

TOP HANDICAPPERS TELL ALL

HORSE *PLAYER*

MONTHLY

BROUGHT TO YOU BY HORSEPLAYERS ASSOCIATION OF NORTH AMERICA

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EVERYTHING BREEDERS' CUP



BC Q&A *with* NHC Champion *John Doyle*

Photo by: Penelope Miller/America's Best Racing



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The Horseplayer Monthly October/Breeders' Cup Issue

Welcome to the Breeders' Cup Issue

This Year's Breeders' Cup Betting Menu Is Likely the Best One Yet

It's that time of the year; the time that so many look forward to. Two days of deep fields, great horses, the best jockeys and trainers, all in a historical lovely setting in Kentucky. It's The Breeders' Cup.

No doubt, in this magazine and elsewhere, you have read about the works, the backstretch tidbits, which horses the public handicappers like or dislike. But maybe you have not heard about the betting menu. If you have not, and especially if you are a smaller to medium sized player, I think you'll be pretty happy when you do.

The staple bet "minimums"

With tons of entries and lots of permutations for exotics bettors, even a fairly large capitalized player can find keeping the bankroll in check to construct good tickets on the Breeders' Cup days. Sometimes on other big days – said to be about long lines with lower minimums – superfectas are even floored at \$1 mins, causing huge complaints.

This year's Breeders' Cup cards are very friendly to weekend warrior exotics players.

\$1 WPS, and \$1 doubles, are new, and can stretch a bankroll.

Tri's, Pick 3's, Pick 4's and Pick 5's are at 50 cent increments. This allows folks who might normally take a \$1 tri key for \$12, to take the same spread for \$6. It allows smaller capitalize bettors to hit the all button for second and third with two key horses and spend, say \$18 instead of \$36. It gives a lot more coverage.

The New \$1 Pick 6

I don't know about you, but I have fun only a few days a year betting pick 6's, and the Breeders' Cup are two of them. At \$2, even when a few of the friends get together and we pool resources, it's still insurmountable, though. At the new \$1 increment, it allows for double the coverage and I plan on taking one. Maybe this year I can last longer than three legs!

The Takeout

We all know takeout matters a lot when looked at over a year, or two years, or three; or if we play a lot of money. Takeout matters less on one day, with deep fields like the Breeders' Cup.

However, it is no small thing that this year you'll be getting paid more on almost every ticket you do cash:

Keeneland has the best overall takeout rates of any Breeders' Cup track since it's been run.

The Breeders' Cup walks a fine line each year between the pomp and ceremony for fans, and delivering good, cold, hard value for bettors, but like we see at some events, bettors can take a back seat. Not at this event, not with the Breeders' Cup, and both the Breeders' Cup and Keeneland should be commended that they stuck with the Keeneland rates this year. There will be more money in your pocket because of it.

The best "value" compared to other Breeders' Cups lie in some exotic pools, like the trifecta, pick 3's at 50 cent minimums, and superfectas. All of those have 19% takeout, and payouts will be significantly higher this year than in some years past.

Whatever floats your boat as a bettor – win betting, hard to hit exotics, splitting tickets with friends – there is something for you this year at Keeneland for the Breeders' Cup.

Do your homework, get firing and good luck at the windows.

Editor's Notes

Welcome to the 2015 Breeders' Cup Issue of the Horseplayer Monthly.

If you ask horseplayers what day or days in the racing calendar they are looking most forward to, the Cup heads the list. It is truly one of the greatest events in Thoroughbred racing. There are jam-packed races with plenty of opportunities for a potential wager, or play against; one can use speed figures, or replays, or pedigree, or do a deep dive into the Euro's to sniff out a nice price winner. It really is a smorgasbord.

In that vein – and knowing you as horseplayers like to formulate your own opinion – we expanded our Q and A segments this year. We found many players with many different philosophies for the segments and we thank them for answering. Perhaps their answers to some of the

(continued on next page)

questions will provide a light bulb moment for a horse you were looking at, or a bet you were thinking of taking. We'd like to thank everyone for participating again this year. And, a special shout-out to our advertisers, too, including the Breeders' Cup team for their support. Good luck this weekend. May we all catch a winner or two!



Race Order/Wagering Menu

BET MINIMUMS

\$1.00 - WIN, PLACE, SHOW
\$1.00 - EXACTA, DISTAFF/CLASSIC DAILY DOUBLE, DAILY DOUBLE AND PICK 6
\$.50 - TRIFECTA, PICK 3, PICK 4, PICK 5, SUPER HI 5
\$.10 - SUPERFECTA

TAKEOUT RATES

16% - WIN, PLACE, SHOW
19% - ALL OTHERS

Friday, October 30

Race 1 12:30 PM WPS EX TRI SUPER PICK 3 DD PICK 5
Race 2 1:03 PM WPS EX TRI SUPER PICK 3 DD
Race 3 1:37 PM WPS EX TRI SUPER PICK 3 DD PICK 4
Race 4 2:11 PM WPS EX TRI SUPER PICK 3 DD
Race 5 2:47 PM WPS EX TRI SUPER PICK 3 DD PICK 6
Race 6 3:30 PM WPS EX TRI SUPER PICK 3 DD PICK 4
Race 7 4:10 PM WPS EX TRI SUPER PICK 3 DD PICK 4
Race 8 4:50 PM WPS EX TRI SUPER PICK 3 DD
Race 9 Distaff 5:35 PM WPS EX TRI SUPER SpDD SupHi 5
Race 10 6:10 PM WPS EX TRI SUPER

Saturday, October 31

Race 1 11:00 AM WPS EX TRI SUPER PICK 3 DD PICK 5
Race 2 11:30 AM WPS EX TRI SUPER PICK 3 DD
Race 3 12:05 PM WPS EX TRI SUPER PICK 3 DD PICK 4
Race 4 12:45 PM WPS EX TRI SUPER PICK 3 DD
Race 5 1:25 PM WPS EX TRI SUPER PICK 3 DD
Race 6 2:10 PM WPS EX TRI SUPER PICK 3 DD PICK 6
Race 7 2:50 PM WPS EX TRI SUPER PICK 3 DD
Race 8 3:30 PM WPS EX TRI SUPER PICK 3 DD PICK 4
Race 9 4:10 PM WPS EX TRI SUPER PICK 3 DD PICK 4
Race 10 4:50 PM WPS EX TRI SUPER PICK 3 DD
Race 11 Classic 5:35 PM WPS EX TRI SUPER DD SupHi 5
Race 12 6:10 PM WPS EX TRI SUPER

(Breeders' Cup Release)

Breeders' Cup Q&A With...



John Doyle, co-creator [OPTIX eq](#) and 2011 National Handicapping Champion

HM: Do you enjoy the BC Day(s) as much or more than other big days in racing? What do you like most about them?

JD: BC Day(s) are my favorite racing days; it's the best racing has to offer. Horseracing's annual awards are decided on these two days. And, with the foreign imports, like the Dubai World Cup, Royal Ascot and some other choice meet/venues, it's the closest racing gets to the Olympics.

HM: With the potential for big scores there are a number of wagers to go after - pick 6, pick 5, supers, etc. Do you more grind away for hits, or do you take big shots at the harder to hit exotics, as a rule?

JD: It depends on your budget and objectives. I look for value. On these racing days, with the large field sizes and stronger level of competition, you have a greater chance for a big score by making value plays. The goal is to make money; not try to force big scores. Sometimes, they come when you least expect them.

HM: If you absolutely love two horses in say a pick 4 sequence at the BC, what do you believe is the best way to make money with your opinion? Rolling pick 3's, doubles, hammer the pick 4, for example, or play them straight win, and in verticals?

JD: It depends. If I absolutely love two horses and they are trading at above my market price, I would tier my bets in several pools mentioned. My wagers would be adjusted based on my opinions about the surrounding races, the strength of the favorites and the pace dynamics within my key horse races.

HM: If someone was sitting with you with a \$200 budget
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for both days, how would you advise him or her to play the races?

JD: First, decide if you want action in every race or you want to focus on a subset. Create a per race budget. For action on all races, you probably will need to stick to Win, Place bets. If you want to focus on a smaller number of races, you can play around a little with Exactas and Daily Doubles. Getting involved in other pools will be difficult with a bankroll limited to \$200.

HM: How much work do you do to handicap both cards? Are you kind of sure who you like beforehand, or do you really dive into replays and figs trying to handicap with a clean slate?

JD: In the past, I have always dove in deep and hard, but.....My partners and I developed OPTIX; a handicapping platform which includes trip notes, pace plots, alerts, speed figures, etc. I will still need to put some work into handicapping races, but most of the big, pain-staking efforts, like watching race replays, will already be done. It gives me a lot more time for wagering analysis. By the way, we are working toward a commercial release of OPTIX very soon.



HM: Is there anyone catching your eye that the pundits and public handicappers might be overlooking?

JD: It's too early to tell, but my best advice is to try do some negative handicapping. Start your handicapping each race by assessing the favorite's chances. Your best chance for a big score is playing against a bad favorite.

Note from the Editor's Desk - Thank you to Penelope P. Miller and America's Best Racing for this month's cover photo. You can follow Penelope's personal Twitter account [here](#) and the America's Best Racing account [here](#).

Eight Breeders' Cup Questions With...

[Ray Paulick](#)/[Paulickreport.com](#)

Q: What horse are you most excited to bet in the Breeders' Cup & why?

A: Honor Code. Loved the fact they prepped him in the one-mile race instead of Jockey Club Gold Cup and he's trained exceptionally well.

Q: What horse are you most excited to bet against in the Breeders' Cup & why?

A: Can't say I'm excited about betting against American Pharoah, but he will be overbet, in my opinion, and has never raced outside of his division. This is a big jump up for him.

Q: How are you expecting the main track will play? Any worries over the Keeneland "Golden Rail" making an appearance?

A: I'm not a student of track biases, but I asked Kentucky-based Dale Romans what he thought of the track this fall. He said the only bias he's noticed is the best horse usually wins. He won the Breeders' Futurity with Brody's Cause, coming from way back in a race using the 'short stretch' and finish line at the sixteenth pole.

Q: Songbird & Rachel's Valentina meet up for the first time in the Juvenile Fillies - which one do you like, or will it be someone else?

A: Songbird.

Q: Any chance of a US-based horse defeating the European invaders in the Mile or Turf?

A: I don't think so. French in the Mile, Brits in the Turf.

Q: What do you make of the Juvenile, is it the most wide-open race on the card?

A: I'm going to play Unbridled Outlaw, coming out of a really troubled trip in the Iroquois. Not that impressed by West or East Coast 2-year-olds.

Q: In the Dirt Mile, if your horse draws outside will you be less likely to play because of the short run into the turn?

A: Liam's Map lays over the field.

Q: Classic: American Pharoah, Beholder, or someone else?

A: Honor Code, but wouldn't be surprised to see Keen Ice upset them. If it's American Pharoah or Beholder I'll go home with empty pockets but a smile on my face. One of them winning would be the best story for racing.

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Player Spotlight

Our “Player Spotlight” segment this month is with [Emily Gullikson](#). Emily is a relatively new horseplayer, and we asked her about what got her involved in horse racing, what her handicapping process is, and some other info. Emily also participated in our eight-question Breeders’ Cup segment, and those answers are also posted in this story.

Q: How long have you been handicapping? How did you get the bug?

A: I am still relatively new to handicapping, playing for just about five years. My background and career is in athletics. I spent a lot of my childhood around horses. I rode hunter/jumper and worked at the barn, I would be there all day with horses. I went to the local track a few years ago and what got me hooked was the Racing Form and the handicapping aspect. I did not know anyone at the time that was into racing. I read books, and searched out anything I could that would help me learn. I’ve been a full-fledged player ever since.

Q: What type of handicapper would you generally be described as? Are you a data cruncher, angles, pace, speed, watch replays, or a pure combination of them?

A: Form cycle. I’m looking at a lot of different factors such as replays, trainer angles, pace, and performance figures to assess a horses’ form and condition going into the race. Watching replays is a big part of that. One of the roles I have at OptixEQ is writing trip notes. I have watched, without exaggeration, thousands of races and race replays this year covering Gulfstream, NYRA tracks, CD and Keeneland. Writing trip notes is a lot more in depth than just picking up on the winner, and the obvious trouble. It is important I watch every performance and grade that effort properly. Within the notes, I will include projections such as, shorter, needs to add/remove blinkers, needs a drop. The visual aspect has become a huge part of my handicapping.

Q: In your Twitter bio it seems you are competitive by nature (sports, fitness). If so, do you think being competitive is a reason why you enjoy the pursuit of handicapping?

A: Playing in handicapping tournaments certainly brings out my competitive side. I’m semi-retired from actively participating in sports. That urge to “train” and “compete” is engaged when gearing up to play a tournament. I play better when I’m sharp and mentally prepared. The preparation and steps involved getting ready for a big handicapping tournament are very similar when I got

ready for a game day.

Q: What do you most like about horse racing?

