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SEPTEMBER 2015

## THE SKINNY ON KENTUCKY DOWNS

*Stettin: Racing 'Isn't' Dead*



PHOTO by NEAL BENOIT / GETTING OUT OF THE GATE

**10 POINT HANDICAPPING**

**PLUS: TRAVERS STUNNER**

## How to Profit at Kentucky Downs

### Five Things You Need to Know



By [Lenny Moon](#)

The number one ranked track in 2015 by HANA starts its short five-day meet on Saturday, September 5th. You can expect large fields as the daily purses are expected to top \$1.5 million this year. The average over the past three years is a tad under 10 per race and that number may be exceeded this year as the purses continue to increase. Combining the large field sizes with the lowest overall takeout structure in North America makes for some fantastic wagering opportunities so let's take a look at the five things you need to know in order to make this meet profitable.

#### 1. Avoid First Time Starters Unless...

Maiden races will have purses of \$120,000 so you can expect anyone and everyone with turf maiden to take a shot at Kentucky Downs. The number one way to profit in maiden races is to focus on horses with experience. First time starters are 7/113 since 2012 for a meager 6% win rate. Betting all of these horses would have produced a loss of \$114 for every \$2. That is unless they are trained by Wayne Catalano. Catalano accounts for six of the seven debut winners so if he has one in and it is taking money then give them a long look.

#### 2. Ellis Park Shippers Are Bad Bets

In the last three years horses from 47 different tracks have run at Kentucky Downs making handicapping these deep fields all the more complicated. Some tracks are better than others but the one that has produced the most starters is among the worst. 444 horses most recently raced at Ellis Park prior to running at Kentucky Downs and they won only 6% of the time. Betting all of these horses

would have produced a flat bet loss of \$490. It would seem the local stock is outclassed more often than not by the out of town shippers.

#### 3. Speed in Sprints, Not in Routes

Being on the lead or within three lengths after the first quarter mile is the place to be in sprint races at six and 6 1/2 furlongs with 81% of the winners since 2012 falling into those running styles. At seven furlongs it evens out with a slight edge to off the pace runners. Route races on the other hand favor off the pace runners (more than three lengths behind the leader after the first half mile). In the shorter route races (one mile and one mile 70 yards) nearly 60% of the winners fell into that category.

#### 4. At the Post

For the most part post position does not greatly affect the chances of each horse but there are some notable exceptions. Outside post positions are dominant in races run at 6 1/2 furlongs. The outside four posts had a 22% win rate over the last three years, which is nearly three times the inside and middle posts. Inside is not the place to be in seven furlong races as the inside four post positions won at a meager 4%. The outside is not the place to be in route races at one mile 70 yards and longer, getting worse as the distances increase.

#### 5. Keep It Simple, Make Some Money

With low takeout rates on every wagering option it can be very tempting to focus on the more difficult wager types. The Superfecta and Pick 5 can be nearly irresistible with the large fields and potential for massive returns but they can quickly drain your bankroll if you fail to cash. Now I am not saying to avoid these wager types but the best way, in my opinion and from my experience, is to try to crush the simpler exotic wagers. The Exacta and Daily Double should not be overlooked and for those that want to maximize their chance of turning a profit at Kentucky Downs should be a major part of the attack plan. Over the last three years the average \$2 Exacta returned over \$95 and the average \$2 Daily Double returned just under \$102. Those numbers may seem modest but if you crush the

*(continued on next page)*

winning combination for \$20 they turn into \$950 and \$1,000 respectively. Cashing these bets will allow you to take a shot in the more complex exotic wagers without stressing your bankroll.

Kentucky Downs provides the five best days of wagering opportunities outside the Breeders' Cup. Deep, competitive fields race after race with the most horseplayer friendly takeout rates in North America make it impossible to pass up. Hopefully the five tips above will help make your meet profitable and if you want to maximize your chance of success check out the [Conquering Kentucky Downs](#) page on my site which goes even more in depth to the inner workings of Kentucky Downs.



About the author - Lenny Moon is the founder of [Equinometry.com](#), a site dedicated to educating horseplayers of all levels about handicapping, betting and handicapping contest strategy and about issues within the horse racing industry that directly affect horseplayers such as takeout rates and lack of transparency by industry organizations. Lenny has been a serious horseplayer for the past 15 years and a serious handicapping contest player for the past five years.

## The Agony of Defeat...



Frances J Karon  
@francesjkaron



Following

Keen Ice & American Pharoah shortly before the wire. Victor's face & eyes tell the story as he looks at Castellano.



RETWEETS 53 FAVORITES 57



## A Look Back at the Travers

By [Jessica Chapel](#)

This piece was originally published on Jessica's [blog](#) and is reprinted with her permission.

[Steve Haskin had concerns before the Travers Stakes](#). [Gary West felt a shiver of apprehension](#). Trainer Bob Baffert thought the Pennsylvania Derby was, possibly, better timing for the Triple Crown winner. "I just hope I don't have to say, I should have gone to Parx," [he said to Sean Clancy](#). He had been leery of bringing American Pharoah to Saratoga: "[I don't want to find any Onions.](#)" In the air-conditioned chill of his family's Saratoga clubhouse box, awaiting the Travers, [Justin Zayat predicted the future](#):

- "What is everyone expecting right now? They're expecting Pharoah to win. My experience in racing is when everyone is hoping for something, it never happens."

When did American Pharoah lose the Travers? He came out of the gate well and went to the front. So far, so good. He clipped off :12 second furlongs through the first half, just as he had in the Belmont Stakes. But he wasn't alone. Frosted was to his outside, and as they moved down the backstretch, the gray pressed for more speed. [Trakus records them as running the same time in the third quarter](#) — an even :23 seconds. "Frosted is taking it to him," called Larry Collmus. More than four lengths back, Keen Ice was matching their velocity.

Horse	¼	½	¾	1	Str	Fin
Keen Ice	:24.81	:24.34	:23.11	:23.60		:25.71
American Pharoah	:24.28	:24.02	:23.18	:23.62		:26.60
Frosted	:24.45	:23.94	:23.11	:23.58		:27.00
Upstart	:24.55	:24.34	:23.28	:23.77		:26.56
Texas Red	:24.72	:24.45	:23.62	:24.35		:26.43
¶ Frammento	:26.34	:25.14	:24.03	:23.50		:24.65
¶ Smart Transition	:24.54	:24.28	:23.47	:24.35		:27.03
Tale of Verve	:26.76	:24.70	:23.96	:24.35		:25.41
Mid Ocean	:25.57	:24.96	:24.22	:24.01		:26.73
King of New York	:26.85	:25.06	:24.29	:23.92		:25.58

DRF incremental times for the Travers / [View the official Equibase chart\(PDF\)](#)

Turning into the stretch, Frosted crowded Pharoah on the rail. At the top of the stretch, Frosted headed Pharoah. Jockey Victor Espinoza alleged rider Jose Lezcano, who had picked up the mount on Frosted after Joel Rosario went down in the Forego Handicap, was being aggressive, [reports David Grening](#):

(continued on next page)

- Espinoza claimed he felt Frosted's chest hit his horse's hip, and "he turned me sideways," altering American Pharoah's stride. Espinoza said Frosted hit him five or six times, though replays don't bear that out.
- Said Lezcano: "He started to get out a little bit, and he touched my horse. I never crossed the line. I never touched him."

American Pharoah dug in and took the lead again. It didn't look easy for the 1-5 favorite. It didn't look as though he had much left. He had shown the same heart at Churchill Downs, fought to get past Firing Line in the final yards of the Kentucky Derby as Espinoza wildly asked him for more with reins and whip, but the reserve he had on the first Saturday in May was missing.

"After he finally shook Frosted off, I really thought, well, maybe there's a chance," said Baffert in the post-race press conference. "He just fought back valiantly, and he just — it wasn't his day today."

It was Keen Ice's day. The maiden winner had finished seventh in the Kentucky Derby, third in the Belmont Stakes, second in the Haskell. He was rising, and his rider, [following trainer Dale Romans' instructions to put him in the race](#), wasn't about to miss an opportunity for a win.

"I just kept tracking and following with them," said Javier Castellano. "At some point when turning for home, I saw the horses slow down and start coming back to me so I knew that I had a chance to win the race."

Keen Ice passed both to win the Travers by three-quarters of a length over American Pharoah in a final time of 2:01.57. The 16-1 shot paid \$34.



*Keen Ice Returns to the Winner's Circle after the Travers - photo by [Penelope P. Miller, America's Best Racing](#)*

"Maybe it's just arrogance, but I felt good about today, I really did," said Romans. "He had just trained too good. I knew he was going to run really big and I just couldn't imagine Pharoah taking another step forward."

He didn't, if Beyer or TimeformUS speed figures are your measure — he ran at about the same level he has been this year. Keen Ice was given [a Beyer speed figure of 106 for the Travers](#), which would make American Pharoah's 105, the same as he ran in the Kentucky Derby. [TimeformUS rated American Pharoah 128 \(Keen Ice 127\)](#), in line with his Derby 127.

American Pharoah is consistent — for that matter, so is this crop. Along with Keen Ice, how Frosted and Upstart — fourth in the Travers and third in the Haskell — ran validates the results of earlier races and confirms what so many were saying before the Kentucky Derby about the depth of the this year's field. Chaos would have been Mid Ocean jumping up for a win; these 3-year-olds are running true to their demonstrated abilities and following form cycles. Yet we've come to expect so much of the Triple Crown winner, that a solid second, on a day he clearly he wasn't feeling at his peak, [or didn't like the track](#), or got a little hot and bothered by the crowd, [is a letdown](#):

- These horses, they will fool you. We tend to become so infatuated with them that we start to believe they are invincible, that all you need to do is put the saddle on them, turn on the ignition and watch them motor around the racetrack on their way to once again dominating those silly enough to get in the starting gate with them. We lose our sense of logic.

But sooner or later, we find out there are no perfect horses.

Dejected owner Ahmed Zayat suggested after the Travers that his homebred colt would be retired. "[My gut feeling is if this horse is one percent not the American Pharoah that we cherish, that's it. The show's over.](#)"

Mike Watchmaker would be okay with that: "[... let's be honest: The American Pharoah we saw Saturday just was not the same American Pharoah we saw in all of his previous races this year.](#)"

Tim Layden likened the aftermath of the Travers as a muffling of what "[has been a racing season defined by living sound.](#)" ([What that sounds like.](#))

Oh, and the winner? His people are celebrating. "Allen told me he never once felt sorry about beating Secretariat," [said Romans to Mike Welsch](#), referring to the late trainer Allen Jerkens, who won the 1973 Whitney with Onion:

- "And I started thinking about Allen and that conversation as soon as my horse crossed the finish line in front of American Pharoah. And you know, I don't feel sorry either."

