



HOR\$ENSE

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

Presents the **Expert-ease** newsletter

Happy (Racing) Trails, to you...
spring is not just about the Triple Crown...



Joe's Corner: the Long Goodbye

California: great racing... and an "escape plan"

Hor\$ense is 35, and I'm reminded of how it changed my thinking on handicapping. *It seems just like yesterday...*

After four LONG years in Arizona, it was – once again – time for a change of scenery. We accomplished a lot: we saved up for a solid retirement and stayed warm year-round (golf!)... but at the cost of awful live racing. As it turned out, So Cal was dragging me back. I had "escaped" twice – in 1978 and again in 1993 – and I figured we wouldn't stay long... but was I ever wrong!!!

After a tough time initially finding suitable work, I had some mad money and started back to live top-tier racing and wagering. I also wrote many *PRN* articles. Handicapping was both Jekyll (solid, from 2003-14) and Hyde (ugly, from 2015-17)... which was because I got a bit distracted working on **Hor\$ense**!

The first few years I spend a lot of my spare time making BIG improvements. In 2005, the **Professional** version was released, earning an 8½ rating from *PRN*. The next 10 years were spent working on a major upgrade. In 2015, I completed my work and released the **Expert** version, which got a "solid 9" rating from *PRN*. This led to multiple years of a track-sponsored guest handicapper gig at Del Mar. And, I finally broke through in Las Vegas multi-day tournaments, cashing in 2015 and 2016.

By 2017, I was tired of the daily grind and decided to retire. There was only one thing left to do... **MOVE!!!**

And that led me to the desert sands of Nevada...

Yours in Racing,

Joe

Quick Hits

Places to Be

At the Track	get back!!!
Away from the Action	anywhere!!
Race Books	better in Vegas!
In-person Tourneys	someday...

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...

"Start spreading the news"...

Is "penny breakage" coming to the Empire state? It would seem so, as New York appears to be ready to join the list of states that believes every post-tax penny should go back to the bettors!

Huzzah!!!

Expert Quick Trick

Are you keeping current? If you're not getting the results you're used to with **Expert**, it could be that it's out-of-date. The annual release comes with new SPEED and CLASS values, as well as the usual upgrades and updates. **Unsure of your status?**

Just check with me.

Featured – More Track Shenanigans Updates...

What will the future of betting look like??? I'm willing to weigh in!!!

I've been ranting about this for ~~years~~ decades, so bear with me one MORE time...

In my early days as a guest writer for thoroughbred racing publications, I shared a "unique" view on the future of racing. I proposed "major leagues", comprised of the big-name tracks of the time, which would run on Fri-Mon or Thu-Sun weekends, and the rest as "minor leagues", to be run on Tue-Thu or Mon-Wed weekdays. **So, how's that going?** Well, we currently don't have any formal leagues, but the various big circuits have filled in some gaps. We do have more weekday/night circuits, and the weekend circuits have done a better job of NOT running their marquee races at the same time. But more can be done to tame the latest crisis in the industry, and isn't hard to implement... if the tracks REALLY worked together!!!!

What's the impetus for your outrage, Joe?!! Well, as a handicapper of 55+ years – starting at age 12 with help from my dad – I've seen a whole lot of changes. While I once believed that the main reason for thoroughbred racing's downward spiral was track closures, technology has changed that landscape. Traditional handicappers need help to revive the sport, and the help might need to come from an unlikely place... sports betting. And, it would also be nice if the tracks worked together to make it work!!!

Let's get track closures out of the way first. Yes, with the higher level of tracks being closed, there WILL be a need to properly consolidate operations. But, losing major tracks – due mainly to mismanagement and growing property values – doesn't have to be the end of the line. Race tracks have been eaten up by "sprawling suburbia" for as long as there has been something called "the suburbs". **Examples? Gladly!**

While a Gulfstream closure would impact south Florida, there are other statewide options. The idea of the Palm Meadows training track being reconfigured for fans has been floated. And the land where Hialeah once operated is a longshot possibility. Plus, Tampa Bay Downs could add some dates. The new "open year-round" Belmont will end racing at Aqueduct. And once Pimlico reopens, the doors will close for good at Laurel. **Ah, California... what to do with you?** Santa Anita – another 1/ST Racing race track and land holding – AND Los Alamitos will be turned into something else, for the same reasons as Hollywood Park. That would leave Del Mar... wow! And... Washington state's Emerald Downs might close in 2026 if they can't pay their increased HISA fees. **So, what can be done to go beyond "just existing"? Well...**

