

## Computer Handicapping - Past Class

by Joe Mainardi

For this month, I was trying to decide on a subject, when I got a call from my most creative customer. He's made so many suggestions, that sometimes I think that **he** thinks **Hor\$ense** is his program! This time, he wanted me to change my past class formulas from weighted formulas to a pure "earnings per start" calculation. Well, he can't make a GREAT suggestion EVERY time! Let me explain what I mean, and then you can be the judge of what you want to use to calculate past class.

The subject of past class is often confused with earnings per start. These two calculations are very different, as I will later demonstrate. While earnings per start are exactly that... earnings per start, past class involves money won based on where a horse finished in their races. It sounds pretty simple, but many handicappers confuse the two... much to my chagrin!

My last article referred to state purse distributions as a valuable tool in calculating in-money ratios. The same reasoning applies to past class, and I strongly recommend that you use these values for both in-money ratios and past class calculations. Since there are nearly as many different purse distribution formulas as there are tracks, it's critical that you choose the one that represents the track that you most often play. Remember that the purse distribution for the major California tracks is as follows: first place - 55%, second place - 20%, third place - 15%, fourth place - 7.5% and fifth place - 2.5%. Note that these percentages usually do not include any added money (Breeders' Cup bonuses, nomination fees, state bred bonuses, and so on). While this "added money" may create slight variances from the actual past class of a horse, it is rarely significant enough to affect the outcome of the past class calculation.

Sooooo... exactly how do these formulas work??? I'm glad you asked! It's simple... no, really, it is. All you have to do is take the money won and divide it by the total points earned. A win is worth .55 (from above), and second, third, fourth and fifth places are worth .20, .15, .075 and .025, respectively. Since the track record box only shows top three finishes, you will need to look through the past performances (PP's) for any finishes beyond the top three. Also, when a horse has more than 10 PP's in one year, you will have to guess whether a horse might have any finishes in those PP's beyond those shown, based on what their last ten races show you. You don't have to "add" any fourth or fifth place finishes to your numbers, but there are rare cases when it makes good sense to do so.

Now that I've laid the groundwork, let's try an easy example. Say that AcesFull has only two wins, and has earned \$55,000 for the year. His past class is **\$50,000**, which comes from \$55,000 divided by 1.1 points ( $2 * .55$ ). Notice that it doesn't matter if it took AcesFull two races or ten races to make that money. It really *is* that easy! Let's finish this simple subject with a comparison of past class to earnings per start.

Let's look at the data for WhyBeNormal: 20 races, 2 firsts, 4 seconds, 6 thirds, 8 fourths, and \$200,000 won. The past class for WhyBeNormal is  $\$200,000 / [(2 * .55) + (4 * .20) + (6 * .15) + (8 * .075)]$ , or **\$58,824** (rounded up), while the earnings per start would be  $\$200,000 / 20$ , or **\$10,000**. Now, we'll compare that with OverHisHead: 8 races, 4 wins, and \$80,000 won. The past class for OverHisHead is  $\$80,000 / [4 * .55]$ , or **\$36,364** (rounded up). The earnings per start would be  $\$80,000 / 8$ , or the same **\$10,000** as WhyBeNormal. What conclusions can we draw from this? Let's take a look, shall we!?

When examining these two horses by earnings per start, they are evenly matched... and not a good conclusion! But we're saved, as past class points out the classier horse! Using our California racing analogy, WhyBeNormal is a solid stakes horse, whereas OverHisHead is an allowance horse. Which horse are you going to lean towards? Obviously, **Hor\$ense** likes WhyBeNormal; most of the time, WhyBeNormal will perform better than OverHisHead. So, past class is a better measure than earnings per start... as far as I'm concerned. What do you think? Using this easy formula will help you find the *real* class horses in every field... and it's not that difficult to figure out!