Onions can be sweet.

# THE #1 RATED HANA TRACK IS RACING LIVE

2015 HANA Sortable Track Ratings

Ranking	Track	Score	WPS Takeout	EXA Takeout	TRI Takeout	SPR Takeout	HI5 Takeout	DD Takeout	PICK3 Takeout	PICK4 Takeout	PICK5 Takeout
1	Kentucky Downs	3.63	0.1600	0.1825	0.1900	0.1900	0.1900	0.1900	0.1900	0.1900	0.1400
2	Keeneland	3.30	0.1600	0.1900	0.1900	0.1900		0.1900	0.1900	0.1900	0.1900
3	Saratoga*	2.86	0.1600	0.1850	0.2400	0.2400		0.1850	0.2400	0.2400	0.1500
4	Del Mar	2.75	0.1543	0.2268	0.2368	0.2368		0.2000	0.2368	0.2368	0.1400
5	Woodbine	2.66		0.2268	0.2500	0.2630	0.1500	0.2050	0.2630	0.2500	0.2500

*"Because of the quality racing and unique course, Kentucky Downs is challenging and fun to handicap, and with their large fields, the payoffs are great."*

- Gary West, award-winning Turf writer and horse racing columnist for ESPN.com



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 Thursday, Sept. 10  
 Wednesday, Sept. 16



## KENTUCKY DOWNS

[KentuckyDowns.com](http://KentuckyDowns.com)

# Horseplayer Thoughts on USADA Oversight

## You Said Yes to US Anti-Doping Agency Oversight in Horse Racing – But Tentatively So

In July, the Horseplayers Association of North America commissioned a survey of its membership, with regards to the Tonko-Barr Bill.

Here was the question:

- On June 1, 2015, legislation was introduced by Representative Paul Tonko (D-NY) called the Thoroughbred Horse Racing Anti-Doping Act of 2015. Among the provisions in the proposed legislation, USADA would create the Thoroughbred Horseracing Anti-Doping Organization (THADO), an independent, non-governmental non-profit governed by a board comprised of six USADA board members and five independent individuals from the Thoroughbred racing industry. This organization would work collaboratively with state racing commissions and their respective staff members throughout the country. THADO would develop and administer a nationwide anti-doping program that would go into effect beginning January 1, 2017, following input from the Thoroughbred industry and the public.

The full text of the release, and details are available here: <http://www.jockeyclub.com/Default.asp?section=Resources&area=10&story=800>

The HANA board has asked the coalition for an assurance that horseplayers would not be funding the initiative through a takeout increase.

- Via email: "This email is to formally advise before the HANA vote that anticipated increased regulatory costs that may be incidental to an enhanced regulatory framework for equine medication will not be borne by the horseplayers through an increase in the pari-mutuel takeout. Your concern on this issue is understandable and you have the full assurance of the coalition that they will neither seek nor support any initiative seeking to put all or some portion of these enhanced costs on the horseplayers who are the lifeblood of our industry."

We are asking for your opinion, yes or no. Should the Horseplayers Association of North America lend its support to the Coalition for Horse Racing Integrity, in their quest to reform drug use and enforcement in horse racing?

The results (n=411):

Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	83.12%
No	16.88%
Total	

Your comments were incisive and poignant (well over 100 of you shared your opinion in the comments section of the poll). Summarizing: You appeared to have distrust of the USADA, or the Federal government, but you were very much in favor of no race day medications and uniform rules (and penalties).

Comments:

"The states and regulatory arms of each have failed to achieve this goal. Enough is enough."

"I think that it is vital to have national standards/rules in Thoroughbred horse racing, that all tracks must follow, but, I do not think that it is good to have governments (federal or state) involved. We, in the U.S., are already over-governed, and that is too-limiting and far too expensive."

"The public thinks racing is fixed. This would help to change that perception."

"HANA should support any group that seeks to advance the integrity of the game. However, I STRONGLY OPPOSE support of the above legislation as it will invite government/politicians in to the sport, which is never a good thing."

"I support the basic tenets of the issue, however, you cannot guarantee that takeout will not be increased to pay for its implementation and to do so is misleading. Local jurisdictions control takeout rates and their distribution. What is truly needed in this sport is a national board that controls universal rules on takeout, drugs, and steward rulings so that everyone is on an equal and level playing field no matter where the races take place."

"Any move to bring uniformity across the various venues in Thoroughbred racing is a step in the right direction."

"At the end of the day, someone has to pay for it, and raising takeout is the easiest solution when most players pay no attention to it to begin with. While The Jockey Club may be fully truthful in their intent, everything slides downhill to us."

"I check yes with extreme reluctance."

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“Involving the federal government will only complicate this issue. Any efforts to change the sport should be made by those involved and interested in the sport. I would support the creation of a certifying body that would certify tracks or programs meeting certain criteria, but cannot support government encroachment on what should be a private enterprise.”

“I am in favor of strict illegal drug regulations and very strict penalties for violations which would include from the owners down. But especially vets.”

“Yes, Yes, Yes! Make it easier to handicap and bet; we need regulation! Plus horse’s injuries won’t be masked by drugs leading to fewer fatalities.”

Bill Shanklin also penned an article on USADA oversight, which we recommend reading. It is available [here](#).

## Jockey Club Comments on Oversight

“In a sport built on the integrity of competition, nothing is more important than a level playing field for our stakeholders, and that includes the fans who wager on our races. Surveys and polls have consistently identified the ongoing medication concerns of bettors and a recent survey of bettors conducted by the Coalition for Horse Racing Integrity found that 98 percent of the respondents agreed that racing states should all have the same set of medication rules.

Only a national, independent, non-governmental organization like the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) can create and maintain a uniform system that protects horses and the integrity of competition for all participants, including fans.

For these reasons, the Coalition for Horse Racing Integrity urges all horseplayers to support the bill known as H.R. 3084, which has been introduced by Congressmen Barr and Tonko.”



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## More on Kentucky Downs

### Using Nashville as Your Home Base - How to Get There, What to See & What to Do in the Area



By [Mike Dorr](#)

Kentucky Downs and its racing meet have grown in stature over the years, so many horseplayers and fans have begun to explore the option of visiting the one-of-a-kind track in tiny Franklin, Kentucky. While the former Dueling Grounds track races under the rules of Kentucky racing, the tracks far turn sits about three furlongs from the border with Tennessee, only 45 minutes from Nashville. With its airport the logical place to disembark, and with Kentucky Downs running non-consecutive days, it makes perfect sense to combine a trip to the historic track with a visit to the honky-tonks, and everything else Music City has to offer.

Nashville has developed something of an “It City” reputation recently, and rightly so - our recreational and cultural options, including food and music and art, have exploded in the last five years after a steady build the decade before. There are dozens of “things to do in Nashville” or “places to eat in Nashville” lists easily found on Google. You should read those. But, if I were planning to come to see races at Kentucky Downs on, say, September 10 and 12, this is how I’d plan my trip.

#### Thursday, September 10

10 A.M. - You’re landing in Nashville, handicapping materials studied on the plane. BNA - the B stands for Berry, not important - is one of easiest, most convenient airports in the US. You’ll be able to walk with your carry-on right into the car rental garage, no shuttles required. You’ll exit the airport area and briefly point your nose to toward Nashville before taking Briley Parkway North, headed towards Kentucky.

11 A.M. - On Briley Parkway headed North, you’ll begin to see signs for Opry Mills, the Grand Ole Opry, and the Gaylord Opryland Hotel. This would be a fine place to exit for lunch - Opry Mills (a huge mall) has plenty of chain restaurants that you’re familiar with and you’re in race mode. Park near the north end though so you can take the short walk to the Grand Ole Opry. Go peak your head in - it’s cool. Nothing will be going on, but cross it off your list. Another time perhaps.

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12:15 P.M. - You've eaten, seen the Opry and you're back on Briley Parkway N. Take I-65N toward Louisville. You'll be in Franklin with 30 minutes to spare.

1:05 P.M. - Post time is in 30 minutes. Check out the casino, the source of all these purses. Decide if you want to be near the clubhouse (top of stretch) or the temporary area near the finish line. You're at the race track - I don't need to tell you how to enjoy your day.

5:30 P.M. - Time to roll back to Nashville. You're going back against traffic so it won't be too bad. You'll pity those going the other direction, though.

6:30 P.M. - Check into your hotel. If you're more of a downtown guy (gal, or couple), enjoying tourists and country music and people-watching, there are plenty of fine options, of which the Omni or Hilton are the best (but priciest). If you're more low-key, and prefer more low-key nightlife options with locals and grad students in the crowd, I'd find a spot in Midtown near Vanderbilt. The Hutton or Hotel Indigo have a boutique flair, but you can find a Courtyard Marriott or Hampton Inn to your liking as well. I'm more the latter, so Midtown it is.



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8:00 P.M. - Thursday night is popular, but people eat early in this town, so any place you find on those Googled lists should be able to seat you. After a travel day, though, I like to stick close to my hotel. Start off exploring Midtown with a craft cocktail at Union Common and enjoy its great service and Art Deco decor. I love eating there with a group, but you'll also find a well-spirited crowd just up the street at Tavern on Broadway, and they'll have the NFL opener between the Steelers and Pats on their big screen.

11:00 P.M. - If you haven't retired for the night, a half dozen places in Midtown will have open-air patios and lively crowds to continue the night. Red Door, Losers, Winners, Soulshine, Rebar, Corner Pub; all have their charms. Red Door is the longest-tenured establishment but will have the most difficult-to-navigate crowd. Losers, Winners, and Rebar are all in a row and you can see what's your speed. But if it's one last beer or late-night bar food I want, I'd hit the Corner Pub Midtown for a local Yazoo brew and their famous cheese beans.

### Friday, September 11

7:00 A.M. - Dude(tte)(s), you're on vacation. Snooze button.

