In 2017 the Pegasus World Cup attracted over \$15 million in wagers. Gulfstream, with the most significant card of the year and their marquee race, gave handicappers the same amount of time to prepare and handicap as they did for the Sunshine Millions.

I propose that draws should take place on Mondays and make it standard; this eliminates guesswork, and people can plan their big weeks around a coordinated post draw.

Getting post position draws and past performances to the betting public on a consistent, year-round routine manor would go a long way towards eliminating confusion and increasing handle. I'm not sure there is an argument for having random days for post position draws.

2. Live Tickets and Dollars are alive. Racetracks spend endless amounts of times promoting pick N wagers, so they might as well let people play along and see the carnage along the way. Assiniboia Downs shows the tickets alive and dollars alive during every leg of the pick four. I would like to see this at every racetrack. Having this graphic come up five minutes before each leg of the pick (n) would keep people invested in the outcome.

Taking a page out of the baseball and adding some win probabilities or odds of cashing as the wager(s) progress could give additional content for social media teams and for studio hosts to disperse as the day goes along.

3. Breeders' Cup Future Wagering. It was discontinued following the 2003 Breeders' Cup after a two-year run, but the wager did over \$500,000 in both years offered (2002 and 2003). Also, this was well before the majority of race fans had an ADW account and before high-speed internet and downloading PDF's was standard. Additionally, mobile devices and tablets were not yet commonly available.

A viable futures market with two pools would generate interest and create additional revenue. More than ever, people know the players, and social media gives players of all bankrolls access to information. The ability to wager and create revenue from this additional information should be a priority for horse racing.

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4. Expand the 23 KDFW entries to 40. We have the Beemie Awards in 2018; how are we unable to put more than 23 horses in any Kentucky Derby Future Wager pool? The ability to win \$300 or more and cash a potential \$5,000 exacta would exponentially increase. Also, keep the field entry, this would still allow a 5/1 or 6/1 return on that wager.



5. The Breeders Cup Pick 3. Churchill Downs has been very successful in promoting the Kentucky Oaks, Woodford Reserve and Kentucky Derby Pick three, and the Breeders' Cup should follow the same path. Make the Breeders' Cup Turf the next-to-last race every year and make it the Distaff, Breeder's Cup Turf and Breeder's Cup Classic Pick three. No re-inventing the wheel, just follow a successful concept from the Kentucky Derby and incorporate into the Breeders' Cup Card.

6. The Big 3 - Pick 3. The Santa Anita Derby, Bluegrass and Wood Memorial are run the same Saturday every year. Racing should take advantage of these high-interest, large field, and nine-furlong preps with horses that the betting public is familiar with. Supersize this with two more stakes races and make it a one-hour telecast like the old Magna Pick 5. Either way, with reduced races, racetracks need to generate more handle with the same number of races, and they could accomplish this by offering commingled cards and increased exposure to the top horses.

Take a chance and experiment with a wagering-intensive studio show on YouTube, Twitch, or Twitter Live sportscast to feed the passion. Make the telecast for hardcore fans and talk about ticket structure, possible payoffs, value and create new metrics and additional ways of showing real tickets and the reasoning behind them.

7. Customer Appreciation Day. Long en vogue in professional sports leagues, the final home game of the year features prizes, drawings, autograph sessions, and things of that nature. Basically, it's a way to say thank you to the fans who have supported them throughout the

season. Three weeks after the Breeders' Cup, the New York Racing Association puts on Cigar Mile day. Declare this National Fan Appreciation Day with 5% takeout, and goose the pot with a \$3 million guaranteed Pick 5, and handle on this card could explode.

If you have the final significant card of the year with super low takeout, all the nation's top jockeys on the grounds, and coordinate some autograph and social media sessions, plus give out Andy Serling Bobbleheads, what could go wrong?

8. Americanize Foreign Past Performances. Give me fractions, points of call, post position information for Australia and Europe races, and I'm all in. With video on all the tracks, we do not need live chart callers. Put chips in saddlecloths (not Trakus) have points of call, fractional times, and all the other data be computer-generated into a set of past performances so that American bettors can see data that looks similar. What red-blooded American male wouldn't want to spend Friday night watching Candice Hare on TVG with a Daily Racing Form style set of past performances? Handle on Australia and European races from North America would have to increase.

9. Eliminate Run-Ups. This is a hot-button topic and only going to grow in the year ahead. Too many errors are made public, and with speed figures being a significant selling point for several data providers, the sooner this is addressed, the better for all parties involved. In a world of Fitbits and people tracking steps on a daily basis, horse racing is falling behind.

10. Coordinate Post Times. Horse racing is getting further away from this actually happening, but another year of watching the Louisiana Derby on a split screen with the fifth at Gulfstream is not something I enjoy. Meanwhile, Santa Anita and Tampa Bay have joined the post parade shuffle game in 2018. Why aggravate only 30% of your fan base when it's possible to alienate 75% of your paying customers?



Overcoming Yourself

A Plan for a Day at the Races

By Rich Nilsen, AGameOfSkill.com

You've arrived at the feature race, and you're down \$180 for the day. Mentally, you are frustrated from having played every race on the card, losing two costly photo finishes, and having wagered on a "too good to be true" favorite who still hasn't finished. You've narrowed the feature race down to two solid horses, but lack of conviction and failure to have a positive mindset is playing havoc on your decision making.

Lookin' Good is the favorite at 2-1, and Darkened Form is an enticing wager at 6-1. In a moment of indecision, you glance at the past performances again in hopes of finally separating the two selections. Noticing the company line from three races back, you see that Lookin' Good defeated Darkened Form by five widening lengths. You quickly scan your eyes to the closest monitor to see that there's only two minutes to post, meanwhile, failing to notice that Darkened Form fell on his face at the start of that particular race. The rushed decision is finalized. Your remaining \$20 is played as \$10 to win on Lookin' Good and a \$10 straight exacta Lookin' Good over Darkened Form.

You return to your seat with zero minutes to post, grasping the tickets in your hands and praying for your luck to turn around. Darkened Form breaks to a clean lead as Lookin' Good gets shuffled back into fifth. Your second selection continues on an uncontested lead while Lookin' Good begins to weave his way through traffic. The favorite gets stopped behind a wall of horses as Darkened Form leads the field to the top of the stretch. You realized that your worst nightmare is coming true, as the 6-1 shot opens an insurmountable lead past the eighth pole. The favorite finally gets clear and closes with a tremendous rush. The rally falls a length short of Darkened Form, who scores at juicy odds.

You wanted to stay for the last race on the card, but you're tapped out. On your way out, you see from the monitors that Darkened Form returned \$15.40 to win and the "reverse" exacta returned \$42.20. Then you recall what your good friend, a disciple of proper money management, would have done in this scenario. He would have used the \$20 as follows: wager \$10 to win on the longer priced horse, and box a \$5 exacta with the two runners. Such a bet would have returned \$182.50, covering your losses for the day.

This scenario is repeated numerous times a day at every betting facility in the country and every online wagering platform. The bettor encounters a race in which he or she does not know what they will do. This is the root of many handicappers' problems. When a betting situation occurs, they either do not know what to do, or they let recent failures dictate their wager. The result is usually

devastating to the struggling horseplayer.

Do you know what you would do in a particular situation? Having a betting plan puts you far ahead of the general public. Many handicappers do not think that they have a problem with betting scenarios, but they will end up wagering on similar situations completely different.

