




HOR\$ENSE

"The PRICE-PERFORMANCE LEADER in thoroughbred handicapping software" SM

Presents the **Expert-ease** newsletter

Come on, Spring!
Baby, it's cold outside!!!



Joe's Corner

NYRA in the news: Using their \$40 million for 2023 from the NY state government (now totaling \$3 billion since 2008) – *ostensibly because the Belmont Stakes is a Triple Crown race AND Saratoga is the East Coast "place to be seen" for Summer racing* – and the latest work includes these items of interest...

Let's start with Saratoga and their efforts to modernize, needing only to satisfy the local preservation committee. They will build a permanent saddling structure (currently held in a tent!), upgrade the conditions on the backstretch, and perform overdue TLC to the grandstands. **Hurray!**

As for Belmont, there's a lot going on. The backstretch living quarters are being upgraded, which is great... but the bigger news is inside the Big Sandy oval. While tearing up the backstretch to put in car tunnels to the infield, they decided to install a one-mile synthetic track (ready for the Spring of 2024)... that's right, this innermost surface will make it the first track to have FOUR racing surfaces. I'll have to upgrade **Expert** in 2024 to handle it... changing the 3-surface limit will cause a major structural change...

Hmmm, I sense a product upgrade coming...

Yours in Racing,

Joe

Quick Hits

Places to Be

At the Track	Get out there!
Online	24/7/365
Las Vegas	race books!

(still waiting for tournaments)

Things to Do... now & forever

- Stop and smell the roses!
- Skip a race now and then!
- Keep accurate wagering records!

Fact that sounds made up...

Beverly Park is a modern workhorse! In the last half of 2021, this 6 year old won 9 of 10 races... followed in 2022 by winning 15 of 30; 40 races in 18 months!!! And... he's 1 for 3 in 2023.

Give it up for **Beverly Park!!!**

Expert Quick Trick

How the "other side" lives

If you want to try the "other" handicapping mode (Automated, Interactive) without changing your setup, just do this...

Look across the top of the Menu bar, and there's an option at the right end. It shows the mode from the setup, and all you have to do to change it is click on that word. It's a toggle, with only these two options.



Featured – Anatomy of a Road Trip...

In the last newsletter I shared my wonderful travel plans... and then things changed!

I had plans on a March-April trip to Golden Gate (near Oakland, CA), and then life threw me a curve and my plans went sideways. Here's what I did to take my first road trip of the new year... *you know, just in case you were wondering how I put one together...*

It all started when I went to book my trip to Oakland. I had one last COVID era airline voucher to use, and when I tried to book the trip I couldn't find any flights to that airport. I was told by the airline that it's a seasonal route that only flew during football season – owing to the fact that the Raiders moved from Oakland to Vegas – so I needed to pick a new place to go before the middle of March... so where could I go for my road trip?

I scrambled around to see where the airline flew that was close to a track, and I found that I could get to Oaklawn if I was willing to drive from Memphis, which is “only” a three-hour one-way drive. Since I really like to drive (just not in traffic), I said “oh what the heck” and booked the flight. Now I had to put all of the *other* pieces together...

My only outbound flight option was a late evening arrival, so I ended up staying an hour west of Memphis on Friday night, and then drove the two hours to Oaklawn the next morning. The weather was not helpful, as scattered storms made the drive a little bit challenging. I parked and headed to the track, and discovered they had a shiny new casino to entice gamblers. *Well, I was on a mission so I kept on walking...*

The track is very traditional, focused on live racing and not full of other distractions. Well, except for the sports bar inside of the facility. Since Hot Springs is not a big metropolitan area, the track and casino are the center of attention in the city. The food and drink prices were very affordable (vs other sporting events), with a craft beer and a sandwich costing less than \$20. As for the racing, it was a nice mix of races... well, maybe a few more maiden types than I like, but it **IS** early in the year. I hit my first race, on a favorite... that wasn't a favorite when they loaded into the starting gate (ugh).

After the Saturday races, which were run under such a deep overcast that the mist felt like rain, I decided to skip the local night life and headed to my next hotel, to knock out the Sunday card and to get a good night's sleep. It rained HARD overnight, so I wasn't surprised to see the track listed as muddy when I arrived. As hard as I tried, I couldn't find a winner... so when I got back to the Memphis airport (a three-hour drive), I had plenty of time to reflect on my fun weekend. Everything was going well... and then...