8:30 A.M. - You've snoozed, showered and changed and you have a whole day to check out Nashville. But, you've got the Kentucky Downs handicapping contest tomorrow and need to fit some study in the day. Hopefully you have printed out some materials because the DRF is hard to find in print in Nashville. Your Googled guides are going to tell you to head to Hillsboro Village to have breakfast at Nashville's most famous breakfast spot, the Pancake Pantry. I do not love 30-minute waits to sit, so if you're like me, you'll want to head one block further to Fido, a locally-owned coffee shop with a fantastic breakfast menu. I love breakfast burritos but there's plenty for every taste - being so near to Vanderbilt and Belmont Universities, half the people in here will be studying. You and your PPs won't be out of place.

10:00 A.M. - Your breakfast burrito was substantial and, faced with the day ahead, a little exercise may be in order. Nashville has a ton of parks and walking trails within minutes of downtown, but the two most popular are Radnor Lake and Percy Warner Park. Both are an easy drive, but Radnor's the more naturally beautiful and smaller. Head south on 12th Avenue/Granny White Pike (the average number of names for any given road in Nashville is 1.5) and turn left on Otter Creek Rd. There are no signs (we like it that way).

11:30 A.M. - After your walk, you're faced with a choice. You could head south, toward Franklin, Tennessee, and make an afternoon of walking around its neat downtown area then driving out to some amazing countryside in every direction. Heading west will take you through Nashville's Forest Hills and Belle Meade communities, with tree-lined boulevards passing by palatial homes, several occupied by stars of country music. I'd suggest heading back up Granny White/12th Avenue and into the up-and-coming 12 South neighborhood and its mix of restaurants and boutiques. Consult your lists again for stores (Imogene+Willie is most popular), but I definitely recommend Edley's BBQ for lunch. It's one of two superlative BBQ shops in town, sharing that distinction with Martin's two blocks over on Belmont Blvd. If you're so inclined at this time, you may enjoy a Bushwacker (basically a chocolate milkshake for adults) on the Edley's patio and study some more. You can hop around several places in the neighborhood before heading back to your hotel for a nap.

2:00 P.M. - Nap time. Have I mentioned you're on vacation? For those less inclined to midday slumber, though, you could use this opportunity to tour around Nashville's downtown in a less crowded fashion. I highly recommend the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum - it really is more a museum of music, full stop, because "country" had so many influences and has influenced so many other genres. It's awesome. Not four blocks away is the Ryman Auditorium ("The Mother Church"), which is as revered a music venue as any in the world. Seeing a show  
*(continued on next page)*

there is a bucket-list item, but that's another trip.

4:30 P.M. - Before heading out for your evening, I might suggest strolling over to Vanderbilt University and briefly walking around the campus. The main campus is a National Arboretum and could easily lay claim to being the most beautiful urban campus in the country, with red-brick buildings nestled amongst magnolias and century-old oak trees. One hundred feet in, you'd never know you were in a city of a million people. It's something else.

6:00 P.M. - Tonight's the night to get out a little bit. Uber and Lyft are your friends in Nashville, because the cabs here tend to congregate at the airport and downtown, where the tourist density is highest. If you decide to make the trip to Nashville, make reservations at your Friday and Saturday night destinations as soon as you can, ideally after reading this. Three neighborhoods are great for going for dinner and drinks on a Friday night - Germantown (North Nashville) and Five Points and Eastland (East Nashville). If you want to try multiple places in a night, almost every restaurant has dinner service at the bar, which is great for trying multiple places. I dig all these places

- Germantown - City House, Rolf & Daughters, 5th & Taylor, Butchertown Hall
- Five Points - Margot
- Eastland - Two Ten Jack, Rosepepper Cantina, Eastland Cafe

10:00 P.M. - Hopefully, you did a little bit of everything tonight but a big race day and handicapping contest is ahead. You may find a craft cocktail nightcap to your liking at Patterson House back in Midtown, or just something back at the hotel. Get some rest - there's a big race day and contest tomorrow.

### **Saturday, September 12**

8:00 A.M. - Wake up, get ready then walk two blocks to Noshville on Broadway, a classic diner/deli that is well-known for its breakfast offerings. It may only be there a short time longer, as Midtown is transforming in a hurry. Try the kosher pickles; yes, even for breakfast.

10:00 A.M. - You're ready to retrace your steps back north to Franklin. It's worth getting there a little early to get registered for the contest, get your space just right, and start simulcasting. It'll be a big day.

6:00 P.M. - Time to say goodbye to Kentucky Downs, and hopefully you're in the mood to celebrate. Downtown Nashville is the perfect place to do so. Head back to your hotel and get ready for the night.

8:00 P.M. - Take a short Uber ride or cab to the area known as the Gulch, about four square blocks of restaurants, bars, shops, and venues. The highest

concentration of restaurants is on McGavock Street, and places like Adele's (Southern), Moto (Italian), Virago (Sushi), and Kayne Prime (Steakhouse) require advance reservations. I recommend each of these places, but there are several more casual options in the same area.



10:00 P.M. - After dinner, take a cab or Uber to Nashville's downtown, Broadway between 2nd and 5th Avenues. While you can find good country music in any of half-a-dozen honky-tonks, my favorite destinations are Tootsie's, Robert's Western Wear, and The Stage. The big secret to avoiding the long lines to get into these places? Go around back to the alley between these bars and the Ryman Auditorium. All the honky-tonks have front and rear entry/exit for safety reasons, and lines in the back won't be very deep. There's plenty to explore on Broadway and Second Avenue, so no need to stay in one place for too long.

1:00 A.M. - Head back to the hotel - I hope you've booked a mid-afternoon flight, and requested a late check-out.

### **Sunday, September 13**

10:00 A.M. - Wake up and get ready - today will be about taking it easy before heading home.

10:45 A.M. - Walk the short distance from your hotel to the corner of Broadway and 19th Avenue to Hattie B's. It doesn't open until 11, but its popularity has meant a line out the door during most lunch hours. Getting there early will reduce your wait for Nashville's most famous food item, hot chicken. Basically fried chicken with varying amounts and mixes of chili powders included in the batter and spice paste, hot chicken has exploded from a few small (but famous) purveyors a decade ago to a staple on restaurant menus in Nashville and throughout the South. Hattie B's has found a niche in Midtown, and it's a convenient place for you to try this uniquely Nashville meal.

12:00 P.M. - Nashville has a lot to see, so grab a Coke refill and drive around before heading to the airport. Centennial Park has Nashville's full-size replica of the Greek Parthenon. Head south to check out some remnants of the Civil War's Battle of Nashville or (further south) the Battle of Franklin. If there's any little thing you missed

2:30 P.M. - Head to the airport, drop off your rental car, and check in. I hope you enjoyed your stay. Come back soon and do it all again.

# QUICK HITS

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## Travers Handle through the Roof

The handle on this past Saturday's Travers Stakes was massive, going over \$49.6 million and representing a 24.5% increase over the 2014 number of \$39.9 million. This meant Travers Day had a higher handle than both Breeders' Cup Friday last year and Kentucky Oaks Day this year.

Simulcast numbers led to the big boost, going from \$29 million in 2014 to \$38.1 million this year.

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

## Laurel's Summer Meet a Success

Laurel held a summer meet for this first time this year, and the numbers proved very strong, capped by an all sources handle of over \$3 million on Maryland Pride Day (August 22).

"We're delighted with the summer meet," said Maryland Jockey Club President and General Manager Sal Sinatra. "Our handle was up over comparable dates, which would have been Wednesday's in the fall and winter, and we had good crowds throughout the weekend. It seemed our fans liked our schedule and we saw more people come here that had never been here for twilight racing and family days. We're also extremely pleased with the \$3 million on Maryland Pride Day, something we haven't seen at Laurel in quite some time.

For full details on all the handle numbers and the rest of the story, click [here](#).

## Two Players Hit \$821,237 Pick 6 at Saratoga

The Pick 6 on Travers Day was not hit, sending a \$557,000 carryover into the next day. Almost \$2 million in new money was sent into the pool, and then the sequence proved tough, resulting in an \$821,237 score for a pair of horseplayers.

For additional details on this story, please click [here](#).

## Xpressbet Says It Was Cyberterrorism Victim

On August 23 the advance deposit wagering site Xpressbet was down for several hours, which the company

was the result of a cyberterror attack, which have been happening to ADW sites with more frequency as of late.

Ron Luniewski, president of Xpressbet, told Ray Paulick that the company has filed a report with the FBI, giving them facts and information about the attack.

"They'll look for patterns to see if they are similar to other attacks," Luniewski said. He said the online company is constantly under cyber attacks "at varying levels of sophistication" but that "in the last couple of weeks they've become more sophisticated. We are now getting some indications these are the same guys that shut down the largest ISP in the United Kingdom several weeks ago."

TVG was also down on the same day, which included the Pacific Classic at Del Mar, although they were not disabled as long as Xpressbet and the sites Xpressbet provides the betting framework for were. TVG said their issues were caused by a network error and not cyberterror.

Handle for the Pacific Classic card was down, probably at least in part because of these issues.

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



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## Judy Wagner Stays as Horseplayer Rep on NTRA Board

Judy Wagner, who was appointed to the National Thoroughbred Racing Association (NTRA) Board last year as the first and only horseplayer representative, will be staying on for three more years. This action occurred at the NTRA's recent Annual Meeting held at Del Mar.

Wagner won the 2001 National Handicapping Championship and as a member of the NTRA Board, she has been working hard on improving important issues for horseplayers like modernizing pari-mutuel tax rules. She visited Capitol Hill the day after the conclusion of this year's National Handicapping Championship to speak about that issue.

Additional details on this story, including Alex Waldrop's comments on the National Handicapping Championship, are available [here](#).

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# Is Racing Dead? Nope

By [Jonathan Stettin](#)

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

The rumors about the death of horse racing have been somewhat exaggerated. While it's no secret we have our issues, and some easily identifiable areas that need improvement, the Sport of Kings is far from dead. In fact I'd argue these are some glorious times in this great game.

At least part of that is owed to our first Triple Crown winner in 37 years, American Pharoah. This sleek, fast, well-built colt continues to deliver one awe inspiring performance after another. It's special to watch for any lover of the breed, game, or athletic superiority. I say in part because American Pharoah is not the only world class race horse we have had the pleasure of watching recently. Think about it, in just the past few years we have enjoyed some truly great horses by any standards.