The wagering menu available may also dictate their bets. What normally would be a win and exacta box bet becomes a trifecta bet with the "chance" at a bigger payoff. The win and exacta are forgotten. The top selection wins but the other plays fail to complete the trifecta.

Does any of this sound familiar? How often has it occurred to you that the way you bet caused you to lose the race? Every handicapper has made this mistake. Some just continue to make it every day.

For players who feel a change is required, let's go through the steps required to become a better bettor.

STEP ONE: Determine Your Level of Risk – Exactly what kind of bettor are you? Are you a \$2 win bettor, a \$50 win bettor, a \$100 multi-race exotics player, or a combination? Know what you are and stick to it.

STEP TWO: Build a Bankroll – The answer to the first step determines the size of your bankroll. The amount you wager on a daily basis, e.g. \$200, should be about 5% of your bankroll, which, in this example, would be \$4,000.

STEP THREE: Discipline – Avoid spreading your daily bankroll across 10 races. Spot playing does not have to mean one bet per week. Spot playing can be \$200 wagered, in aggregate, on your two or three best races of the day.

STEP FOUR: Conviction – If you have to spread your bets too thin, a common occurrence for many at the track, then the wager is not worth making. Conviction results in smart bets with the prospect of a profitable return.

STEP FIVE: Strategy – The theme of this article. You need to predetermine the type of bets you will make depending on the scenario. Nothing needs to be written in stone, but guidelines do need to be decided upon beforehand.

If you have a solid selection in the second race, are you going to play the daily double and for how much? How much will you wager on your second race selection? If there are two horses you figure can run second to your top selection, how will you play the exacta? Of course, there are hundreds of scenarios, depending on your selections and the types of wagers offered. Make a conscious decision to predetermine the type of bets you will make. Be consistent and good luck!

About the author - Rich Nilsen is Director of Player Services at BetPTC.com and founder of AGameOfSkill.com. He will be making his 14th trip to the NHC next month.



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YOUR HOMEPAGE FOR THE THOROUGHBRED INDUSTRY

Ferrozzo Crowned 2017 NHC Tour Champion

When the dust settled on the 2017 National Handicapping Championship tour earlier this month, Minnesota-based player Mike Ferrozzo took home top honors of \$100,000, a trophy, and a shot at a \$2 million bonus at the upcoming NHC19.

"It feels like I've had a thousand pounds lifted off my shoulders," said Ferrozzo, who took the lead in the last weekend of 2017 with a strong placing at Hawthorne Race Course but had to sweat out the results of the last few online Tour events. "I was pretty apprehensive for a couple weeks there. I can't believe I won the whole thing but I guess I did. I'm totally elated."

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

Turf Racing Could Be Coming to Finger Lakes

According to an article by The Blood-Horse, officials at Finger Lakes are continuing their drive to bring a turf course to the New York track. The turf course was included in Governor Andrew Cuomo's 2018 budget, and up to \$2 million of the funds needed could come from the track's ownership.

"The breeders have been asking for it for years. This is the closest we've ever had it coming closer to reality," said David Brown, president of the Finger Lakes HBPA. Breeders are keen to have a turf course installed, since it would help keep New York-bred horses competing in state, rather than being shipped elsewhere to race, which is what is happening now.

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

Night Racing at Belmont? It's Possible.

Another item in Governor Cuomo's 2018 budget would allow for Belmont Park to conduct races after sunset, a push that has gotten stronger with the New York Islanders hockey club announcing that they will be building a new arena on the grounds.

"We envision night racing as a part of a comprehensive redevelopment of Belmont Park," said Patrick McKenna, Director of Communications at NYRA. "The Islanders are

making preparations to begin construction on a world-class arena that will be part of a sports and entertainment complex to rival any in the country."

Details include "allowing 'post-sunset' racing only if races are conducted on the main track in its current configuration, and the race card must conclude by 10:30 p.m. Night racing would be limited to Thursday through Saturday nights.

In addition, NYRA would have to coordinate post times with Yonkers Raceway to "ensure that starting times of all such races are staggered."

You can read more about this story by clicking [here](#).

Sam Houston Back in Action

The 2018 meet at Sam Houston Race Park began on Friday, January 19. Sam Houston is a top ten-ranked track on HANA's board, with industry-low 12% takeout on hi-5's, doubles, pick-3's, 4's, and 5's.

More information on the meet at Sam Houston is available [here](#).



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Yavapai Downs has new Owners

A group that includes Kentucky Downs president Corey Johnsen has purchased Yavapai Downs in Arizona. Dark since 2010, the new owners will be looking to revitalize the facility.

"The Arizona horse racing scene holds great sentimental value for me, and it's very gratifying to be part of re-establishing a year-round racing circuit," Johnsen said. "We look forward to improving purses for all the hard-working horsemen, encouraging the Arizona-bred program that has produced so many solid runners and providing an entertaining product for the many dedicated horseplayers.

The owners also announced that veteran racetrack executive Ann McGovern will be the general manager.

You can read more about this story [here](#).

Check out our HORSE PLAYERS SECTION



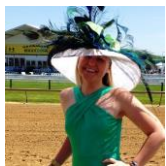
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Horses to Follow Using The Sheets: Fillies



By [Melissa Nolan](#)

Over the past few years in *Horseplayer Monthly* we have shared with readers some colts and fillies to follow as we get into the heart of the Triple Crown season and beyond.

Last year we had perhaps our most successful analysis as we identified Mastery, who went on to a highly-productive (albeit short) career and is now standing stud at Claiborne Farm as one of the most popular new stallion of 2018; El Areeb, who became a MGSW when winning the Grade 3 Withers and Grade 3 Jerome before getting injured, and Abel Tasman, the likely Eclipse Champion 3-Year-Old Filly of 2017 who annexed the Grade 1 Kentucky Oaks, Grade 1 Acorn, and Grade 1 Coaching Club American Oaks in succession before finishing her year running a game second to Forever Unbridled in the Grade 1 Breeders' Cup Distaff.

While success is never easy (and especially not in the sport of Thoroughbred racing!) we hope to emulate at least some of our success as we present our next group of "Horses to Follow Using [The Sheets](#)" in 2018. We will separate the analysis and bring you two fillies today to follow and before presenting our group of colts in the next issue of *Horseplayer Monthly*.

The fillies up for discussion today are **MONOMOY GIRL** and **COSMIC BURST** and a review of their relative attributes follows below:

[MONOMOY GIRL](#) (Tapizar - Drumette, by Henny Hughes) first came to the fore after breaking her maiden first time out going a mile on the Indiana Downs turf by 3 3/4 lengths as the favorite over a field of nine. Three weeks later at Churchill Downs, she won another grass allowance, once again as the favorite in gate-to-wire fashion. While her Ragozin numbers were nothing to really write home about in those first two wins (17.25 in the maiden score, and 14.75 in the allowance) they fit just fine with an improving 3-year-old filly that time of the year.

Remaining at Churchill Downs for her third start, MONOMOY GIRL was moved to the dirt for her first stakes try in late October. The Brad Cox trainee found the main track just as much to her liking as the turf and went "flag fall to that's all" to capture the Rags to Riches Stakes and paid \$8.80. That first dirt start is when the filly really started finding her rhythm, propelling her into the "horse to watch" category with a Ragozin figure of 9.75. (Any time a 3-year-old filly can run a "single digit" on *The Sheets*, she becomes an animal to whom you want to pay attention).

