




HOR\$ENSE

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

Presents the **Expert-ease** newsletter

The HISA era is here... I'm hoping they will make a real difference...



Joe's Corner

Here's how I judge an idea: if those who have the most to lose don't like it, then it's probably a pretty good idea.

As it applies to HISA (the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act), all indications are that it will be a grand success. **Now, why would I say that?** Because the lawsuits – files by *SO MANY* racing commissions – have been dismissed without much discussion. Below are just a few examples.

Texas lost their case in May, and their idea of a threat is to stop racing altogether. And in early June, a multi-commission lawsuit was tossed out; there's no word yet on what these folks will do.

HISA's racetrack safety programs go into effect 7/1/22, and the anti-doping and medication control program scheduled to go into effect 1/1/23. These are not small changes to the industry.

Every racing commission in the country will be affected by HISA, and one thing is for sure: they will ALL lose the levels of POWER and AUTONOMY that they previously enjoyed. They all have legal counsel, and some of them are using it to try to keep the status quo... but if they had done a better job in-house for all of these years, they probably wouldn't be in this situation.

The bettors deserve better, and HISA aims to bring it to US... and the racing commissions who fight it are telling us that we don't matter enough. I don't like government intervention, but when it's needed, I'm all for it. Hopefully, this time it'll work out.

Yours in Racing,

Joe

Quick Hits

Places to Be

At the Track	Summer racing!
Online	24/7/365
Las Vegas	race books!
	(still waiting for tournaments)

Things to Do... now & forever

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

Fact that sounds made up...

In the last TWELVE years, the Jockey of the Year Eclipse Award has gone to a jockey based in New York for most of the year!

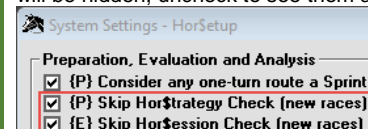
NO wonder Flavien Prat moved!!!

Expert Quick Trick

Skipping Along...

If you don't change the two screens – **Hor\$ession** and **Hor\$trategy** – that pop up after the **Scratches & Changes** screen and the **PASS/PLAY** screen (respectively) then use this setup change to hide them.

In the upper left corner of the setup screen, click each checkbox ON and they will be hidden; uncheck to see them again.





Featured – AI is back in racing, except it never left...

Have you noticed that the Stronach tracks show us an “AI 1/ST PICK”??? **So... AI in racing, what a fresh, new idea... except that it's not.** While I can't say for sure when it was first used in handicapping – my best guess is the early-to-mid-eighties – I've had it in **Hor\$ense** since the beginning in 1989. Since “AI is back”, now is a good time to revisit how AI in racing should work.

As part of the 2022 release of **Hor\$ense Expert**, I decided to boost the AI (aka **Hor\$marts**) performance. *And why should you care?* Well... I hope you have some time to hear me out...

AI, in general, was first sold to the masses with outlandish promises that mostly failed... DUH! But those ideas that survived – robotics, specific-purpose software – got the chance to grow. I applied my formal AI education and work experience to my own handicapping, which inspired me to create **Hor\$ense**... but nobody cared that it used AI, they just wanted it to pick winners!

In the three-plus decades since those early AI works, most AI efforts still go unrecognized... which is how AI should work: something special happened, and you don't really need to know how. Specific to **Expert**, I'll now summarily describe **how** it uses AI... AND **why** it's needed.

Expert uses two main types of AI: heuristics and interpretation. A heuristic is also known as a “rule-of-thumb” or “proven expert knowledge”. The interpretation of data is looked at in terms of interpolation (ex., a horse shortening from 7f to 6f) and extrapolation (ex., a horse stretching out to a route from a sprint for the first time). These two AI types work well for **Expert** because of their value in data-driven handicapping; it IS software for a specific purpose. *Let's take a look...*

The first place that you see it is in the setup (**System Settings**). The first section you see it is in **Hor\$martsPlus for Facets**, and the initial setting is “ON” (you're using AI right out of the box!). The other section is in **Preparation, Evaluation and Analysis**, where **Expert** will make AI adjustments, based on how you address these items: one-turn routes, treat all-weather like dirt, “Win Only” wagerer, using race post positions for SPEED and PACE/TRIP, and Trouble calls.

The next place it exists is in the **Pre-Screening** and **Master** profiles. The **Pre-Screening** profile you use will tell **Expert** which types of races you have more (or less) interest in handicapping. Furthering this intelligent thinking, the **Master** profile tells **Expert** that you have a preferred “system-of-play”. These are advanced concepts, and the AI within it guides **Expert** to do what you want it to do when selecting races for handicapping... the **PASS vs “PLAY”** decision!