A: Earlier today backed at 6/1 at Belmont. I watched as this “best bet of the day” stumbled out of the gate and instantly lost all chance. Immediately followed that up in the next race, with 26/1 tourney horse that absolutely stood in the gate, spotted the field, made a late rally to get up for fourth and then galloped out past the winner.

One of the most memorable times in my life came standing on the winner’s circle rail watching Zenyatta in the 2010 Vanity. Horse racing, in mere seconds, can bring out every possible emotion. There is nothing like it.

Q: What do you think can be improved in the sport for someone like you, as a customer?

A: From a handicapping and player aspect I would like to have more information available about the horse on race day. This includes equipment changes, such as a first time starter debuting in blinkers, the addition or removal of front wraps, and shoe information/changes. When a horse is scratched by the veterinarian the reason for the scratch should be listed. Along those lines, I would be interested in knowing the weight of the horse coming into race.

Another improvement that should be implemented is the way inquiries and objections are handled. Ideally, we could be watching the video as the stewards are watching the video, listening to their discussions, along with the phone conversations with the jockeys involved.

Q: What Breeders' Cup race are you most looking forward to as a fan? As a bettor?

A: Without question, the Classic.

Emily’s Breeders’ Cup Q&A

Q: What horse are you most excited to bet in the Breeders' Cup & why?

A: The Sprint is one of the more fascinating races. Could be as simple as one-two Private Zone and Runhappy. Running through the field I can make a case for and against every horse, and that makes it a great betting race. One horse I will definitely look at betting is Holy Boss. He was taken out of his game last out and still ran a sneaky good race. He possesses a versatile running style, which is necessary in a race like this. He maintains good form coming into the race, believe six furlongs is ideal; he is a major contender.

One of my favorite bets during Breeders Cup is the Distaff/Classic Double. The Distaff, like the Sprint, is race
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where I can poke holes in many horses that look to take the most action according to the early morning line. There can be a lot of value in this double, even if that means just beating one of the favorites in either leg.

Stopchargingmaria projects to get an ideal trip. She boasts a solid record at the distance, is a multiple grade one winner, has top connections, and she runs well fresh. The early morning line of 15/1 makes her a no brainer top choice.

Curalina is a talented filly and looking at her past few starts has not had an "easy" race. She has really had to run some hard, yet valiant, races this year. Those hard efforts are often undeniably taxing.

Got Lucky, in my opinion, is a toss here off that big effort in the Spinster. She had to run extremely hard to get up late, and is coming back in less than 30 days, which is far from ideal.

Sheer Drama ran some big races earlier this year that would make her a major win candidate. The fact that she is coming into the Distaff off a layoff is worrisome. She has yet to show she runs her best race fresh. I'm not totally against using in the double if there is value with my top choice in the Classic. As far as the in race betting, I'm looking elsewhere.

Imachatterbox has also run some hard races coming into the Distaff. My other big concern with her is the distance. I do not believe the nine furlongs is her ideal, and at a short price that makes her vulnerable in this group.

Stellar Wind is another has to also overcome a layoff. In addition, she has the task of overcoming John Sadler's 0-33 record with runners outside of the West Coast. Despite the record, he is a competent trainer that has won big races. And as an individual, she has done little wrong so far in her career. She ran a credible race in the Kentucky Oaks, and handles the distance. I can look past those "knocks" especially with the price compensation.



Wedding Toast is a legit contender here, but by no means a cinch. She has displayed grit and class and is coming into the race off a real nice effort. I really don't know if she is as good racing around two turns, and that gives me some reservation.

Frivolous and Yahilwa, both coming off game efforts in the Spinster. I cannot completely toss either, but they look a cut below the prime contenders and will need to bring their A+ game.

Q: What horse are you most excited to bet against in the Breeders' Cup & why?

A: Filly and Mare Sprint looks like one of the more wide

open races. The two potential morning line favorites, Cavorting and Stonetastic, have some question marks as far as I'm concerned. Cavorting does her best running when she has a clear outside trip. She does not like to run behind horses and deal with kickback. Company wise this is a much tougher group than what she has been facing this year. Stonetastic, who I am a big fan of, has not shown to be as effective at seven furlongs. From a pace standpoint she will have pressure from the likes of Room For Me, Taris, and Super Majesty who are all fast early, and run as aggressive need the lead types. Dame Dorothy is a must use, and my top choice in the race. Unlike Stonetastic, Dame Dorothy does her best running at this 7 furlong distance. I like her versatile running style, and most importantly she possesses grit. There is a good amount of pace signed on; this race should be a battle late, I want a filly/mare that is a fighter. From a betting standpoint, in horizontal wagers, this is a spread race and will use a few in here to advance.

Q: How are you expecting the main track will play? Any worries over the Keeneland "Golden Rail" making an appearance?

A: I have watched every race at Keeneland this meet and competed trip notes for every horse at this fall meet for OptixEQ. Overall the main track has been quite fair, and have no reason to suspect that would change for Breeders' Cup. I have seen the shadows on the track to be some distraction during the race. There were not that many instances and occurred mostly with younger, or less experienced types. Whether a horse will jump a shadow is something near impossible to predict and not enough to concern myself with.

Q: Songbird & Rachel's Valentina meet up for the first time in the Juvenile Fillies - which one do you like, or will it be someone else?

A: Both fillies are legit. Songbird is a multiple grade 1 winner and has won impressively in every start, including most recently at the distance. Based on her resume, I give her preference over Rachel's Valentina. In addition, I will be including a filly I am quite fond of, Bold Quality. I have been impressed with this filly in both of her starts. She is a smart, talented filly with lots of upside and will continue to improve.

Q: Any chance of a US-based horse defeating the European invaders in the Mile or Turf?

A: The European horses seem to have a serious edge in the Turf with Golden Horn and Found. The Filly and Mare Turf could see a horse with US-based connections. Dacita, one of three for Chad Brown, was so impressive getting up over a game Tepin in the Ballston Spa, she should be a

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solid price and is a serious contender. In the Mile, Make Believe will be a key of the European horses, as well as, Tourist for the US-based horses. Tourist looks pointed towards this race and coming into it the right way. He is making his third start of the year, and has an OptixEQ improving trip grade pattern. Last year he had an EX (excuse) effort in the BC Mile with trouble and wide trip. The connections have to be looking to rebound.

Q: What do you make of the Juvenile, is it the most wide-open race on the card?

A: Currently, I think the best 2-year olds have been racing in Kentucky. My preference is towards those colts. Brody's Cause is legit. He comes from off-the-pace but has shown he can close into a slow pace if necessary. I've been absolutely impressed with what he has shown so far. His stablemate, Unbridled Outlaw, also has to be considered coming off a couple troubled trips and is one that continues to improve. Conquest Big E will merit a look as well if he draws in.

Q: In the Dirt Mile, if your horse draws outside will you be less likely to play because of the short run into the turn?

A: Certainly something to consider, but I don't think it would be enough to put me off a top pick if everything else lined up. There have only been two races run at a mile this meet. Both races were won by very likely contenders- one by the favorite and the other by the second choice in wagering. Both mile races were won by jockey Corey Lanerie, along with Paco Lopez running second on both occasions. Watching those races I did not think any of the runners were compromised by their draw. That said, neither were 12 horse fields.

Q: Classic: American Pharoah, Beholder, or someone else?

A: Honor Code. Connections have been looking to this race all year and have the horse coming into this race in top form. I am not as concerned about his trip, and that he will be too far back. He should be sitting mid pack, and no one can deny the kick and finish this horse has. This might not be popular opinion, but I liked his last race in the Kelso quite a bit, thought that was a real smart effort. I expect him to be no less than the fourth betting choice if the field stays intact. Despite his excellent race record, he is coming off that recent loss, and is untested at the distance. This horse has tons of quality and class and belongs in this race. I have a hard time looking at any horse in this field as "the horse to beat", for me, Honor Code looks like the horse to bet.

Eight Breeders' Cup Questions With...

[Candice Hare/Blog](#)

Q: What horse are you most excited to bet in the Breeders' Cup & why?

A: Undrafted. He's a standout to me in the Turf Sprint, but won't take the beating that favorites elsewhere will on the card.

Q: What horse are you most excited to bet against in the Breeders' Cup & why?

A: Nyquist. Bad post and doesn't stay the trip.

Q: How are you expecting the main track will play? Any worries over the Keeneland "Golden Rail" making an appearance?

A: I think it'll be fair for the most part.

Q: Songbird & Rachel's Valentina meet up for the first time in the Juvenile Fillies - which one do you like, or will it be someone else?

A: Songbird has done nothing wrong in CA. She's professional for her age and could have it easy out front.

Q: Any chance of a US-based horse defeating the European invaders in the Mile or Turf?

A: Mile, no. Turf, yes.

Q: What do you make of the Juvenile, is it the most wide-open race on the card?

A: With Nyquist and Swipe drawn wide, it does make this into a wide-open affair. It's also one of the more complicated form-wise as several of the key preps were over wet tracks.

Q: In the Dirt Mile, if your horse draws outside will you be less likely to play because of the short run into the turn?

A: Yes

Q: Classic: American Pharoah, Beholder, or someone else?

A: American Pharoah most likely winner, but my sole futures wagers are hoping for Honor Code

Breeders' Cup Gameplan



By [Lenny Moon](#)

The Breeders' Cup provides a plethora of wagering opportunities with massive pools which makes it very tempting to bet every race and into as many pools as your bankroll allows. This is a recipe for disaster. There are 13 Breeders' Cup races spread over the two days and eight supporting races. No horseplayer can possibly have 21 good opinions so picking your spots will be the primary factor in whether you make money or lose money this coming weekend.

Strategy for Success

The best way to put yourself in position for a successful wagering weekend on the Breeders' Cup programs is no different than how you should approach each day of wagering. You need to find two or three key spots to invest the bulk of your bankroll and save the rest for action bets. Finding these spots should be fairly straightforward if you do your homework and know your strengths.

With over 20 races over the two days of racing the sooner you get started handicapping the better. Advance past performances are already available and pre-entry past performances were available more than a week ago. With all the extra time you should have no problem thoroughly handicapping every race but do so the same way you do any other day. If it worked in the past there is no sense changing now. Don't spend time or money on things that you normally wouldn't because all the extra information will do is cause you to lose focus.

After you handicap the races grade each one of your selections based on your confidence level. Again there is no way you can possibly be super confident in every race, no one can, so find the two or three horses or races you really like and plan your wagering attack around them. You know what your bankroll is for the two days so work backwards and allocate the amount you feel appropriate to each race and write it down. It is much easier to stick to your original plan if you have it in front of you. I can speak from experience because I have had the best success when writing down all of the wagers I want to make ahead of time.

Doing just that part will put you ahead of most of the people you will be competing with in the parimutuel pools. It will also allow you to be flexible and compensate for any changes that might occur such as late scratches, track conditions, track biases or overlaid/underlaid odds on your

selections. This leads to the next part of the strategy for success: be flexible.

Horse racing is one of the most dynamic sports in the world. Between the infinite number of possible things that can occur in a race to the constant shifting of the odds. An overlay on the morning line might instantly become an underlay when the initial odds are posted on the tote board. Likewise, and especially in large fields like those in the Breeders' Cup, a logical horse might be overlooked and become a massive overlay. The bottom line is to be successful in wagering on horse races you must be as dynamic as the sport itself and the best way to do that is to be prepared ahead of time.



The final part of successfully navigating the Breeders' Cup wagering menu is to not let emotion affect your wagering. This might sound like old news but when wagering into the largest pools of the year it's easy to lose focus after a big win or tough loss. If you win big early don't put all of the money back into the wagering pools. Increase your remaining wagers proportionally to your original bankroll. Likewise if you can't pick a winner for the first few races don't double down to try to get all your money back. The Breeders' Cup is the best betting opportunity of the year but there will be races the next day and the day after that and so on. Wagering on horses is not about what you did on a single day or over the course of one weekend. It's how you do on an annual basis that is the true measure of your success.

Lenny's Breeders' Cup Q&A

Q: What horse are you most excited to bet in the Breeders' Cup & why?

A: Smooth Roller in the Classic. He reminds me of Tiznow because he is a late bloomer albeit a year older. He really moved forward in the Awesome Again and his running
(continued on next page)

style should put him in the garden spot behind American Pharoah and Beholder. With those two taking most of the money Smooth Roller should be double digit odds. I think AP may be over the top and Beholder is 0/2 outside of California and had a recent setback that may prevent her from running her best.

Q: What horse are you most excited to bet against in the Breeders' Cup & why?

A: Runhappy doesn't owe me any money because I had him in the King's Bishop and while it would be great to see this horse win for a small outfit I simply don't trust him in the Sprint. He has a tendency to break poorly and the other main speed horses drew the far outside posts which means they will have to send hard to clear resulting in a wicked early pace. Maybe he's a freak but at underlaid odds those factors make me lean against Runhappy in the Sprint.

Q: How are you expecting the main track will play? Any worries over the Keeneland "Golden Rail" making an appearance?