MONOMOY GIRL wrapped up her 2-year-old season with a second place finish in another dirt stakes, the Grade 2 Golden Rod, to a filly who likewise had initially found success on grass, Road to Victory. Showing her now trademark speed that day, MONOMOY GIRL led from the start until the last 1/16th before being eventually worn down and settling for the place spot. While she was now no longer undefeated, MONOMOY GIRL still showed progression on The Sheets and actually had her finest performance in that 2-year-old finale, running down to a 9.5 Ragozin number.



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This filly is promising not just on numbers, but due to her connections as well. Her trainer, Brad Cox, is one of the best young trainers in North America, while her owners include shrewd horse-traders Michael Dubb and Sol Kumin, among others in partnership. Furthermore, MONOMOY GIRL has recorded three workouts in 2018, so there is reason to believe she is on the precipice of making her first start of the year en route to a potential Kentucky Oaks campaign. Her connections, her speed, and her performance figure improvement all make MONOMOY GIRL an important filly to watch going forward.

[COSMIC BURST](#) (Violence - Peggy Ring, by Ghostzapper) might not have quite the number power as our first filly Monomoy Girl, but she still is extremely progressive and holds enviable form lines that make her one to watch down the line. (Not to mention her sire is about the hottest thing going in the breeding industry!) Trained by Donnie Von Hemel, COSMIC BURST is another filly (like Monomoy Girl) who sports a record of 4: 3-1-0, although she ran that second-place in her first start and is undefeated since then. Those three straight wins occurred at three different racetracks and all were while routing one mile or greater.

The Violence filly broke her maiden at Keeneland in late October in her second start after running second by 1 ½
(continued on next page)

lengths in her debut at six furlongs. COSMIC BURST showed slight improvement in winning that maiden race to go from a 20 to an 18 on *The Sheets*. Her next start came on the "Stars of Tomorrow" card the Saturday after Thanksgiving and is when her talent really started to manifest into that of a serious horse. COSMIC BURST won that allowance in her third start, and in doing so, held off heavily favored Grade 1-placed Princess Warrior (while giving her four pounds). Highly-regarded Go Google Yourself and Trust also comprised part of that robust field of 10 that day.

Her Ragozin figure for that race came back a 12.25, so a big jump forward but also not such a big jump for an improving 2-year-old that it would set her back much.

In fact, COSMIC BURST would end up winning her next start while also slightly regressing to a 13.75 figure on *The Sheets*. Even with that slight regression, COSMIC BURST was still able to win her first stakes try when annexing the Trapeze Stakes at Remington Park in late December. Although it was a slightly lesser performance on *The Sheets*, it was who she beat that day that remains noteworthy.

Behind COSMIC BURST in the stakes were two next-out impressive winners: Stronger Than Ever and Sassy Sienna. Stronger Than Ever came out of that third place finish in the Trapeze, well, "stronger than ever" as evidenced by her impressive rally from off the pace to win the Silverbulletday Stakes in her subsequent start. A few days later on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Sassy Sienna followed up her fifth-place run in the Trapeze with a dominating win by nine lengths at Oaklawn as the favorite.

Clearly the Trapeze is a key race, and fillies coming out of that heat should remain productive runners at least in the short run. It is important to note that like Monomoy Girl, COSMIC BURST has remained in regular training in the interim, so overall fitness should not be an issue in the weeks to come.

Both MONOMOY GIRL and COSMIC BURST are both very intriguing prospects for the Midwest 3-year-old filly stakes, and look for them to make their 2018 debuts in the next few weeks in races such as the Martha Washington at Oaklawn and Grade 2 Rachel Alexandra at Fairgrounds. Hopefully they continue developing and we see them return to Churchill Downs in May.

Be on the lookout for our next article on the 3-year-old colts who look good on [The Sheets](#) in the next issue of *Horseplayer Monthly*.

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.

In Search of...The Perfect Contest Format

By [Paul Matties](#), NHC17 champion

When I was a kid, there was a TV documentary show called *In Search of...*, where Leonard Nimoy, better known as Spock on *Star Trek*, went in search of the answers of far-fetched mysteries, like aliens and Bigfoots. My interests are less sci-fi and obviously more horse racing-based, so in the same spirit of *In Search Of...* and with the Pegasus World Cup Betting Challenge and the NHC (National Handicapping Contest) rapidly approaching, I've decided to go in search of the perfect horse racing contest format.

Like a lot of things in America, we horseplayers have two main choices when it comes to contests. The Coke and Pepsi of contests are mythical or money. Although there are arguments for both, neither is perfect.



Mythical tournaments are good in breaking down handicapping to its simplest form and allowing players to think outside the box of their normal thought processes, but many players prefer the money contests because the player has to bet real money. Like a traditional day at the races, the tournament player has to make hard choices on how he is going to invest his money, instead of just arbitrarily selecting 20-1 shots all day. Because of this, it's not surprising that money contests have grown tremendously in recent years, primarily on the back of the success of the BCBC (Breeders' Cup Betting Challenge). This year, the BCBC grew to over 400 players, who each put up \$10,000 to participate. Also, tournaments that have copied the BCBC's model have popped up at every major horse racing event on the calendar and they, too, have been successful. Tracks prefer the money contests to the mythical contests because it creates handle on their races, in turn, increasing their bottom line.

These money contests have their flaws, however, as witnessed by the scandal that rocked the tournament
(continued on next page)

world, where one player at this year's BCBC was disqualified from the prize money for collusion and the eventual winner was investigated for being part of a team that formed a LLC prior to the tournament. While the winner was eventually exonerated, his actions of skipping multiple races and his questionable betting tactics have raised concerns of the formats of these tournaments.

What was really exposed in this year's event is that with the use of multiple entries, either by legal means or illegal means of collusion, players can dutch their money in a race, essentially moving money from one contest entry to another, giving them a significantly-higher bankroll to move forward with. Another problem with money tournaments is there is zero protection for the leader, especially going into the last race. His total is posted and everybody else bets all the money that is necessary, in most cases their whole bankroll, to get to an amount that is higher than the leader. This can easily be accomplished by someone who has had many winners throughout the day or by somebody who hasn't been close to cashing a ticket all day, making the contest essentially a one-race contest. To this point, nobody has been able to create a money tournament format that demands the high-level handicapping necessary to win most mythical tournaments. Interestingly, the Pegasus World Cup Betting Challenge is the first major cash tournament since the BCBC scandal, and although there is some stronger language warning about collusion, the major concerns of entry manipulation and weak formats were not really addressed.



The evolution and the growth of the mythical contests are directly related to the internet and the emergence of on-line horse racing contest sites like HorseTourney, Derby Wars, and DRF Tournaments, and they have become the standard for qualifying tournaments to bigger events like the NHC or the BCBC. There has been some experimentation in recent years, but basically all on-line contests are either "Pick and Pray" or "Live" formats.

In the Pick and Pray format, you make all your selections well before all the races go off without the help of real

odds, track watching, or any race day happenings. In the Live format, you progress as the day goes, but your selections are directly correlated to how you're doing in the contest. Often times, it's not who you like, but who you have to take, based on your current position in the standings. Because everybody who was in last would correctly pick the longest shot in the race, the long-accepted "cap" of 20-1 came to fruition, so you couldn't get beat by a 99-1 in the last race that nobody liked, but everybody picked. The only difference now is that you don't get beat by a 99-1; you get beat by a 20-1, instead.