To summarize: before looking at even ONE race, by making just a few setup and profile changes, you can tell **Expert** how YOU want it to treat the data used for handicapping. From there, it will take your choices and utilize them when you're handicapping. The data-driven AI in **Expert** is very specific; I'm not trying to save the world, I just want it to pick winners from the data. If you have it “turned on”, this is how it's done....

Data **evaluation** is for each horse, thinking about “how this horse might do in the race, based on what we see in its racing history”. Most data is “in range” and doesn't require AI; the focus is on the data considered “out-of-range” by heuristics: “double class jumps”, “too fast fractions”, “very quick workouts” are just some of those reviewed by the AI engine. For any facet, if your setup is in the **Interactive** mode AND **Auto-Set** is turned OFF, you can adjust the data through additional Q&A and/or data adjustments. After the last horse is done, it's on to the analysis...

Data **analysis** is performed on the entire field, with two types of AI adjustments. One type is made based the selections you make in the **System Settings** setup. The other type comes from the built-in heuristics used in everyday handicapping (think “lone speed”, “huge class drop”).

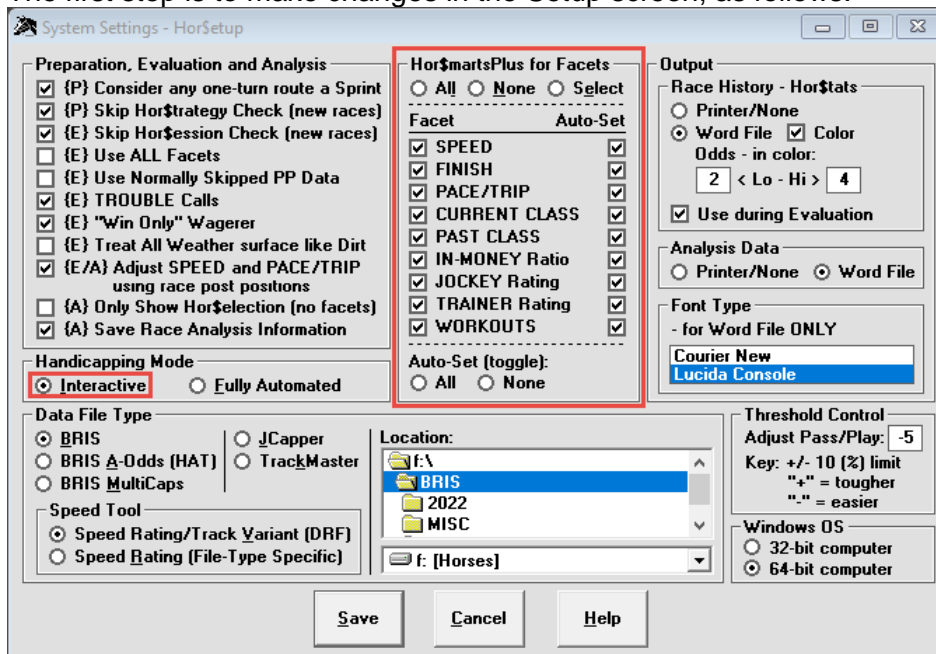
So there you have the **how**. The **why** is much simpler to explain: data interpretation without **thought** is nothing more than statistics... and we all know what Mark Twain said about stats!



Handicapping Tip – Interactive Handicapping...