A: There were a few speed days at Keeneland this meet but overall since the dirt track was put back in the track has been relatively fair. There is a slight overall advantage towards forwardly placed horses but that is the universal tendency in North American dirt racing. It will pay to pay close attention to the races on Thursday and the undercard races on Friday and Saturday to see if the track has changed but I'm going in with what I have seen over the past month.

Q: Songbird & Rachel's Valentina meet up for the first time in the Juvenile Fillies - which one do you like, or will it be someone else?

A: At first glance it looks like a match race between the two and I would lean towards Songbird because she has run faster than everyone else to this point. The juvenile fillies this year have not run particularly fast as a group so maybe this turns into a chaos race? If Songbird gets pressured early I think Land Over Sea could turn the tables on her but I certainly will include the two favorites in all my wagers.

Q: Any chance of a US-based horse defeating the European invaders in the Mile or Turf?

A: Golden Horn looks almost unbeatable in the Turf which scares me. He follows several other similar looking Arc winners all of which bombed in the Turf but he has two major factors in his favor: Frankie Dettori and his running style. He runs best on or near the lead and the Turf doesn't have any crazy speed in it. Found looks like a horse that doesn't want to win as she always finds at least one horse

to beat her. In the Mile I will definitely be using Tourist as I was really impressed by his win two back at Kentucky Downs and by his versatility to close in the Shadwell Turf Mile. However after watching the replays of the European invaders he will have to run the race of his life to win the Mile. Make Believe is the real deal and he should get a perfect trip right behind Obviously who has set the pace and stopped in the last three Breeders' Cup Mile's.

Q: What do you make of the Juvenile, is it the most wide-open race on the card?

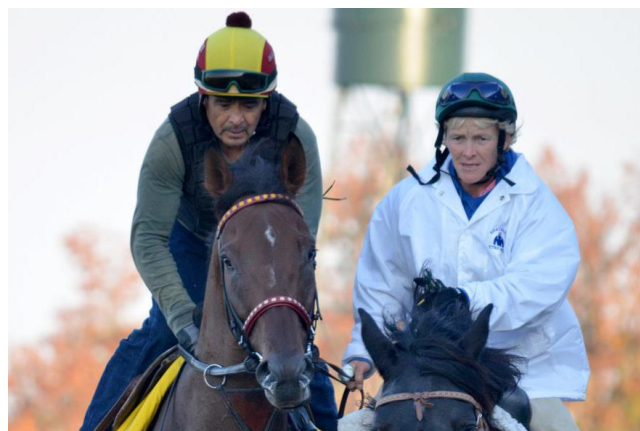
A: The Juvenile looks like a spread race to me as I can make a case for the favorites but also for several longshots. Saying that the three chalks will probably run one-two-three but I won't be betting on that result.

Q: In the Dirt Mile, if your horse draws outside will you be less likely to play because of the short run into the turn?

A: I don't think post position will matter much in the Dirt Mile because there is enough speed signed on to ensure a spread out field. That will allow most everyone to get position.

Q: Classic: American Pharoah, Beholder, or someone else?

A: As I mentioned earlier I think Smooth Roller can upset the Classic, but I won't be surprised if American Pharoah or Beholder win especially with the absence of Liam's Map, who I thought would seriously hurt both their chances with his early speed.



Lenny likes Smooth Roller in the Classic - photo by [Penelope P. Miller, America's Best Racing](#)

About the Author - Lenny Moon is the founder of [Wagerlogged.com](#), a site designed to take the pain out of record keeping and help horseplayers become more profitable at the betting windows. He is also the founder of [Equinometry.com](#), a site dedicated to educating horseplayers of all levels about handicapping, betting and handicapping contest strategy.

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YOUR HOMEPAGE FOR THE THOROUGHBRED INDUSTRY

Putting a Bow on the Kentucky Downs Meet

Total handle of \$16,831,333 was a new record for the track's live racing season, an increase of over one million dollars despite running two fewer races than the 2014 meet and moving a scheduled Sept. 12 Saturday card to a Monday afternoon of racing. That milestone in total handle included a record setting one day total of \$5,073,589 set on closing day Sept. 19. Handle per race went up as well for 2015, increasing to \$350,652 a race from its 2014 mark of \$316,306, a growth of 10 percent.

"While handle increases are gratifying, our number one goal for every live race meeting is the safety of every horse and rider," said Kentucky Downs President Corey Johnsen. "We started a record number of horses per race, and the horse ambulance never moved. We had a number of talented horses run at Kentucky Downs, but our Star of the Meet was Ron Moore and his course maintenance crew, who worked tirelessly under challenging weather conditions. The flawless safety record speaks for itself."

Other details from this story are available [here](#).

Nevills Wins Rippey Award

All of us at HANA would like to congratulate Joe Nevills from the *Daily Racing Form* on winning the second annual Ron Rippey Award for Handicapping Media. Two of Horseplayer Monthly's regular contributors, Lenny Moon and Craig Milkowski, received honorable mentions, and we are very happy for them as well. Barry Meadow, another Horseplayer Monthly regular, won the award last year.

For more information on this story, please click [here](#).

Five Dates for Kentucky Downs in 2016

Kentucky Downs will race just five days again in 2016, but according to track president Corey Johnsen, a continued effort will be made to expand the meet at HANA's #1 rated track.

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

HRTV Becoming TVG2

It has been announced that HRTV will be rebranded as

TVG2 instead of keeping the separate TVG/HRTV designations that have been in place since the two networks merged operations back in February.

"Our goals have always been to provide a better fan experience, increase our appeal to distributors, and drive revenue to the industry," said Kip Levin, CEO of TVG. "Importantly, having TVG and TVG2 allows us to better utilize TVG's state-of-the-art television facilities to deliver a premium product for both networks. We look forward to continuing to work with our important track and distribution partners to deliver more races and higher quality broadcasts to racing fans like never before."

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



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Gulfstream Summer Meet Handle Soars

An extremely successful summer meet at Gulfstream Park concluded on October 3. The total live handle increased \$34,163,271 to \$243,162,958, signifying a 16.35 percent over 2014 figures.

The daily average handle during the summer meet swelled from \$3,799,994 in 2014 to \$4,421,144 this year for a 16 percent increase and a \$621,150 daily boost. The all-sources handle during the summer grew \$32,062,231 to \$316,252,302 for an 11-percent boost over 2014 figures.

For more details about this story, please click [here](#).

\$402,000+ Pick 5 Hit This Month at Santa Anita

One horseplayer took down the popular "Players Pick 5" for over \$402,000 on October 3 at Santa Anita.

Purchased for \$144.00 at Golden Gate Fields, the winning ticket included Hail Mary Play in the first race at \$13.00; Wild Street Party in the second (the lone post time favorite) at \$5.20; Corps de Ballet in race three at \$33.20; Mesa Sky in the fourth at \$78.80 and Mishegas (Yiddish for craziness) at \$68.40.

The remainder of this article is available [here](#).

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Pace & the Classic



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

The biggest race of the 2015 Breeders' Cup, as it almost always is, will be the Classic. It draws a great field highlighted by Triple Crown winner American Pharoah and top older mare and 2013 Breeders' Cup Distaff winner Beholder. It also includes 2014 Belmont Stakes and two time Jockey Club Gold Cup winner Tonalist, Travers winner Keen Ice, Pennsylvania Derby winner Frosted, Met Mile and Whitney Stakes winner Honor Code and Gleneagles, a multiple Group 1 winner on turf in Europe. It is a deep and contentious field of three year olds, older males, and a mare.

When analyzing upcoming horse races, bettors often try to predict the pace of the race as part of the handicapping process. Will it be slow and favor those near the lead, or will it be fast and hurt the chances of those on the front end and aid those coming from behind? This is sometimes and easy question to answer, and sometimes it is difficult. When it is easy to predict, bettors will bet the horses that look to be advantaged, often in excess. When it is difficult, bettors can find value---if they are correct.



The early leader of the 2015 Breeders' Cup Classic does not look very difficult to predict. It should be American Pharoah. It isn't that he is a "need the lead" type horse as his wins in the Arkansas Derby and Kentucky Derby demonstrated, but he does possess high early speed and there doesn't appear to be others in the field that will

attempt to engage him early. Frosted did so in the Travers and while it was likely a factor in American Pharoah's defeat, it didn't help Frosted either as he faded back to fourth. It is unlikely those tactics will be employed again after that result.

But this doesn't mean it will be an easy trip for American Pharoah. It is a long race at the classic distance of ten furlongs and he will face challenges sooner rather than later. Tonalist, Beholder, Frosted, and even Awesome Again Stakes winner Smooth Roller will keep him within sight. If he can repel the challenges of those horse, he'll then have to deal with strong closers like Honor Code and Keen Ice and maybe even Gleneagles if he takes to the dirt course.

The point is an easy early lead doesn't always assure an easy trip. Particularly in a deep field like the Breeders' Cup Classic at the 10 furlong distance, there will be challenges. This may seem odd coming from the creator of TimeformUS Pace and Speed Figures and the Pace Projector---pace scenario should be considered, at best, a secondary handicapping factor. There are no guarantees of what will happen when the gate opens, and even if a bettor gets it correct there are no guarantees it will lead to the expected result. Value should be the focus. Bet horses that offer the most value on the tote board based on ability in a race like the Classic, not because of a perceived pace set up that may or may not play out.

TimeformUS Breeders' Cup Classic Pace and Speed Figures						
Year	Track	1/2	3/4	1m	Fin	Style
2014	SA	132	132	130	129	Leader
2013	SA	123	123	121	129	Tracker
2012	SA	132	131	134	134	Leader
2011	CD	135	131	127	123	Closer
2010	CD	143	137	129	126	Closer
2009	SA*	165	161	155	137	Closer
2008	SA*	140	140	140	129	Closer
2007	Mth	155	145	134	135	Closer
2006	CD	143	134	129	126	Closer
2005	Bel	140	132	126	129	Midpack
2004	LS	146	149	145	135	Leader
Average		141	138	134	130	

*Run over synthetic surface

Craig's Breeders' Cup Q&A

Q: What horse are you most excited to bet in the Breeders' Cup & why?

A: Keen Ice - He has been improving all year, beat American Pharoah last out, and will be 10x the price of the Triple Crown winner.

Q: What horse are you most excited to bet against in the Breeders' Cup & why?

A: Undrafted - The distance is too short for his best and he'll be over-bet based on his win at Ascot; European sprinters are not a strong group.

(continued on next page)

Q: How are you expecting the main track will play? Any worries over the Keeneland "Golden Rail" making an appearance?

A: Keeneland has been as fair a dirt track as you will find. I'm more worried speed will be at a disadvantage than a "Golden Rail" appearance.

Q: Songbird & Rachel's Valentina meet up for the first time in the Juvenile Fillies - which one do you like, or will it be someone else?

A: Songbird - She has run much better TimeformUS Speed Figures and has already done it around two turns.

Q: Any chance of a US-based horse defeating the European invaders in the Mile or Turf?

A: Of course, it isn't like the US horses never win these races. There are only a few entrants in the Turf with Arc winner Golden Horn being the strongest on paper. But the Arc winner hasn't had much success in the past shipping in for the Breeder's Cup. Tepin could be dangerous in the Mile if the turf course is wet.

Q: What do you make of the Juvenile, is it the most wide-open race on the card?

A: It is wide open. The top three morning line choices all have question marks despite winning last start. Nyquist didn't look like a horse that really wants to routes in his Frontrunner Stakes win. Greenpointcrusader looked great but did it on a very sloppy track that he was bred to relish. Brody's Cause also won in the mud over the Keeneland track from well off the pace on a day where speed really struggled.

Q: In the Dirt Mile, if your horse draws outside will you be less likely to play because of the short run into the turn?

A: I would, but Liam's Map is going to be tough to go against for me no matter where he or the competition draws. He lays over the field on class and speed in my opinion.

Q: Classic: American Pharoah, Beholder, or someone else?

A: See question 1...but I won't be disappointed at all if American Pharoah or Beholder wins. Both are fabulous horses.

About the author - Craig Milkowski is the chief figure maker for TimeformUS. We had a more in-depth Q&A with Craig in our September 2013 Horseplayer Monthly, and that is available by clicking [here](#).

Eight Breeders' Cup Questions With...

Seth Merrow (equidaily.com)

Q: What horse are you most excited to bet in the Breeders' Cup & why?

A: Karakontie. Last year's winner at the 12-1 ML!

Q: What horse are you most excited to bet against in the Breeders' Cup & why?

A: Songbird. She's the one to beat and she'll be on my tickets - but I'll certainly play some P3s using horses like Nickname, Rachel's Valentina, and perhaps even Land Over Sea and Dothraki Queen - because Songbird will be taking enough action that beating her can blow up the prices - and these 2-year-old fillies aren't invincible.

Q: How are you expecting the main track will play? Any worries over the Keeneland "Golden Rail" making an appearance?

A: Seems like it's been fair so far.

Q: Songbird & Rachel's Valentina meet up for the first time in the Juvenile Fillies - which one do you like, or will it be someone else?

A: As noted above, Songbird is the one to beat - but, given her anticipated price, I'll play around.