Over time, it's become accepted by the tournament community that all mandatory race contests should be Pick and Pray and all Live tournaments should be optional. The best example of the latter is the Horseplayer's World Series (HPWS) at the Orleans in Las Vegas. In the HPWS and other seasonal Orleans contests, it is straight optional selections, meaning you pick 10-15 races, from five or six cards per day, over a three-day period. Being one of the longest running contests, dating back to the mid 1990's, they have never changed this format, but this format always brings up the million dollar question - Are you a better handicapper if you pick 12 \$4 winners out of 20, or if you pick two \$24 winners out of 20. Most would argue it's the former and not the latter, especially in the short term, so in order to accommodate that; you would need to create some bonus for picking winners. Nobody has really created a foolproof way to handle this and until somebody does, I wouldn't suggest changing this tournament. The one thing I would like to see them do different is to pick five-ten races on the slower racing day, Thursday, and up the amount you can play on Saturday to 20, or even more. With the modern racing schedules bombarding Saturdays, you could come up with 20 selections by noon if you had to.

On the other hand, the NHC has taken on many changes in the last few years, altering their contest to one of the best formats you could have for a straight mythical tournament. Under the old rules of mostly mandatory picks and double bet scenarios, the contest became limited in your options. With the massive size of the field chasing all the top heavy prizes, players were forced into picking from two or three possibilities, on races where you had no opinion. One year, some disgruntled players rolled up three balls of paper with numbers on them and drew their picks from a hat. Obviously, that was not the best way to determine an Eclipse Award winner. Thanks to some great work by the Player's Committee and a willingness by the NTRA to get it right, they have made the necessary changes to make it the elite handicapping contest in the world. The way it works, now, is the first two days, you make 30 mythical wagers, some mandatory and some optional, and you have to make the cut at the end of the second day. Being there is a cut at this point, it gives you considerable time, before you have to start throwing "Hail Mary's" with your selections. Those lucky enough to
(continued on next page)

move on to day three have another qualifying round of eight to ten optionals. This leads to another cut, where the 10 finalists head to the Final Table for eight to ten mandatory plays. In the realm of mythical tournaments, the concept of a multiple day tournament with the field narrowing gradually, forcing the winner to survive different levels of play, both in player amounts and formats, is a fair way to crown a champion. However, many would make the original argument that the NHC is a lesser tournament because it's not real money, and since we are in search of the perfect contest format, we have to explore the possibilities of making this great format even better.

With that in mind, making the NHC a hybrid mythical and money tournament might be the most logical decision. What's intriguing about this possibility is there are two major issues facing the NTRA in putting together the NHC. The first is that the majority of the players get a trip to Las Vegas, but most of them go home empty-handed and disappointed after looking forward to this event all year. Second, getting a venue to host the event is not as easy you would think. It has to be in a gambling establishment, but because of the nature of the tournament, the players are not really there to gamble, and the handle on the races bet is generally lacking.

In my proposal, each player could start with a real bankroll of \$3,000, earned from their qualifying contest. The format for the first two days of picking 30 horses wouldn't change but for each selection, the player would be make a real \$50 win/place bet on each horse. After the two days, the field would be cut as it always is, based on the size of the bankroll, but all players who didn't make the cut would keep their bankroll. It's not ideal in creating perfect ROI's, but what horseplayer wouldn't like the idea of sending money through the windows instead of mythical plays, and it also is the perfect impetus to get rid of the 20-1 cap. At the very least, the idea of betting each of your selections creates some type of monetary risk associated with throwing away your pick. Best of all, at 600 entries, that would generate \$1,800,000 in handle wagered at the host venue and would fuse that same amount into all the tracks around the country.

The benefits of this idea are far reaching. Not only does it compensate the players who miss the cut by giving them a prize based on their performance, it helps the players who make the cut because it lessens the amount of "Hail Mary's" thrown by those chasing them. The host site would receive their cut of all the wagers, and they would probably get significantly more action from players who missed the cut the next day. Every betting establishment in the world would be willing to bid for this kind of business. Possible contest venues would start competing for the right to handle the NHC, in turn, creating more money that could be used for prize money, food and running the tournament. The NTRA would also help all the tracks of America by increasing their handle and the track's

customers would have the added benefit of the bloated pools. It would be a date on the calendar for all players, not just the 600 players who qualified for the NHC, but the demand for qualifying for the NHC would also increase, so it would be logical to expect the participation of the qualifying tournaments would go up, as well. There are also incentives for the participating tracks to put on better cards for the NHC tournament, as they would be competing to get chosen for a mandatory race. You would not only be making the contest better, you'd be making the entire industry better, all the while, not changing the basic parts of the qualifying portion of the NHC.

On day three, the fun would really start. You let the remaining players have their own BCBC-like money contest, using the money they have accumulated from the first two days. To be fair, you could seed the leader's bankroll or the top three-to-five's bankrolls, with designated additional bonus money for leading the qualifying. What makes this round really intriguing is that all the players keep the money at the end, so in general, they might be more conservative to go all in on a whim, but with the last race being a cut to the final table, everybody wouldn't make the obligatory all-in bet that is custom on the last race. It would be the truest money tournament that has ever been run, and again, you would have the benefits of the handle to the host venue and the industry. This day might have to be extended from its current period to reach its full potential, but it would be really exciting for those participating and would be the goal of any serious contest player.

The Final Table would also become more interesting, because you would have 10 players up there with massive bankrolls that is their money. It isn't Monopoly money or chips. It's theirs, and they're going home with it, but not before they have to use it to try to become the NHC champion. The format of the Final Table would be up for debate as it could easily revert back to being mythical here. Many would like to see a mega 10-person Pick N Pray or Live contest, similar to the ones used to qualify for the NHC, itself. Others would like to reintroduce the ability to pick winners or introduce a new format where you would make multiple selections for each race. Whatever the case, with the money involved, there could be an effect on the pools if it stayed a money contest. Since the NHC is currently held in Las Vegas, theoretically, the host venue could legally "book the bets" at the final table, if necessary. That way no bet at the final table would affect the odds across the country, and the players would be making what could be the biggest bets in their lives, in order to become the NHC champion. Now, that would be the excitement the industry and many of the top players are looking for.

Not sure that we accomplished finding the perfect horse racing contest, but it was fun trying. Then again, Leonard Nimoy never really found the Loch Ness Monster on any of those *In Search of...* shows, either.

OptixEQ Previews...

The seventh race on Saturday at Gulfstream Park, the Grade 3 Fred Hooper

By [Emily Gullikson](#), [OptixEQ](#)

#1 TALE OF SILENCE (3-1 VULNERABLE/SOFT). Given the pace scenario and his recent form, this is a horse that is worth playing against. He had a near perfect trip last out at Laurel in a softer spot. According to OptixNOTES, his form in graded stakes is average. Going back to the most recent Dwyer Stakes, also a G3 stake, the DROP? keyword is present. From an OptixPLOT perspective he is positioned in Q4. As one that follows Gulfstream regularly, closers (Q4) are often at a disadvantage. There are other runners in here with a more favorable PLOT position at what should be better prices.

#2 EIGHT TOWN (9-2 NO VALUE/SPREAD) I am not completely against Eight Town in this spot. He has flashed ability, and based on his races, belongs in a race like this. While there is upside with a runner like this, the morning line here seems a little short.

#3 CONQUEST BIG E (8-1/BELOW) he has yet to run competitively with this level of competition. He projects to be forwardly-placed, and tends to become rank with any other style of tactics. To take this field on as a win contender on the front-end, he will need some class late - something very questionable.



