HOR$ENSE

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

Presents the **Expert-ease** newsletter

What does 2023 have in store? Quite a lot, actually!!!

Joe's Corner

My 2023 wish list for us horseplayers…

- The "superstar" horses sticking around for another year… we deserve it!!!

- HISA acceptance… stop with the lawsuits already!!!

- Less crooked trainers… and harsher penalties for those who get caught!!!

- No more "late" wagers after the race has started… stop off-track wagers once the first horse goes in!!!

- Penny breakage for everybody… everywhere!!!

- Bigger fields… I'm looking at YOU, California!!!

- More turf racing!!!

- *Vegas tournaments… oh, how I miss them!!!*

Most importantly… health and happiness!!!

Yours in Racing,

Joe

Quick Hits

Places to Be

At the Track	Get out there!
Online	24/7/365
Las Vegas	race books!
	(still no tournaments)

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

OLD Fact that sounds made up…
A century ago, **Zev** was your Eclipse **Horse of the Year** for 1923! He won the Kentucky Derby and the Belmont, losing the Triple Crown finishing 12th in the Preakness (which was run first that year). He won 12 out of his 14 outings, eight of them being stakes races… PLUS a match race! **Zev***!!!*

Expert Quick Trick

Quick Race Updates/Reviews…
If you save the race analysis (using **Save Race Analysis Information** option in the **Systems Settings**), you can retrieve the results by going to the **File** menu and selecting the **Saved Races** option; choose the **Analyze** option to see what was saved internally OR the **Modify** option to make changes to the analysis.

Featured – The near & far future of Expert…

Everything has a lifecycle, even **Expert**. In this light, let's stop for a moment and cover what I have in store with **Hor$ense** handicapping software for 2023… and beyond.

Origins: The history of **Hor$ense** has its roots in my fascination with numbers. I've been a "stats freak" for as far back as I can remember. When I was twelve, my dad introduced me to Santa Anita… and I was hooked. In the pre-computer years, I used a number of handicapping tools. The first one in my toolkit was the original **Kelco Class Calculator** (a "slide rule" wheel, used to better estimate class). Once I could afford one, I bought a **Horse Race Analyzer** (by Mattel toys!)… and the time that I saved made handicapping easier. ***But something was missing… a program made just for me!!!***

Product history: I needed an overall system that was simpler to use than all of those labor intensive "origin" tools. By 1986, I had been a full-time computer programmer for three years. When my company offered a purchase plan on a personal computer, I quickly bought one… and I started my journey in computer handicapping. Program development started that year, and the results were so good that I turned it into a commercial tool to help others… and **Hor$ense** was born in 1987. It wasn't until a positive review in late 1989, from the *Phillips Racing Newsletter*, that **Hor$ense** became a success. I have continually improved the program, and **Expert** is the latest version.

Current status: The many changes that have come to the handicapping industry – the inexpensive data files, more sophisticated programs, and many others – have altered the landscape immensely. I have been asked many times why I don't develop a smart phone app, and the answer is always the same: **Hor$ense** is not built for the "instant analysis" that some people now want; rather, it's about "putting in the work" to both pick winners AND understand how you came to that choice. ***That will never change!!!***

The near future: In 2023, I expect to keep the **Expert** program going strong. There will be handicapping improvements and upgraded & new features. Data integrity is still a high priority, and I'll continue to look for opportunities to push the limits of handicapping.

The far future: Or, as The Clash song says, "should I stay or should I go?" THAT, my friends, is the **BIG** question. To address it, starting in the middle of 2023, look for some surveys… where your responses will be critical to the direction I take. The result could be anything… from staying-the-course with the current program to a new look-and-feel. Everything will be on-the-table, and I'm going to be counting on your feedback.

The BIG picture: Horse racing has been a huge part of my life, ever since my first time handicapping a race using "the form" – bonding on "divorced dad" weekends, helping pay for college with my winning wagers, figuring out how to play multiple tracks with software, running a small and reputable business for 30+ years, visiting race tracks (worldwide) AND making many TRUE horse racing friends – and that will never end.