It was time to fly home!!! My flight was scheduled to depart at 10:00 PM and arrive home at Midnight. I knew it wasn't going to go well when the plane didn't arrive until after we were supposed to depart. Then we pushed back... and then returned to the gate 15 minutes later. Long story short, we finally took off two hours later. We landed just before 2:00 AM, and I was finally able to fall asleep at 4:00. **Exhausting!!!**

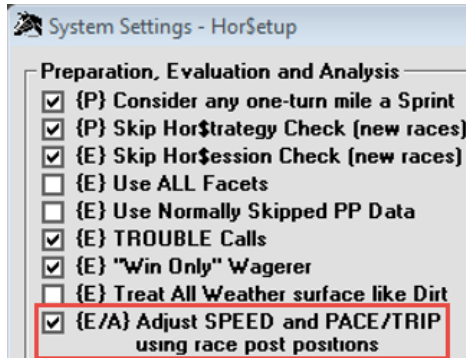
So, there you have it. A last minute trip. A long flight. A long drive. Two days of racing. Met new horse racing friends. It was fun, and I'll do it again when I get the chance.

Epilogue: I already booked my June (4-track) trip, moved the '24 Canadian Derby trip to this August, and finalized my Kentucky Downs “roadie” in September. **Love these road trips!**



Handicapping Tip – Trouble is a brewin’

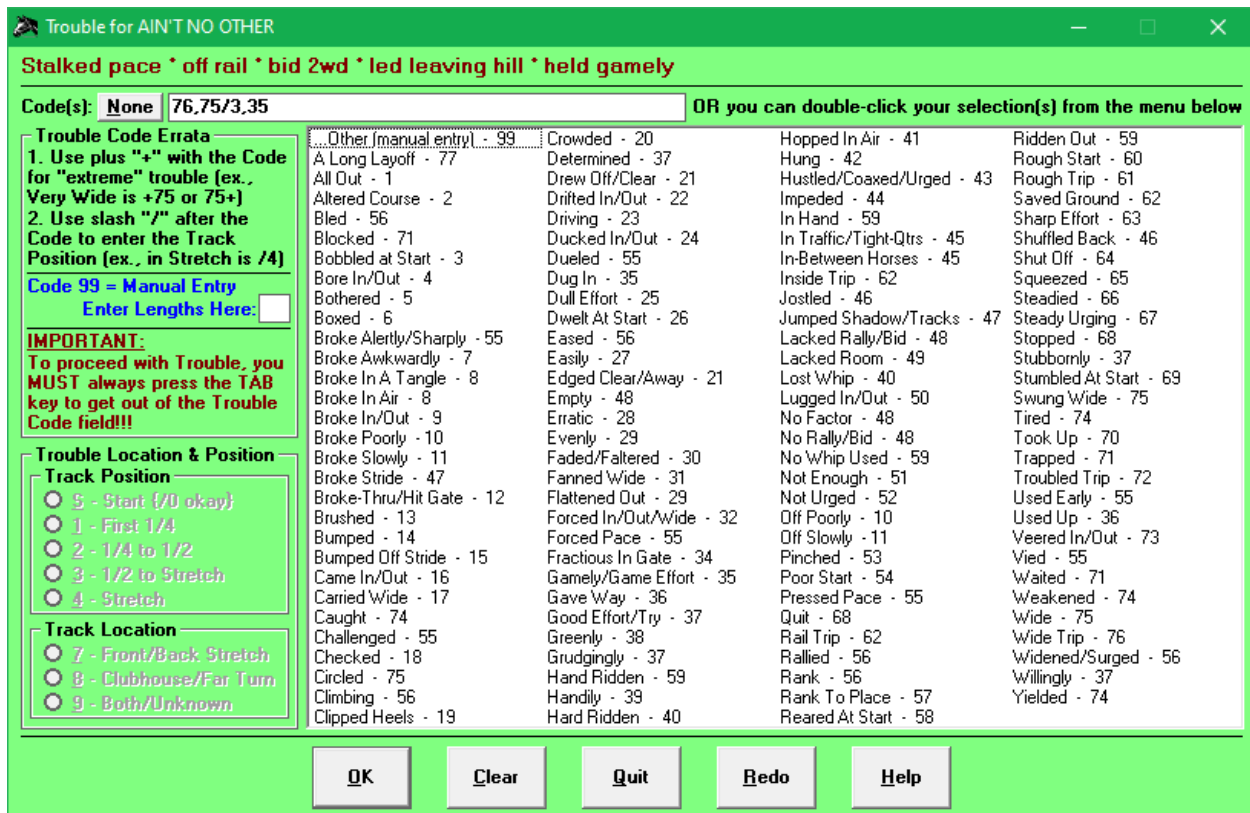
One of the most difficult aspects of developing a handicapping tool is how to measure the trouble a horse gets into in a past race. There is one school of thought that makes it an ancillary factor, only looking at it “as needed”; *like the way I look at breeding*. Of course, I’m a “math guy”, so I chose the path of analyzing trouble calls and coding them into **Hor\$ense**. For this, I looked at countless replays AND the associated “forms”, noting the PP trouble line and the number of lengths lost to the trouble AND where it happened. Once I was done with this work, I coded it into **Hor\$ense**. Now, let’s look at how this is done in **Expert**...



