

***HTR Monthly Report***  
**Thoroughbred Handicapping Newsletter**  
**April 2006**

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*KM Software*  
Handicapping Technology and Research

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## Tournaments

**Spring Championship at the Orleans**

The Spring *Orleans* tournament was held March 30 – April 1 and drew nearly 700 entries. This was an increase over the previous tournament last autumn, but still well below the projected 800 players estimated in the marketing material for prize money. The top payoff was \$110,880 for the overall winner. There was also daily prize money and a Sunday bonus contest.

I counted about 20 HTR subscribers in attendance, several did well but none of us was able to crack the top-10 this time. Below are the results for our group.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Fin</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Prize\$</u>	<u>Qual</u>
Alan Noring	12	9,202	\$3,465	Yes
Javier Jaramillo	29	7,864	\$1,039	Yes
Barbara Buckley	36	7,486	\$1,039	Yes
Tommy Castillo	50	6,814	\$1,039	Yes

Barbara Buckley won 9th place day money on day-1 (\$500) and Javier Jaramillo got the top day money prize on the final day (\$3500). John Buckley won the Sunday bonus contest and \$10,000!

The tournament winner scored a whopping 11,380 points and the second place finisher also accumulated over 11,000 points. The 3<sup>rd</sup> thru 7<sup>th</sup> place finishers scored above 10,600 points, a total that typically wins this contest. The lowest score to cash was 5,702 (80<sup>th</sup> place). The unusually high scoring was due to a multitude of longshot winners on all three days of the contest, many of which were over the \$42 ‘cap’ and worth more than 2,100 points to the players that used them.

For the first time ever at the *Orleans* tournament, they posted scoring updates throughout the day. A hand-written board was put it up every 2 hours starting at 11am and displayed the top-10 scores for the day as well as the current overall high point total. This was very helpful in determining how the contest was going and we hope that they continue doing this at future *Coast* tournaments.

Unfounded rumors of the demise of the *Coast* contests continue to spread among the players with the takeover by the Boyd Gaming Corp. *Orleans* management is firm in claiming the tournaments are a good revenue producer and will continue. A new event has even been added at the recently opened *South Coast* hotel to take place in May. The *Gold Coast* contest (July 20) and the Fall *Orleans* (Oct 5) are on the immediate schedule as well as the Horseplayer World Series (*HWS*) in January 2007. No evidence to believe that Boyd Corp. will pull the plug yet.

The future of major horse handicapping tournaments in Nevada is like looking into a foggy crystal ball. There are no more handicapping tournaments in Reno at all. Las Vegas events, aside from the *Coast* contests, continue with mixed results at the *Hilton* and *Ballys/Paris*, but the *MGM* has discontinued and none of the other hotels are interested. Even the popular National Handicapping Championship (*NHC*) has apparent vulnerabilities with Magna and Churchill tracks rumored to be whispering about dumping the inept NTRA. The *NHC* is just about the only triumph for the organization and now they have raised the host fee (\$10,000 for 3 qualifiers) and some of the smaller budget locations may have to end their participation (TUP for example). The fee increase is part of a plan to fatten the total prize package at the *NHC* to \$1,000,000. I think that is an excellent marketing plan that would certainly raise the excitement level to qualify as well as put pressure on the *Orleans* to guarantee a million dollar tournament at the *HWS*. We can keep our fingers crossed that both events will carry on and the day will come with two \$1,000,000 pots to shoot for every January. There is something about a “million” that gets people to come out of the woodwork and increases the media exposure.

*Handicapping with HTR2*  
**Late Pace Velocity - Part II - Turf Routes**

Refer to last month's issue of this newsletter (March 2006) for the primer on Late Pace velocity. This month we'll cover Turf Routes and expect the results to show a lot more power for L/P / Lv than was found with Fast Dirt.