Rachel Alexandra had a 3-year-old filly campaign that ranks with the best of them. Zenyatta may have even been better than her when push comes to shove. Wise Dan is as diversified a top stakes horse as you'll find. Is there a distance or surface he would not at least be competitive on against top competition? How about Beholder who doesn't get the credit she deserves but is one top class filly. She's been top class at all ages thus far and isn't finished yet. All this amidst racing being dead or dying. The game and landscape is changing, not dying.

It is also noteworthy that we are seeing these superior world class equine athletes, when commercial breeding has a hard focus on speed, not distance and longevity. Furthermore, it is happening despite the widespread over use of Lasix. Almost all American Thoroughbreds run on Lasix today whether they bleed or not. That can't help, but we are still seeing some truly remarkable horses. Racing's not dead, not by a long shot.

No, a Triple Crown winner does not solve all our problems. It's not supposed to. It surely helps our exposure though. The crowds at Belmont and Monmouth for his last two races before the Travers were refreshing. A friend of mine was poolside this weekend amongst a crowd of all ages. About 5:30 the pool emptied to comments of, "We are going to watch American Pharoah." In late June, I was at the DMV office. My phone rang and my ring tone is the bugle call to post. What else would you expect? As it rang, the girls working behind the counter all took notice and said Wow American Pharoah. They identified the call with him. It was quite the Kodak moment for racing. Racing's not dead.

It was also somewhat sentimental to see a daughter of Rachel Alexandra, Rachel's Valentina, win her debut at Saratoga on Haskell day in New Jersey. After all Rachel won The Haskell during her brilliant 3-year-old campaign.

This was American Pharoah's day however, and he was not about to share it with anyone except his partner Victor Espinoza. In an effortless mile and an eighth he put to rest any sound opinions about his greatness and deserving of inclusion in the conversation of the best of the bests.

Great ones have those intangibles too. Zenyatta danced and posed for the cameras. She loved strutting her stuff. American Pharoah is like a loving pet, almost like a dog. He's a kind and gentle animal until he gets his cue to run on by you.



The nature of our game is speculation. We do it from the breeding shed, to the sales ring, to the starting gate. I've always said and felt comparing horses from different eras is pointless and comes down to a matter of personal opinion. I don't think that's speculation but fact. We can group greats together but who's better is all about opinion. Unless we line them up we don't know.

I had this very conversation with Mike Smith once. Mike's ridden some of the best of the best and has a savvy opinion. He agrees it's all opinion and preference when it comes to comparing different eras. You can compare times and judge that way but remember that \$10k claimer who goes 1:09 flat every time, until you put him next to a stake horse and they finish in 1:12 and you can't find him. Or you can say this one ran against better than that one. Nonsense as horses like most athletes will run or play to their competition. Just ask Sugar Ray Leonard, or Kobe Bryant. The only way we know is to line them up.

Owners like Ahmed and Justin Zayat have been great for the game as well. They remain open and even interactive about their stable and racing operations. They both engage and answer fans on social media and even address the tough questions when they come up.

I don't think there is a fan, reporter, or race track worker who has requested a meeting or photo op with American Pharoah who has been turned down. The fact they only recently entered the game and have already bred one of the best, on top of an already enviable Kentucky Derby record has got to encourage others to get in the game.

So despite the myriad of issues the sport faces daily, from drugs, cheating, commercial breeding, mismanagement of tracks, aftercare, injuries, handle, attendance and more, racing is very much alive.

## Handicapping: The Theory of Everything

-or-

### Why Our Meticulous Analyses Get Screwed Up So Often!

By Vin Rogers

Consider this common scenario: Joe Horseplayer is analyzing past performances for a claiming, dirt sprint at Aqueduct's inner track. He knows his stuff: inner track favors speed – the horse he likes (let's call him "Mystery") has good early kick, wire-to-wire last – qualifies on class, connections, affinity for this track. Joe has viewed replays of Mystery's last two races and all the pieces fit. This guy should win.

But – Mystery does *not* win. He gets out of the gate okay; no trip issues – is on the lead briefly; then fades, finishes fourth in noticeably slower time than his most recent races.

Joe is understandably perplexed. He suspects drugs, larceny. He checks and rechecks his analysis; then berates himself for, perhaps, overemphasizing speed figures and track bias. Next time, he thinks, pay more attention to class – or pedigree – or something else.

But Joe's methodology was sound! The fault, dear Brutus, lay not in Joe's numbers but rather in the mind, the personality of this complex creature we call the HORSE. Many years ago I wrote a children's book about a racehorse called Sunshine Mary. The inspiration for the book came from a piece I'd read in the *Daily Racing Form*: Sunshine Mary had raced 14 times and finished last in 11 of her races; and next to last in the other three. *But* – she continued to run eye-popping workouts on a daily basis! How to explain this mystery? As a horse owner and rider, I knew a bit about equine behavior; thus this explanation for Sunshine Mary's performance appeared in the book: (remember, it's a *children's* book!)

- "Suddenly she felt alone and a little frightened. She did not like running out there on the track by herself. It seemed like one of her lonely morning workouts. But then she heard the clippety-clopping of the horse behind her. She saw them running close together, and she could feel the thunder of their hooves on the track. Sunshine Mary slowed down. Soon one horse, then another, then another, and then another horse caught up with her. Then Sunshine Mary was surrounded by horses. She felt warm and safe as they gathered around her. She galloped easily and happily along until the race was over. This

time Sunshine Mary didn't finish last – but, of course, she didn't finish first either."

I think I was, quite innocently, on to something!

I've read most of the experts on Thoroughbred horse racing analysis; Beyer, Free, Fotias, Scott, Christ, Davidowitz, Friedman, Meadow – and others. My 3x5 card notes, laid end to end, might stretch to Chicago.

These are smart guys; experienced guys – and I've learned an enormous amount from them. But – there is one *huge* gap in the handicapping literature I've read; insight into the *mind* of the Thoroughbred racehorse.

Horses have, of course, been ridden, trained, and observed for centuries; the Mongols on the Asian Steppes, the ancient Greeks and Romans – and – in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the father of modern horse breeding and understanding – perhaps the first "horse whisperer" – the legendary Federico Tesio.

Tesio and many others were interested in the horse's mind as well as its body. What goes on in a horse's mind – its personal, social, and emotional conformation can have an enormous effect on its physical performance.

I've spent the last two or three months delving into the fascinating field of horse psychology. I found a number of helpful references and finally settled on four recent sources: J. Warren Evans' "Horses: a Guide to Selection, Care and Enjoyment"; Robert Miller's "Understanding Ancient Secrets of the Horse's Mind"; Eunice Rush's "Know You, Know Your Horse"; and most importantly Kerry Thomas's "Horse Profiling: The Secret to Motivating Equine Athletes".

Rush and Morrow emphasized the similarities between human right brain-left brain social style traits, i.e., horses can be patient or impatient, subservient or dominant, compliant or assertive, confident or uncertain.

Evans divides horses into five major temperament types: quiet, interested, nervous, stubborn, and – sometimes – treacherous. Miller's Ancient Secrets of the Horse's Mind include the secrets of: flight, i.e. flight as a horse's primary survival behavior; perception – constantly on the lookout for danger; memory – infallible- forgets nothing – and, finally, dominance hierarchy; e.g., some horses attempt to control the movement of their peers.

Kerry Thomas's work, however, is seminal to this discussion because he, far more than the others, relates his knowledge of and experience with equine athletes' psychology to the thoroughbred racehorse.

Thomas's focus is on the study of the emotional conformation of the individual and its relationship to the *herd*; i.e., "the everyday behavior and interaction that occurs within the intricate social order of the Equine circle (herd)."

I recently obtained a short, informal paper coauthored by Thomas and Peter Dent from Bloodstock Research Information Services in Lexington, Kentucky. They observe in their introductory paragraph "One of our long-term goals  
(continued on next page)

is to change the way people look at races; ...“the study of equine communication”, they write, “is like opening a window to the invisible.”

Some on-track examples from the Thomas-Dent paper:

1. A horse whose vision is restricted by wearing blinkers for the first time overcompensates by turning its head to see the world around it (the other horses in the herd) disrupting the efficiency of its forward motion.
2. A horse seeks the comfort of movement with another horse. Buddy-up horses are dependent on another horse for safety, direction and rhythm of motion.
3. Some horses will prefer to be near the back of the field early in a race in order to read the other members of the group’s intentions. They are, in fact, sizing up the field and determining where they want to go.
4. A horse engages in a pace duel with one other horse, not thinking about the rest of the field, the length of the race, or anything else but that one-on-one struggle.
5. One horse infringes upon another horse’s comfort zone. Picture an invisible egg surrounding each horse. The size of that egg is dependent on the individual horse. Some horses shy from space infractions, some feed off of close contact.

These sorts of observations do not appear in the data provided by Brisnet, the DRF, TimeForm, or any other data source commonly used by handicappers.



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So – what to do? Most of us are not equipped for the sophisticated analyses of Thomas and Dent. Horses and their behavior are, after all, their life’s work. (My guess is, incidentally, that perceptive trainers and riders – Todd Pletcher, Mark Johnston, David Payne; Johnny Velazquez, James McDonald and Joao Moreira, for example, are well aware of their horses’ mental idiosyncrasies – but, unfortunately, we’re not aware of their awareness.)

The famous (or infamous depending on your point of view) Secretary of Defense under President George W. Bush, Donald Rumsfeld, had it about right when, commenting on the complexities of international affairs, he explained there are: “known knows” (things we know now); “known unknowns” (things we know we do not know) and “unknown unknowns” (things we don’t know we do not know).

For the handicapper, “known knows” – things we know now – include a horse’s average speed, its distance and surface preferences, the quality of its workouts, etc. “Known unknowns” include the horse’s potential trip, its physical health on given day, its ability (or lack of) to carry an added five pounds today, how it will react to starting from an inside (or outside) post for the first time, etc.

“Unknown unknowns” – for most of us – for the average horseplayer – include the sorts of interactions and behaviors described in Thomas and Dent’s on-the-track examples. We are, essentially, helpless here.

