

# HOR\$ENSE

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

Presents the **Expert-ease** newsletter

## Spring season racing... Now things are gonna heat up...



### Joe's Corner

I always enjoy Spring racing... because it means that Summer racing is coming soon!!!

But, seriously, why? Spring racing is has some very nice meets going, with plenty of racing for everybody.

For starters, the weather gets warmer! There are tracks I ignore for months, just because of the cold and/or crappy conditions. This alone puts more tracks in play every day.

Sticking with the "better racing" theme, turf racing increases, in both raw numbers AND percentage of races carded. This excites me a lot, having more races to handicap... plus I like the turf.

Spring meets are both opening and closing, so if you live in certain areas – NYRA, Kentucky to name a few – you can go to both days. You can also travel there and act like a local! Look for stories and teasers within these pages on how you can do this.

Last, but not least, there's the Triple Crown. It's great theatre, occasionally living up to the hype. The Kentucky Derby prep races are in full swing, and they've been great to watch.

No matter how you look at it, we all have a lot to be thankful for... so get out there and enjoy it!!!

Yours in Racing,

*Joe*

### Quick Hits

#### Places to Be

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

#### Things to Do... c'mon, just DO IT!!!

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

#### Fact that sounds made up...

Now everyone can get a FREE copy of **The American Racing Manual!!!**

It's now maintained by The Jockey Club, and they offer it for free as a download. To get it, just go to [jockeyclub.com](http://jockeyclub.com) and look under **Resources** and select the **Fact Book** option. The 2022 edition is not yet ready; they usually release it by late May or June. **Enjoy!!!**

### Expert Quick Trick

#### How to change track conditions...

Do you like to play "off" tracks? Did you know that **Expert** knows how to do it?

It's pretty simple. Look across the top of the menu bar, and there's an option one spot in from the right. It's default is **Dry** but you can switch it to **Wet** by clicking on it. It's a toggle, with only these two options.



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## Featured – What Goes Into an Expert Release...

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As I find myself working on the finishing touches for the 2022 release of **Hor\$ense Expert** – which debuted in 2015 – I sometimes forget that what comes naturally to me as a programmer might not seem so obvious to those who don't write code or design systems. So, with that in mind, I thought that we'd take a quick trip down the software development "rabbit hole".

First, let's talk about the five main types of work that go into an **Expert** release. They are: upgrades, updates, nice-to-haves, system changes and "bugs". Let's explore these...

In **Expert**, upgrades are things like new features (the "all tracks for the day" race extraction and selection feature is one of them for 2022) and major rework to the layout or flow of the program (displaying more details behind the "pass/play" decision is a 2022 upgrade). These involve quite a bit of work, as changing the flow of the program and/or the look of something that currently exists **always** requires extensive testing. These are the most challenging efforts... but always worth the challenge, because it helps us become better handicappers when using the program.

Next up are the updates, which are necessary to keep **Expert** current. This year, the list contains these items: the ANNUAL Speed and Class calculations, adding Race History information (showing the actual class difference in each PP is the biggest one), refining the Trouble codes (used in the Interactive handicapping mode), and being on top of changes at the tracks (this year's biggies are [1] the re-emergence of the one-mile chute at Saratoga, and [2] the new synthetic surface at Gulfstream). These enhancements keep **Expert** current.

A nice-to-have is a sort of an update, but it's more about the "look-and-feel" of the program. This year, most of the work in this category has gone into making the Race History easier to read. And, as I do each year, I review the pop-up messages to ensure that they are accurate and understandable. As with the updates, these are all necessary in order to make **Expert** better.

A system update is almost always internal, and typically doesn't change anything within the flow of **Expert**. For this year, some examples are: renaming an internal variable name (so that I can better understand what it does), and creating a common routine from multiple versions of the same code (which is helpful when making changes to the code). This is necessary work, which makes it easier to maintain and enhance **Expert**.