The real work needs a coordinated effort by ALL tracks to cooperate. **AH-hahahahahaha!!!!** No, really, they have to! But it's not "just getting along"... it's about "fighting their foes for the dough". Sports betting is the foe, and their bettors are the fight. If they'll bet on the outcome of a pitch, next goal, 14-way parlays and first score, then horse racing should be chasing it down. They are "twitch bettors", mostly in it for the action. So, rather than wanting things to go back to "the way it was" (ahem, not happening), the industry needs to "play their game" to get the money flowing again. That could happen through [1] in-state casino revenue sharing, [2] historical horse racing machines, or [3+] whatever shenanigans they come up with to get 'er done. **What do tracks have to do to the on-track product to lure bettors??? Glad you asked!**

You're gonna need to stay with me on these... not all are brilliant, but many could work. Let's start with a simple one; getting tracks with similar schedules (ideally in the same time zone) to use 10-minute race gaps. **Huh?** Okay, take a group of three tracks (let's say NY, MD and KY) and stagger their post times 10 minutes apart, with bets tied to each track (ex., race #4 at each track). We still get to have our regular racing... and it gives amateurs a quick (under 30 minute) multi-race play. I have another idea, which is a bit tricky, and it ONLY involves changing the ENTIRE racing culture of daytime racing. We need more evening racing! Let's be blunt: baseball gave up day games to get more people to go, so why not racing? Trotters do it, and Los Alamitos has run evening quarter horses forever, so why can't thoroughbred racing make some adjustments? Just imagine a world where people who work days could get home and play multiple tracks, starting at 6:00 and ending by 10:00. And on weekends, night racing is just another party!

So, that's my latest high-level plan. Any chance it happens? I'm not entirely sure, but something needs to change... and it needs to happen pronto!!!

(Yes, I get worked up about this... but, in my defense, I've been this way for 30+ years!)

Handicapping Tips – Setting Up Your Success...

The **System Settings** were revamped in the 2024 **Expert** release, but the sheer size can be intimidating. Lucky for you, I'm here to help!!! **But how?**

Let's attack it head-on! For those with the latest release: ask how much of it you're using, and what should you use? For those without it: consider what you would use. **Let's take a look...**

Screening

Conditions

☐ Treat one-turn route as a Sprint
☒ Treat All Weather race like Dirt

Calculations

Pass/Play Decision Control
 Adjust: Key: +/- 10 (%) limit
 + [tougher], - [easier]

Customizations

☐ Skip Hor\$trategy Screen (new)
 Handicapping Mode
☐ Interactive ☒ Fully Automated

Evaluation - Hor\$martsPlus for Facets

Facet	Auto	-Confidence- Ex Hi Md Lo
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SPEED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FINISH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PACE/TRIP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CURRENT CLASS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PAST CLASS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN-MONEY Ratio	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> JOCKEY Rating	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRAINER Rating	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WORKOUTS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>

Facets (toggle): ☐ All ☐ None ☐ Select
 Auto (toggle): ☒ All ☐ None/Clear

Evaluation

Conditions

☐ "Win Only" Wagerer
☐ Evaluate ALL Facets
☐ Use Normally Skipped PP Data
☐ Treat Dirt PPs like All Weather

Calculations

Temp Speed Tool Switch
 Use when 1+ PP has no SR/TV:
☐ YES, same surface ☒ NO
☐ YES, ANY surface
☐ YES, Wet/Dry must match

TROUBLE Calls

☐ Use Text Info from PPs
☐ Cap Max Lengths

SPEED - "smoothing" for PPs
 Impact: 0=low, 2=normal, 4=high

Customizations

☐ Skip Hor\$ession Screen (new)

System - Windows OS Hardware

☒ 64-bit computer ☐ 32-bit computer

Other Options - See Settings Menu

- Master Profile (Hor\$ystem)
- Pre-Screening Profiling (Hor\$strategies)
- Facet Selection (Hor\$essions)

Analysis

Conditions

Selection(s)
☒ Weighted Score (recommended)
☐ Raw Score (limited value option)

Calculations

☐ SPEED - Reduce "Lengths Ahead"
☒ SPEED and PACE/TRIP - Adjust using race post positions
 Use More FINISH, Less PACE/TRIP
 Weight: 0=none, 2=some, 4=most

Customizations

☐ Only Show Hor\$election (no facets)
☐ Save Race Analysis Information

SPEED Display Type
☐ Time - 5ths ☐ Ft/sec - Total
☐ Time - 100ths ☐ Ft/sec - At Calls
☒ Lengths Behind

PACE/TRIP Display Type
☒ Running Styles ☐ Exact Positions

Show DIG DEEP for Top Picks
 Select topmost number of horses:

First, what's not covered. [1] the **Conditions** sub-sections (it's based on your own style), [2] the **Customizations** sub-sections (except for Handicapping Mode, all display related), and [3] the **Input-Output** options (Input is required, Outputs are merely useful). This leaves us with the **Calculations** and the **Hor\$martsPlus for Facets** section! I'll flag the new features with the **"NEW"** label; older features will have no designation. **Now, let's dig a little deeper.**

Screening: for race prep. The **Pass/Play Decision Control** lets you make races easier or harder to play. I set this feature to -5, and this "easier" setting usually gets me at least one (1) extra play from a card.