Perhaps the best advice is to:

1. Expect your most insightful analyses to be inexplicably wrong from time to time.
2. Do check trips (charts and/or videos) when things don’t work out, i.e., what happened during a given race? My analysis was sound – but did the trip make my numbers irrelevant?
3. Try to eliminate as many variables - “known unknowns” - as possible. For example, one might limit one’s play - as I do - (remember I’m more handicapper than gambler) to non-maiden, six furlong dirt sprints (Thomas believes that the shorter the race, the less opportunity for a group herd-based dynamic to develop). I focus on Aqueduct, Belmont, and Saratoga – tracks where I am familiar with surface idiosyncrasies, trainers, and jocks.
4. Read people like Thomas, Rush, and the others; can’t hurt. You won’t become an expert, but you will know more than you did before – and perhaps become more tolerant of your inevitable handicapping “errors”.

I once owned the most docile, lovable and affectionate Quarter Horse that ever lived: barn name Joey. He was mature, responsive, energetic – completely professional and a joy to ride. One spring morning, as I led him from barn to turnout, he suddenly veered to the right and took off at full gallop. I watched – helplessly of course – then said to myself – not in anger, but rather like remonstrating with a 5-year-old child: “Joey – what *are* you doing?” Of course I’ll never know. But in Joey’s perceptive mind – on that day, at that place and at that time – something was decidedly *wrong*.

And so it goes on the racetrack. Today’s race is not yesterday’s or last month’s. Sights, sounds, smells, touch – all never exactly the same. “Unknowns” cloud the handicapping picture.

As others far wiser than me have observed - “*this is one tough 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.*

## Ten-Point Handicapping Process

By [Mike Dorr](#)

Inspired by [this post at Equinometry](#), I am writing down my handicapping process in an effort to be more consistent at betting the races. Lenny's post – and his entire blog – is solid throughout, and touches on a lot of the same topics I want to.

### My Handicapping Process

1. Glance over whole card, find races I like to bet – features, stakes, large (8+ fields), maidens – and ones to lay off (short fields, short fields, short fields)
2. Look at the conditions of a given race
3. Look at the morning line odds, identify favorites, noting one or two reasons for favoritism
4. I use Brisnet Ultimate PPs, so I'll look at the upper right of the past performance, noting Speed Figs at Track, Surface, Distance and Recent. Looking for outliers among non-favorites can be useful
5. Handicap the Pace Scenario. BrisPPs pre-note running style, making it pretty easy to sketch out pace scenario. Again, I like to look for outliers, esp. lone Es among Ps and Ss or lone Ss among a lot of Es
6. Check trainer/jockey angles after this
7. Look at the running lines, noting class of previous races especially, and look for similarities to current conditions. Also, try to figure out if the trainer has targeted this race in a meaningful fashion.
8. Look at recent works
9. Look at pedigree stats in maiden races; need to develop something similar for turf races
10. Plot out betting strategy

Of all these things, I feel like I'm worst at 10, but I'm open to the idea that it's actually 1-9 I'm bad at.

*About the author-I have not spent a day in my life inside the Thoroughbred industry. I have been a casual racing fan most of my life, remembering fondly the Triple Crown races of Swale, Alysheba, Sunday Silence and others. "[Pure Heart](#)" by Bill Nack, about the death of Secretariat, remains the best article on sports I have ever read.*

*It was not until 2004, however, that I attended my very first Thoroughbred race, at the Fair Grounds. Seeing Afleet Alex win the 2005 Arkansas Derby and his subsequent performance in the Triple Crown marked me as a true racing fan. Multiple visits to the track and simulcast and hundreds of dollars wagered have made Thoroughbred racing my sporting passion.*

*I currently live in Nashville, Tennessee, with my wife and two boys. I consider Oaklawn Park in Hot Springs, Arkansas, my home track.*

## Interview With Trainer Tom Morley

By [Neal Benoit](#)

*This piece appeared on Neal's website [gettingoutofthegate.com](#), and it is reprinted with his permission.*

When [we last visited with Tom, nearly two years ago](#), his stable consisted of himself, [Maggie Wolfendale](#), one groom, one hot-walker, and about a dozen horses. Since that time, his stable has grown to around fifty horses, with 33 stabled on the grounds at Saratoga and Belmont, a dozen two-year olds in nearby training centers where Tom visits them on a regular basis, and about five older horses turned out at farms (having a mid-season break). His staff now consists of two full-time assistants, eight grooms, eight hot-walkers, and, of course, now lady of the castle – Maggie Wolfendale-Morley.



Tom Morley Stable remains a New York based operation, but will soon be expanding into other racing circuits. Tom told us "Fifty horses is a good competitive number to divide the stable." After Saratoga, Tom plans on leaving some horses at Saratoga and moving the rest back to Belmont. In the fall, he intends to send some horses to Keeneland for the first time. Then over the winter he plans to ship a division to Florida and stable them at either Payson Park or Palm Meadows. In Florida, his two assistants, Pearl Hagadorn and Sarah O'Brien, will manage the operations while Tom runs the New York division. Tom added "In the future, when my staff has been with me longer, I wouldn't be afraid to let the number of horses grow larger. At the end of the day, it's not just a numbers game, but you need to have the numbers because there is always a level of attrition, when horses get hurt, sick, or taken away by an owner."

The backbone of the Tom Morley Stable is made up of homebreds and horses purchased at yearling and 2-year old sales. In discussing the horses in his barn, Tom said "We have a good mix of grass and dirt horses, but I think we are lacking a little bit in long-distance dirt horses. I tried to focus on that in the two-year old sales this year, buying horses that are bred to go a mile or longer on the dirt."

*(continued on next page)*

The amount of grass horses in his barn and the absence of grass racing during the winter in New York convinced Tom that it was time to send some horses south. He believes that owners will be more inclined to send turf-meant horses to him if they know the opportunity exists for them to race on the turf year round.

Tom has become much more active in helping owners in the process of purchasing horses. Tom explained, "We have developed a very thorough process. I attend the Breeze shows and viewing days creating a list of horses I am interested in. Our blood-stock agent, Conor Foley, does a lot of slow-motion replay watching on the horses. If a horse makes his list and my list, then we go to look at the horse three or four more times. Finally, they are vetted and if they pass, we assign a value to the horse to make sure that the owner doesn't spend more than that. Conor is someone I trust immensely. We went through the Darley Flying Start program together and we've had a lot of success with the horses we bought at the sales. He is an integral part of the team – both at the sales and for private purchases."



One of the challenges in selecting horses to purchase is evaluating the mental state of the horse at the sales. Tom describes the horses this way, "The babies at the sales are already in an incredibly fragile mental state. They have been asked to run a faster eighth of a mile than they will ever be asked to run again, at a very early stage of their life."

Tom explained that in a sale with 1,200 horses in it, a horse might breeze on the first day followed by four days of breeze shows and three days of viewing. He adds, "These horses have gone from being fit to breeze to have a week of just showing. That can play with their minds a lot. I am looking for a horse who is always composed and does what is asked of him: walk, stand, don't rear-up, or be sweaty in the sales ring."

For example at the April sales, Tom had two horses on his list but after watching them in the back room before the sale, he changed his mind. He said, "One of them flipped over and the other one was completely washed out and a mess." Needless to say, Tom and the owners did not bid on those horses. Evaluating the mental side is very

important because it allows Tom the opportunity to see how a horse will handle the training track with countless horses running around them and how they will handle the pressure of being in the paddock once they get to the races.

Once a horse has been purchased at the sale, Tom explains, "They are sent to a farm where they do very light training in the morning and are turned out in the paddock or walked the rest of the day. We want them to get over the sales, these are an enormously stressful thing for two year-olds and we want them to know that is not what the rest of their life is going to be about."

When I spoke with Tom two years ago, he referred to horse racing and trainers as being somewhat of a "closed shop." To combat this perception, Tom has made a sincere effort to open up the doors to his stable and allow people to see what goes on "behind the curtain". One of the ways he does this is embracing social media, in particular, Twitter.

He feels Twitter can be a great communication tool to reach people who are interested in the stable and his horses or those who might want to get involved in the stable at an ownership level. For example, one of the ways he does this is by routinely tweeting comments about his horses on the days they are racing. Tom said, "I try to give an honest and levelheaded opinion of what might be going to happen that afternoon or what I think happened during the race. For example, Amazing Anne ran third in a race at the Belmont spring meet. We had a very heavy rain storm that morning and I felt the ground was a little bit dead. Junior (Alvarado) and I felt the filly did not handle the ground as well as she does a firm course. I felt this was important information and explained why she finished third even though she was second-favorite, and why she was beaten by ten lengths. You can be honest and offer up an opinion after the race as much as you can before the race." In addition to Twitter, Tom has restarted his blog on his [website](#).

Tom takes the same honest and open approach with his owners. He tells them right up front that he runs an open shop and invites them to visit their horses at any time. While the majority of his owners likely appreciate his candor, it has actually caused him to lose an owner on occasion. For example, Tom told us, "I was fired by one owner for being too honest with him. He couldn't handle the fact that his horse wasn't a superstar and he wanted to run his horse in a race where the horse had no chance. Sadly, the horse was taken away. It's possible this type of owner will go through two or three other trainers and eventually realize that at least Tom Morley was being honest with me and that my horse wasn't Secretariat. Maybe then he'll decide to give me another chance because I told him the truth from the word go and that is all I want to do."

*(continued on next page)*

Tom wants his owners to know that if they have decided to use him as their trainer, he is not going to tell them something that is not true. Tom says, "If your horse is slow, we are not going to spend two years training it because it is not going to get any quicker. It is in the owner's interest to know their horse is slow."

A big change in the personal life of Tom Morley happened on June 13, 2015 when he married [Maggie Wolfendale](#) (paddock analyst for NY Racing Association). When asked how this has affected Maggie's role at Tom Morley Stable, Tom replied, "To be honest, being married to Maggie hasn't changed anything. She is still one of my leading riders on some of the best horses in the barn and, honestly, she's becoming better and better on the horses and her feedback is invaluable to me."

Maggie continues her afternoon position at NYRA and she must remain professional at all times, including being honest when commenting on Tom's horses in a race. Tom explains, "She might not comment on 8 of 10 horses that I run, but that might be because she does not have anything to add to what she has said before. Maybe they are 15 to 1 and she only has a small window of opportunity and can't talk about every horse."

However, when given the opportunity, Maggie does not hesitate to talk about Tom's horses. Tom said, "Just the other day, Noble Cornerstone was in the paddock and Maggie said I have to comment on him, he's 100 pounds heavier and looks incredible. The comments she made were hugely objective. I expect nothing less than that because she is a professional. She does receive a fair amount of social media abuse, and I call it abuse, over things like her commenting that one of my first-time starters might need a race, but then he won the race. Fortunately, she has thick skin, takes a deep breath and deals with it. Our relationship has definitely not made her life easier and I tell her, 'don't ever let what you and I have ever change the way you do your job,' because she does a bloody good job. It's just one of the challenges her and I have to deal with, so we get on with it, we do it with a smiling face, and that's what's important."

