




HOR\$ENSE

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

Presents the **Expert-ease** newsletter

Come on, Summertime!
Things are finally **HEATING UP!!!**



Joe's Corner

The saying "politics makes strange bedfellows" is in full view in New York. The state legislature FINALLY approved the 2023-24 budget, and the line item of most interest to the horse racing industry in the state is the budget item providing a \$455 million taxpayer-funded loan to NYRA. It's mostly for renovating Belmont Park and will *eventually* be repaid to the state (aka the NY taxpayers). That's nice... I guess. I'm not being negative about it – I'm all-in for anything that will help racing – but even I have suspicions...

Based on what I've read, there's a lot to be concerned about. First, I'm skeptical of the premise that making a half-billion dollars in renovations will inspire people to want to "all of a sudden" head (back) out to Belmont... and to **ALL** of the other tracks in the state. And what will become of Aqueduct? It has been rumored that The Big A will need to be sold to make the overall plan work... with no proof that they will get the \$1 billion they're hoping to get for it. **Color me jaded!**

Yours in Racing,

Joe

Quick Hits

Fact that sounds made up...

Silky Sullivan was the best known closer of his time... and possibly his most incredible effort came in late February of his three year old season (in 1958). With Bill Shoemaker up for the first time, the "California Comet" made up **41** lengths from the first call... in a 6½ furlong allowance race!!! That's right, he made up all that ground in just 4½ furlongs!

Things to Do... now & forever

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

Places to Be

At the Track	Get out there!
Online	24/7/365
Las Vegas	race books!
	(still waiting for tournaments)

Expert Quick Trick

Want to uncompress all of your data files for the day at once???

Simply use the **Handicap** menu option named **All Race Cards – Date** (the **F1** shortcut) and they will all load at the same time. **It's so easy!!!**



Featured – New in Expert for '23... and beyond!!!

Every year around this time, the latest **Hor\$ense** release comes out, and this year is no exception. The actual release date, which is usually on **Independence Day** (happy fourth, everybody!), will be slightly delayed this year; our daughter is visiting for the week, and I want to spend as much (mostly) uninterrupted time with her as I can.

And the list is shorter than most years, with two legitimate reasons for it. The first reason is **Hor\$ense** related, where I've decided to save most of the upgrades and updates for the **BIG** refresh next year. **But why, Joe?** Well, while **Hor\$ense** has used AI techniques since its inception (in 1989!), it's about time for an influx of more modern "smart" logic... and **next** year will be the time for it. The other reason has nothing to do with horses: my wife and I have involved in two car accidents since last summer (one versus a deer, and a drunk driver caused the other one); the impact of these events has been overwhelming at times. And, just when I was getting back "into the groove", my wife took a tumble during one of her regular hikes in late April, which resulted in a broken ankle; being her primary caregiver has left very little spare time for **Expert**...

Enough of my "whining"... let's see what did (and didn't) make this year's list...

What's IN!!!

Let's get one thing out of the way: the annual updates to the **track class** and **speed values** are always IN!!! As for the rest, there were a handful of "fixes" that needed to be done. Among them was ensuring that the reinstated Santa Anita "about" 6½ furlong **downhill** sprint was separated from the more often used **flat** 6½ furlong distance. Also, the DIG DEEP feature wasn't *clearly* identifying a possible **STAR** horse that is NOT a **STAR**; this has been remedied, by explicitly saying so.

For better analysis (aka picking winners), a few important items required rework. First up was making sure that the **Current Class** analysis for non-graded stakes reflected the ACTUAL purse instead of the average purse; the gap between the two has become quite large at "cheaper" tracks. Also, I discovered (watching a replay) that the "hardly ever run" 1¼ dirt race at Belmont starts on the turn, so that adjustment has been made.

***With so few changes, there is NO price increase this year!!!
Look for your specific offer via email late next week!!!***

What's coming... in the next-gen product

The first thing will be to create a better flow, by having fewer verification pop-ups; in addition to the re-tooling of the flow, there will be more "don't show again" pop-up choices. And, the use of the TAB key to advance in a screen will be eliminated!

Still working on having a better flow, I've also committed to taking a "deep dive" into the ENTIRE setup process. My main goal will be to make it better integrated, incorporating more of an interview style (think "Q&A"); one example is to ask for an answer AND how confident the user is with their answer.

Keep reading for more...

Handicapping Tip – on hiatus... back next time

More next-gen updates...

At the system level, internal file structures will need to be made. First up is the track info file: with the advent of a FOURTH racing surface coming to Belmont Park in 2024, this file needs to be changed. As well, more structural changes are needed; I know that the main SETUP file needs to be better organized internally, which will lead to a more robust SETUP screen. Another known change is to allow a “wet track” option for each loaded track; currently it’s done as “all-or-none”.

