HOR$ENSE

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

Presents the **Expert-ease** newsletter

Spring is in the air… & 3-year-olds are taking your money*!!!
*but not mine

Joe's Corner

This issue comes with a "warning" label…

If the current crop of 3-year-olds have you bewildered, my "warning" to you is to… skip those races! I get it… the excitement of the Triple Crown is too much to resist… *or not*. And the prep races… *meh*.

Here's my view: it's like a track meet of sixth graders running against each other… with one big exception. While human runners don't dramatically improve in between races, horses can "all-of-a-sudden" stop being gangly and disinterested, and focus on running.

I don't even look at races where the field has only 3-yo horses… and I skip the races for 3-yo and up tilts until July. And I literally can't remember the last time that I purposely bet on a 2-yo race.

You don't have to play every race, so my advice is to let the "kids" run around for another six months or so, before plunking down your money!!!

Yours in Racing,

Joe

Quick Hits

Places to Be

At the Track	it's almost time!!!
Online	24/7/365
Las Vegas	race books are open
	(still waiting for tournaments)

Things to Do… always!
- Keep accurate wagering records!
- Skip a race now and then!
- Stop and smell the roses!

Fact that sounds made up…
Spectacular Bid was so dominant in 1980 that he ran UNOPPOSED (aka a walkover) in the Grade 1 Woodward Stakes! There were only four horses entered and the other three scratched overnight. That's right… nobody was even interested in running second*!!!*

Quick Trick

Using "synthetic" surfaces (or not)
In the setup **Systems Settings**, there's an option in the **Preparation, Evaluation and Analysis** section to treat an All Weather (AW) surface just like an actual Dirt surface.

If the **Treat All Weather surface like Dirt** box is checked, during the **Evaluation** any AW past performance will be treated as if it was on Dirt. Otherwise, they stay separated.

Featured – "Theory of Constraints"

There is a management methodology known as the "Theory of Constraints" that can be applied to our beloved sport. There are five phases, and I'll show you how to think this way when you're developing your handicapping AND wagering plans.

Here are the phases – and how they apply at a high-level:
- Identify – something could be better OR you need to stop a bad situation
- Exploit – look for "hidden" information, using the information that you already have on hand
- Subordinate – lower/eliminate things that either have limited value (lower) OR are false (eliminate)
- Elevate – raise or lock-in things that have merit
- Evaluate (or re-Evaluate) – do the required due-diligence, and then either validate your theory OR return to the Identify stage for more discovery (OR the Exploit stage if you just need a refinement)

So, now let's look at applying this to handicapping and wagering.

Handicapping: Your angle on maidens dropping into a maiden claiming race is doing very poorly.
  Identify: Let's say that you have two basic rules; [1] the drop has to be below the top-most maiden claiming level AND [2] your pick was within five (5) lengths at the wire in their last two races.
  Exploit: First, you'll need some data; use your wagering records… or start keeping them! The next step is to analyze: [1] was the race the same distance type (sprint-to-sprint, route-to-route) or different (sprint-to-route, route-to-sprint), AND [2] the lengths behind for each of the four distance combinations.
  Subordinate: Consider tossing out the "different distance type" races, as they require more speculation than when the distance types are the same. So, those race combinations have been subordinated.
  Elevate: In its most simple form, your subordinations have elevated the "same distance type" races. Now you can turn to those races and look at the lengths behind quandary.
  Evaluate: While I don't play this angle, I can tell you that your next step could very well be to see what happens if you reduce the number of "lengths behind" – one length at a time – and go from there. Depending on what you find, you're either done or returning back to the Identify (or Exploit) phase to give it another go.