Q: Any chance of a US-based horse defeating the European invaders in the Mile or Turf?

A: In the Mile, Grand Arch and Tepin both have wins at Keeneland coming into this. And Recepta will have to step it up - but she's interesting.

In the Turf, like Songbird in the Juvenile Fillies, I think Golden Horn will take a lot of action in the Turf - but he's not invincible on the fairly quick turnaround and the trans-Atlantic trip. Slumber, Big Blue Kitten, Twilight Eclipse, The Pizza Man, and even Cage fighter are intriguing.

Q: What do you make of the Juvenile, is it the most wide-open race on the card?

A: The logicals look, well, logical. Nyquist, Greenpointcrusader and Brody's Cause

Q: In the Dirt Mile, if your horse draws outside will you be less likely to play because of the short run into the turn?

A: Of the four outside post positions it looks like only Valid has - perhaps - a chance to show some speed and get position. The other three look up against it.

Q: Classic: American Pharoah, Beholder, or someone else?

A: It seems like a very competitive field. Tonalist, Frosted, and Smooth Ruler are all interesting players.

Another Take on the Classic

Running Distances and Their Impact



By [Mike Dorr](#)

One of the many quirks of the Breeders' Cup lineup of races is the staggered nature of their distances. No two races for older horses (3+) racing is held at the same distance and surface configuration. With Keeneland a new entrant to the Breeders' Cup rotation, there are some new distances being run in this year's edition of the BC. In ascending distance order, for Keeneland:

1 Turn

BC Turf Sprint - 5.5F

BC Sprint - 6F

BC F&M Sprint - 7F

2 Turns (*denotes new distance for BC)

BC Juv Fillies Turf, BC Juv Turf 8F

BC Mile - 8F

*BC Dirt Mile - ~8.3F (Normally 1 Turn 8F)

BC Juv Fillies, BC Juvenile - 8.5F

BC Distaff - 9F

*BC Filly & Mare Turf - 9.5F (Normally 10F or 11F)

BC Classic - 10F

BC Turf - 12F

I am a firm believer that every horse has his or her optimum running distance, surface, and track configuration, that is to large degree based on pedigree but ultimately revealed in performance and runstyle. Though several BC races have similar names, their configurations may require significantly different efforts from their participants.

The biggest case in point may be the Open and Filly & Mare versions of the Sprint. The BC Sprint is a true test of speed, but the F&M Turf requires that little extra bit of stamina. Mares that have been primarily successful at 6F often have trouble stretching out. More often, distaffers that have run well at 7F exactly or one-turn miles are more apt for the 7F distance.

Conversely, you have a horse like Private Zone, dominant at 7F and sparkling at one-turn miles, running in the 6F Sprint. His connections prefer it to this year's two-turn BC Dirt Mile, but the fact that it's not his optimal distance may require close watching of his odds.

One move I love is Tepin opting for the BC Mile despite her eligibility for the F&M Turf. She's a filly who excels at the mile distance and probably has a better chance in open

company than in the sex-restricted race 330 yards further.

The Dirt Mile at two turns plays more like a 8.5F route than a 7-8F sprint. Liam's Map seems a standout, especially as a two-turn affair, but you may elevate routers over pure middle-distance sprinters here.

The Filly & Mare Turf is at the shortest distance it's ever been contested. I'd probably favor fillies and mares that have demonstrated 1 ½ form over 10F+ form. For example, Hard Not to Like has been fantastic at 9F but fared poorly stretching out to 10F in her BC Prep. Her 7th place there would be a red flag at the same distance or longer, but this shorter distance may represent a solid opportunity.

BC Classic

The Breeders' Cup Classic matchup puts the question of brilliance vs suitability to distance to its ultimate test. It's the difference between these two questions:

Which horse is best at one mile and a quarter, ten furlongs
- the Classic distance?

-versus-

For which horses is 1 ¼ miles their best distance?

The former question has a myriad number of qualifications, but a superior athlete may simply triumph by being the best horse at many possible distances. Pace scenarios also play an important role here, as it absolutely did in last year's classic won by Bayern.

The BC Classic comes down to three groups: those brilliant horses whose winning distance *includes* ten furlongs on dirt; excellent horses for whom 10 furlongs is their best distance; and good-to-excellent horses for whom the classic distance is sub-optimal.

Group 1 - Brilliant Horses

American Pharoah - I'd suggest that the Triple Crown winner's optimal distance is actually nine furlongs, evidenced by his top efforts this year being the Haskell and the Preakness (at 9.5F). His superior ability carried him to his crown and other wins, but his Travers showed his vulnerability to horses that might peak at 10F. He can overcome being pressed from his front-running style in shorter routes, but he is vulnerable at additional distances.

Beholder - This mare continues to amaze and it's hard to argue her best race wasn't this year's 10F Pacific Classic against males. She had a perfect trip, rating just off the pace, and her comeback in the 8.5F Zenyatta was just as easy. Her pedigree suggests that her stamina is a complete aberration - she should be a sprinter/miler by all rights, but her ability at any distance is freaky. With 8.5f the shortest typical route, it's probably her best distance, but she's demonstrated more flexibility than any other contender.

Honor Code - Though we've never seen him run it, I will state my belief that Honor Code's best distance is the ten
(continued on next page)

furlongs of the Classic. His sire, AP Indy, was the most reliable source of stamina on dirt in modern Thoroughbreds; his dam sire and grand-dam sire are Storm Cat and Mr. Prospector respectively, noted for their ability to pass on speed that can sustain route distances. Honor Code's main knock is his closing running style which typically requires a fast pace that keeps front-runners honest.

Group 2 - 10F Runners

Gleneagles (IRE) - This talented and multi-G1-winning colt would be a big favorite if this race were run on his preferred surface of dirt. Like Toast of New York last year, pure ability can even overcome a surface switch. Tactically, I imagine he'll need to stay close to the lead for a potential stamina edge to materialize in the final stretch. Intriguing factor in the race.

Tonalist - This son of Tapit's biggest victories have all been at 10F or greater; on the other hand, they have also all been in New York. He's also lost in New York at shorter distances (Met Mile, Westchester) but run well enough to think that distance is the more important variable. (His other 10F try, fifth in last year's BCC, was as good as you might expect from an off-the-pace effort). I'd expect Keeneland to play more like New York than Santa Anita, so I expect him to run well.

Keen Ice - 10F is a bullseye best distance for this son of Curlin and an Awesome Again mare. That's two BCC winners contributing 75% of his genetic makeup. (Awesome Again also sired BCC winner Ghostzapper) Keen Ice, of course, beat American Pharoah in the Travers at 10F and has rested since. When colts that should improve with age do, they become significant threats to win. Probably Honor Code only can match his late kick. He has a very strong chance to figure

Effinex - A horse that appears to have more stamina than speed, his best performances are clearly at 10F (like Tonalist, in NY) and will definitely be flying under the radar in this race.

Frosted - This guy will always be known as the horse to finish second to AP in the Belmont, but also his most ferocious challenger in the Travers, despite being finishing third to the closing Keen Ice. His Derby fourth behind three West Coast dueling speed horses that did not falter was sneaky good. His best should be ten furlongs, and may find others to do the dirty work this time. Will give him a chance.



Group 3 - All Others

Smooth Roller - This late debuting 3-year-old has several indications of a horse with 10F potential but one gets the sense that he had the easiest of times with the Awesome Again field and won't get such an easy trip next time. His

sire Hard Spun was that rare horse that you felt could win at any distance between six and ten furlongs - half his career earnings were at classic distances, but his best wins were below a mile.

Hard Aces - (See Smooth Roller) but two years older and beating weaker West Coast fields. He's

Hoppertunity - He's a horse for whom 9F is his best distance and has been beaten by his So Cal contemporaries. One hopes that he's not primarily entered as a fullback for American Pharoah because he's not without ability - before his injury Derby week, he was going to go off as second choice to California Chrome. A dream trip could keep him in the running for an on-the-board finish.

Breeders' Cup Classic Picks - I'm going to, probably unwisely, play against the Triple Crown winner in this exciting contest. I think a Gleneagles or a Frosted challenges AP in the first half mile for an honest pace. Beholder sits the ideal trip behind the leaders but Honor Code and Keen Ice move in tandem around the far turn. Tonalist gets fired up a little too late and encounters traffic. The leaders meet their stamina/surface limits and back up. **Honor Code passes Beholder in the final steps but she is able to hold off Keen Ice for third. Final time: 2:01:45.**

Mike's Breeders' Cup Q&A

Q: What horse are you most excited to bet in the Breeders' Cup & why?

A: Tepin in the BC Mile. I saw her in person break her maiden in October 2013 and cashed a winning bet because she just stood out so much in the paddock. And visual handicapping is not my forte. But she stood out.

Fast forward to May 2014, when she was at the Churchill Distaff Turf Mile. I saw her form in the PPs and remembered that maiden win and just knew she fit in that spot. So I made another big win bet on her, and keyed her in exotics. And cashed again - my best score on Derby Day.

Come Belmont day, I suspected that despite moving lower in odds, she was still better than her competition in that G1. Big win, key in exotic. Best Belmont score.

But come Saratoga, I thought that the Diana and Ballston Spa were just a bit too long for her. So I didn't bet her. I made the point publicly that I thought she should point to the BC Mile for her best shot in a BC race. Prep in the First Lady - and that's exactly what her connections did. So, I came back firing - making my biggest win bet I ever have on her at 8/5. And she won again.

So, I've never failed to cash a win bet on Tepin. The BC Mile will be her toughest competition yet, but she has the home field advantage. Her odds should be good; I'm hoping to keep our streak alive.

(continued on next page)

Q: What horse are you most excited to bet against in the Breeders' Cup & why?

A: American Pharoah, if only because he'll produce the biggest overlays for his competition. I hate to go against him, but the potential payout is just too good. I don't think ten furlongs is his best distance, so favor others for whom the mile and a quarter suits.

Q: How are you expecting the main track will play? Any worries over the Keeneland "Golden Rail" making an appearance?

A: Pretty fair. The "Golden Rail" occurred before the track configuration was changed (slightly longer turns) concurrent to the addition of Polytrack. So, the new dirt track uses the new configuration and every indication has been that it's fair.

Q: Songbird & Rachel's Valentina meet up for the first time in the Juvenile Fillies - which one do you like, or will it be someone else?

A: Songbird, but I think this exacta will pay \$7.

Q: Any chance of a US-based horse defeating the European invaders in the Mile or Turf?

A: Sure. I think Tepin can do it in the Mile, and The Pizza Man or Big Blue Kitten may find their way in the Turf. But I really like Golden Horn in there - think he's the goods.

Q: What do you make of the Juvenile, is it the most wide-open race on the card?

A: Could be, yes. I'll probably just play some action bets or see if I can find a unique pace horse at a price in this race and conserve my bankroll. The Juvenile has always proved confounding to me.

Q: In the Dirt Mile, if your horse draws outside will you be less likely to play because of the short run into the turn?

A: Only if I settle on a speed horse not named Liam's Map. My Dirt Mile angle will be to pick confirmed routers who have demonstrated success at 1M70Y to 8.5F configurations. Mainly toss the one-turn specialists.

Q: Classic: American Pharoah, Beholder, or someone else?

A: Honor Code. Feeling AP Indy's sire career ends on a tremendous note in the thoroughbred breeding industry's capital. I can't think of anything more appropriate. (And don't overlook Got Lucky in the Distaff for the AP Indy double!)

About the author – Mike's biography is available [here](#)

Love for the Breeders' Cup Sprint

It's Always the Best Race



By Art Parker

Personally, it was one of my favorite moments in the decades I have played the horses. It happened in my favorite race on the day that has a greater overall importance than any other day in the world of horse racing. The winner was one of my all-time favorite horses; even though many of you will not remember him.



It kicked off Breeders' Cup Day as in the past. Just seconds after the gate opened Olympic Prospect seized the lead as expected with the swift filly, Safely Kept, remaining very close to him. I don't know who else was in the next flight but I knew my man would be far back in the early going. If the race was a half-mile or 4 ½ furlongs Olympic Prospect would have been an unbeatable horse. He was extremely as fast from the gate and he could zip a half mile much faster than anything in the world at that time. But when Tom Durkin announced his sizzling half mile time you could see the leakage from the gas tank and the holes were getting bigger. As expected Olympic Prospect fried himself and the brilliant filly took the lead and looked like a winner since she was made of the stuff found in champions.

But then a black flash appeared on the rail. There was a blur of red on top of the black. It was the silks of Ogden Phipps. An exciting runner was showing what a closing train was supposed to look like. It was just like the vision I

(continued on next page)

had the day earlier when reviewing the race, the Breeders' Cup Sprint of 1989.

Dancing Spree was his name and on his back was an old pro named Angel Cordero, Jr. He gobbled up real estate like a wealthy speculator in the old Wild West. Down the rail he came and Safely Kept, who ran a terrific race, had no idea what was about to happen to her. Dancing Spree got up and to the wire and won the Breeders' Cup Sprint at more than 16-1. The whole thing was so exciting I almost couldn't breathe. Naturally I was quick to remind all my buddies sitting nearby that I had the winner and they didn't. I reminded them of how they suggested I was insane when I told them, less than half hour earlier, that Dancing Spree was the best bet of the day.