Horses racing on the main track at Gulfstream Park, like they will in Saturday's Fred Hooper - [photo by Penelope P. Miller, America's Best Racing](#)

#4 FRAMENTO (20-1/BELOW) another deep closer that needs a favorable pace scenario to favor his run style. His OptixFIGS, even on his best day, are average to his competition. He ran a decent race here last year, again picking up horses late, possible similar here.

#5 FIRST GROWTH (7-2/VULNERABLE) He is making his third start off the layoff after running a top in his first race back in the CC Express Stakes. He ran gamely in the G3 Mr. Prospector with a slight OptixFIG regression. This race could be the race that puts him "over the top" off those last two efforts. In addition, he will be tested for distance here, required to carry that sprint speed an extra quarter mile. He may prove me wrong; however, the likely odds are short enough to take a shot against.

#6 GIUSEPPE THE GREAT (12-1/VALUE/SPREAD) as a value horse he has shown the ability to be competitive in graded stake races. Early on in his career he ran well around one turn and is getting back to that today. His running style and ability to stalk and pounce will be a real asset. He has a large square on OptixPLOT and should get first run on the morning line favorite Tale of Silence. From that aspect alone makes him value.

#7 MOVES LIKE ALI (30-1/BELOW) based on his current races he is below, and a legitimate longshot in here. He will provide some early speed, but will have to contend with others for the lead. The ability to stick with them and have the stamina for the mile test is leap to endorse.

#8 TOMMY MACHO (6-1/SPREAD) he is a bit of an "in-or-out" type. On his good day he absolutely fits. The barn is going well, he runs well at Gulfstream, and the PLOT is decent. His numerous layoff lines however, remove some confidence. Final odds could determine how to use him here, and worth including on spread multi-race tickets.

#9 GAME OVER (10-1 VALUE/CONTENDER/KEY) there is a lot to like with this runner. His OptixPLOT position is a favorable as a square in Q1. From OptixNOTES he has run multiple races with B grades in G3 stakes. His OptixFIG are in range as well. Key horse in this spot.

#10 BEASLEY (15-1/EXOTIC KEY/SPREAD/VALUE) another horse that has run a B race in a G3 stake and shown GRIT on multiple occasions. Remove a couple of races on his form, and you are looking at a very consistent runner. On OptixFIG scale he would need his best race, and possible even a slight improvement. Even on that front, he is not far out of it.

#11 DREAMING OF GOLD (30-1/BELOW) his OptixFIG are well below and lacks the class of others in this field.

A Look Back at 2017

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

As we reflect on the year past, most think of the best and most memorable races. As a handicapper and student of the game, I reflect on those all year long. That being the case, it is only natural this 2017 wrap-up looks at some different things than the masses.

2017 is gone and 2018 has begun. 2017 was an interesting year in the Sport of Kings. A lot happened, both good and bad. What will and should be most remembered is the tragic San Luis Rey wildfire that took the lives of some of our equine athletes that we love, but it also revealed the love and human spirit many of us have for these graceful and powerful horses who give so much of themselves to make the wheels of our game go around. They do this at our command as well, as none are truly given the choice. The heroes of that day have earned their place in the history of our great game on the championship level, and they should never be forgotten. Neither should the example the tragedy showed of how we can drop everything and pull together as an industry, a family if you will, when we want to and have to, and maybe the time is truly upon us when we do have to. Whether our game is stagnant or in decline is debatable, and your stance likely depends on which set of facts you choose to believe regarding handle, takeout, and attendance. What is certain however, is we are not growing, there is no choice C on this exam, it is either A for stagnant or B for declining.

We made no progress on a central governing body with one set of rules and a commissioner. The industry can't seem to work together in that area, nor does it display a genuine willingness to want to. It is every track, ADW, network, publication, product, and even farm for themselves. None of them get what is best for the industry as a whole ultimately benefits them.

There is no uniformity in drug testing and rules, although we do chip away at progress in that area. The problem there is that there are far too many chefs in that kitchen, and when that happens, the soup always comes out salty. This leads back to the need for a central governing body and one set of rules and standards across the board including racing, wagering, and drugs.

The need for uniformity was further evidenced in the area of steward decisions once again in 2017. 2017 gave us one of the worst Grade 1 disqualifications in the history of the game when Solomini was robbed of a victory at Los Alamitos. It was as bad as the Bayern fiasco in the Breeders' Cup Classic a few years ago. It is not so much where you stand on the DQ; we can argue that all day long, although I personally think it was a no brainer. It is the lack of consistency in these decisions and the amount of subjectivity that is involved in them. We can usually agree if a defined foul or infraction occurred, what we

can't agree on and what is way too subjective is if it cost a horse a chance at a better placing. The Solomini decision took this subjectivity to a whole new level. The horse which caused the most damage, McKinzie, was left alone while Solomini, who came in less than McKinzie went out, and did not bump the "victim middle horse" as hard, was disqualified. The cost of a Grade 1 win is significant to Solomini and his connections. It also means a lot to his sire, Pioneer of the Nile. The bettors who put their money on Solomini were completely hosed. Bettors usually are. While the Eclipse Awards are less meaningful than ever before in our game, and the voting system likely needs an overhaul, Solomini had a strong resume if he wasn't robbed of the Grade 1 win and even in light of that, his 2-year-old season is pretty strong in comparison with any other candidates.

Lady Eli will probably get her well-deserved and overdue Eclipse. That is a credit to Chad Brown and his team who accomplished the unimaginable in bringing this all heart and talent filly back from laminitis in both front hooves. Lady Eli didn't just make it back to the races against all odds, she did it at the level she left off, and while that really transpired in 2016 not 2017, her resume in 2017 is probably going to get her an Eclipse.



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

Brown will likely get one also. The trainer who wins the most money usually does. Dale Romans was one exception who comes to mind recently, but it is usually a foregone conclusion the leading money winning trainer gets it. Brown should get it, but not for winning the most money. He should get it for going outside the box, and going against the grain and doing what is best for his horse. I am talking about Cloud Computing. Brown could have pushed onward to the Kentucky Derby and ran Cloud Computing, but he knew his horse needed more time and wasn't ready. He brushed Derby fever aside as if to say no worries there is one or more Kentucky Derbies with my name on it, and I am going to do right by my horse. Not every trainer will bypass a shot at the roses the first Saturday in May. Brown did and was rewarded with a

(continued on next page)

classic victory in the Preakness. True, he has a shedrow that makes it a little easier to employ that school of thought, but that said, there are still a lot of trainers in strong positions that would have let Derby fever rule the day. Brown deserves some credit for truly putting the horse first. He actually did the same thing with Cloud Computing when he was two and powering around Chad's Saratoga shedrow, and had he not done it then, there would likely have not been a Preakness on the resume of horse and trainer.

Racing has always been a "what have you done for me lately?" game. What better reminder of that is there than Arrogate? He was touted as the best horse in the world, almost unbeatable, and compared to Secretariat in March. By August he was a question mark, and after November he was an also-ran. He is not only a reminder of "what have you done for me lately," but also that these magnificent animals are animals and not machines, and there are never free squares. They always have to run the race and never pay on past performances.

They also all, and I mean all, have just so many of Arrogate's Dubai race in them. Even the best of horses can get gutted under the right circumstances, and they can lose the desire to run and win when it happens. It happened to Sham after the Belmont. It happened to Rachel Alexandra after the Woodward and a tough campaign, and it likely happened to Arrogate after Dubai and accomplishing so much in such a short period of time: the fastest Travers ever, the Breeders' Cup Classic, The Pegasus, and The Dubai World Cup all over a few months with a young and lightly-raced horse. It was a win for the ages and it is unfortunate it ended on a sour note which will make a lot of non-students of the game forget how good he was when he was good.