Wagering: Your bankroll has taken a sharp drop, and you haven't changed anything in your approach.
  Identify: For simplicity, let's say that you have an odds threshold (2-1) and you believe the losses are because you're wagering on horses at 2-1 or more when you bet them that drop below 2-1 after you've made your play. You would then revisit your minimum odds requirement, to see if using a higher odds threshold… or if it's just some weird cycle.
  Exploit: In my case, I will rely on my personal wagering records to look at where I am with my minimum odds plays. One of my basic tenets – discovered during a prior wagering records analysis – is to stay away from plays or less than 2-1, but in the past year or so I've watched many horses who are 2-1 or more going into the starting gate turn into 3/2 (or less) coming across the wire. With my records, I can look back at historical wagering data to get a better feel before the next step.
  Subordinate: I selected races from the last five (5) years… because I feel like that's when this all started. I then reduce it to bets that are less than 5/2 and greater than 3/2, assuming that horses have gone both up and down within that range. I have effectively subordinated those outside of that range.
  Elevate: With just wagers that I've made between 1.55 and 2.45 odds, I can get a better idea of whether my theory is correct. I have elevated those wagers.
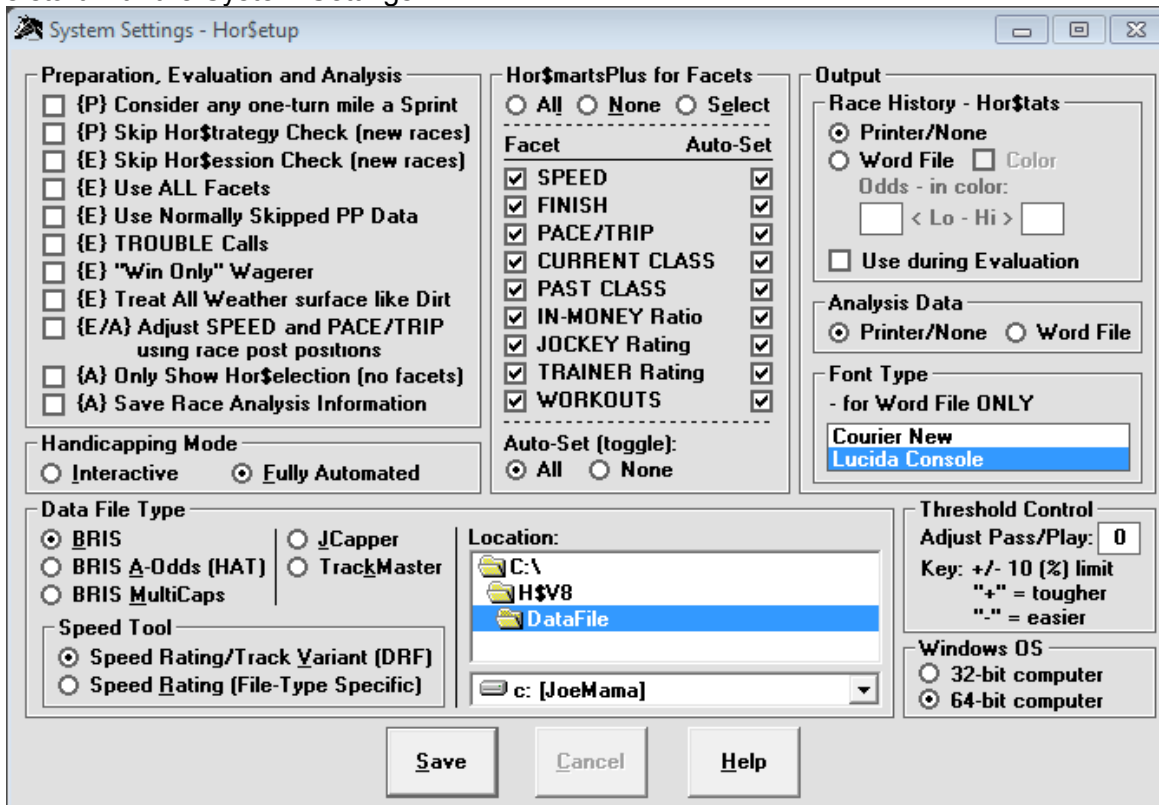 **Evaluate:** The evaluation turned up something interesting. Namely, I stopped recording my no-bet ($0) "tracking only" wagers at the end of 2017, and I ended up showing a profit in the 2018-19 years. But in the prior three years (2015-17) I was overplaying the shorter odds horses – both with real and imaginary bets – and had losses. So, if I were satisfied with the analysis showing that I should keep playing the same way that I did in the last two years, then I'd be done. And if I wanted to I could dig deeper and find more; things like sprints vs. routes, cheap claimers, and so on.