*About the author- Neal Benoit grew up and still resides in the Saratoga area and became a fan of horse racing during in 1977 when watching Affirmed and Alydar square off as two-year-olds.*

*Neal doesn't consider himself a "professional gambler." He says on his website, "I don't really consider myself a true "gambler." I don't go to casinos, I've never bought a lottery ticket, and I'm not very fond of losing money. I'm a fan of horse racing and I'm a horseplayer. I see each race as a riddle. And for me, the thrill is in solving it.*

*"For me, there is so much more about being a fan of this sport than the wagering opportunities. A byproduct of being a horseplayer is the opportunity to witness majestic animals and amazing people putting on one of the greatest shows on earth. I have the utmost respect for the hard working people involved in the daily grind of this business. Their hard work enables people like me to thoroughly enjoy my time spent at the racetrack."*

## Survivor Contest At Kentucky Downs

### Survive Kentucky Downs at [DerbyWars.com](#)

Highly acclaimed by horseplayers across the country, Kentucky Downs is once again approaching their five day live racing meet. The huge fields assembled for high quality turf racing provide great moments and more importantly prime wagering opportunities. This year, the highest rated track in North America is teaming up with racing's biggest contest site to bring you a great daily contest.

DerbyWars has introduced \$1,000 Kentucky Downs Survivor, a contest that gives players the opportunity to make huge scores for a tiny buy in. DerbyWars players have made returns in excess of 250 times their investment playing Survivor, and you can too!

The rules of Survivor are simple and easy:

- In each designated race, pick a horse to finish first, second or third
- If your horse hits the board, you advance to the next race
- If your horse finishes out of the money, you're out
- You can enter up to FIVE TIMES for \$4 per entry
- If you're the lone survivor, you win the entire pot!

With an average field size over ten horses per race, Kentucky Downs is sure to be the most challenging Survivor venue ever. Last year, favorites won at a rate of 37% percent, and hit the board in nearly two-thirds of races, but when they don't, it's anyone's game. Over half the races go off with ten or more horses, giving you plenty of opportunity to survive the challenge of your opponents.

DerbyWars players get the most bang for their buck in daily Survivor games, just ask Lenny Moon, the author of the blog, "Equinometry". He won the first \$1,000 Saratoga Survivor of the meet and took home one thousand dollars for picking six horses to hit the board.

"Survivor is every horseplayers dream, a way to turn a small investment into a large return and the best part is you don't have to be perfect in every race to do so," he said.

Moon took home the whole \$1,000 pool for just \$4, a 250X return. Had he done a traditional show parlay, his payouts would have been - \$2.60 - \$3.10 - \$4.30 - \$4.90 - \$8.40 - \$3.30. This would have returned \$294.22, or 73X his investment. Survivor is your newest way to turn a little into a lot!

If you're looking for an easy and inexpensive way to make big profits, look no further than Survivor games. Play every day of the 2015 Kentucky Downs Live Racing Meet on [DerbyWars.com!](#)

# A Fork in the Road

By Rich Nilsen

When we arrive at the fork in the road, which path we choose plays a major role in our future success as horseplayers. Each time we come to the split, the decision we make reaffirms the type of bettor we have become, be it good or bad. Fortunately, it is never too late to take the right path, just harder. One of those forks in the road, for me, came two decades ago at Churchill Downs.

SINAN CIERO deserved to be the public choice in the [last race of the day at Churchill Downs on June 5, 1996](#). Winner of his only start while earning an "off the chart" Speed Rating (99) for a first time starter, Sinan Ciero appeared to have tremendous potential. This was a well-bred horse by a top young sire and out of a good producing mare who had already thrown a turf winner. He had the looks of a future stakes horse.

On the BRIS Ultimate Past Performances, the favorite's pedigree stats read as follows:

SIRE: 21% turf, 27% 1st Turf, 6.2 AWD (Average Winning Distance)

DAM: 1 turf winner, 9 starters, 6 winners [at the time of the race]

Sinan Ciero was making his first start on the grass, a surface he was obviously bred for, and he was stretching out to one mile. With an outstanding figure earned in his six-furlong maiden win and sporting two workouts over the Churchill lawn, Sinan Ciero seemed more than capable of winning this race.

Most within the wagering public seemed to see the same thing because Sinan Ciero was being bet down below even-money in this field. On the surface, this race appeared fairly weak, so he looked formidable at 4-5. The chink in the armor, of course, was that this was an inexperienced horse trying a new surface and two turns for the first time. No big deal, right?

In the field of 12, only one other runner, MAJESTIC RANSOM, had the type of pedigree stats that screamed "I want turf, please!" Making his grass debut, Majestic Ransom had the following turf pedigree:

SIRE: 24% turf, 21% 1st Turf, 7.3 AWD

DAM: 1 turf winner, 5 starters, 5 winners

Exiting a win in a conditioned \$25,000 claimer, Majestic Ransom did not have the "future stakes horse" look that the favorite had, but he was in sharp form and bred just as well for the lawn. Majestic Ransom had run a 92 Speed Rating in his recent win and also had won a Maiden Special Weight race two back, running a 91 fig in the mud. It was worth noting that Majestic Ransom's sire, Red Ransom, had a much higher AWD than Dayjur, indicating that the stretch out in distance should be easier for him than for the favorite.

Majestic Ransom opened at 8-1, which was slightly below

his 10-1 morning line. Shortly after the post parade, the odds on Majestic Ransom began to drift up as Sinan Ciero continued to hover around 4-5.

What's a horseplayer to do? This race was the classic example of the dilemma that handicappers face on a regular basis. All horseplayers at one time or another have fallen into the trap of assuming a horse will win just because he is a prohibitive favorite.

"Well, he looks like a future superstar," they think to themselves, "and someone is betting him heavy, so he's probably unbeatable. I'll key him on top in the exotics. I'll key him in the Pick-4."

With experience, many handicappers are able to overcome that detrimental thinking and take advantage of opportunities like the one that was presented in this race.

When it came to pedigree for the turf, there was not much separating Sinan Ciero from Majestic Ransom. However, the same could not be said for the pari-mutuel odds. As the horses were nearing the gate, the former was 4-5 and the latter was 13-1. The decision was easy. Take the high road and bet Majestic Ransom.

The astute horseplayers who strayed from the masses were well rewarded on this day. As the latches sprung open, Majestic Ransom pounced to the early lead, while Sinan Ciero broke sluggishly and went wide in his first race around two turns. The favorite was finished after six furlongs, but Majestic Ransom cruised home easily by three lengths. He topped an unbelievable \$41,141.50 superfecta while returning \$28.60, \$12.40 and \$9.00 across the board.

Making the decision to key on a horse such as Majestic Ransom instead of Sinan Ciero is the difference between being a winning horseplayer and a losing one. It takes conviction and experience. It is important to remember that no one makes money doing the same thing that everyone else is doing. The Majestic Ransoms will not win all the time, but they will be victorious often enough to make it worthwhile in the long run.

When you come to the fork in the road with two horses of similar credentials but vastly different odds, take the less crowded highway. When you reach your destination, the payoff is always more rewarding.



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About the author - Rich Nilsen is Director of Player Services for [BetPTC.com](#), the only ADW that offers instant cash rewards daily. BetPTC is offering up a 25% rewards bonus on Louisiana Downs' wagering in September.

## YouTube Goes to the Races

Just another friendly reminder that YouTube has many horse racing related videos available. From handicapping to movies to sitcoms. If you have some down time, horseplayers have the option to learn some new angles, get in some horse racing history or just be entertained. Here are some gems that can be found on YouTube right now:

### HANDICAPPING

#### [Horse Player NOW Interviews: Andy Beyer](#)

Andy Beyer talks speed figure methodology and how handicappers can best utilize them:



#### ["The Trainer's Edge"](#)

Produced in the 90's, sports commentator Gil Stratton talks with professional trainers and jockeys who explain how to "read" a horse to determine if it's ready to win:

#### **Playing to Win**

Narrated and co-written by Bob Neumeier. Great handicapping insight from the 90's:

Part 1: <https://youtu.be/znCrb0gBcy0>

Part 2: <https://youtu.be/nkaafumvoGE>

Part 3: <https://youtu.be/znCrb0gBcy0>

### HISTORY

#### [Seabiscuit - 1939 Champion Thoroughbred](#)

Screenplay (uses actual footage) about the champion Thoroughbred racehorse "Seabiscuit", based on the story "A Colt Was Born" by Hazel Merry Hawkins.

#### [30th Running of the Wood Memorial](#)

A quickie from 1954:

### TVLAND

#### [Bewitched "Three Men and a Witch on a Horse"](#)

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

### ENTERTAINMENT

#### [Japan World Cup 3](#)

The most bizarre horse racing game ever. It is hard not to crack up watching it:

## Improving the Horse Racing Data Product

By [Mike Dorr](#)

Studying the *Daily Racing Form* the night before a day at the track was one of those customs that appealed to me as a novice horseplayer. As a self-proclaimed "stat geek", this made sense – the numbers in the form presented a puzzle to be solved, and I ate it up. Studying the Form has actually lost some appeal to me as I've become a more serious player. I've realized two things: I'm the exception among new and potential racing fans, and I don't get enough data. I'll post in the future about what I think can be done to make racing data more accessible to casual fans and bettors, those who want to improve their chance at cashing a ticket but who are not going to be handling hundreds of dollars a day at the races. These suggestions are geared to the serious bettor and can be summed up by telling the racing services (DRF, Equibase, BRISnet) to do one thing: REDUCE SEARCH COSTS.

*Note: I use BRISnet in examples below since that is the service I currently use the most, and am familiar with their pricing.*

Let me start off by saying I'm not afraid of a lot of data. I've got about 12 years' experience with database development and data mining and there's nothing I'd like more than to have access to "the database" that all PPs and the accompanying stats are generated from. I don't foresee ever getting that kind of access at a low price, so I'm going to concentrate on making suggestions that are nearer to the current business model.

