



# HOR\$ENSE

"The PRICE-PERFORMANCE LEADER in thoroughbred handicapping software" <sup>SM</sup>

Presents the **Expert-ease** newsletter

## The Horse-pocalypse is upon us!!! Or is it just a figment of our imaginations???



### Joe's Corner: and now, to me...

**"Home Means Nevada"** (it's the state anthem)

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

My life isn't ALL about the horses... just mostly. True story: after graduating from college and working just a single FULL-TIME WEEK, I knew I wanted to be "off the treadmill" ASAP. Since withdrawing from an IRA started at age 59 1/2, I made that my goal. Saving you from the boring details, I beat that mark by a few months in 2017, and walked away! **Never look back...**

**But, where to go? And. Why?** Well, the California cost-of-living and the overcrowding drove us to look at other places, and the Las Vegas valley came out on top. **Who woulda thunk it!?**

What's never changed is that playing the ponies is what I love!!!

Speaking of handicapping, retirement has made me better at my craft. I built the **Hor\$ense** platform for me, so it's been the only software program I've used; I still study the "form" for every race. **Expert** came out in 2015, and two years later I finally had the time to make serious improvements. I have used it to play in big tournaments, cashing in three of my last seven (in 2015, 2016 and 2019)... before COVID ended the fun. I'm a play-from-home plus-player, and at least three times a year I travel to race tracks across the country. It's been a fun ride. **What's left to say?**

**Life's been good to me so far!!!** (thanks, Joe Walsh)

**Yours in Racing,**

*Joe*

### Quick Hits

#### Places to Be

At the Track	Get back!!!
Away from the Action	Anywhere!!
Race Books	in Vegas!
In-person Tourneys	Where?

#### 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...

### CONFIRMED!

New York racing will switch to "penny breakage" as of September 1, 2025.

### Expert Quick Trick

**On hiatus...** in honor of D. Wayne Lukas. While I was on my road trip, I read that he had died, just short of 90 years old. Quite a career for a former basketball coach: He started with a career in quarter horses before he moved on the thoroughbreds. He took younger trainers under his wing, most famously, Bob Baffert. To me, his best piece of work was AFTER most had pushed him to the fringes of the conversation, with his win in the 2024 Preakness with Seize the Grey.

**RIP in "horsemen's heaven"**

## Featured – The 2025 Release!!!

I wrote the first lines of code for my own personal handicapping program in 1985. Five years later, I was selling it. It started out as a speed tool, so it's fitting that most of the 2025 release, due out this month, will mostly focus on the results of my latest speed research! ***So, what did you do, Joe?***

Well, I took what I learned and converted that information into **logic** – the step before the **code** – and I ran scads of **data**, in to figure what needed to be improved. The majority of my focus was to enhance the speed “smoothing” that I introduced last year (for both the Evaluation AND Analysis phases). **Let's jump right in and check it out!**

Let's start with the horse evaluation. Here are the latest speed-based additions and refinements:

1. It was time for a refresh of the Trouble values (only available in Interactive Mode):
  - a. The values and names have been expanded and updated.
  - b. The “long layoff” criterium has been expanded with an “extra-long layoff” calculation, which is mainly based on the class of the race.
2. There is now a dynamic “gap factor” method used for days between races, which is based on the Track, Surface and Distance type for both sprints and routes. This update is in addition to the gap being initially determined by the race's class level.
3. The **Hor\$mart's** (AI) was improved with what I found out about the “lower limits” for 1st and 2nd calls, related to distance subtypes for sprints and routes. These are defined as:

Subtype	Sprints	Routes
Short	5 to 5.5 furlongs	1 mile to 1 mile 70 yards
Average	6 furlongs	1 1/16 mile to 1 1/8 mile
Long	6.5 to 7 furlongs	1 3/16 mile to 1 1/4 mile

Each lower limit is separately calculated for dirt, all-weather and turf surfaces for the first two calls at all tracks. These two call values are now adjusted by the class of the race and the speed smoothing setup value. This logic is used whenever a horse's estimated call fraction drops below the “low limit” call value, changing the value of the call(s).