Evaluation: for each horse. [1] The **NEW Temp Speed Tool Switch** lets you switch – from the SR/TV to the BRIS Speed Rating – if a PP has no SR/TV. The most accurate settings are **YES, ANY surface** and **YES, Wet/Dry must match** box checked. This "switch" check occurs for every race. [2] For **TROUBLE Calls**, you must be in the Interactive Handicapping Mode to use it, and it works best when you check the **NEW Cap Max Lengths** box. [3] The **NEW SPEED "smoothing"**... option modifies PP times – for each call and the finish – to match race distance/class limits, which is very useful for distance/surface switches.

Evaluation – Hor\$martsPlus for Facets is both old and new. The BIG change is the **NEW Confidence** feature, which lets you apply your handicapping knowledge of each facet to the evaluation of every race.

Analysis: for the field. [1a] **SPEED Reduce "Lengths Ahead"** will "reign-in" an overly-aggressive final time for the projected winner, closing the gap to the rest of the field. [1b] The **SPEED and PACE/TRIP adjust using race post positions** "recovers" the lengths lost on turns for each horse in the field, based on each horse's running style (determined by the datafile vendor). [2] The **NEW Use More FINISH, Less PACE/TRIP** option alters the default – which uses less FINISH and more PACE/TRIP.

Now, go ahead experiment with these... see if it makes a difference!!!

“Tip by the Book”... is on Hiatus this time

*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?***

Why take the break??? I left room for **a bigger finish** (below)...

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???

How quickly things change! I was all set for a quiet winter at home, and then – as noted in the **Featured** section above – the folks at 1/ST Racing threatened to close Gulfstream Park ASAP if they didn't get what they wanted... a little MORE money before they sell it!!!

Since I saw what happened with Golden Gate, I needed to get there before they closed up shop. So, I went to Florida in mid-March, taking my first trip to Gulfstream Park AND returning to Tampa Bay Downs.

Losing three hours crossing the country led to an “early” start on my trip to “the Downs”, first fattening up on pancakes, and then hoofing it out to Oldsmar for a day of racing. It was busy for a mid-week card, and it had a good vibe! Opened as Tampa Downs in 1926, reopened post-WW2 as Sunshine Park, the current name has been in place since 1980. The racing was fair, I netted a **big fat** \$2.20 on the day's plays. It should remain untouched until such time that it... goes away.

Yep, I'm jumping right into the “drama”. I got to Gulfstream “early” the next day and walked around, and I'm happy to say that I'll come back if it doesn't close. The day was nicer and the card was better, but I still surrendered \$2 of my Tampa profits. Oh well, there's always another racing day ahead. **Thanks for the fun & the 20¢, Florida!!!**

Up next... all-in on a June trip to Aqueduct, Parx and Delaware Park.

In closing... a bigger finish!

Trevor Denman retires... and says goodbye as only he could...

For four decades, he had one of the most recognizable race-calling voices in America. To me, he was more than a race caller, he was an innovator and a storyteller. He was not afraid to call the winner at the wire, even if he wasn't 100% sure... and he was almost always right!

What made him revolutionary at the time, was that his keen eye was evident the entire race, and he shared exactly what he was seeing... not just each horse's position and lengths behind. Add to that, he had so many signature phrases, most of them forever stuck in the heads of folks like me. And the fans throughout So Cal – Santa Anita, Del Mar, Hollywood Park, Golden Gate and Fairplex – were spoiled by all of this. Also heard and seen nationally, he was always a professional.

On a personal note, we once briefly chatted at Del Mar, and he's as a nice a person as you'd expect to meet. And there is this: his was the last voice I heard – “gentlemen, please remove your hats...” – before the American flag went up the pole, followed by my proposal to my wife on Big ‘Cap Day in 1987. Not an easily forgotten memory.

Mooooving (on) like a winner!!! All the best, Trevor!



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What I Learned...

The Delta Downs announcer has this nickname for jockey Tim Thornton: Money Bags. **So, who IS he?** Well, he has more than 3,000 wins from just over 17,000 mounts, and has over \$60 million in career purse earnings, and a 22.4% win rate since 2017... well done, Tim!!!

“Money Bags” indeed!

What I Played!!!

March 31, the last race at Turf Paradise ... my last play of the month. **Expert** picks a longshot. He grabs the lead, gets weary... but he hangs on for a **BIG** \$57.80 winner (times two)!!! See, **Expert** isn't just for lower priced horses!

Joe Mainardi

Owner, Developer, Writer...
“a one man show”

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