




HOR\$ENSE

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

Presents the **Expert-ease** newsletter

The Triple Crown is upon us... and it's just three races, folks...



Joe's Corner: Who do ya love?!?

For the Triple Crown? *shrugs* ... nobody. *Seems harsh, I know.* I don't dislike the spectacle – well, maybe a *little* for the Derby – it's just that there are better races to handicap on those same days. To wit: the Kentucky Derby almost always has 20 runners, the Preakness is the "best" of the three, and the distance of the Belmont is just tough to handicap. Still, it's the Triple Crown!?!

For the Breeders' Cup, I love the overall class and the longshots you find with quality horses. And it reminds me of a 2-day racing festival. As a bettor, these are two of the best days of the year!!!

Many consider these events the "icing on the cake"...

There is something else I love. It's my love for everyday racing... and the people who make it work. It's the people, places – and the horses – that provide us with the pleasure we get from it. In turn, we support racing at all levels... not just on the big days.

While I haven't been to every track, I watch and wager at a lot of the US and Canadian tracks. When you play, I hope you go to the track or an OTB... and using your phone or playing at home still counts! That's the kind of love I'm talking about!!!

Consider this... WE are the cake under the icing!

Yours in Racing...

Joe

Quick Hits

Places to Be

At the Track	Get out there!
Online	24/7/365
Las Vegas	race books!
	(and some tournaments)

Things to Do... now & forever

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

Fact that sounds made up...

Colin went undefeated in 1907-08, with 15 wins. Amazingly, he was ALWAYS on the lead at the top of the stretch, running in 14 stakes races after his maiden score. *Want more?*

He ran all sprints in his 2-year-old season (12 times)... and then he ran all routes in his 3-year-old (and final) campaign. Adding to that, we was ALWAYS the favorite, at less than even money all but twice. **Colin!!!**

Expert Quick Trick

Customer Appreciation Trick...

Thanks to user HL for this trick... he's tailoring **Expert** to match his own style, saved as a (**Hor\$ession**) facet control.

While I can't share his style with you, something similar would be to assign Current Class an "8" weighting and all other facets to "1", in order to find a competitive "hard dropper" in a claimer.

It's that easy! Try it, you'll like it!!!



Featured – Ripping off the band-aid... OUCH!!!

Snippets from the internet... I wish the news was better...

Let's start with a heart-warming story, from the Thoroughbred Daily News on 2/16/24. Dean Purdom was a grinder of a jockey who couldn't get over the hump, due to his addictions to alcohol and cocaine. After years of self-sabotage, he entered a treatment center in 1992; he hung on as a jockey until he retired in 1997. With nothing to chase, he turned to helping other people. He eventually found the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation (TRF) while volunteering at a women's prison, and he's now is in charge of TRF. His prior struggles helped these women find themselves and, because of his racing connections, he's helped some of the women find jobs in the horse racing industry after their release. **Well done, Dean!**

There was some recent weird news from the wagering side. On Saturday 3/9/24, as later reported by the Paulick Report, something that was so bad happened that a joint press release had to be issued the next day, by AmTote (a subsidiary of 1/ST) AND Roberts Communications (the supplier of almost all racing feeds in the US). The "communications network" failed at many tracks (the Tampa Bay Derby ran as a no-bet race), and this was no simple tote issue. Somehow, the mid-Atlantic wagering "hub" – both primary and backup – failed. As a four-decade IT pro, I know this type of problem is mainly attributed to two things: a poorly tested update (not great) or a hack (yikes!). Without more information, which the general public will probably never get, we all had better hope that it was just poor testing.

On to the (ongoing) news surrounding track closures and their impacts. Many of you are getting tired of it, but I'm sharing this as a reminder of what we need to be ready for when it affects our favorite track(s). First up is more news about Maryland racing, from the Paulick Report on 1/12/24. The Maryland Thoroughbred Racetrack Operating Authority announced the framework for the state's racing future... and it's pretty close to what I've previously written. The key points are [1] Laurel will no longer have live racing, [2] Pimlico will be rebuilt and be the only live racing conducted in Maryland, and [3] The Stronach Group (TSG) will retain the intellectual property rights to the Preakness and Black-Eyed Susan. No surprises here... except that there was no time frame mentioned. There's more coming from TSG...