A lot of good work got done for the race analysis. Here are the latest refinements for speed:

1. Some of the speed smoothing rules have been refined, with certain individual rules being separated into two rules. All are based on the overall pace/trip positioning (“FUMO”) rules.
2. When speed smoothing is applied, the smoothing setup value will limit the number of AI rule cycles to run. This is needed to “comply” with your setup selection.
3. For the speed analysis screen, the analysis type set in the setup – lengths back, times (100ths or 5ths of a second) or feet per second (between calls and overall) – will be displayed in the SPEED header for the speed selection.
4. While I was reworking the speed analysis screen, I fixed some column alignment issues.

**That's it for speed! Now... here's the rest.** There were two bugs in the race screening. First, the F7 option will be temporarily disabled whenever a race has a field size initially greater than 14 horses AND the current and prior surfaces aren't the same; it re-enables for the next race. Also, I stopped the rare occurrence of a “pass” race being chosen as a “play” race, due to an unlikely combination of settings in a **Hor\$Strategy** setup. In evaluation, I fixed a bug where the current class AI logic was occasionally refusing to run a second loop. In analysis, new logic was applied to the “bar graph” analysis displays, for both the facets and the DIG DEEP feature.

**This release is about Quality over quantity... ENJOY!**

## Handicapping Tips – Sprint & Route Subtypes

When you're handicapping, have you felt like there was something that you "knew was true", but you just couldn't figure out how to prove it? **Me too!!!** Here's how I proved how much the "call" fractions impacted the **SPEED** and the **PACE/TRIP**. Hopefully, this inspires you "prove your theory"!!!

We instinctively know that sprint fractions are faster than route fractions, and I've applied those ratios throughout my **Hor\$ense** programs from the beginning. In recent years, I applied that same line of thinking to the differences between surfaces, with fractions being faster in this order: turf then all-weather then dirt. What has been missing is exhaustive research on the subtypes for sprints and routes, on all surfaces. Specifically, we should see subtype fractions increase with distance. It sounds simple... but it's really NOT! **So, how did I do it?!?**

**Well, it turns out that I've had the data all along!!!** You see, for each **Expert** release I calculate the best times for each track/surface/distance combination. From that, I compute the average time per furlong (**TpF**) for every distance (all surfaces, for both sprints and routes). For subtypes, what's needed is to dig deeper into the data to identify the patterns. In **Expert**, there are three subtypes: for sprints (in furlongs – under 6, 6, 6 1/2 to 7) and for routes (in miles – under 1 1/16, 1 1/16 to 1 1/8, 1 3/16 to 1 1/4). **Is there more? Why, YES, there is!**

The next step is to establish a baseline DIRT value for the fractions, so that each analyzed fraction (for ALL surfaces) will have the same starting point. For my research, I selected these times for sprints (2f = 22.50, 4f = 46.00) and routes (4f = 46.50, 6f = 71.75). Using the **TpF**, I then produce adjusted fractions. **So, how about some examples? Sure, I can do that!**

I'll start with an equal comparison, both on the dirt at 6 furlongs. The Avg TpF is 11.60 (for both), with 2f=22.39 & 4f=45.78; Louisiana Downs (LAD) matches that TpF. For comparison, Fonner Park (FP) at 6 furlongs has a TpF of 11.90 (for a ratio of 1.026); the equivalent fractions are 2f=22.97 & 4f=46.96. In summary, a shipper from FP running 22.97 & 46.96 would convert to 22.39 & 45.78 in a race at LAD.

Next, a dirt 6f vs dirt 6.5f example. The Avg TpF is 11.60 (6f) and 11.84 (6.5f), with a ratio of 1.021. The 6.5f fractions are 2f=22.86 & 4f=46.72. The FP 6.5f has a TpF of 12.03 (for a ratio of 1.017); equivalent 7f fractions are 2f=23.25 & 4f=47.53. So, to run 22.86 & 46.72 in a 6f race at LAD, this Fonner Park shipper running a 6.5f race there would have equivalent fractions of 23.25 & 47.53 at LAD.

Now, let's look at a surface switch, 6f on the dirt against 5.5f over an all-weather surface. The Avg TpF is 11.60 (6f-D) and 11.35 (5.5f-AW), with a ratio of 0.979; Gulfstream Park (GP) is a close match to the AW TpF. This means that the 6f Dirt fractions of 2f=22.39 & 4f=45.78 at LAD would need to be fractions of 2f=21.93 & 4f=44.83 from the GP 5.5f AW PP.