My old friend Dancing Spree really upset the apple cart all over the world. A son of the great Nijinsky II, Dancing Spree was supposed to run long on the grass but instead he excelled at running short on the dirt. Dancing Spree won some route races too. He could actually run any distance and succeed, but he excelled at terrorizing the competition as a closing sprinter.

Whenever I recall that race at Gulfstream Park I realize that the race itself did nothing to alter my belief about the best race the Breeders' Cup offers. The Sprint is and always has been the best race on Breeders' Cup day. When players get a Daily Racing Form or other past performances for the Breeders' Cup they usually go straight to the Classic. That's okay with me, but I go straight to the Sprint. I know it will always be a great race and that potential bargains wait my discovery.

The Breeders' Cup Sprint throws everything into the blender. First you toss in a ton of speed, then some class, then surfaces from the past, and current conditioning. Pour in a ton of pace scenarios and try to figure out the outcome of total madness that will last less than 70 seconds. Yes, all races have a little bit of these things but the Sprint is the toughest to figure out. It is a great challenge for any horse player. I will tell you this...I would rather spend two hours analyzing the Breeders' Cup Sprint and cash a paltry two dollar ticket than I would sitting in a chair playing a slot machine while trying to get luck and win a \$1,000.

The Breeders' Cup, especially since it has expanded into two days with a wider variety of races, is a special and unique challenge. Still, the Sprint gives us the greatest wagering opportunity and often the greatest racing thrill. Bring on the Cup!

About the author - Art regularly blogs for the educational site AGameofSkill.com and the ADW BetPTC.com. BetPTC is offering a \$300 sign-up bonus for new members now through November 5.



Eight Breeders' Cup Questions With...

[Charlie Davis](#), HANA Board Member

Q: What horse are you most excited to bet in the Breeders' Cup & why?

A: I'll preface this by saying that all of my handicapping is done 1-2 days before race day. I don't follow horses all year, instead I bet every day and watch the races, and then when the full PP's come out, I do my real work.

At this point in the game though, Tonalist. I've made and lost a lot of money on this horse and right now he's a key for me. Of course it depends on the odds, the way the track is playing, etc., but right now I'm planning on making back all the money I lost last year in the Classic on him.



Q: What horse are you most excited to bet against in the Breeders' Cup & why?

A: American Pharoah looks like the most likely at this point, based on my liking Tonalist and thinking that AP has had a very tough campaign. But again, it's very early for me.

Q: How are you expecting the main track will play? Any worries over the Keeneland "Golden Rail" making an appearance?

A: I think they're one of the best in the business at track maintenance, so I don't expect any crazy bias like last year in the Friday races at Santa Anita (though I made a ton of money off that bias!). I'll keep an eye on the longer term track profile, but I don't expect them to do anything different on the big days. I'm not worried in the slightest.

Q: Songbird & Rachel's Valentina meet up for the first time in the Juvenile Fillies - which one do you like, or will

it be someone else?

A: I prefer Songbird by a large margin of the two, but I'll likely pass this race at this stage. It'll all depend on the odds, and I doubt they'll be high enough.

Q: Any chance of a US-based horse defeating the European invaders in the Mile or Turf?

A: I'm a value player, so I'll be playing whichever direction offers the most value. Often in these races I find the Euros are overlooked in the US, and I pay close attention to the action on Betfair to see how the Euros are betting their and our horses.

Q: What do you make of the Juvenile, is it the most wide-open race on the card?

A: These are the horses we know the least about, so it's always a difficult race to handicap. I'll be betting this race, though I've no idea how or who yet.

Q: In the Dirt Mile, if your horse draws outside will you be less likely to play because of the short run into the turn?

A: Not really. On the far outside I'll take a closer look (11+), but I don't think it's enough to compromise a horse I think is much the best.

Q: Classic: American Pharoah, Beholder, or someone else?

A: Someone else, Tonalist.



HANA Board member Charlie Davis thinks Tonalist will be wearing the Breeders' Cup Classic blanket after Saturday's race - photo by [Penelope P. Miller](#), [America's Best Racing](#)

Analyzing the Breeders' Cup Pick 6

A Life Changing Score

By Dan Zucker

The explosion of Daily Fantasy Sports has been astounding. DraftKings and FanDuel have done a remarkable job creating an overnight dynasty. As reported just last week (Week 6 of the NFL season), their combined handle was just north of \$45 million. As a comparison, Nevada, currently the only state with legalized sports betting handle, takes in over \$100 million on the Super Bowl.

So, how does the Breeders' Cup compare? The chart below is the comparison of the Breeders' Cup handle (for just the BC races) as compared to the Nevada handle on the Super Bowl.

Year	Breeders' Cup	Year	Super Bowl
2014	\$127,800,000	2015	\$115,900,000
2013	\$135,958,816	2014	\$119,400,822
2012	\$127,676,360	2013	\$98,936,798
2011	\$140,070,361	2012	\$93,899,840
2010	\$152,293,176	2011	\$87,491,098
2009	\$127,396,580	2010	\$82,726,367

Yes, the Breeders' Cup handles more than the Super Bowl and it will be the single biggest wagering event in 2015. Now that we have established the liquidity in the event, let's talk about the chance for a life changing score.

While sports betting has its 15-team parlay card and DFS has developed the Guaranteed Prize Pool, no single US wagering event can offer the potential payout of the Breeders' Cup Pick 6.

The chart below outlines the Breeders' Cup Pick 6 payoff history since its inception in 2000.

Year	Min Bet	Pick 6 Payout	# of Winning Tickets	Consolation Payoff	# of Tickets	Handle
2014	\$2	no winner	0	\$114,472	5	\$2,500,000
2013	\$2	\$47,516	36	\$406	1845	\$3,277,813
2012	\$2	\$419,245	4	\$2,712	265	\$3,139,394
2011	\$2	no winner	0	\$95,070	31	\$3,639,126
2010	\$2	\$800,160	5	\$1,240	854	\$5,240,640
2009	\$2	\$1,838,305	1	\$4,822	163	\$3,313,244
2008	\$2	\$55,920	30	\$755	921	\$2,882,343
2007	\$2	\$321,813	6	\$1,536	401	\$3,287,581
2006	\$2	\$1,450,707	2	\$11,318	85	\$4,786,481
2005	\$2	no winner	0	\$90,235	40	\$4,586,700
2004	\$2	no winner	0	\$56,149	61	\$4,566,837
2003	\$2	\$2,687,611	1	\$18,663	48	\$4,489,454
2002	\$2	no winner	0	\$43,937	78	\$4,569,515
2001	\$2	\$262,422	11	\$1,475	-	\$4,811,450
2000	\$2	\$45,722	68	\$936	-	\$5,123,453

Note: The consolation is paid to any player that hits 5 of 6 correctly. See point #3 below.

Here are key points to notice:

- Three, million dollar plus winners - 2009 2006 and 2003.
- Five years in which no one hit all six races in the Pick 6 – 2014, 2012, 2005, 2004 and 2002
- In the five years where no there was no Pick 6 winner, the consolation payout was for those who had five of six correct.
- The Pick 6 Mean: \$528,600
- The Pick 6 Median: \$370,529
- The Pick 6 Mode: \$1,000,000 (using a grouping of: <\$50k <\$100k, <\$250k <\$500k, <\$1000k, >\$1000k)

What makes the 2015 Pick 6 so special?

For the first time ever, the Pick 6 minimum bet has been lowered to \$1. As you can see by the handle figures, the pool size has decreased steadily over the last five years. Multiple factors impact the decline but none bigger than the \$2 minimum bet amount.

For example, let's say you took a swing last year at the Pick 6 and selected two horses from each race. Your total combinations = $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times \2 or a \$128 bet. This year that bet gets cut in half to just \$64. But remember, a Pick 6 ties your money up for six races with the final leg being the Classic featuring Triple Crown Winner – American Pharoah.

My recommended strategy for approaching the Pick 6 this year involves finding friends and singles. First, create your own “players pool.” Get a couple friends (or more) to each kick in the same amount of money carved out to invest in the Pick 6 ticket. This way you get the excitement and benefit of a bigger ticket without having to carry the entire cost.

Once you have your players pool, it's time to handicap and piece together your shot at a life changing score. To do that, and as most serious Pick 6 players would tell you – find a single. That is, one horse in one race that you think can't lose. This significantly reduces the cost of the ticket by essentially turning it into a Pick 5. Lastly, when considering your investment into the Pick 6 as it relates to your entire bankroll, keep it at 5%, no more than 10%. You'll want to be able to cover with the Pick 4 and Pick 3's on your way to history.

About the author - Dan Zucker is a co-founder of Predictform.com (and PredictionMachine.com), a horse racing data analytics company which produces proprietary Pace Figures at multiple calls throughout a race.

Zucker is a Thoroughbred owner and partner and has campaigned stakes runners – Quiet Meadow, Street Life, Pianist and Catch My Drift.

Eight Breeders' Cup Questions With...

Mike Adams (@GateToWire)

Q: What horse are you most excited to bet in the Breeders' Cup & why?

A: Esoterique in the Mile. She has two Group 1 wins and was a strong second to Solow in the Queen Anne. Solow would be 3/5 in this field. She has tactical speed to stalk or be mid-pack and she possesses a wonderful turn of foot. It's a deep field and I don't think many of the US bettors realize how good she really is. You may be looking at potentially getting 7/2 on a filly who should win easily if she gets the right trip.

Q: What horse are you most excited to bet against in the Breeders' Cup & why?

A: Liam's Map. Pletcher is 1-1-1 in his last 21 Breeder's Cup starts. I think going in the Dirt Mile is a red flag. It makes no sense given today's bloodstock values why he is in the Dirt Mile. There is absolutely no way that Liam's Map's actual chance to win the race will come anywhere near what his odds will be at post time. He may win but I will be betting against him seeing that he should be the biggest underlay of the weekend.

Q: How are you expecting the main track will play? Any worries over the Keeneland "Golden Rail" making an appearance?

A: The main track has been very fair this meet and I think the day may favor mid-pack to closer types in the route races. With the big fields, a lot of horses from the outside draws are going to have to leave the gate stronger than normal. I think we will see some honest paces and some very wide trips. That should benefit horses saving ground, behind the leaders or mid pack who can move into position on the turn and angle out at the top of the stretch.

Q: Songbird & Rachel's Valentina meet up for the first time in the Juvenile Fillies - which one do you like, or will it be someone else?

A: Both are very strong fillies but the draw was not kind to either of them with posts nine and 10. I think this will hurt Songbird the most as she will need to use a little more energy than normal leaving the gate. I think this race sets up beautifully for Tap to It. I was at Saratoga when she broke her maiden and I have been waiting for her to go two turns all summer. She should get a great stalking trip and take advantage late.

Q: Any chance of a US-based horse defeating the European invaders in the Mile or Turf?

A: Probably not. The Euro contingent is very strong in both of these races. If a US horse upsets it will probably be Tourist in the Mile.

Q: What do you make of the Juvenile, is it the most wide-open race on the card?

A: It is very wide open and I think there are a number of horses who could win with the right trip. 13 horses going 1 1/16th miles at Keeneland makes the trip a huge factor. I was impressed by Brody's Cause and Greenpointcrusader but it really is a wide open race and I won't be shocked if a long shot upsets or if a favorite wins. I can make a case for a bunch of horses in that field.

Q: In the Dirt Mile, if your horse draws outside will you be less likely to play because of the short run into the turn?

A: Yes, and I think that holds true for all the two turn routes at Keeneland. I am a trip handicapper and one thing you need to know about Keeneland is that wide trips around the first turn in routes seldom end up successful. These Breeders Cup races are so competitive that it just won't be possible for a horse to be wide in the first turn and be able to win.

Q: Classic: American Pharoah, Beholder, or someone else?

A: I think Tonalist is going to win the Classic. I think the rail is a good place for him. He should save ground in the first turn. Move up in a striking position on the backstretch and then run down the leaders in the stretch. American Pharoah and Beholder have had wonderful years but I think they both will be battling Frosted in the final turn and that will set the race up for Tonalist.



Mike is on Tonalist in the Classic - photo by [Penelope P. Miller, America's Best Racing](#)

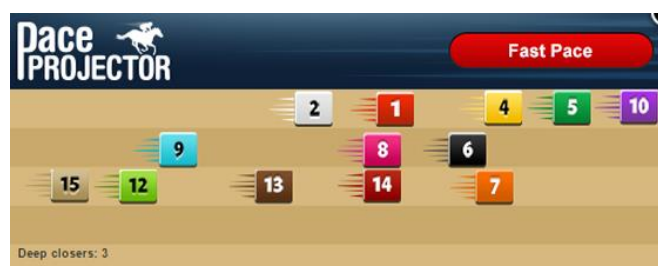
Looking for a BC Pace Meltdown?