Is California racing close to the edge of the slippery slope? A 3/23/24 article by Bill Center in the San Diego Union-Tribune, laid bare the struggles in the state. After the CHRB approved 26 fall-winter dates at Pleasanton (to partially replace the lost Nor Cal dates from Golden Gate), TSG's 1/ST group executive chairman Craig Fravel essentially threatened the CHRB with closure of Santa Anita and the San Luis Rey Downs training facility, intimating that selling the land for a big profit was now a possibility; Los Alamitos could easily suffer the same fate. This would leave Del Mar to carry more dates, which they are really not interested in doing. And, let's save for later on the talk about the state's problem with "diminishing class".

Up next is the saga of Arizona racing at Turf Paradise, from a separate Paulick Report article on 1/12/24. Unsurprisingly, the current owner's "mystery buyer" backed out – conveniently, after the revised 2024 racing dates allowed the track to open late – and those dates may be the last hurrah for the track... and maybe for thoroughbred racing in Arizona. With Arizona Downs (almost a TSG track) once again not being granted a license, Rillito Park in Tucson may end up being all there is in 2025. Not good... *RIP AZ?*

And it's not solely a US problem. I read that TWO far-east Asian racetracks are dead or dying. Kranji Racetrack (run by Singapore Turf Club) is closing in October, after 180 years. Macau Race Track (run by Macau Jockey Club) closed end of March, after 40 years. Both countries will no longer have live racing.

As if that's not enough, there's more causing tracks to struggle than we knew... or could have even guessed. I learned, from a 2/27/24 Thoroughbred Daily News "letter to the editor", that the main culprit for the tracks without slot money propping them up (again, the racinos) is the **1978** Interstate Horseracing Act. It seems that back then Las Vegas had the upper hand when negotiating with race tracks on how to share the money collected off-track. While this was not a big deal back then, as the tracks got 1% of the money wagered off-track. But now, with all of the current OTB options, the tracks – especially those without racinos – are losing out on a revenue stream that hasn't been replaced. We need some help...

It's hard for me to say this, but we need the US government to step in!!! After all, they created HISA (for better or worse), so maybe they'd like to help keep some tracks around! **Just a thought...**

Thanks for reading... there'll be better news on the horizon... *fingers crossed*



Handicapping Tips – Stay “classy”... or “die trying”

WARNING: This article may contain opinions and sarcasm 😊

If you believe everything you read, hear or smell, then you’ve been exposed to every side of the class story. So, let me add another view. I’ll keep it brief and – somehow – I’ll also have a tip.

In the world of class handicapping, there are two extremes for how claimers are judged. One side says “\$5,000 is \$5,000 everywhere, that’s how it is.” The other extreme is when it’s all about the purse values. This even affects speed, where many “speed figures” take class into account; the DRF Speed Rating & Track Variant do not. *Everybody has a take... even me!!!*

I’m taking the approach that the knowledge of what a claimer is worth falls somewhere in the middle, which requires you to suspend the belief that one of the extreme views is the only way... ~~just like in politics~~ *blatant sarcasm alert*. *Hey Joe, is this leading somewhere? Why, yes, it is!*

To be succinct, we’re currently in a time of tumult, where outsized purse values at tracks using casino games (aka, “racinos”) to help fund purses are allowing the lesser tracks to compete with long-standing top circuits... and these inflated purses are hurting the non-racino tracks.

Case in point: the previously noted death march that is California racing. And, why the purse problems? I believe that, in large part, it’s because they don’t have racinos. *How so, Joe?* With no “racino” money to enhance purses, their image and power is weakened against those with higher purses. To wit, for almost all allowance and maiden races, they can’t compete with Kentucky, NYRA, Gulfstream, Woodbine or Oaklawn... and others are rapidly closing the gap.

Golden State racing has long been considered “too big to fail”, but Hollywood, Pomona/Fairplex and Bay Meadows are gone, Golden Gate is just about done, and the land values at Santa Anita and Los Alamitos make it only a matter of time for them... and Del Mar has no control of their destiny! True story... the land is owned by the state government, and it includes being used for the annual SD County Fair (no lie). Eventually, without the extra money the racinos provide – for themselves and the racing industry – there will be no racing in the state!!! *RIP CA Racing...*

I suppose now is the time to get to the tip...