In the horse evaluation, for a sprint PP used in a route race (and vice versa), I have *always* accepted this “crossover” data, without regard to whether there exists a “same type” PP-race combo. Using a more intuitive (AI) approach, I have concluded that this should only happen when a “same type” PP-race combo doesn’t exist. For example, **Expert** will only use a route PP in a sprint race IF there are no sprint PPs available.

Another horse evaluation change in the works will be something I call “par fractions”, which relates to how race fractional times are created from PPs. Currently, fractional times for each sprint (and route) distance at a track are based on the speed ratings for each separate distance. The new method will group sprint distances together in order to make for “smoother” first and second call estimates. Another enhanced AI-based decision will look at the PPs to determine [a] if any are “too old” to be used AND [2] if a trend/pattern is noticeable.

Another evaluation concept is for SPEED, where you will be able to use the file maker’s specific speed rating whenever the DRF “speed rating/track variant” combo is missing; for BRIS files it’s their BRIS Speed Rating (the new Gulfstream synthetic surface was the impetus for this, because it excluded using speed data from many PPs). This will be a user option, determined in the enhanced setup. There will also be a setup option to put a cap on the number of lengths of trouble a horse can have from a PP. Also, the impact of the differences in the length of the stretch of a PP versus the race will also be used; for example, a longer stretch *should* favor a stretch-runner. Finally, exhaustive testing will be done to determine how credible it will be to use PPs of 4 and 4½ furlongs, but only in races up to 5½ furlongs; it will be implemented if the testing proves its worth.

Moving to the analysis (the dark blue screens), there are some changes coming. The analysis will also be enhanced with more “thoughtful” AI, in the form of “bonus points” tied to positive combinations of SPEED, FINISH and PACE/TRIP. I’ll also revisit the **Current Class AND Past Class** values, to see if the +/- values need to be more weighted to the actual values (vs the relative values). Also, there will be a recalculating of the morning line odds after scratches; this will be a “linear odds” function, which will NOT take into account any changes the scratches make to the speed, pace or class.

There are others, but I’m not ready to go out on a limb just yet. If I’ve learned anything about plans, it’s that they can be changed by outside forces quite easily.

“Tip by the Book”... A Handicapper’s DNA

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 one is from Dave Litfin’s *Expert Handicapping* book, where his **Introduction** section caught my eye, for its eerie similarity to my own handicapping DNA. **Maybe it applies to you too...**

Dave started at age 12, as did I. We both used a Kelco Class Calculator (which my Dad gave to me, because he didn’t have the patience to use it). While I couldn’t go to the track on my own like Dave, my Dad took me there on my “divorced Dad” weekends. Both Dave and I dabbled in the “newfangled” creation called the Exacta! We both listened to the results on the radio.

At age 21, he felt like he was already better than almost all of the people he met at the local OTB parlor, and I felt the same way around the people I ran across in the So Cal circuit. He used his expertise to make quick money when he really needed it; I funded a term of college by scheduling my classes around the Santa Anita winter meet. Due to starting at a young age, Dave had no decades-long bad habits to fight; I wrote special software (that became **Hor\$ense**) to avoid developing bad habits. He devoured the knowledge of those experts that came before him – Ainslie, Brohamer, Davidowitz, Quinn, Quirin, etc. – which I also did. Most importantly, he discovered the value of having computing power take care of the more mundane tasks. **Yeah... me too!!!**

He closes his Introduction chapter with a quote from handicapper Barry Meadow, summarizing expertise in a political judgment book he read: “Experts offered no special predictive insight about anything.” **Agreed.** That said, I personally believe that horses are easier to figure out than politicians, so in that way it IS possible to have “special predictive insight” in handicapping. You just have to devote the time and energy to figuring out what is changing and how best to do something good with what you have learned.

In the end, it makes you who you are as a handicapper.

In closing...

More horse racing phrases used in everyday conversation...

Down to the Wire

Because a wire was sometimes hung above the finish line so judges could more easily separate the horses at the finish, the finish line was also called “the wire” starting in the 1870s. A victor was known to have taken the race “down to the wire”.

Anybody who has ever worked to a deadline and completed the effort just before it was due will know this phrase. I still use it, even though my (early) retirement was many years ago.



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What I can’t believe I had to do... AGAIN!!!

Postpone a road trip... ☹

In late June, I was *supposed* to take a “Great Lakes” tour of four tracks: Woodbine, Fort Erie, Presque Isle & (JACK) Thistledown. Alas, my wife broke her ankle *really* badly, and as a result I won’t travel again until late August (to the Canadian Rockies, with a stop off at the Canadian Derby). Hopefully, next year I can take the Lake Erie tour.

Joe Mainardi

Owner, Developer... “a one man show”

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