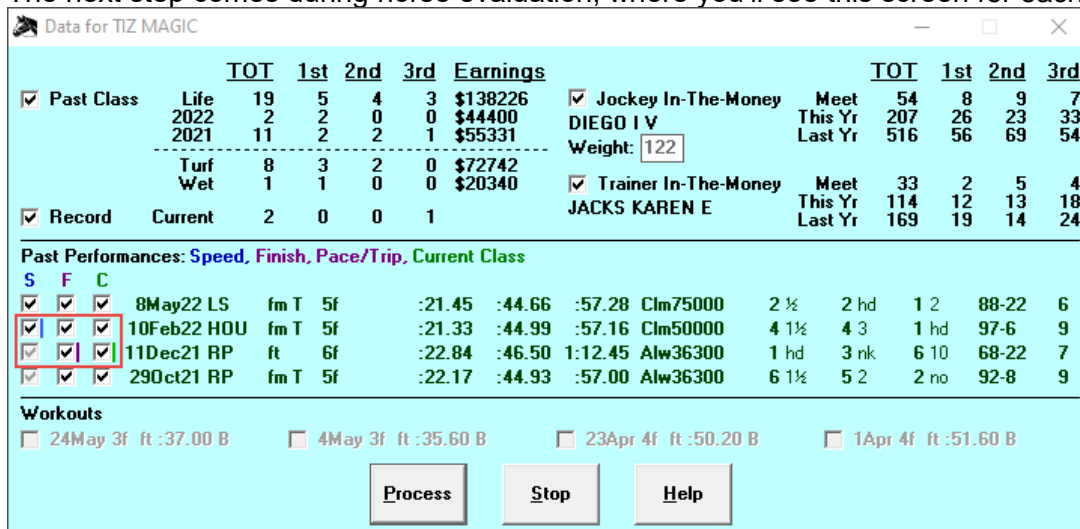
For those of you using **Expert** in the **Fully Automated** mode, handicapping a race actually virtually no time at all. **It's TRUE!!!** It takes longer to do all of the prep – select the race, print out the **Race History**, and look at the selection(s) – than it does to do the actual handicapping. But, you could be missing a lot, and with just a few more keystrokes/clicks per horse, you can get a fuller handicapping experience. Take a look at how easy it is to take control of the data.

The first step is to make changes in the Setup screen, as follows:



1. Change the **Handicapping Mode** to **Interactive**
2. Make sure that all of the **Hor\$martsPlus for Facets** boxes are checked; if they're not already set, click the two **All** buttons in that section

The next step comes during horse evaluation, where you'll see this screen for each horse:



You can either accept the data to be used OR you can make changes by (un)checking the various boxes (as indicated). This will give you greater control over the data **Expert** uses.



“Tip by the Book”... it’s NEW!

And now, for something COMPLETELY different...

This space will now be used to share my thoughts on tips I’ve seen in books and newsletters. Some are terrific (and have inspired me to do similar work), while others are downright awful. *This should be a fun ride!*

My inaugural tip is from James Quinn’s “High-Tech Handicapping in the Information Age”. Published in 1986, this book was influential to me, as I was in the early stages of developing **Hor\$ense**. What inspired me was not a handicapping tip per se, but the quote at the end of the Preface: *“The information age is a brand-new world for all of us. ...an essential attitude... must be accepted by... even the most hardened... handicappers.”*

Brave new world, indeed... and it still is kind of “new”. So, let’s talk about this how to apply this “quote becoming a tip” in detail.

Our mind is the most powerful handicapping tool we have. We learn from our experiences, and we make mental notes about what works and what doesn’t; from this, we develop a system. And a system – whether it’s using pen-and-paper, a computer program, or just in your head – needs to reflect your style.

The first step is to make sure that you **know** (not guess at) your strengths and weaknesses. Write stuff down – keep a notebook, if you must – and be honest about your discovery phase.

Next up is to logically group that information – race types, workouts, front-speed, and so on – noting which are good and bad for you. This lets you start to understand what you need to work on to be a better handicapper... and wagerer.

Step three is to figure out what to do with what you have so far. Ideally, you will cut back on doing bad things and do more of the good things. You will need a plan, and you may end up with more than one method to reach your handicapping/wagering goals.

Take me, for example. I use old-time criteria to get started: “no wet tracks”. Then I use the rule-of-thumb that “cheap claimers” and “baby races” are off limits. Once I’m ready, I count on **Expert** to make all of the data-centric decisions, because it has features that allow me to choose the data I want to examine; you too can set it up for how you handicap. Once **Expert** has weighed in with a selection, I use the **Race History** feature to look at the field in the traditional sense; the best comparison is using the DRF “form”. As you can see, I use a hybrid of methods to handicap.

The takeaway – or “tip” – is to understand what you need to do to get better at handicapping, and to have a plan to get there... and then stick to the plan. If I can stick to mine, I’m sure you can too.

In closing...

Going to Del Mar? Join me!!! I’ll be on-track July 29 and 30 – possibly doing a guest handicapper seminar for the track Saturday the 30th – so if you’ll be there, let’s meet up!



UNIQUE SOLUTIONS SOFTWARE

On the Web:
www.ponypicker.com

What I just did...

Completed the ‘22 Release!

The best improvements:

- Two NEW ways to extract races – **multi-track (!)** and **single track file lookup**
- Enhanced the AI (**Hor\$marts**) during evaluation & analysis
- **Race History** enhancements

There are MANY more... if you’re interested, please go to ponypicker.com, and on the **Updates Past & Future** main menu option you’ll select **Updates for 2022**.

Joe Mainardi

Owner, Developer... “a one man show”

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