Gun Runner is a throwback old school war horse who dances every dance and brings it every time. He finally turned the tables on Arrogate in the Breeders' Cup Classic, but that was not the Arrogate he had been facing earlier. Steve Asmussen did a masterful job campaigning this horse and not only keeping him good and peaking for over a year, almost unheard of in the game today, but he was always getting a little better. Impressive. The tell which everyone missed may have come early. In Dubai that night Arrogate caught all the attention for breaking poorly and still being able to run Gun Runner down. The track in the desert that night was deep, heavy, and very kind to closers and very tough and tiring on speed. Gun Runner ran a huge race that night, better than anyone realized until the Breeders' Cup Classic rolled around. He also showed us you can win a major race at Saratoga with another horse's shoe stuck to your tail.

Most of us knew there were a million ways to lose a race and only one way to win. Well, 2017 taught us there are actually a million and two ways to lose and still just one way to win.

I read recently, courtesy of Andy Asaro, about a

greyhound track, an activity I never have and never will partake in, that went under and actually attempted to litigate with bettors to recoup winnings they had paid out to them. While I don't see that case as a winner, you never know what can happen in a court room, so that is a new way to lose for us.

We also all got to see one of the worst beats in horse racing history when Emisael Jaramillo was home free on Cryogenic, who he guided through traffic on the backstretch, and bulled his way to the lead turning for home, only to have the horse shift or switch leads approaching the wire, unseating him. It was a scary accident that could have been a lot worse.

It was really bad for one unidentified player, however; there was one bettor alive to the only Rainbow 6 ticket worth over \$550,000 if Jaramillo had stayed on. Ouch on all counts. I hope the player has hit some nice Pick 6's in the past as that will soften the blow, as they know they can do it again. It helps with my tough beats, though, I would not wish one like that on any bettor.

In addition to one of the worst disqualifications ever, and one of the worst beats ever, we also heard one of the worst explanations ever. The Santa Anita "will pay" explanation that they tried something new showing the payouts in the Pick 4 and Pick 5 as if each horse was the post time favorite was ridiculous. We all saw the low payouts, and any sharp player would immediately spot there was not as much spread from the smaller payoffs to the larger ones as normal. Santa Anita offered the above explanation after announcing they would look into the wagering patterns relative to the payoffs.

While they very well may have displayed the payoffs in that fashion, it would be the first time I have ever seen it done that way, and in doing so, it can hamper hedge players alive and not knowing the true pay outs. Why they would project 20-1 shots as potential post time favorites is beyond me, but there is a much more plausible explanation I have seen more than a few times before.

Let's say for example the connections of one of the horses, say Unique Bella, or any winner for that matter, or any big bettor even bet a huge part wheel in the Pick 4 and 5 singling their horse or their top choice and a few of their friends followed suit and they wound up alive, that is exactly what the will pays look like. If you bet a \$1,500 pick 4 and 5 part when singling a winner or even not singling a winner and wound up alive, it can and would have that exact effect on the will pays.

While not privy to what happened and taking Santa Anita at their word, it would make sense if the betting pattern was as described, their explanation defies logic and common sense.

So all in all it was quite the wrap for 2017. Whether it is choice A or B remains to be seen, but hey at least racing's not dead.

Harley Davidson has Gotten to Work

Plagued by fewer sales to millennials and Gen Ys, the 114 year old motorcycle giant tries to change. Why Isn't Racing Doing the Same?

By Dean Towers, [Harness Racing Update](#)

This past summer I received a note from TVG's Justin Horowitz. Justin, as some of you may know, is interested in investing and he came upon a story about Harley Davidson: [Millennials Could Be a Problem for America's Iconic Motorcycle Brand](#).

"Our data suggests the younger Gen Y population is adopting motorcycling at a far lower rate than prior generations," AB analyst David Beckel said in the note. "Gen Y's are aging into the important 'pre-family' cohort of riders and Boomers are increasingly handing over their keys to the smaller Gen X population."

This, as Justin said to me, certainly sounds familiar. The reasons given for Harley's loss of market share are also quite familiar. Cycling, in the world of potential self-driving cars, seems anachronistic; rider safety is a growing concern in a time when parents are worried to send their kids to football practice; and, of course, these once blue collar bikes are expensive - especially so with the absence of good paying blue collar jobs. When we add the fact that secondary markets are proliferating, it makes for an uphill climb.



Despite the evidence at hand, Harley Davidson has not crawled into a ball and complained. They went to work. Harley's research shows buyers have their first "motorcycle moment" by age nine, so to touch the younger demographics who are not at showrooms, Harley became a sponsor of a new popular video game called "Crew 2". This road racing adventure game allows the user to cruise streets and highways across the U.S. virtually, and for the first time users are able to ride a Harley.

Further, they've started more traditional partnerships, like a new deal with the Ultimate Fighting Championship.

By concentrating this joint venture (and others) on video

and mobile, the iconic brand has seen a bump in sales from demographics that have never been well represented as Harley buyers.

Harley Davidson has a goal of two million U.S. riders by 2020, and benchmarks have been set for many new demographics.

Trying new things and branching out is something not new to this company. I remember not long ago at a seminar, the presenter told a story about Harley Davidson seeing a statistically significant number of google searches coming from Iraq. When the company researched the phenomenon, they concluded the traffic was from American soldiers, looking to make a possible purchase when their tours were up. Harley Davidson not only created a financing program for the military, they even built limited edition military bikes. This all from a set of Google searches.

Time will tell if some of these measures – and I'm sure others that are in the planning stages – will work or fail. But at the very least, they're trying. If you're a shareholder of the company, you can't ask for much more than that. Turning the page over to our sport, despite the same problems, I don't see a lot happening by way of strategy; marketing or otherwise.

[This week in the Thoroughbred Daily News](#), it was reported that a new bill in Ohio was advanced allowing fantasy sports games, with racing not represented. This is probably not by accident, because racing has long been reticent to embrace fantasy as a way to attract new customers.

Fixed odds and exchange wagering – these too held with much contempt by racing's old guard – are another prime example of something new and vibrant not being embraced.

Meanwhile, in Arizona at the racetrack industry symposium, presenters from overseas [talked about new ways to wager](#). These innovative products included allowing customers to sell their serial wagers after one or more legs, or cancelling a bet (at a potential profit) at any time during a race. Most of these innovations would be great to explore and experiment with, no doubt. But, as the DRF story notes, "the approaches largely capitalize(d) on the use of tools that are not in place at U.S. bet-processing companies."

Also in Arizona, takeout rates were talked about by economists, ADW operators and gamblers. All agreed the rates are too high to attract tech-savvy, modern gamblers (something we've written about [in terms of millennials here](#)).

What is sometimes maddening about the sport of horse racing, in my view, is that its brain trust often scratches their heads about how something – in this case, few younger people betting on horse racing – is happening. In fact, when we get down to brass tacks, they should probably be asking themselves how it could not be happening.

Harley Davidson may not accomplish their goals, they've come out firing. I, for one, would love to see horse racing fire a few bullets of their own.



RIP Somebeachsomewhere

By Greg Reinhart

One of the saddest recent moments in harness racing occurred earlier this month when it was announced that the great Somebeachsomewhere, the most influential pacer and pacing stallion of recent vintage, had lost his battle with cancer, dying at age 13.