Here Are the Three Most Likely Races

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

TimeformUS Past Performances include a Pace Projector for each race. This tool tries to predict the position of the field at the official first call of the race. The official first call is after one quarter mile for races at less than one mile and after one half mile for races at a mile or longer. The Pace Projector also attempts to predict when the pace might be fast or slow based on the composition of the field along with the distance and surface of the race. With those things in mind, these are the three races that appear most likely to be hotly contested and fast early. Closers usually take the worst of it in horse racing, but these races could be the exceptions.

Distaff

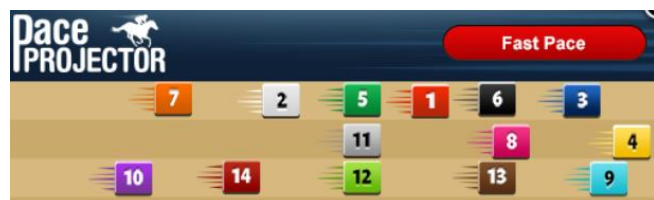


A full gate of 14 is set to contest the nine furlong Distaff on dirt. Of those 14, seven are designated with a running style of “Leader”, “Speed”, or “Tracker”---these horses do best when on or close to the lead. Yahilwa (the 10 horse) is projected to clear from the outside and establish a clear lead. Calamity Kate (5) is the other most likely to lead if Yahilwa can’t clear from the outside.

Regardless of which horse leads early, she won’t be left alone for long. When the field is this deep with horses possessing both early and tactical speed, any leader will likely face multiple challenges at various points in the race. These types of challenges usually result in a slow final fraction and allow closers to make a meaningful late charge. The leaders turning into the stretch should be ripe for the picking in the lane.

Top late threats: Got Lucky (12), Stellar Wind (9)

Filly and Mare Sprint



Like the Distaff, the Filly and Mare Sprint features a maximum field of 14. As might be expected, large fields lead to faster-paced races. The more horses in the race,

the more likely multiple “speed horses” enter. This causes the battle for early position to be more hotly contested. Seven furlong races like this one usually don’t draw a lot of speed horses, but it is the Breeders’ Cup, so more are given the opportunity to go farther than they might otherwise be asked to run. Three entrants are labeled as “speed” horses and four more as “trackers”. Trackers are horses that like to run just off the speed.

La Verdad (4), Sweet Whiskey (9), and Taris (3) are shown as the horses most likely to be near the lead. La Verdad just raced this past weekend and displayed a new dimension, rating a few lengths off the pace and beating an overmatched group of New York-breds, so perhaps she will attempt that style again. Sweet Whiskey raced poorly last out at Keeneland when unable to make the lead early, but she is almost always a pace factor. Taris was involved in a vicious four-horse speed battle in her last race and doesn’t seem the type to rate easily. Speed is always dangerous, but in this contest, horses on or near the lead seem particularly vulnerable.

Top late threats: Cavorting (14), Wavell Avenue (7), Judy the Beauty (11)

Mile



Turf racing in general is less speed-favoring than dirt racing, and when the pace is expected to be fast, horses racing towards the front of the pack face a daunting task. Of all the races on the card, this one is the most likely to have a fast pace. The reason---Obviously. In 14 starts at one mile on the turf, he has led after six furlongs by a length or more in---you guessed it---14 of them. These 14 starts include the last three editions of this race. The Pace Projector, not surprisingly, thinks Obviously will have a clear lead early while going fast.

While the early pace isn’t likely to be strongly contested, due to Obviously’s superior early speed, it will be fast, and that takes a toll on those in closest pursuit. The top two finishers in 2014 were running 10th and 12th early in a 14-horse field. In 2013, Wise Dan won from sixth early while longshot Za Approval rallied from 8th to complete the exacta. It was a 10-horse field. A fast pace doesn’t always aid closers if the pace setter is a top class horse, but Obviously hasn’t been that kind of horse so far in his career, and it is unlikely he is now, at the age of seven. What he is, though, is a nightmare for other speed horses, and that is why this race should be won from off the pace.

Top late threats: Karakontie (11), Mondialiste (4), Esoterique (9)

Eight Breeders' Cup Questions With...

Valerie Grash (@FilliesFirst)

Q: What horse are you most excited to bet in the Breeders' Cup & why?

A: I don't tend to bet on my favorite horses who are short-odds, so while I'll be excited to see Rachel's Valentina, Songbird, Liam's Map and Beholder run, I won't bet on them. Instead, I'm looking forward to finding some value in the juvenile and juvenile turf races. Like Camelot Kitten in the Juvenile Turf; Pricedtoperfection and Last Waltz in the Juvenile Fillies Turf; Conquest Big E and Brody's Cause in Juvenile; and Tap to It in Juvenile Fillies.



Q: What horse are you most excited to bet against in the Breeders' Cup & why?

A: American Pharoah. Just because.

Q: How are you expecting the main track will play? Any worries over the Keeneland "Golden Rail" making an appearance?

A: Track biases seem to go hand-in-hand with the Breeders' Cup—after Santa Anita's speedway, any change is welcome. In fact, I'm hoping for torrential rain and a sloppy track, the kind of conditions that really take some handicapping prowess. Of course, that probably won't happen, but like everyone else, I'll roll with the punches. Whatever the early races reveal, I'll follow.

Q: Songbird & Rachel's Valentina meet up for the first time in the Juvenile Fillies - which one do you like, or will it be someone else?

A: Songbird truly looks like a freak, but for sentimental reasons I'll be rooting for Rachel's Valentina. Regardless of the outcome, the duel should make for an amazing race—one that I will likely sit out in terms of wagering, and just enjoy purely as a fan. One entrant that wouldn't surprise me if she stepped up with a big race, though, is Tap to It, who looks to want the distance.

Q: Any chance of a US-based horse defeating the European invaders in the Mile or Turf?

A: In the Turf, with Arc winner Golden Horn, and in-form Group 1 winner Found entered? NO! In the Mile, I think Tepin offers a viable US threat.

Q: What do you make of the Juvenile, is it the most wide-open race on the card?

A: While Grade 1 winners Greenpointcrusader and undefeated Nyquist are likely to take lots of money, I'm hoping to get a better price on the other two Grade 1 winners: Ralis, who can be forgiven for his poor performance on a sloppy track last out (and has been working out gangbusters over Keeneland track) and last-out Breeders' Futurity winner Brody's Cause whose late-running style (not to mention stamina pedigree) indicates he should be running well late. Besides, the second dam of Brody's Cause, Sweet Roberta ran second to Go for Wand in the 1989 BC Juvenile Fillies. Tossing out Aidan O'Brien's annual sacrificial BC entry, Waterloo Bridge—he's no Johannesburg. For a price, I will stake some money of Conquest Big E, a mere maiden winner last-out, but a competitive runner-up to Brody's Cause after a problematic start in his first race.

Q: In the Dirt Mile, if your horse draws outside will you be less likely to play because of the short run into the turn?

A: Fortunately, it won't be an issue as Liam's Map drew post three, right outside the speedy Bradester

Q: Classic: American Pharoah, Beholder, or someone else?

A: Beholder all the way in the Classic! Tonalist and Honor Code are just so frustratingly inconsistent that I hesitate to back either of them and, honestly, this year's 3-year-old crop has been underwhelming—including Triple Crown winner American Pharoah (just my opinion). The 3-year-old that I am putting some money on in the Classic is Gleneagles. Yes, he's the Aidan O'Brien's invader who's never raced beyond a mile and never on dirt. However, like recent Classic place-getter Declaration of War, he's got a brilliant damside dirt pedigree, with his second dam being the gutsy Grade 1-placed Mariah's Storm, dam of Breeders' Cup Classic runner-up Giant's Causeway (a full-brother to Gleneagles' dam).



Valerie is picking Beholder to win the Breeders' Cup Classic - photo by [Penelope P. Miller](#), [America's Best Racing](#)

Handicapping the Dirt Mile

The first thing one has to remind themselves when handicapping a mile race at Keeneland is that the real distance is much closer to a mile a seventy yards. Secondly, the first finish line will be used resulting in a shorter stretch.



Other important factors for this race: It is a two-turn mile, and so far for races 1 mile to 1 1/16th on the dirt, the bias is in favor of horses racing on the inside who are close to the pace.

Barring an outside closer bias or a ridiculous speed duel, the Mile looks like a relatively easy race to figure out. Let's look at the horses:

1. Red Vine: The rail will probably be a good thing. Even though he tends to start off in the back half most of his races, with the rail, and the knowledge of the short stretch, expect him to start off no worse than 6th, probably even closer. He has recency, looks to be in form, and his best speed figure came at Monmouth going a mile and seventy. The negative with him is that he gets off to bad starts sometimes, but his last two one post performances were trouble free. He looks like a must use in all exotic tickets.

2. Bradester: His speed figures make him a contender. Strategy wise, he should have the rail no problem in the first turn if he wants it. The big question is will he let Liam's Map get a clear lead early? He is training well at Keeneland, that is for sure, with two months off it is unlikely he will pressure the speed early but perhaps around the half mile instead. A bad chase ride could cost him a 1-2-3 placing.

3. Liam's Map: Looks beatable in that he's been off for 55 days and the Whitney loss, although it was his best speed figure, shows he can come up short. It is unlikely this horse doesn't go for the lead, but he may not be able to secure the rail in the first turn. Obvious contender, but there might be zero value at his expected odds. Three-for-three going a mile, but he's never tried a mile seventy.

4. Mr. Z: Figures to be pace compromised by the two to

his inside, which will also work against him getting close to the one or two path. Even on his best day, he would be lucky to finish 7th against this field.

5. Lea: He is capable of good speed figures when he pops. The 5 post just doesn't look it will do him any favors. Going from decent finish in grade one turf race to a dirt mile on a 48 day layoff is a bit worrisome, also that his best dirt form occurred in late spring. Doesn't look like a top two finisher at this time.

6. Street Strategy: Fresh off a win at today's distance, that is a plus, also came 5 wide doing so, have to give him bonus for that. The obvious problem is class. He won the next best thing to stakes race in his last, but it wasn't a stakes race. This horse is still a sleeper as he can pick up horses late. If you are playing supers or tris, he is worth throwing into the third or fourth spot on some tickets.

7. War Envoy: Has never tried the dirt, all his races have been on the turf except for one polytrack performance. He's been off since June and shows a three furlong workout that barely made time. The only bright spot is that he is used to carrying weight and gets a three pound allowance from many in the race that have never carried 126 before. The kind of horse that most horseplayers have to pitch and say "if he hits the board, I'm just gonna rip my tickets and turn the page."

8. Wicked Strong: Likes to dance in Grade 1 events, but rarely wins. He is winless this year, and Liam's Map seems to be at least a second better than him. Has more recency than most in the field and is in good form. The post won't help him at all in this event, and that might be the main reason that even if he shows up, third money might be pressing it, despite his class.

9. Tapiture: His best race was at three. Comparing his speed figures this year with the rest of the field, he just lands in the middle. Needs a pace meltdown to finish in the top two, but the post shouldn't compromise his running style.

10. Valid: His best races put him in the thick of things, but his running style coupled with today's post position will make things very difficult. Ran second to Red Vine at Monmouth going a mile and seventy. Suits today's distance, but he may have peaked two starts ago. Can't throw him out.

11. War Story: Would need an absolute chaotic pace to even have a chance to hit the board. If he were to win, many will say "that is why they run races." Still, he has made over \$300,000 without winning a race this year which means any horse owner would love to own him.

Picks: 1st Red Vine 2nd Liam's Map 3rd Bradester
Superfecta Ticket 1,2,3 with 1,2,3 with 1,2,3,6,8,10 with 1,2,3,5,6,8,10

Eight Breeders' Cup Questions With...

Phil ([@IsolatedTops](#))

Q: What horse are you most excited to bet in the Breeders' Cup & why?

A: Grand Arch - A perfect ground-saving post over a course he loves with a top that is just shy of the best in the race. Unlike last year he won't be cross country shipping in late to a new course. But like last year, his price will be long.



Phil is most excited to bet Grand Arch, shown here at Woodbine Racetrack - photo by [Penelope P. Miller](#), [America's Best Racing](#)

Q: What horse are you most excited to bet against in the Breeders' Cup & why?

A: The two favorites' chances in the Juvi Turf were disemboweled by the draw. Happy to exclude them to create leverage in the verticals for that race.

Q: How are you expecting the main track will play? Any worries over the Keeneland "Golden Rail" making an appearance?

A: Expecting a fair surface but with the weather this week will monitor Thursday races and BC undercards closely.

Q: Songbird & Rachel's Valentina meet up for the first time in the Juvenile Fillies - which one do you like, or will it be someone else?

A: The draw did Songbird and Rachel no favors, will try the other O'Neill, who, unlike those two, was caressed by the draw, with a top and bottom pedigree that indicates she should continue to enjoy running longer.

Q: Any chance of a US-based horse defeating the

European invaders in the Mile or Turf?