Returning to dirt-to-dirt, let's go sprint-to-route, with 6f vs 1m. The Avg TpF is 11.60 (6f) and 12.15 (1m), with a ratio of 0.979; Lone Star (LS) matches the 1m TpF. So, the 6f Dirt fractions of 2f=22.39 & 4f=45.78 at LAD would need to be fractions of 2f=23.47 (implied) & 4f=47.97 from the LS 1m PP.

Finally, we can look at a route turf-to-dirt switch, with both at 1m. The Avg TpF is 11.79 (T) and 12.15 (D), with a ratio of 0.970; the Woodbine (WO) inner turf is a TpF match. So, the 1m Dirt fractions of 4f=48.12 & 6f=1:14.22 from LS would need to be fractions of 4f=46.67 & 6f=1:11.79 from the 1m WO Turf PP.

It's a lot to absorb, but the good news is that **Expert** does this internally, and all fractional subtypes have been accounted for in the 2025 release, making the **SPEED** adjustments even better!!!

## “Tip by the Book”... Good Vibes, Let It Ride!!!

*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?***

In my far-back past, I was fortunate enough to have shared emails with the late Jay Cronley. **Who?** He was a talented and off-beat writer, who got a gig with ESPN.com to (in part) write about horse racing. **Why?** Because he wrote a book called *Good Vibes*... which was made into the movie *Let It Ride*. **So?** His writing captured what every horseplayer dreams of... to never lose a race on a given day!!!

What can we learn from this preposterous idea? Getting past the low likelihood that it could actually happen, you would have bragging rights over your fellow players forever! More importantly, it would let you be able to better understand just how hard this game is to beat.

**Thanks, Jay, for letting us ALL dream!!!**

## 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???***

In late June, I was off to the East Coast for three tracks – Parx, Delaware Park and Aqueduct in three days! Day one was a washout, as the Parx card was cancelled by the heat wave. Instead, I hung around, had a few beers at the bar and heard some great stories from the locals. **That's why I went!!!**

Day two at Delaware Park, was better.... they were running! I met up with a long-time customer and his wife; we all swapped stories and talked about how to try new things with **Expert**. They also introduced me to a local trainer and breeder. The card wasn't much to my liking, and I made no plays... but I still had a good time! With a long drive to NYC on Friday, I crashed out early.

The 2+ hour drive to the “Big A” was better than I expected – no worse than an LA rush hour – and I arrived early enough to handicap the whole card. The impending closure, after Belmont re-opens, is obvious; maintenance is NOT really being done. It was a vibrant scene, but these “all-knowing” bettors made it hard to start up a conversation; eventually I did meet a friendly fan, and we talked for quite a while. I found six races to play, but the odds forced me to skip two of them... and I had five winners and a second, and my three wagers (two single wins and a daily double) made me enough money to buy overpriced beers at JFK before heading out. **Overall, I had a great time!**

Next up: Del Mar, Santa Anita and Kentucky Downs... giddy up!

## In closing...

What's up with the Triple Crown? Does anybody **really** care?

Well... from the business side, the answers are most likely: “nothing to see here” AND “we don't care what YOU want”. We all realize that the format is outdated – I've always been on-board with Memorial Day weekend Saturday for the Preakness (3 weeks to recover) and a move to mid-to-late June for the Belmont (3-5 weeks off) – but the fiefdoms aren't giving up their precious schedules. If more Kentucky Derby winners who are legitimate Triple Crown candidates continue to skip the “middle crown”, then another champion seems even less likely! **Is that what they really want... I don't think so!**



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## What I Learned...

Here comes the Thunder...

As in **Thunder Plains Downs**, a new race track in Wyoming, the first ever mile-long circuit in the state. Built in Cheyenne, it's just 90 minutes from central Denver. It's 16-day meet starts August 1.

Because it's new, **Expert** won't be able to handicap races there until I'm able to get up-to-speed with their speed figures... most likely not in time for this meet.

**Welcome, Thunder!!!**

**Joe Mainardi**

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“a one man show”

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