"It's devastating. It's a terrible day," said Brent MacGrath, the trainer and part-owner of the Canadian-owned pacer who was syndicated as a stallion but his original owners — the six-member Schooner Stable of Bible Hill, NS — still held majority ownership in the horse. The Schooner Stable is comprised of Maritimers MacGrath, Garry Pye, Stu Rath, Reg Petitpas, Pamela Dean and Jamie Bagnell.

I was fortunate enough to see Somebeachsomewhere in person three times during his racing career. In 2007, when he was a 2-year-old, I was working with driver Luc Ouellette on his website, and I was visiting him in Canada. Luc had just won the Woodrow Wilson at the Meadowlands with Dali, and we were feeling pretty good about our chances in Canada's signature event for 2-year-old pacers, the Metro, at Mohawk. Somebeachsomewhere had drawn in Dali's elimination, and I remember watching his win in the Battle of Waterloo for Ontario-sireds at Grand River, thinking he was a pretty nice for that group, but he had struggled on the half, and I didn't think he would be much of a problem. Well, all of us got a rude awakening on the final turn of that elimination as after Dali sidled up to Somebeachsomewhere, he suddenly sprinted away, leaving Dali and the rest of the high-quality field in his wake. He would go on to win the final a week later in similar fashion, stamping himself as the best horse of a great crop, which also included the likes of Shadow Play, Art Official, Badlands Nitro, Santanna Blue Chip, and Bettor Sweet.

The next time I saw Somebeachsomewhere was at three when I went up to Mohawk for the North America Cup. He had won his prep races comfortably and was drawing attention from mainstream outlets across Canada, given he was Canadian-sired (by Mach Three), owned, trained, and driven (Paul MacDonell). He didn't disappoint the throng of fans at Mohawk that night, crushing the field in dominant fashion, but what I will always remember is the roar from the apron that night. I haven't been to a Triple Crown race on the Thoroughbred side, but it had to rival that, and even thinking about it today I get goosebumps at the reaction that horse brought out in people.

The rest of Somebeachsomewhere's 3-year-old season was a series of amazing performances. Even in his lone

defeat, in the Meadowlands Pace to Art Official, he was parked three-wide to a half in 51 4/5, and nearly won, only giving way grudgingly late. He went 1:46 4/5 at Lexington, won at Mohawk despite being probably a 15 sick on a scale of 1-10, and beat Shadow Play in a monsoon at Yonkers in the Messenger despite being parked out a long ways.



Somebeachsomewhere passed away after battling cancer
— Nigel Soult photo

Going to Hanover Shoe Farms to stand stud, his impact on the sport on that side was immediate and the same dominance he showed on the track. From his first crop he had triple millionaire Captaintreacherous, and the hits just kept on coming, with the likes of Pure Country, Huntsville, and Downbytheseaside dotting the landscape. He is also the sire of Sunshine Beach, whose babies have been well-received at recent sales.

It is unfortunate and sad that we won't get to see more crops from Somebeachsomewhere, as he should have been able to keep going for at least 10 more years under an ideal scenario. Also, there does not appear to be an immediate successor to his presence as a stallion. Captaintreacherous's first crop will hit the track next year, he is also at Hanover, and those are big assets in his favor, or we'll have to wait for Huntsville or Downbytheseaside to see if they can carry on their sire's lineage.

I can think of no better way to end this remembrance of the great Somebeachsomewhere than by quoting the full page ad Dr. Bridgette Jablonsky, the Farm Manager at Hanover, took out in Harness Racing Update.

It read:

Beach,

Quite simply you were the best

It was an honor to be a part of your life and I thank your owners for giving me that privilege.

Your shoes will never be filled.

Although my heart is broken, I take comfort in knowing you are at peace now.

I will treasure the memories I have of you forever.



Win a seat to the **\$75,000 Final at one of these Meadowlands Qualifiers!**

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**MAR
10**

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\$10,000 Prize Pool*

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7**

\$100 Total Fee
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Enter by 7 p.m. Walk-ups welcome. Payouts to Top 10 Finishers.

See playmeadowlands.com for contest details.

*Prize pools based off 100 entries.

WHHC FINAL ON SATURDAY, APRIL 28, 2018

Visit DerbyWars.com for a complete list of online qualifiers.



The Back Page

Courtesy of our friend [@o_crunk](#), here are a few stats he has posted on Twitter this year



o_crunk

@o_crunk

Following



Handle by bet type, year over year for 2017.
File under: decline of the jackpots.

wager_description	year	total_handle		year	total_handle	y/o/y_pct
Win / Place / Show	2016	\$3,434,005,784.00		2017	\$3,537,223,444.00	3.01%
Exacta	2016	\$2,440,039,317.00		2017	\$2,449,692,179.00	0.40%
Trifecta	2016	\$1,679,698,325.00		2017	\$1,651,928,088.00	-1.65%
Superfecta	2016	\$1,043,649,431.00		2017	\$1,033,570,389.00	-0.97%
Pick 4	2016	\$523,037,131.00		2017	\$581,114,974.00	11.10%
Pick 3	2016	\$440,405,246.00		2017	\$464,239,361.00	5.41%
Daily Double	2016	\$442,554,929.00		2017	\$446,246,437.00	0.83%
Pick 5	2016	\$271,286,797.00		2017	\$326,369,177.00	20.30%
Pick 6	2016	\$98,054,894.00		2017	\$86,099,793.00	-12.19%
Pick 6 Jackpot	2016	\$74,263,870.00		2017	\$55,139,964.00	-25.75%
Perfecta	2016	\$38,736,135.00		2017	\$32,916,954.00	-15.02%
Super High Five	2016	\$35,268,503.00		2017	\$32,099,998.00	-8.98%
Quinella	2016	\$13,813,233.00		2017	\$13,124,535.00	-4.99%
Grand Slam	2016	\$6,434,087.00		2017	\$6,988,539.00	8.62%
Pick 5 Jackpot	2016	\$1,852,671.00		2017	\$4,101,232.00	121.37%
Z-5 Super Hi-5	2016	\$5,934,156.00		2017	\$4,022,099.00	-32.22%
X-5 Super High Five	2016	\$2,560,398.00		2017	\$2,726,121.00	6.47%
Place Pick All	2016	\$1,342,999.00		2017	\$1,411,991.00	5.14%
Future Wager	2016	\$1,414,318.00		2017	\$1,365,707.00	-3.44%
Super High Five Jackpot	2016	\$2,944,768.00		2017	\$887,778.00	-69.85%
Pick 7	2016	\$377,580.00		2017	\$550,134.00	45.70%
Tri Super	2016	\$4,021.00		2017	\$30,875.00	667.84%
Twin Trifecta	2016	\$2,518.00		2017	\$6,966.00	176.65%

6:46 PM - 3 Jan 2018



o_crunk

@o_crunk

Following



Top 5 tracks by handle gain year over year in 2017:

GP +\$107M

LRL +\$82M

CT +\$30M

SAR +\$29M

CD +\$26M

Top 5 tracks by handle loss year over year in 2017:

SA* -\$33M

PIM -\$27M

GG -\$23M

MTH -\$23M

BEL -\$20M

*BC removed for y/o/y comparisons

9:35 AM - 3 Jan 2018



o_crunk

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Following



Top 5 tracks by gains in handle per betting interest for 2017 year over year:

PIM +\$66.9K

KD +\$16K

GP +\$7.5K

SAR +\$6.5K

LRL +\$4.2K

Top 5 tracks by losses:

KEE -\$6.6K

LRC -\$4.5K

FG -\$2K

SA -\$1.9K

TUP -\$1.6K

7:53 AM - 4 Jan 2018



o_crunk

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Following



Of the 67 tracks in the US to conduct at least 50 t-bred races in 2017, 35 of them lost handle year over year. 40 lost races year over year.