A: As mentioned above, for the Mile certainly. For the Turf, I truly hope Golden Horn runs them off their feet as such a bold and sporting move by his connections should be rewarded. But I could not bet him at odds on, off the ship, and the likely state of the turf.

Q: What do you make of the Juvenile, is it the most wide-open race on the card?

A: Nyqvist was yet another juvenile favorite done no great joy by the post position draw. Will try the rail horse, Conquest Big E, off a course and distance prep with a fantastic pattern for a barn going well at the meet.

Q: In the Dirt Mile, if your horse draws outside will you be less likely to play because of the short run into the turn?

A: I liked Valid (a horse who has very quietly run some very big figs) at a price and yes, I am definitely less likely to play him now that he has drawn the 10 hole.

Q: Classic: American Pharoah, Beholder, or someone else?

A: This year's Breeders' Cup Classic is a...classic. Immense respect for every competitor that showed up. The one point I'd make is that the mare, while she will have to duplicate her Pacific Classic effort, has actually run that fast before. Her Breeders' Cup juvenile fillies prep, for her age and sex, was a bizarrely fast figure.

A promotional graphic for BETPTC.com. It features a green and blue bokeh background. The text reads: "\$300 SIGN-UP BONUS + INSTANT CASH BACK EVERY DAY". Below this, it says "Enter promo code HANA". The BETPTC.com logo is at the bottom, with the tagline "Racing's Best Kept Secret" and a note: "*state restrictions. See site for offer details".

A promotional graphic for Derby Wars. It features a dark background with a horse and jockey on the right. The text reads: "DERBY WARS Start Winning Today at DerbyWars.com". In the center, it says "\$10,000 SAT SURVIVOR PLUS! \$5,000 FRI Survivor". On the right, a yellow starburst contains the text "\$22 TO ENTER".

Skill Game, You Bet

By [Jonathan Stettin](#)

This article originally appeared on [Pastthewire.com](#)

It always amazes me how many people play the horses that believe they have no chance at winning. To a certain degree they may be right, in that “they” have no chance at winning, but to think that nobody has a chance at winning is just plain wrong. There are and have always been, a small percentage of people who play professionally, or even recreationally, that do in fact beat the game. Why would anyone play a game they believe they have no chance of winning at?

To be clear, when I say beat the game, I mean show a profit on your wagers on a yearly basis. To take it a step further, to truly beat the game is to not only make an annual profit on your wagers, but to earn a living off of them. Yes, just like a full time job. The one glaring difference between this form of earning a living, and say a regular 9 to 5 job, is you will have to work harder and more hours at this shall we say unconventional lifestyle. Now the naysayers will come out in force and insist you cannot make a living betting the horses. They’ll tell you how there is too much luck involved and how they always lose in the end. I assure you they are wrong, but I’ll excuse myself from arguing the point any further. Instead I’ll just smile at them and share with those of you who believe it is at least possible how it’s done.

First off, I speak from many years of experience. About 40 years’ worth of them. That’s a long time to study anything. It was about that long ago that I decided this was the game I loved and this was the life I’ve chosen. Yes I forayed into different aspects of the game and even at times other areas of life, but for a large majority of those years what and if I ate depended on the outcome of horse races. It was more stressful than many 9 to 5’s I’d imagine. It was a full time career that took many sacrifices, but it was what I loved and I worked tirelessly at it.

Before we get into the basics of handicapping, let’s just talk about some of the sacrifices and shine the light on why this isn’t for everyone, especially the faint of heart. First off you have to accept no matter how hard you work, or how much you put in, there are no guarantees of any success. You have to be willing to risk it all, and sometimes often, much like a businessman or entrepreneur who goes all in on a venture. You have to be willing to forego a lot of nightlife, as you’ll be studying for the next day, and also most normal relationships, as your time and schedule will not be conducive to them. Trust me you’ll need some understanding partners. When “normal” people want to go to dinner and a movie, you’ll need to stay home with your racing form. Get used to questions like if you study at

night and are at the track all day where do I come in? You can forget many conventional types of financing as most institutions will automatically red stamp declined on any application you submit that shows your profession as professional gambler. You’ll learn to live with big down payments, unconventional financing, high interest, cash purchases, and to do things when your bank roll permits as opposed to your wants or schedule. It’s not easy but if you are not willing to do it you are not going to beat the game. Part of the blame for people thinking racing cannot be beat rests with the industry itself. The industry almost never promotes itself as a skill game. Unlike poker which embraced the skill aspect of the game and promoted it to the hilt, racing never has. Both are indeed skill games with large elements of luck to them. Both however can be equalized by understanding them and knowing how to play the odds. We’ll come back to that.

Only recently has racing started to promote itself as a skill game and that came by accident really. The growth of tournaments and obvious success of certain players repeatedly have opened eyes to the fact there is a large amount of skill involved. Funny because certain types of tournaments are more luck than skill. For example, a cash tournament such as The Breeders’ Cup Betting Challenge is primarily skill. Lock down tournaments are also a majority of skill. Tournaments where you can simply look at the leader board and just take a wild stab at a horse you may not even like, but if it wins puts you on top are basically luck. Nonetheless tournament play is growing, and making people realize this is a skill game we play.

To overcome the inherent luck, you must master three things, patience, money management, and value. They are all of equal importance and just as crucial to handicapping ability. Anyone can learn to handicap, just as anyone can learn to pitch, or play chess, but we all won’t play at the same level. That’s because it’s a skill game, make no mistake about it. You then have to learn you are playing against the others betting into your pool. Not the house, not the horses or jockeys, but the other players. This is the very nature of pari-mutual wagering and what makes the game so competitive.

Once you decide this is for you, the work really begins. You are inevitably going to be wrong more than right so a basic fundamental is when you are right make it count. Don’t hedge, double up. Don’t bet place, you are costing yourself more win money than you are saving when you’re right in the long run. Many will argue and disagree and continue to bet place. Smile at them, they’re not beating the game. They’ll have their broken clock winning days, but when it counts at tally time, they’ll need a red pen. Patience is your friend. Get close with it. Don’t bet every race and every track. Pick your spots. Your strong spots, and wait for them. Increase, don’t lower your percentage. You can’t be prepared for every race at any given track let

(continued on next page)

alone multiple tracks. We make those exceptions on days like Breeders' Cup but we get a little extra study time so it can work out. There have been many a day I've sat with \$10k in my pocket without making a bet. Patience is your friend.

Value is something you will have to learn how to identify and find. You can write a book on this subject alone. Some make their own odds and play overlays, some use the morning line, and some assign win percentage chances and play the horses whose odds exceed the assigned percentage. Unlike place betting, I won't try to dissuade you from any way of finding value. What I will say is this, THERE IS NO VALUE IN A LOSING HORSE. Betting a horse you think likely can't win because its odds are higher than one you think can likely win is not finding value. It's finding wallpaper. Value plain and simple is a horse that's chances of winning are equal to or greater than its odds. There is hidden value to be found as well. Like a horse who is 2-1 on the board but 4-1 in the exacta pool.

THERE IS NO VALUE IN A LOSING HORSE

You have got to manage your money. Don't chase losing bets. LIVE TO FIGHT ANOTHER DAY. This is a streaky game. Push when you are hot, not when you are not. Always remember, it's a marathon, not a sprint.

LIVE TO FIGHT ANOTHER DAY

There is no shortcut for your homework. Although you may find abbreviated past performances for sale, there are no cliff notes in horse racing. Whatever past performances you use, master them. Know every symbol and every line. Read every line of every horse. Skip and skim nothing, as if you do you'll beat yourself. There are enough competitors looking to beat you, don't help them by missing things you should see. Don't make the mistake of so many players and think "I know these horses". You know like the ones who tell you who'll win a week before the race is drawn. Sure they will have their broken clock moments, but at the end of the year they'll have to borrow your red pen. Read every line of every race. There are patterns there you won't want to miss.

Use the tools. There are many. Replays are invaluable. Tracking Trips is new and improved and a great part of any level arsenal. Workout reports. The Ragozins and Thorograph don't provide the edge they did in the past, but they still are an advantage over those who rely on Beyers. You must know how to read them however, otherwise they are just a number.

Remember you will lose many a photo, you'll cut out that horse that costs you a six figure pick 6, you will be wrong more than right, but if you show the discipline and have the talent, percentage wise you can master and beat this skill game. The more people who tell you that you can't beat the game or you are not beating the game, the better. Those are the ones you're beating. Just smile and tell them they're right.

Jonathan's Breeders' Cup Q&A

Q: What horse are you most excited to bet in the Breeders' Cup & why?

A: I would have to say Golden Horn. He looks to be a cut above the top American horses running this year. Of course during the course of the two days there will be some price horses I'll bet who'll excite me more, I just don't know who they are yet.,

Q: What horse are you most excited to bet against in the Breeders' Cup & why?

A: Gleneagles. I'm hoping he takes a good share of money and he's catching a strong Classic field. Good luck, he's gonna need it.

Q: How are you expecting the main track will play? Any worries over the Keeneland "Golden Rail" making an appearance?

A: I'm hoping honest. Historically and before polytrack Keeneland was speed on the rail. I believe they will do what they can to keep it honest but I will be watching closely for a return to the old days.

Q: Songbird & Rachel's Valentina meet up for the first time in the Juvenile Fillies - which one do you like, or will it be someone else?

A: Both are immensely talented. Rachel's Valentina has shown more fight to date but I'm not sure she's better. I'll likely look to beat both of them.

Q: Any chance of a US-based horse defeating the European invaders in the Mile or Turf?

A: More likely in the mile as I think Golden Horn means business in the turf.

Q: What do you make of the Juvenile, is it the most wide-open race on the card?

A: Definitely one of the more open races. I think it's a good race to go for a large superfecta and some long shots in multi race wagers.

Q: In the Dirt Mile, if your horse draws outside will you be less likely to play because of the short run into the turn?

A: I will definitely downgrade. Not play, no but downgrade for sure. The Keeneland configurations at some distances, especially the mile are huge factors. Ignore at your own peril.

Q: Classic: American Pharoah, Beholder, or someone else?

A: Anticipating an early hook up and fight - someone else.

Eight Breeders' Cup Questions With...

Craig J. ([@Derbyologist](#)/[Derbyologist.com](#))

Q: What horse are you most excited to bet in the Breeders' Cup & why?

A: Liam's Map. I think he is the most talented and fastest horse in America. He has been training well and pointed for a Breeders' Cup race since February. He is fit, fast and fresh. Lightly raced and 1 mile is the perfect distance for him to fire a career race. He checks all the boxes. Class, form, speed and pace.



Craig is high on the chances of Liam's Map - photo by [Penelope P. Miller, America's Best Racing](#)

Q: What horse are you most excited to bet against in the Breeders' Cup & why?

A: Wedding Toast. She has been facing small fields and getting advantageous pace trips in the last couple of races. She faces a full field and pace pressure all the way around the track. She has also missed some training time. The perfect storm of a beatable favorite.

Q: How are you expecting the main track will play? Any worries over the Keeneland "Golden Rail" making an appearance?

A: No worries on the track surface. Weather may play a role on Saturday. Only concern is if they over-correct a perceived bias early in the day.

Q: Songbird & Rachel's Valentina meet up for the first time in the Juvenile Fillies - which one do you like, or will it be someone else?

A: Songbird has been fast, she is capable of running fast

early and fast late. She has dominated all of her starts and looks like the best 2 year old filly.

Q: Any chance of a US-based horse defeating the European invaders in the Mile or Turf?

A: I think in the Turf is the most likely to provide an upset. Golden Horn has run two big races in a row and this would be third big race after shipping. His running style could find him close to the lead and that is a big ask off the ship and quarantine. He is the most talented horse, but shipping and running style may not fit with Keeneland course. The only question is how big of a slice will the Pizza Man get?

Q: What do you make of the Juvenile, is it the most wide-open race on the card?

A: Nyquist is very vulnerable as the favorite. Greenpointcrusader, Brody's Cause and Conquest Big E have ability and will provide a solid test. Post position and track condition could be a deciding factor in how the race plays out. I have been very impressed with Greenpointcrusader.

Q: In the Dirt Mile, if your horse draws outside will you be less likely to play because of the short run into the turn?

A: Yes I think post position will be very important. Liam's Map is the best horse in the race and most likely winner from any post position (Craig's answer was before Liam's Map drew post three) but an outside post could be small cause for concern. Overall inside posts will have an edge.

Q: Classic: American Pharoah, Beholder, or someone else?

A: Tonalist. The classic 10 furlong American dirt horse. Has been pointed to this race all year. Enough speed to stay close, and enough class to put him on top.





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If Something Looks Bad, It Needs to be Scrapped

Daily Fantasy Sports is providing yet another strong lesson for Harness Racing

Just this past week or so, the multi-billion dollar Daily Fantasy Sports market has been rocked with some very bad press.