<u>Lv = 1</u>	<u>All Turf Routes</u>			<u>PL-5</u>						
<u>Item</u>	<u>Plays</u>	<u>Win</u>	<u>ITM</u>	<u>WROI</u>	<u>PROI</u>	<u>SROI</u>	<u>\$AvgM</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>I.V.</u>	
Play All	03948	17%	46%	0.85	0.85	0.81	\$9.77	\$80	1.59	
Favorites	00965	34%	70%	0.84	0.89	0.90	\$4.94	\$9	3.06	
K1	01303	30%	64%	0.92	0.91	0.90	\$6.11	\$22	2.71	
K2	00830	19%	53%	0.88	0.85	0.87	\$9.32	\$36	1.68	
K110	00548	40%	74%	0.98	0.95	0.93	\$4.92	\$12	3.37	
E/P=1	00144	26%	55%	1.01	0.91	0.82	\$7.90	\$60	2.20	
A/P=1	01026	26%	56%	0.80	0.84	0.85	\$6.23	\$26	2.32	
S/P=1	02273	21%	51%	0.85	0.88	0.85	\$8.04	\$80	1.92	
Fr2=1	01435	17%	45%	0.83	0.78	0.78	\$9.88	\$80	1.51	
Fr3=1	02325	19%	49%	0.83	0.89	0.85	\$8.78	\$74	1.71	
PAC=1	00282	28%	61%	0.89	0.91	0.91	\$6.41	\$26	2.41	
PER=1	01318	26%	57%	0.86	0.86	0.86	\$6.62	\$37	2.32	
PED450+	00989	19%	52%	0.86	0.87	0.85	\$8.92	\$74	1.71	
Trn400+	00174	24%	57%	0.77	0.83	0.84	\$6.38	\$16	2.12	
Jky300+	01437	22%	55%	0.77	0.85	0.86	\$7.11	\$39	1.93	
WK85+	00298	15%	44%	0.61	0.68	0.68	\$7.87	\$28	1.38	
HTR=1	00547	31%	63%	0.85	0.83	0.86	\$5.60	\$16	2.70	
VEL=1	01757	24%	55%	0.91	0.89	0.87	\$7.50	\$80	2.20	
\$	01327	08%	29%	0.89	0.87	0.76	\$21.56	\$80	0.80	
\$\$	00373	07%	26%	0.75	0.65	0.62	\$20.79	\$74	0.68	
RS= F,E	00423	23%	51%	1.01	0.90	0.86	\$8.80	\$62	2.06	
RS= P	00991	20%	51%	0.87	0.88	0.84	\$8.87	\$80	1.79	
RS= S,R	02534	16%	43%	0.82	0.82	0.79	\$10.45	\$80	1.44	
QP +6,7,8	00353	23%	54%	0.95	0.89	0.85	\$8.21	\$44	2.01	
Alw/Stk	02032	17%	46%	0.84	0.85	0.81	\$9.89	\$80	1.48	
Claiming	00975	17%	44%	0.96	0.91	0.81	\$11.04	\$80	1.59	
Purse100k+	00259	15%	47%	0.75	0.71	0.75	\$9.76	\$74	1.32	
F	00034	32%	56%	1.46	0.96	0.90	\$9.00	\$16	2.85	
E	00389	22%	51%	0.97	0.90	0.86	\$8.77	\$62	1.99	
P	00991	20%	51%	0.87	0.88	0.84	\$8.87	\$80	1.79	
S	01802	17%	45%	0.84	0.85	0.81	\$10.12	\$80	1.51	
R	00732	13%	39%	0.77	0.75	0.76	\$11.47	\$69	1.25	

### Analysis

The overall results with grass routes and Lv=1 are so-so. Claiming horses did well, but the higher-class turf allowance and stakes had poor returns. Strong jockey, trainer or workout did not help the cause much. One interesting positive to come out of the test is that early speed items combined with the Lv=1, produce the best results. In fact, looking at the running style (RS), we see a clear correlation between early position and impact of Lv=1. The closer up the horse is predicted on the pace, the more likely the Lv=1 adds power to the outcome.

This study and last month's similar test on the dirt races has provided a somber reminder of the difficulty of finding value plays based on late speed velocity.

*Handicapping with HTR2*  
**The Lone-“P” Runner**

RS “P” is the running style designation for Presser or Stalker; a horse that remains in the front half of the pack down the backstretch, usually within 4 lengths of the early leader.

The Lone-P refers to a single horse in the race with the RS (running style) = “P”. It doesn’t matter what the running style mix of the rest of the field looks like, we are concerned here only when a solo entrant has been identified as a “P”. Let’s look at the pros and cons and then some test results.

PROS

- The Lone-P is in an enviable position to deal with any pace scenario. If the early fractions are rapid, the presser can sit and wait for the front-runners to wilt and will be in the best position to take advantage. If the pace is slow, the “P” can sit close up, possibly right on the lead and get the jump on the closers.
- Front-runners will be looking over their shoulder for the Lone-P. A “P” stalker that combines a strong Fr2 velocity rating is a deadly foe to the front speed.
- Holding the middle pits the “P” against the closers and forces them to run around or even to wait for the presser to go first. Tactical speed is the name of the game and the “P” has it.
- Jockeys love the “P” and have a flexible runner that can wait or move when asked.
- A single presser on grass can usually sit on the rail and save critical ground for the stretch run.

CONS

- If the entire field has early speed (“F” and “E” type), the “P” may find itself converted to an “R” against the field down the backstretch. That may not be so bad if they blitz early and tire, but any horse forced to the back of the pack has a tall order to come from last and win.
- If the field is comprised entirely of “S” and “R” runners, the “P” may now inherit the lead, a position it may not like. This is very rare on dirt, but will occur on turf now and then. Most “P” horses are entirely uncomfortable on the lead in a grass race and fade in the stretch.
- If today’s race is a dirt sprint and there is a single “E” or “F” in the field, the jockey on the “P” may feel compelled to press the leader so the race isn’t a walkover for the front-runner. The speed duel may be the kiss of the death for the “P” unaccustomed to fighting for the front. This situation rarely happens in routes as the jockey will be more patient on the “P” in the longer race, but the horse may be pressed to move quicker than normal if the leader is cruising.