The first place to set it up is in the **System Settings**; look in the “Preparation, Evaluation and Analysis” box (upper-left corner of the window) for the “Adjust SPEED and PACE/TRIP using post positions” option and select it by checking the box. This will “tell” the Evaluation and Analysis steps to use the current race post positions and racing styles to add lengths to the SPEED facet; which will then impact the PACE/TRIP.

Expert takes both the post position and the “run-up” to a turn into account. All of this is done as part of the Analysis stage, and it’s the simplest “trouble” adjustment. The Evaluation is where the heavy lifting gets done...

To evaluate trouble from the PPs, you MUST use these **System Settings** options: [1] the **Interactive Handicapping Mode** AND [2] **TROUBLE Calls** (by clicking on the box in the setup, as seen above)... now you’ll be able to apply a horse’s trouble to the SPEED. Looking at the window below, you can see that there’s a lot of trouble to choose from. You can enter each one separately OR you can enter them in a list of codes. If you can’t find the trouble in the list, use the “99” code and manually enter your own estimate.



I’ve done the work, so you don’t have to. Don’t be afraid... give it a try!!!



“Tip by the Book”... tout sheets (ugh)

This space is where I share my thoughts on tips I've seen in books and newsletters. Some are terrific (and have inspired me to do similar work), while others are downright awful. Let's delve, shall we?

This time around, we turn our attention to the on-track tip (aka tout) sheets. This gem comes from Robert Rowe in *How To Win At Horseracing*, published in 1990. The chapter was about how NOT to sell a tip sheet; I wish I would have read this before I tried it back in the early days of **Hor\$ense**... I'll never do it again.

His story was more about what I his “stupid cohort” (my words) as a partner AND the fact that the police were regularly busting them; I failed because I ignored the basic premise that tout sheet sellers can't be trusted. And if I'm offending any sellers, just remember that it's only my viewpoint being shared here...

Where do I start? Well, let's look at the premise that most of the sheets give you three horses in each race – sometimes more than that – and declare victory if any of them win. They're almost always sold to the least knowledgeable patrons. They aren't actually allowed within the facility; you'll always find them OUTSIDE of the entrance gates. *But that's not what gets me...*

My disdain is due to something that happened in the early 1980s... I saw sheet sellers “cooking the books”! **How so?** Well, I was on the way to a weekday card at Santa Anita with my best handicapping buddy, and as we were walking towards the infield gates I saw a panel van with guys hanging around it. A door swung open and a guy started handing out sheets to them. A few of them went towards the entry gate... but others started walking down the aisles dropping cards all over the place! **But why???** Curious, I decided to pick one up, and I noticed that the ink for the early races looked different. Sure enough, my background as a printer paid off, as the ink for the first four races was WET!!!

We walked up to the entrance and I went right up to a seller and asked him if I could look at it... and when he let me, I immediately smudged it and shouted “these guys are crooks, they're printing the cards in the parking lot”! They scattered... and I was proud!

But, even knowing this, twenty years later I tried my own online version, and made so few sales that I packed it in... for good!

My lesson is: you're a good enough handicapper to walk right by, with the confidence that you can beat the touts any time. And if you're not that good yet... just keep working on it! ☺

In closing... we're taking credit for it!

Horse racing phrases used in everyday conversation...

“**Neck and neck**” was originally used to describe well-matched horses who didn't pull away from each other during a race. The earliest known written instance of the phrase with regard to horse racing is from 1799. Here are just some of the places where we are used to hearing it: sports standings, elections, car races.



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What I re-did... again!

My road trips!

Latest '23 trips to be taken:

- June – Woodbine, Fort Erie, Presque Isle, Thistledown
- July – Del Mar! Los Alamitos?
- August – Century Mile (my first Canadian Derby)
- September – Kentucky Downs

Moved to '24:

- Winter – Golden Gate
- Spring – Lone Star (+TBD?)
- Saratoga and Monmouth

Hope to see you there!!!

Joe Mainardi

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