It occurs to me that a typical Past Performance Card is, in marketing parlance, a "bundle" – the single unit is the PP information for a single race. Historically, bundling PPs for all races at a single track makes perfect sense for how the races used to be bet – on the track. The majority of handle today comes from simulcasts or online through ADWs – a racetrack PP card is not a natural bundle for many bettors. Think of it this way – a typical day at the races bundles stakes races with claimers, maidens and allowance runners at different distances on turf or dirt or AW and with fields of four to 12 runners. A racetrack card primarily helps those bettors targeting the multi-race pools, the P3s-P6s. Many bettors – and I daresay most big bettors – have a niche. Handle numbers would lead you to believe that quality – graded stakes races, HQ meets like Saratoga, Del Mar, and Keeneland, Derby/Belmont/BC – attracts the most action. In the absence of quality, larger fields always produce good betting opportunities, which ultimately drives handle. I personally like betting maiden races, since a little pedigree knowledge goes a long way to finding a price on a horse. Some bettors like horizontals; others, vertical bets.

A bettor could, with a half hour's work, find the set of races that he's most attracted to do on any given day. An

*(continued on next page)*

information service (say BRISnet) can help that bettor reduce his search costs (his time, basically) by creating bundles targeted at simulcast and online bettors.

#### PP Bundling Options

- Class: 10 most expensive stakes races on a given day; all stakes/allowance races on East Coast; 10 best MSWs, etc.
- Field Size: Based on current entries, the 10-12 races with the most horses entered to run on a given day
- Bet Type: 10-12 Races offering \$0.50 tris, \$0.10 supers – sorted by Class/Field Size; Late P4s for east coast tracks
- Surface/Distance: 10-12 Turf Races, Sprints, Two-turns, etc.
- Post Time: Races within a given simulcast window, say 2-4 EST

I think you see that the real value here is in combining these options to attract bettors to the races they like the most. Have a bundle that has all allowance-level races and above with nine or more entries – these formful races with many opportunities to find price horses should attract big bettors, but they're not always going to find them if they limit themselves to playing just three tracks.



How would one price bundles like these? Right now, the effective price for a BRIS Track PP is effectively \$0.20; 10% TwinSpires share of takeout of a \$2 win bet to get Ultimate PPs free. I can envision pricing these bundles for \$0.10/race. For a 10-race card, that's \$1.00. Using the same math as above, a \$10 daily handle would offset the price of a single bundle. Handle \$20/30 and Ultimate PP "Better Bet Bundles" are free for the day. During its Breeders' Cup promotion, TwinSpires/Brisnet showed the ability to associate higher handles with information discount and, apparently, had considerable success with that promotion.

I believe the feedback loop of driving bettors to good races and producing handle gains will lead tracks to card better races. California would have done fine this spring if field size jumped up to 9 a race like Tampa Bay, takeout hike be damned. If bundling drives more bettors to a 12-horse claimer at Turfway, then we'll have supported the practices the sport needs. But for me, I want to identify more overlays, win more money, and this would help me do that.

## A Final Word on Kentucky Downs

You've no doubt heard, sensing an unmistakable pride in the pronouncement, that Kentucky Downs is unique, owing largely to its 1 5/16-mile turf course, which from the air must look like a giant pear.



As uniqueness goes, that's impressive enough and guaranteed to send a flutter through the pastoral heart. But for horseplayers, here's another and perhaps more significant reason Kentucky Downs has become something unique in America's racing experience: If you had bet \$2 to win on every favorite here last year, you would have made a 34% profit on your investment. And that's — well, that's simply extraordinary, unprecedented in recent memory, or any memory, for that matter.

Yes, Kentucky Downs is unique because of its undulating, European-style turf course and its all-turf-all-the-time program and the blessed brevity of its schedule, which contributes to a carefree and festive atmosphere. All that's wonderful. But for the horseplayer, whether serious or casual, here's wonderful: large fields with good horses, and plenty of betting opportunities with a low takeout. And that summarizes the bettor's perspective of Kentucky Downs.

It has become one of the most bettor-friendly racetracks in America, a veritable bettor's paradise. For more than half the Kentucky Downs races (51.2 percent) in 2013, 10 or more horses lined up in the starting gate. And the racing was very formful — that is, predictable. Favorites won 37.2 percent of the races, and yet the average favorite paid \$6.60. Nearly a third of the winning favorites paid \$8 or more. In other words, you're unlikely to find a four-horse field here with a 2-5 favorite that renders all the betting options equally unappealing, a situation that seems to have become commonplace elsewhere. In fact, the Kentucky Downs fields were so typically large that there was only one odds-on favorite the entire 2013 season, and Seruni, in an unusually dull effort from the old pro, finished fifth at 4-5.

This isn't to suggest, however, that you should adopt betting on favorites as your strategy, but it does emphasize that at Kentucky Downs, in part because of the large fields, the odds are so attractive that even betting favorites can be profitable. The other factor in this oddity,

*(continued on next page)*

of course, is the takeout.

As you probably know, the takeout is the cost of betting: what's removed from the pool before the money is returned in the form of payoffs. A lower takeout means a higher payoff, reflected in better odds. And Kentucky Downs has become an industry leader in lowering the takeout. In fact, the track has the lowest takeout in the country (18.25 percent) for exactas. The Pick 5 will offer a takeout of only 14 percent. Rolling doubles, Pick 3s, Pick 4s, trifectas, superfectas, and the Hi-5 all have 19-percent takeout, and straight win, place and show wagers have a 16-percent takeout.



With a lower takeout tantamount to lower prices, it's almost as if there's a sale every day at the racetrack. But only almost, because sales generally involve an effort to move products that might otherwise be unattractive. And, over those few weeks in September, Kentucky Downs will offer some of the most attractive racing in the country. That's right, some of the best racing in America, right here in Franklin, Kentucky — and the most lucrative racing, too, with purses averaging \$1.5 million a day.

Many outstanding horses have raced at Kentucky Downs over the years. Yaqthan, Chorwon, Silverfoot, Rahystrada and Ioya Bigtime all have won the track's premier event, the Kentucky Turf Cup. Sovereign Award winner Never Retreat won the Kentucky Downs Ladies Turf Stakes in 2010 on her way to earning nearly \$1.4 million. A year before she won the Breeders' Cup Distaff, One Dreamer won a stakes at Kentucky Downs. Morluc, G H's Pleasure, Battle Won and Silver Medallion all won stakes at Kentucky Downs. But in terms of quality, the racing this year promises to raise the standard.

So, yes, Kentucky Downs is unique, with its giant pear of a turf course and all those zeroes dancing in a chorus line, but it's also a horseplayer's paradise. And that's what you probably need to keep in mind when you saunter up to the wickets to invest in the short-term futures market — that and the track's winning trends. And, make no mistake, knowing the trends — something else that makes Kentucky Downs unique — can be the difference between winning and just having a good time.

Speed, for example, has a significant advantage in the

races run at distances less than a mile. In 2013, nearly half the winners, or 8 of 18, led virtually from the start in these sprints. And only three horses rallied inside the eighth-pole to win a sprint.

That might seem strange since the run down the lane at Kentucky Downs takes in one of the longer homestretches found on any turf course in North America. It's about a quarter-mile. But, and here's the rub, the stretch run to the wire slopes uphill, which tends to compromise the strength of late-runners. At the same time, in those sprints, the run to the turn is downhill, which only emphasizes the speedsters' advantage.

The situation changes at a mile, or a mile and 70 yards, where the initial run down the backstretch is uphill. Only three winners led throughout at this distance in 2013, and all three were able to take advantage of a soporific opening half-mile (49.0 seconds, 49.64 and 49.65). But the typical winner rallied from about five lengths back after the opening half-mile, and a few were able to rally from far back, such as Drama Drama, who overcame an 11 length deficit to win, and Miz Ida, who charged from 8 1/2 lengths back to take the Kentucky Downs Ladies' Turf Stakes.

No matter the distance, though, the winner usually makes his decisive move in the expansive, sweeping turn that propels the horses into the stretch. In sprints, the broad turn allows speedsters to continue their momentum unchecked; and in longer races, it allows the late runners, even encourages them, to launch their bids early.

## From the Ratings Issue

### 1. Kentucky Downs

Total Score: 3.63

Field Size: 10.18

Best Bets: The entire betting menu scores the best in North America

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

This southern Kentucky track with a short, boutique meet has made serious noise in the betting landscape since 2012.

Mike Maloney, a professional horseplayer, sums it up nicely: "Big fields and competitive racing are certainly part of the equation. But Corey Johnsen, unlike many track execs, understands it's good business to give your customers a fair chance to have a successful gambling experience. Do yourself a favor and check out Kentucky Downs."

Horseplayers have responded. In 2011 handle was approximately \$900,000 per race card. In 2014, that number was over \$3 million.

## Q & A With...



**Craig Milkowski**, Chief Figure Maker,  
**TimeformUS**

Q: This season, your top two figure dirt horses at a route are American Pharoah for his Haskell and Beholder for her Pacific Classic. Are you comfortable with those two figures, and do you believe they, at the present time, are well above others if both meet in the Breeders' Cup Classic?

A: I'm comfortable with both figures. The Travers reminded horseplayers (myself included) that big figure, easy wins don't mean the horse will run faster next time. Sometimes it does, sometimes it doesn't. Beholder was the opposite, winning easily without much effort and then exploding to a big number when asked. As for the Breeder's Cup, other horses have run upper 120 figures, so it won't be a cakewalk for anyone.



*Beholder Winning the Pacific Classic - photo by [Penelope P. Miller](#), [America's Best Racing](#)*

Q: Are there any other Classic contenders on your radar?

A: Sure. I think Honor Code has to be respected if the pace gets hot. We've seen his devastating late kick on several occasions already. Keen Ice showed he is still improving and could be a factor. The Woodward may add another contender in Liam's Map.

Q: Speed figures for the Kentucky Derby - and some other races at a distance - have lost some luster over the years. The Derby track seems to change with the longer and longer time to post, 20 horses can make things chaotic, few route races on a card to compare etc. Are these races becoming harder and harder to make figures for?

A: All of the Triple Crown races provide challenges to

figure makers. You are dealing with lightly raced 3-year-olds, more lightly raced than ever in fact, and you are dealing with distances that are not only new to the horses but are rarely run at the tracks over which they are contested, or anywhere for that matter. The goal of speed figures is to equate performances at different distances and we try to keep that in tact at TimeformUS. A G1 performance at 6f should be rated similar to a G1 performance at 10f.