One of the largest companies – Draft Kings – had what most are calling a “data leak” just after the Sunday 1 o’clock NFL games a week ago. Information was inadvertently posted on twitter (too early) about ownership rates of players for the weekly NFL contests. Sure, [close approximations of ownership rates are published each week for everyone to see before games already](#). Sure, this might not have helped you or me. Sure, a huge number of people did not see the “leak” before it was deleted. But it was important because the episode showed cracks in the systems and it raised legitimate questions.

What happened next, though, was pretty interesting and even the most savvy media observer likely could never have predicted it in such fervour.

Headlines went from “early lineup tweet” to “data leak”, to “insider trading” to “huge scandal”, at some media outlets within hours. Calls for the companies to be more transparent regarding who sees data and when they see it – reasonable asks – leapfrogged to the nebulous (and often anti-consumer), “the industry needs to be regulated” quicker than two shakes of a lamb’s tail. Rational customer concerns about employees playing at other sites (some employed in DFS have and do win big money tournaments at other sites), quickly went to “those employees are stealing all my money” narratives. Rumblings that all tournaments run should be cancelled and everyone should get their money back were rampant.

It’s not the least bit unreasonable to think there is a more to this story and that some of these dire narratives might be foreshadowing, but how quickly things mushroomed, a lot of it on pure conjecture, was eye-opening.

These are issues a lot of new companies or industries have – especially those that disrupt older business models. Some have not set proper controls, or do not have experienced business people in positions of power as they hockey-stick grow. Facebook went through them with privacy, google with their ad program. With gambling, though, it’s infinitely worse, because so many have a strong dislike towards it. This gives them a megaphone.

Back in 2008, for example, when Betfair was moving into Australia, an anti-gaming Australian MP, right in Parliament, suggested the betting company was funneling money to Al Qaeda. Seriously, that happened. The people who wish you never existed, agenda-driven journalists, your competition looking for your customers, or tax-hungry politicians, never let a good crisis go to waste. Think horse racing and PETA for an object lesson a little closer to home.

What does the above have to do with harness racing? Quite a bit, frankly. Harness racing is a gambling game, and like Draft Kings, how it controls its optics is extremely important; I would offer even more-so.

I had a look at the proposed rule changes submitted to the USTA for 2016 this week. One of them, forwarded by trainer driver Ray Schnittker, is about changing the time between charted lines.

The current rule:

“Within 30 days of being entered, a horse that has not raced previously at the gait chosen must go a qualifying race under the supervision of a judge....”

Ray wants 30 days to be changed to 120 days. That’s one month to four months. Ray reasons that it costs money to requalify a horse, and that the “bettors know which trainer will have them ready or not.”

With costs through the roof the last decade, I am all for saving money, and I am sure I can keep stats on a horse’s record off 120 days off without a charted line. But we need to remember the lessons learned about optics. 120 days off between starts with no raceline opens a Pandora’s box for a gambling game like horse racing, not unlike a “data leak” in Daily Fantasy Sports does.

A horse needs four months between starts for a number of reasons, but primarily because he or she was not racing well, had an injury, was sick, or had another issue. The last few starts for a nice 1:54 type mare before being laid off might look something like this:

May 9th 8th by 22, 1:57.1, 6th by 11, 156.0, 9th by 18, 157. Then Ray, and other good horsemen like him, fix up this mare, school her in 1:54 on Tuesday August 1st, and she’s in the box in a non-winners of a ham sandwich, against horses going in 1:55 – a full 11 lengths faster in the time box than her last charted line.

She is sent to the lead, takes two left turns, scores in 153.3 and wins by 7. She pays \$14.

Ray knew she’d do that, the people at the schoolers knew it, Ray’s owner knew it. The only people who did not know were customers because they could not see a charted line. Remember them?

Ray, or someone like him, is not a bad person. He’s not trying to cash a bet. If he wants to bury a horse in a qualifier and cash a bet he would’ve done it already. But,

(continued on next page)

other than the obvious (form reversals with no charted line will light up the chat boards and social media in a nano-second), further optics are degraded. The reason given for the change to 120 days from 30 is to save owners and trainers money. This in a sport that gets money from the public purse (slots coupling) controlled by politicians – another one of racing’s “customers”. Saving money and inconveniencing customers (or pulling the wool over their eyes in the worst instances with stale date horses) when getting hundreds of millions for purses from slot machines does not sit well with them, and invites the inevitable questions that pop up. “This money should go to schools not to ‘greedy horse owners’”. You know the drill.

I completely understand where Ray is coming from. But if the optics are bad, you just can’t do these sorts of things. Draft Kings and others like them have brought a lot of these issues on themselves. Despite them knowing many were waiting in the weeds to pounce, their structure, their lack of controls, their desire to grow at breakneck speed and their inexperience still made them gloss over what’s most important: Transparency, the integrity of a gambling game, and how such is perceived. That’s something that never gets old and they’re getting a lesson in that truism. Harness racing is not Daily Fantasy Sports, and that puts it in an even more tenuous position when it comes to optics. It is not growing at these huge rates and it doesn’t have market forces speaking loud and clear with dollars, wanting to play it. It depends in large part on public money, and government support, and make no mistake, like with Fantasy Sports, there are many in the weeds waiting to pounce. That is all the more reason to be hyper-vigilant with these issues. If any rule change looks bad – no matter how well intentioned - it must be scrapped, because optics mean everything.

Big Numbers for Crown at Woodbine

Woodbine Racetrack hosted the Breeders Crown on Saturday, October 24, and did a Canadian record handle of over \$5.7 million.

That numbered was boosted by a mandatory payout in Woodbine’s Jackpot Super Hi-5 on the last race on the card. According to [Standardbred Canada](#), “Horseplayers wagered \$1,670,263 of new money into the Jackpot Hi-5 to bring the gross pool, including a carryover of \$557,274, to over \$2.2 million.

“A total of 155 winning tickets correctly selected the top five finishers, including 25-1 upset winner Grin For Money, to score a return of \$12,746.60 for a 20-cent wager. The race handle for the 13th and final race Saturday was \$1,913,354.”

Woodbine also has a new 15% takeout pick 5 on the first five races on their card every night, and on Breeders Crown night, that wager handled over \$52,000.

Meadowlands Returns Soon

Racing at Meadowlands Racetrack resumes on Friday, November 13, and there are some changes in store for the meet this year.

According to a press release from October 20, “The Meadowlands will race live on Friday and Saturday throughout the 2016 season which will begin on January 2 and conclude with Hambletonian Day on Saturday, August 6. Post time will be moved up to 7:00 pm and a few more races may be added to accommodate the demands of the horse population.

In response to the difficulty horsemen face getting overnight horses raced consistently through January and February and continued poor subscription to the winter late closer program, there will be no late closers offered during those months next year.

The Meadowlands will also race live for three weekends in September next year, with the focus on two-year-olds featuring Kindergarten legs for both trotters and pacers. The idea here is to provide mile-track racing opportunities to those late-bloomers preparing for The Red Mile and beyond.

The September Friday dates are to be raced as blended cards with Thoroughbreds racing on the grass and the Standardbreds on the main track as part of the same program.

Also under consideration is an earlier start to the 2016 Fall Meet, potentially opening two weeks after the Red Mile Grand Circuit meet providing greater continuity to the stakes schedule as well as warmer weather for the Breeders Crown races.

These dates are subject to NJRC approval.”

Hinckley Continues to Lead Contest

The results are in for The Breeders Crown Championships for the 2015 HANA Harness Grand Circuit Handicapping Challenge presented by the Bellino Stables, DRF Harness, Green Acquisition Corporation, Hambletonian Society, Isle of Capri Pompano Park, Meadowlands Racing and Entertainment, Northfield Park, Tioga Downs, and Vernon Downs.

With 12 championship races on the docket there were two handicappers that soared above the rest of the flock. We had three handicappers with 7 wins each. The big question was which 7 races would determine our winner? Ray Garnett took the honors by almost 100 HANA points bringing home a total of 620 for the night. His key was Color’s A Virgin in the 10th who returned \$15 to win and a total of 182 HANA points in that race. Second place went to Bryan Owen who bagged the biggest win price of the evening when Boston Red Rocks scored at \$38 for a total of 330 HANA points. The top five was rounded out by Bob Zanakis at 457 points, then two of our regular top contenders Gordon Waterstone, 448 points and Ann Stepien at 446 points.



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The Back Page

We elected to turn this segment to writer Vin Rogers again this month. Hope you enjoy his latest piece.

A Conservative's Approach to Handicapping

This is, after all, the political season; debates, speeches, polls, accusations, denials, robocalls. This piece, however, has nothing to do with politics – and everything to do with the human personality; both genetically and as formed by the cumulative effects of one's life experience.

I wrote, in a previous HANA article ("The Theory of Everything") that I was "far more handicapper than gambler."

Let me explain: I am by nature and experience a fiscally conservative guy; child of the Great Depression.

Consider: I was the leader of my high school jazz band and a good enough trumpeter to be offered an on-the-road gig with the (then) famous Louis Prima band – man, that was tempting! But – ultimately – I decided that college was a safer bet. College career choice? Teaching. Can't get more conservative than that! I saved, invested prudently, and can honestly say (in my "golden years") I'm comfortable.

My interest in horses began early – but not at the racetrack. I'm talking amusement park ponies at age five or six, later, county fair horse shows, and later still (oddly) as a Cornell undergraduate, admiring both the horses and the horsemanship of the Big Red national championship polo team.

For me, at that time, horseracing was essentially the Kentucky Derby, Preakness, and Belmont – and occasionally – for some illicit fun – a visit to an illegal betting joint in downtown Ithaca during my undergraduate years.

Fast forward 15 or 20 years; I'm now a professor of Education at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. Every summer in nearby Northampton, the county fair comes to town – and so does horseracing. Turns out that a guy who lives next door on pretty Pomeroy Lane knows a guy who trains horses – and he shares a "sure thing" entered in Saturday's feature race at the fair. The "sure thing" wins – and I begin to see horses in a different light, i.e., serious **money** was changing hands at the racetrack!

Next step – a visit to Saratoga – and I was hooked forever.

I evolved from horse "lover" to horse "player." I discovered the daily racing Form, Ragozin's "sheets", Andy Beyer on speed, Cary Fotias on pace, Bill Scott on form – and much, much more.

As an academic – serious scholar and researcher – I found this data compelling. I was, indeed, hooked; but not so much at the prospect of winning big bucks but rather on the challenge of making sense of the data itself. I believed that, if one tried hard enough – gathered the best data and put in the necessary hours, one could solve the equine puzzle. Making a "life-changing score" was never my goal.

Hooray for the Rainbow Pick Six winners; I wish them well – but I'm playing a different game.

Most of us have seen the ubiquitous ads for brain games designed to sharpen and hone memory, focus, and attention; "Lumosity" comes quickly to mind. "One must exercise one's mind", the ads say, or risk inevitable mental deterioration.

My mind game focuses on the analysis of the wealth of data available to today's handicappers.

I use Brisnet's Ultimate past performances exclusively; they include both speed and hard to find pace figures, class and race ratings, trainer-jock stats, pedigree data, and more.

In addition – and at the click of a mouse – Twin Spires' "professional" site allows me to access a horse's lifetime record – every workout, every surface, every distance, every race. Charts and video replays? Available with another click. Similarly, career trainer and jockey stats appear; 50 trainer categories, e.g., turf routes, dirt sprints, first time Lasix, etc. Similar data is available for jockeys as well as comprehensive pedigree stats.

That's a lot of information – for many, data overload.

But I'm not analyzing every race.

I've learned, over time, where my strengths and weaknesses lie. Examples? I will not play turf races – I simply can't cope with the inevitable last minute cavalry charge – ten or more horses fighting for position around the far turn, bumping, forced wide, pinned on the rail, blocked – just doesn't work for me. Of course these conditions (large fields, crowded late runs) often produce monster pay-offs – but as I've said before, that's simply not my game.

Neither will I play maiden specials or claimers, races at distances longer than a 1 1/8, and for obvious reasons, races over fences.

So what's left?

Plenty!

I can almost always find two or three playable races each day at the tracks I frequent, i.e. Belmont, Aqueduct, and Saratoga. (Obviously, concentrating on the idiosyncrasies of two or three tracks should sharpen one's analyses.)

And – two or three races are really all I can handle! Watching replays, checking jock-trainer data, career works and races, etc. takes time! But that's okay with me – I need time to solve the puzzle – and it's the process of analysis itself that drew me into handicapping in the first place – it's what (at age 88) keeps me in the game.

Consider this scenario; I'm at the track – the horses are rounding the far turn, entering the stretch. The guy next to me is shouting "Come on with that 7!" Another guy is begging "the 3" to accelerate; still another tears his ticket, throws it on the ground, and mutters "The 8 didn't run a step."

By the time one of my horses hits the stretch, I know his name, his mom's and dad's names, maybe his grandma's and grandpa's names!

Win or lose, this old brain has been stimulated – and the old heart is thumping; it's the way I play the game.

About the author - Vin Rogers is a retired UCONN professor of Education, a jazz trumpeter, an ex-equestrian and Thoroughbred owner. He finds handicapping endlessly fascinating and hopes someday to learn how to do it.

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