When referencing the extremes in class analysis, we first must understand their inherent flaws.

When using a **claiming-price** analysis, the kicker is that it’s observationally tied to perceived knowledge of track class (i.e., Gulfstream is a better track than Tampa Bay Downs). Where that gets a bit muddled is when a track is in transition; the California racing example above didn’t cover claimers, but it is widely accepted that equal-price claimers at Santa Anita are better than at Ellis Park (mid-level Kentucky racing)... but for how long will that be true?

Using a **purse-value** analysis with claimers, race conditions present a wide range of purse values for same-price claimers; a non-winner of two races almost always has a smaller purse than a race for open claimers. That’s fine, but you need all of the raw data to get the purse value... which isn’t found in the “form” but typically comes from electronic data files AND a way to extract it. **Expert** will do this for you, and using the raw data doesn’t use any AI (**Hor\$smarts**).

So, where is the middle ground? Having observational evidence is a good start, as is the raw data. But, to use it properly, a service or tool is needed; I started with homemade lookup tables, and now with **Expert** and the **Hor\$smarts** AI engine I have a better handle on the true value of the multitude of claiming races. Your methods might be slightly different, but knowing the limitations of the extremes – and doing something about it – is vitally important!!!

Learn to be classy... without going to extremes!!!



“Tip by the Book”... Take a Bow, Andrew B!!!

Let's talk about tips from books and newsletters. Some are terrific (inspiring me to do similar work), and others not so much. **Let's delve, shall we?**

It's time for me to “make up” with Andrew Beyer. While I wasn't a huge fan of his personality or presentation style, he really knew his stuff. **Need proof?** Look no further than his class-based speed figures (aka, “pars”), which helped people who struggled to grasp the impact that class had on speed. Let's not forget that he was also a prolific writer and, for a while, a TV personality for the sport. Love him or hate him – and sometimes, both – he represented the sport.

Once one got past his verbose style – with his “horseplaining” and MOTO (master of the obvious) statements – you could find essential truths about handicapping that opened your eyes. And, while he might have left you believing that his speed figures were much too complicated for the “common man”, you could get a grip on them if you wanted to do so. He wasn't an everyman, but he was genuine.

I have read just two of his books, *Picking Winners* and *The Winning Horseplayer*, and each one taught me a little bit about both “what to use” AND “what not to use” when making handicapping decisions. The handicapping world would be a lesser place without him...

The tip: don't let your personal feelings about someone cloud your judgement of their talent. **Veritas, Andy!**

I'm a Travelin' Man... I Get Around!

Part of my retirement involves travel... and every trip I take – whether it's alone or with my wife – I try VERY HARD to stop at a race track. Big or small, I want to see them ALL!!! So, where in the world is Traveler Joe???

Admittedly, I wasn't feeling too strong about my Winter travel plans... and I was right. My January plans all fell through, February was not really an option... and March flew by so fast. **So here we are...**

In early April, I'm booked for Turf Paradise, as the end of the current meet in early May just might be their last. I've also made plans to go to Canada's Woodbine and Fort Erie in late June. As the June 9th end for Golden Gate gets closer, I'm all-in on getting there. And, I might even return to Tampa Bay Downs in late April... if I'm able to join my daughter on her business trip to Orlando.

Wherever I go, I'll make sure to take good travel notes!!!

In closing...

One more horse racing phrase used in everyday conversation...

Run for Your Money

In the 19th century, it was every punter's dream to have their horse give them a chance at winning... aka, a “run for your money”; after all, we all want our horse to have a good chance at cashing us a ticket.

As time has gone on, this phrase covered all walks of life, in situations where a person or group proved to be a worthy competitor.

The “commonly used horse racing phrases” I have referenced in this section – past and present – were found in an article from Mental Floss, by Ellen Gutoskey (5/4/22).



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What I did in 1987...

I won my last big wager on the Kentucky Derby... Alysheba rallied to save me! Truth be told, I stopped betting big bucks on the race soon after that...

And... I turned 30... and I got married!!! On the programming front, I had my first taste of AI, building expert systems at my regular job. I also released the very first **Hor\$ense** product.

It was quite a busy year!

Joe Mainardi

Owner, Developer, Writer...

“a one man show”

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