Q: Have any 2-year-olds caught your eye this year so far? Have you seen any lights-out numbers?

I've never really been one to get very excited about 2-year-olds. Nyquist has looked good at Del Mar but I prefer to take a wait and see attitude as the distances get longer.

Q: TimeformUS's color coded bias numbers have seemed to be very popular with players. Can you talk a bit about them?

A: The bias color coding is done mechanically. We look at the average early position horses of winners at each distance and compare that to the winner of each race on the main track for a particular day. We also look at the odds of the horses. We don't want to give too much weight to heavily bet winners. From this information we find the extreme days where speed did much better or much worse than the average. I recommend handicappers peruse the charts for those days. I don't always blindly accept the bias color coding, but I know it gives me a reason to dig deeper. I am confident when a track is not coded (white) that the track was pretty fair and I don't spend extra time on it.

I've been asked about inside/outside bias coding and also turf. Neither are really possible at this time. Inside/outside biases are much more subjective and numeric data that could be analyzed isn't readily available yet. As for turf, tracks simply don't run enough on grass to give a reliable rating. The tracks that do run enough races tend to split them between two courses or by using different rail settings on the same day, which is just like having two separate courses.

Q: There always seems to be something new on the horizon at TimeformUS. Is there anything being looked at or planned that you can share?

A: We are always trying to improve the product. Summer is always busy so we try not to do much during that time. One small change coming that I had been requesting is you will see a "1st time starter" trainer rating for second time starters. It is great to know the Steve Asmussen, for example, has a 95 rating with second time starters, but it sheds more light if you see he is only 65 first time out.



## The "Bounce" in Harness Racing

By Dean Towers

If you read a Thoroughbred handicapping book, visit the DRF website, the Paulick Report, or scan social media, you will often hear racing fans and handicappers talk about "the bounce."

The bounce is a simple enough concept to understand. A horse - sometimes off a long layoff but not necessarily so - runs a really big race with a correspondingly high speed figure. For his or her next race, he or she is likely a favorite, but runs up the track. Bounce theory says the horse had to work far too hard, and ran far too fast for their first effort, and had little in the tank for the comeback race.

It makes sense, but it certainly can be overused. A horse who runs a nice effort on June 1<sup>st</sup>, but does not surface until October 1<sup>st</sup> and runs a terrible race will be said to bounce. A horse with a curb, or who bled, or had a high white cell count, can all run horrible races. A horse who runs a huge figure will often be risen in class, where poor races can and do happen. These horses didn't bounce, things just happened, but the fact does remain: A big effort can take something out of an animal, and he or she can race poorly a few weeks later; in Thoroughbred racing anyway.

Does it happen in harness racing? I think, in certain instances, it does.

Many harness trainers, who after a very tough effort for their charge, place their horse right back in a week later; the horse is sharp, and sound, so there is no reason not to. Sometimes, however, the horse races poorly, and when an owner comes to the paddock after the race, or to the barn the next day to hear what happened, he'll get a little of this:

- "I don't know, [the driver] Steve said he drove perfect"
- "Might be sick, maybe I will take a blood"
- "He drank and cleaned up his feed tub, and he's walking fine, so I don't have any idea, but I will watch him this week"

The fact is, often times nothing shows up during the week. The horse is not lame, is not sick. There is really nothing to explain it. I suspect that the horse - yes, even a tough as nails, wonderful Standardbred - probably bounced.

Perhaps there was something not quite right with him, six or seven days after the big effort. Perhaps he was

slightly pinched by something the trainer couldn't overtly see. Perhaps he lost a little too much weight last week off the tough effort (and Lasix) and he needed two or three more days to recover. Most times we can't, the trainer can't, and the groom can't explain it; horses hide their issues and that's been ingrained in a Darwinian way. But there had to be something bothering the horse.

How do I try to identify potential bounce candidates; to exploit them at the windows? I do a few things:

- I watch a horse's return to the winners circle off a huge effort. Does he look happy and sound, with ears pricked, or dead beat?
- I watch the horse in the post parade the following week. Does he look sound and on the bit like he did the previous week?
- I look at TrackIt or other tools that show lifetime PP's. Has this horse ever raced super-hard in the past and thrown in a clunker the following week?
- My statistics have shown trotters off big wins can have a higher than average failure rate, so I definitely pay stout attention to the square gaiters. A rocky-gaited trotter off a big win is a cross out for me.

The best thing about uncovering these horses is that they will be a favorite, and you only have to be right once or twice out of every ten bets to make some serious money. Throwing out the chalk out of the top four in superfectas can be extremely beneficial.

Another benefit for us as handicappers is that if we do recognize a horse who bounces, that's not the end of it. When the horse is back in the box off a flat effort, we can head back to the windows at an inflated price. I would submit bounce is one of the reasons the beaten favorite angle still shows some value in this exceedingly difficult betting game.

The term "bounce" might be overused, but in my view it does have merit. Any time you or I as handicappers can find a horse others are not on, or can pitch a favorite, it's an opportunity to beat the crowd. And in a pari-mutuel system, that's the name of the game.

*About the author - Dean Towers is a long time handicapper, and board member of the Horseplayers Association of North America*

## Hinckley Leads Contest

Through the end of August, Sally Hinckley is leading the 2015 HANA Harness Grand Circuit Handicapping Challenge presented by the Bellino Stables, DRF Harness, Hambletonian Society, Meadowlands Racing and Entertainment, Northfield Park, Tioga Downs, and Vernon Downs.

For full standings, please click [here](#).

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# The Back Page

This information is courtesy of *Trot Magazine's* Horseplayers Issue. Thank you to Darryl Kaplan for allowing us to re-print it.

HORSEPLAYER/2015

## SURVEY SAYS

**TROT conducted a web survey of horseplayers asking for their thoughts on issues facing racing's customers. More than 300 people participated.**

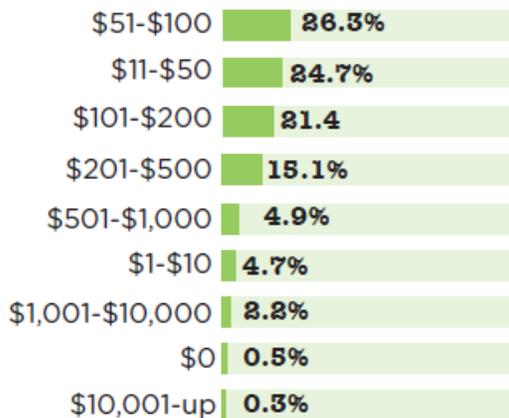


How often do you play the horses?

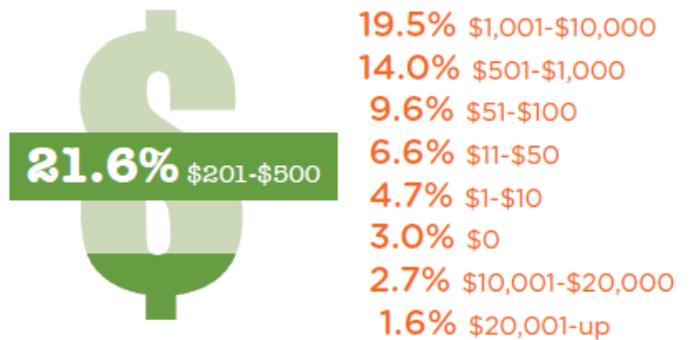
**47.1% WEEKLY**



Approximately how much money do you wager each day when you play the horses?



Approximately how much money do you wager on horse racing each month?



On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 being very little and 5 being very much)...

How much do you like the following wagers:



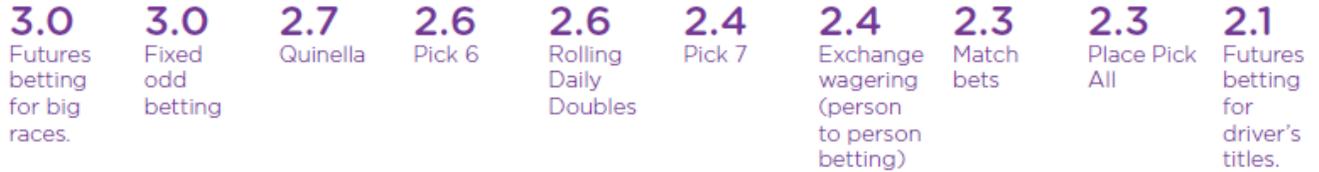
What method do you like to wager:



How often do you bet each of the following:



How much would you like to see the following wagers introduced:



**TROT** asked horseplayers if they agree with the following statements.

The percentages indicate those who support each position.

Even as a horseplayer, respect for the horse is important to me.

**97.8%**

There should be larger carryovers, more often.

**63.6%**

Horses should leave the gate on time, at zero minutes to post.

**90.1%**

The drivers of losing favourites should be interviewed on television after every race.

**51.8%**

I support low minimum bets (i.e. 20 cents)

**77.8%**

I'd prefer a Pick 6 over a Jockey Hi-5

**51.5%**

I am comfortable introducing new bettors to harness racing

**66.0%**

Takeout is the #1 issue hurting harness racing today.

**40.8%**

There should be less time between races.

**64.1%**

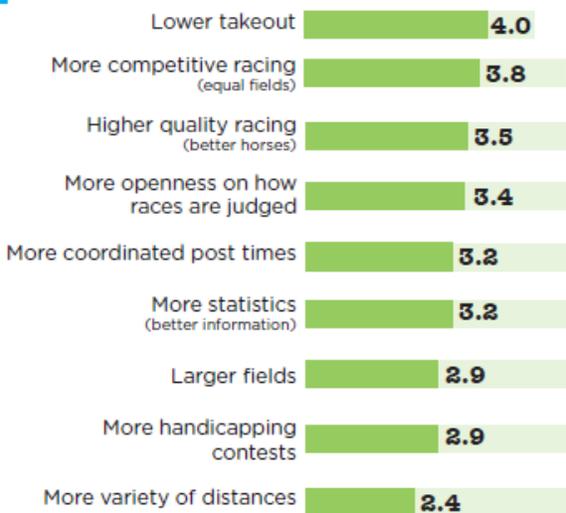
As a horseplayer I feel well treated by the horse racing industry

**36.2%**

HORSEPLAYER/2015

**On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 being very little and 5 being very much)...**

**What would encourage you to bet more harness racing:**



**What handicapping aspects are most import to you:**