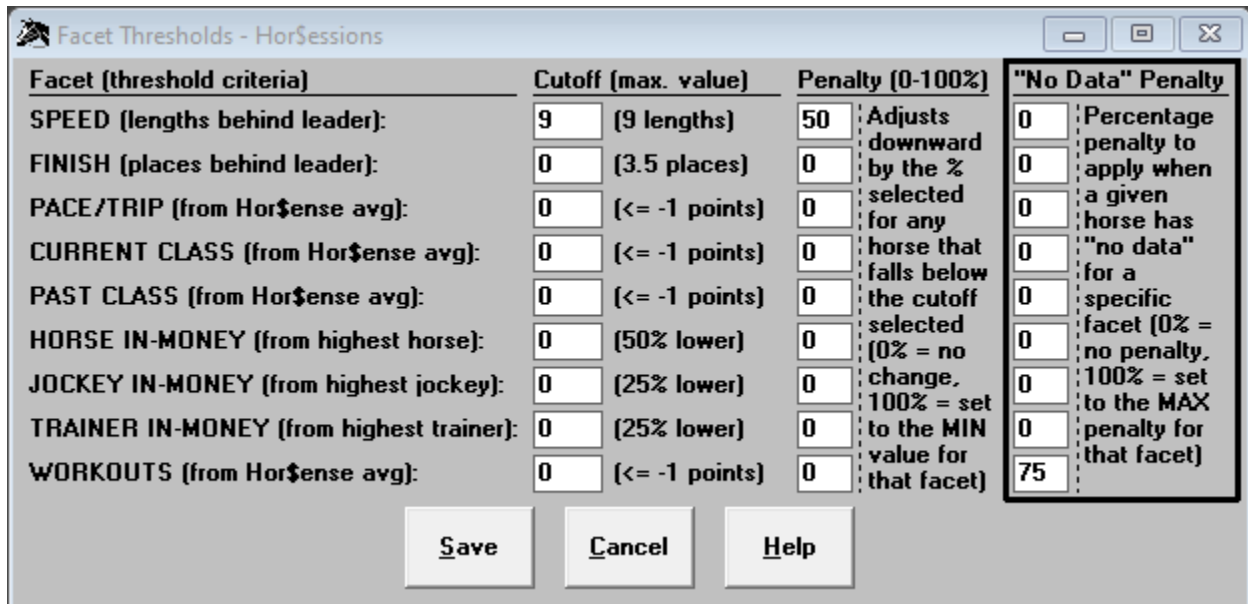
The last type is the dreaded "bug fix", and I must admit that they do happen in **Expert**... and if a programmer says that they have never written code with a flaw in it, know that they are [a] lying AND/OR [b] a terrible programmer. For this release, the most glaring one was in the Race History, where a horse's "record box" didn't take into account when a horse missed a year of racing; an example is for a horse that didn't race in 2021, where the "bad" code listed the prior year as 2021, but in reality it was 2020 (which is now fixed). These are often caused by NOT testing a scenario that wasn't identified (an error of omission) OR thinking that a situation couldn't happen (an error of commission). There's a lot of code in **Expert** (over 30,000 lines, plus all of the screens) and I test a lot... but sometimes "bugs" happen.

Now that you have a better idea of what I do to make sure **Expert** is working properly and is doing what it's supposed to do, you can rest assured that I do everything within my power to make it the best handicapping program out there. By the next newsletter, the 2022 release should be available, and I'll have the highlights for you in those pages.

## Handicapping Tip – Set Up Your Strengths (part 3b)...

We have already covered **Pre-Screening Profiling**, **Master Profile** and **Facet Selections**. Now it's time to close the books with **Thresholds**.

This option allows you to refine the analysis that you see when **Expert** is one evaluating all of the horses in a given race. What it does is allows you to set lower limits on the impact of ANY facet. While considered an advanced feature, handicappers at all levels can put it to good use.