Using this method, you can to tackle your issues in a logical and organized manner.

Handicapping Tip – Set Up Your Strengths (part 1)…

If you want **Expert** to handicap like you do, then start by using the various setup features to focus on your strengths AND avoid your weaknesses…

Let's start with the System Settings:

There are too many advanced options to cover in one issue, so let's focus on the key options:

- **Treat All Weather surface like Dirt** – (this issue's **Quick Trick**) horses moving between these types of tracks can leave gaps in the speed analysis; check this box and **Expert** will treat them as if it was the same surface
- **Adjust SPEED and PACE/TRIP using race post positions** – check this box to have the **Expert** analysis take post positions into account for these two facets
- **Hor$martsPlus for Facets** – if ALL of the boxes are checked then **Expert** will make the facet calculations automatically occur. And if you want to see the data AND have the chance to hand-pick the data that's used (beyond the defaults), just select the Interactive Handicapping Mode
- **Output (Race History – Hor$tats)** if you have MS Word on your computer, set the option to the Word File option AND check the color box to get the most comprehensive race view you can find just about anywhere
- **Threshold Control** – if you're finding that **Expert** is giving you too few (or too many) "PLAY" races, you can change the Adjust Pass/Play value to your liking

There are many other options worth considering, and you can find more information about them in the User Manual.

Your Take… eventually

That's right… this space is STILL for you to share your handicapping ideas and thoughts. Since I'm still waiting for that "first take", I'll kick-start it for you.

I have a friend who regularly plays the multi-race exotics. He uses all sorts of angles that we're familiar with: graded workouts, jockey/trainer combos, recent class, and the like. As you might imagine, his tickets tend to be dominated by the shorter priced horses; his handicapping methods don't lend themselves to much other than that.
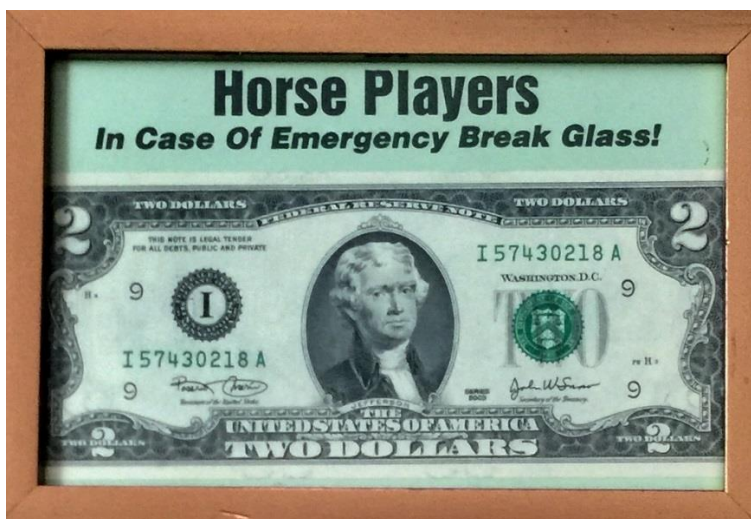
But, when we meet up in person at the local casino race book, he knows that I spot horses "beyond the chalk", and he checks with me to see if there are any horses he has overlooked. Every so often I'll see a horse that will pay well if it wins, so I let him know.

I never know beforehand if he's added any of them to his ticket… but I can always tell when he's played one that won, because the "thumbs up" tells me that he has enough trust in my plays to add a horse or two to his tickets.

My take: Never be afraid to look beyond the chalk!

In closing…

I'm never broke as long as I have this…

UNIQUE SOLUTIONS SOFTWARE

On the Web:
http://www.ponypicker.com
https://ponypicker.boardhost.com

Contacts:
Email - uss@ponypicker.com
Facebook - @JoeThePonypicker

What I saw recently…

The movie Secretariat. Not a big deal, right? It wasn't… *until* I realized that he STILL holds the stakes record for ALL of the Triple Crown races!

Joe Mainardi
Owner, Developer… *"a one man show"*
jdm@ponypicker.com