What I'm not as sure about is whether detailed and in-depth handicapping will become such a lost art that I can no longer keep this quality program going. It's been a long road… one that I hope will continue...

Just know that you're in good hands for the next few years!!!

Handicapping Tip – How to "Pick Your PP Data"

Handicappers who pick their own PP data have the advantage over those who accept the default PP data. In **Expert**, PP data selection requires the use of the **Interactive** handicapping option, as described in Issue 7 (July 2022). Now seems like a good time for a practical example.

Let's say that you're handicapping a ROUTE race and find this horse in the lineup…

Looking at the PPs, you can see that the one on October 15 is a SPRINT. If you don't want to use this PP AND you're using the **Fully Automated** handicapping mode, you will be "stuck" with it; the result is it will estimate that he'll finish second… not easily seen as a likely outcome.

To avoid this, you need to set up **Expert** to use the **Interactive** mode, which would allow you to un-select the **Finish** for that PP by clicking on the checkbox under the **F** column for that PP. During the evaluation, **Expert** will bypass the default finish selection for that PP, thus skipping a likely false in-the-money finish.

If you usually bypass a sprint PP for a route race, you should make **Expert** work the same way. In the July 2022 issue of the newsletter, I explain how to set up this option in the System Settings; contact me if you need to replace that newsletter.

Next up, we'll go deep into Interactive mode handicapping. Yes, I'm looking for "trouble".

"Tip by the Book"…

This space is where I 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. Let's delve, shall we?

My first work as a semi-regular newsletter contributor was in the early 1990's, when David B Fogel (a very smart mathematician) asked me to join his staff. He gave me a copy of his book, *The Mathematics of Horse Racing*, and I learned that we thought in much the same way about the math side of handicapping.

After reviewing these 30+ year old notes, what follows is the most important of those [and how I have applied them in **Hor$ense**]:

- A "good loss" is 4 lengths or less [I went with 5 lengths]
- Layoffs are 28 days [I use class to adjust a 14-60 day range]
- Class drops are important [the analysis ties class to the finish]
- Distance-type (speed/route) conversions are necessary but tricky [it was already being used, but this made me refine it]
- Jockey weight matters [not a big believer, but I added it]
- Weighted "rules" [a critical feature, used in all handicapping phases]
- Consider age/sex/distance-type [used in all handicapping phases]
- Betting types [analysis focus is on one horse W(PS), no exotics]
- False alarms [too subjective for me, not used in the program]
- Money management [this option exists; must be set up first]
- Odds comparison [in the final analysis; clarified recently]

Overall, this book expanded my horizons on what a handicapping program should be, and where I could improve on the solid foundation that I provided in the earliest versions of **Hor$ense**.

In closing…

RIP Trakus… *and who exactly was this horse?* Not a horse, but a company… and one we've seen in every race. Since debuting at Keeneland in 2006, their technology has been used to track the positions of the horses. Yep, those color coded saddle cloth icons on the bottom of the screen during a race came from them.

Happily, handicappers have both contributed to and benefitted from Trakus. You see, the markers in each saddle cloth lead to a more accurate tracking of the distance each horse has run. This has led to improvements in both speed and pace handicapping.

Alas, Equibase is now supporting a more accurate and cheaper method, using GPS and "beam timing". So, Trakus decided to stop supporting North American operations by January 1, 2023. I will be curious to see what the new systems will look like… or will we even notice a difference? Ah, but that's for another day…

A trailblazer, handicappers in-the-know can partially thank Trackus for the speed and pace advantages we have today.

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On the Web:
www.ponypicker.com

What I just did…

Made a TINY profit in 2022…

In the last issue, I stated that I was holding out hope for a plus ROI in 2022. At the same time, I made the decision to tweak my handicapping analysis – by swapping the **PACE/TRIP** and **FINISH** facet impacts in **Expert** – and I was able to turn things around in a BIG WAY**!!!**

In that final quarter, I won at a 27.7% clip (up from 20%), with the average win going from $7.03 to $12.55. This meant I went from $283 down to $21 up!

Eddie D. would be proud!!!

Joe Mainardi

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