9:47 AM - 3 Jan 2018



o_crunk

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Following



47,123 individual t-breds made at least 1 start in the US in 2017. That's the fewest in the US since at least 1969.

12:54 PM - 4 Jan 2018

9 Retweets 6 Likes



1



9



6



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o_crunk @o_crunk · Jan 4



In 1970, 47,778 horses made 488,326 starts in US/CAN w/ an avg field size of 8.6. In 2017, 47,123 horses made 289,666 starts in the US w/ avg field size of 7.7.



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o_crunk @o_crunk · Jan 4



For the first time in 10 years, the average age of starters declined to 4.109 from 4.152, perhaps a sign that foal crop declines of last decade have fully manifested themselves on the track - a new normal?



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2





o_crunk @o_crunk · Jan 4

In 1970, 47,778 horses made 488,326 starts in US/CAN w/ an avg field size of 8.6.
In 2017, 47,123 horses made 289,666 starts in the US w/ avg field size of 7.7.

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o_crunk @o_crunk · Jan 4

47,123 individual t-breds made at least 1 start in the US in 2017. That's the fewest in the US since at least 1969.

1 9 6 1

[Show this thread](#)



o_crunk @o_crunk · Jan 4

Since the beginning of the downturn in 2007 however, median and average starts per year are essentially unchanged, 5 and 6.14 respectively in 2017 and broadly unchanged in the last 20 years.

2 1 1 1



o_crunk @o_crunk · Jan 4

But there's no better time to own and race a horse in the US if available purses are any measure as both median and average purse per horse in 2017 is the highest it's ever been as race declines continue to lag foal declines.

2 2 1 1



o_crunk @o_crunk · Jan 4

Here's a chart reflecting some of this data. I will add more fun stuff to this thread later.

year	distinct_starters	avg_age_of_starters	median_starts	avg_starts	median_purse	purse_per_horse
1997	63,718	4.0927	6	7.4800	\$4,245.00	\$12,776.58
1998	63,316	4.1040	6	7.2348	\$4,679.00	\$13,658.01
1999	63,216	4.0921	6	7.1404	\$5,152.00	\$14,576.35
2000	64,124	4.0855	6	7.0426	\$5,600.00	\$15,315.34
2001	65,492	4.0866	6	6.9082	\$5,712.00	\$15,526.27
2002	66,685	4.0728	6	6.7491	\$5,700.00	\$15,355.07
2003	67,941	4.0887	6	6.5458	\$5,382.00	\$14,820.00
2004	68,277	4.1096	6	6.4996	\$5,558.00	\$15,290.82
2005	66,606	4.1041	6	6.4036	\$5,980.00	\$15,580.67
2006	66,442	4.0725	5	6.3213	\$6,320.00	\$16,101.88
2007	66,956	4.0529	5	6.2513	\$6,480.00	\$16,819.09
2008	66,742	4.0392	5	6.1324	\$6,302.50	\$16,666.43
2009	65,787	4.0525	5	6.1746	\$6,102.00	\$16,023.82
2010	62,692	4.0542	5	6.0507	\$5,993.00	\$15,773.71
2011	59,607	4.0547	5	6.1218	\$6,735.00	\$16,991.37
2012	57,027	4.0673	5	6.2269	\$7,803.00	\$18,897.22
2013	53,890	4.1111	5	6.2761	\$8,517.00	\$20,061.64
2014	51,398	4.1565	5	6.1707	\$8,970.00	\$20,775.45
2015	49,704	4.1760	5	6.1298	\$8,900.00	\$21,113.28
2016	48,332	4.1529	5	6.1581	\$9,210.00	\$21,475.16
2017	47,123	4.1099	5	6.1470	\$9,295.00	\$21,953.57



o_crunk @o_crunk · Jan 6



Andy's Love joins an elite list of 32 other iron horses to make at least 30 starts in the US in one calendar year. Here's Andy's Love Equibase profile: equibase.com/profiles/Resul...



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[Show this thread](#)



o_crunk @o_crunk · Jan 6



None made more appearances than the 31 starts made by Andy's Love on the PEN/LRL circuit. That's the most starts made by a US t-bred in a calendar year since Miss Prim in 2014, who also made 31 starts.



1



[Show this thread](#)



o_crunk @o_crunk · Jan 6



Those 12,823 made a staggering 149K starts from the 289K total - almost a start a month as a group - true iron horses who make up the numbers in races we bet literally every day.



1



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o_crunk @o_crunk · Jan 6



5,438 of that 47,123 made just 1 start (11.5%). 12,823 of that 45,123 (37%) accounted for over half of all starts at US tracks.



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**o_crunk** @o_crunk · Jan 13 ▼

That's slightly up from last year (33.08% vs 33.34%). What's more, for the first time, the average off odds of that 12,496 race subset, had the favorite go off below 70 cents on the dollar.

 1  1  

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**o_crunk** @o_crunk · Jan 13 ▼

2017 also continues the trend of more races with odds on favorites, as exactly 1 in 3 races in 2017 had an odds on favorite. That's 12,496 of 37,483 races!

 1  2  

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**o_crunk** @o_crunk · Jan 13 ▼

Continuing the 2017 racing year in review tweets. For the 8th consecutive year, over 30% of t-bred races conducted in the US had an odd-on (even or less) favorite at post time.

 1  3  1 

[Show this thread](#)



o_crunk @o_crunk · Jan 13



Yet the winning percentage of those odds on favorites continues to hover around 50%. Here's some data since 2000 through 2017 that illustrates this trend.

year	odds_on_favs	winners	odds_on_win_pct	total_races	odds_on_favs_pct	avg_odds
2000	12,854	6,120	47.61%	55,298	23.24%	\$0.76
2001	12,905	6,212	48.14%	54,925	23.50%	\$0.75
2002	12,491	6,076	48.64%	54,117	23.08%	\$0.75
2003	13,580	6,543	48.18%	53,309	25.47%	\$0.74
2004	13,735	6,491	47.26%	53,403	25.72%	\$0.75
2005	13,177	6,309	47.88%	52,061	25.31%	\$0.75
2006	13,842	6,678	48.24%	51,491	26.88%	\$0.74
2007	13,779	6,694	48.58%	51,132	26.95%	\$0.73
2008	13,759	6,672	48.49%	49,952	27.54%	\$0.73
2009	14,382	7,073	49.18%	49,197	29.23%	\$0.72
2010	13,968	6,920	49.54%	46,222	30.22%	\$0.72
2011	13,798	6,946	50.34%	45,254	30.49%	\$0.71
2012	14,753	7,372	49.97%	44,929	32.84%	\$0.70
2013	13,468	6,681	49.61%	42,975	31.34%	\$0.70
2014	13,489	6,838	50.69%	41,120	32.80%	\$0.70
2015	12,371	6,239	50.43%	38,789	31.89%	\$0.70
2016	12,615	6,361	50.42%	38,134	33.08%	\$0.70
2017	12,496	6,310	50.50%	37,483	33.34%	\$0.69



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