Facet (threshold criteria)	Cutoff (max. value)	Penalty (0-100%)	"No Data" Penalty
SPEED (lengths behind leader):	9 (9 lengths)	50	0
FINISH (places behind leader):	0 (3.5 places)	0	0
PACE/TRIP (from HorSense avg):	0 (<= -1 points)	0	0
CURRENT CLASS (from HorSense avg):	0 (<= -1 points)	0	0
PAST CLASS (from HorSense avg):	0 (<= -1 points)	0	0
HORSE IN-MONEY (from highest horse):	0 (50% lower)	0	0
JOCKEY IN-MONEY (from highest jockey):	0 (25% lower)	0	0
TRAINER IN-MONEY (from highest trainer):	0 (25% lower)	0	0
WORKOUTS (from HorSense avg):	0 (<= -1 points)	0	75

Adjusts downward by the % selected for any horse that falls below the cutoff selected (0% = no change, 100% = set to the MIN value for that facet)

Percentage penalty to apply when a given horse has "no data" for a specific facet (0% = no penalty, 100% = set to the MAX penalty for that facet)

Save Cancel Help

Let's do an easy one first. The far-right column is the **"No Data" Penalty** threshold that allows you to minimize the negative impact for any horse that has no data available for evaluation. From the screen above (used in my own analysis), you see a 75 in the WORKOUTS box; this means that the worst value is reduced to 75% of the original maximum negative score of -1. This tells **Expert** to assign any horse with no useable workouts a "max" negative score of -.75 instead of a -1 score.

Digging a little deeper, take a look at the SPEED facet settings for the Cutoff and the Penalty criteria. This means any horse projected to finish 9+ lengths back will incur an additional penalty to 50% towards the "max" negative score of -1.5. An example: a horse is projected to finish 12 lengths back, the assigned score of -1 would adjust downward to -1.25. This derives from [1] a difference of -.5 (the poor score of -1 and the "max" negative score of -1.5), [2] adjusted to -.25 when the 50% Penalty is applied, and [3] the -.25 is then added to -1 to get to the -1.25 score.

Well, that does it. Now you can get started on customizing **Expert** to handicap like you do.

## Your My Take...

*Still waiting for your take... just send me something to publish!*

Usually, I'm in a "ranting and raving" mood in this column, but this time around I'm gonna take it easy on you.

Here is my take: keep in touch with people. It doesn't have to be your best friend... it could be anybody.

The pandemic took some folks out of their routines, and they've been replaced with others. If you're one of those people, and you miss something that gave you joy before 2020 happened, by all means go back to doing it.

That will usually involve people who made it fun, so get back in touch with them. It doesn't have to involve racing, but it can. So, why not reach out to someone who meant something to you at one point, and just say "Hi"? And maybe the joy of doing that thing will come back to you.

Anyway, that's it. I'll be back ranting and raving next time.

## In closing...

It's time to get back out there...

Whether it's your favorite local hangout (for me it's a casino race book), a local track OR a road trip...

I can't tell you how to do the first two, but I do know a little about race track road trips...

Here's a kick-starter of ideas for you:

- Unless you can't do it, go for multiple days. Yes, being at the track on Kentucky Derby day is great (if not a whole lot crazy), you should really try can stay longer and do more fun stuff.
- Treat it like you won't be back. Like golfers who **MUST** play at Pebble Beach, you can be comfortable in knowing that you'll have a great time at the races. Go ahead and be a tourist: buy a few collectibles, take pictures and wander around a bit.
- Treat it like you **WILL** be back. Especially if you're doing multiple days. I live right on the edge and have conversations with the locals and the employees. And why not! We pretty much know why we are there. 😊

Wherever it is that you go (back) to, make it a good one...



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## What I just booked...

### My first 2022 road trip!

The "Kentucky Double" turned into a three-fer! Here's what it looks like...

Keeneland: April 27 & 29

- Includes closing day

Belterra Park: April 28

- Opening day

Churchill Downs: April 30

- Opening night

Unless there's a major travel shutdown, I'll be there for sure. If you're planning to be at any of them, email me and we can meet up!!!

## Joe Mainardi

Owner, Developer... "a one man show"

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