Here is an example field featuring a Lone-P and rankings for Fr1-2-3. 6.0f sprint on fast ground.

<u>Horse</u>	<u>RS</u>	<u>Fr1</u>	<u>Fr2</u>	<u>Fr3</u>
#1	F	2	1	5
#2	F	*1	2	4
#3	P	3	3	3
#4	S	4	4	2
#5	S	5	5	1*

This is a typical scenario for a Lone-P, #3. There are two apparent speedsters (“F”) that will go at it early along with a couple of slower “S” horses that will need a meltdown to catch up late. The Lone-P appears to have it all its own way here in terms of the trip – the horse can sit and wait while holding the middle unimpeded. The situation looks very favorable for the Lone-P. Next we’ll see how they stack up in the real world.

*Handicapping with HTR2***The Lone-“P” Runner**

We'll look first at general categories of distance/surface and see if the Lone-P is better suited to sprints or routes and whether the grass has any potential with the angle. The only filter in this first test is purse value  $\geq 10k$ .

There is a nice bonus for researchers when testing the Lone-P -- there will be absolutely no ties in the data as these are races that featured a single “P” runner only. No wet tracks were used in the study. I did create a filter that eliminated a race if it did not have at least 5 horses with an RS designation in it, such as a 2yr maiden race full of FTS.

Lone-P	All Races	Purse \$10,000+		Minimum 5 Horses with RS Ratings					
Type	Plays	WIN	ITM	WROI	PROI	SROI	\$AvgM	High	I.V.
All	04483	15%	45%	0.84	0.81	0.79	\$11.1	\$128	1.13
D SPR	02689	16%	46%	0.96	0.87	0.81	\$11.9	\$128	1.20
D RTE	01762	15%	46%	0.81	0.81	0.79	\$10.6	\$61	1.10
T SPR	00188	12%	40%	0.73	0.78	0.79	\$11.4	\$32	0.95
T RTE	00548	14%	43%	0.76	0.75	0.78	\$10.9	\$64	1.15

Analysis

There is only one way to go here and that is with dirt sprints. The ROI is pretty good (0.96) for a large sample of 2600+ races and no other handicapping except betting on the solo “P” in the sprints. All told the Lone-P shows no advantage with routes and grass.

The next table is a test of Fast Dirt Sprints only, purse  $\geq 10k$  to locate the factors that generate the most profitable situations with the Lone-P.

Lone-P	Fast Dirt Sprints	Purse \$10,000+		Min 5 Horses with RS Rating					
Factor	Plays	WIN	ITM	WROI	PROI	SROI	\$AvgM	High	I.V.
All	02689	16%	46%	0.96	0.87	0.81	\$11.9	\$128	1.13
Favorites	00401	38%	79%	0.87	0.96	0.98	\$04.6	\$8	2.73
MLO=1	00365	33%	70%	0.77	0.84	0.87	\$06.3	\$11	2.37
K=1	00329	36%	71%	0.98	0.97	0.94	\$05.9	\$23	2.54
K110+	00130	45%	82%	1.06	0.98	0.98	\$04.7	\$12	3.04
HTR=1	00299	29%	63%	0.86	0.90	0.88	\$05.9	\$27	2.12
Fr1=1,2	00573	21%	54%	1.04	0.97	0.83	\$10.0	\$88	1.48
Fr2=1	00355	22%	54%	0.86	0.97	0.94	\$07.7	\$32	1.57
Fr3=1	00386	20%	56%	0.88	0.88	0.93	\$09.1	\$41	1.37
PAC=1	00312	26%	58%	1.10	0.98	0.95	\$06.6	\$56	1.86
PER=1	00422	29%	64%	0.93	0.92	0.91	\$06.3	\$22	2.13
TRN 350+	00386	26%	64%	1.10	1.00	0.96	\$08.3	\$88	1.88
TRN 400+	00126	34%	65%	1.53	1.02	0.91	\$08.9	\$88	2.42
JKY 300+	00704	22%	58%	1.06	0.93	0.94	\$09.8	\$61	1.54
\$	00569	11%	37%	1.05	0.92	0.88	\$18.6	\$56	0.86
\$\$	00151	13%	38%	1.34	0.98	1.00	\$20.3	\$88	0.98
Wk 80+	00648	18%	48%	0.99	0.84	0.81	\$11.1	\$88	1.30
FC $\geq 85$	00377	29%	66%	1.00	0.89	0.91	\$06.7	\$24	2.07

Analysis

Remember, we are looking at dirt sprints only here. Any of the factors that tend to portend a “live” runner, such as a strong jockey or trainer, workout or FC strength, have a big positive effect on the Lone-P. If the Lone-P has an edge with Fr1 or PAC it also produces good results. The \$ and \$\$ get some good longshots with this angle.

*Systems and Angles*  
**Picking Losers – 1000 in a Row**

I had recently posted a challenge on our bulletin board to find a set of parameters that would yield 1000 or more consecutive losers. In my own experience, this is very difficult. No matter how negative the combination of factors, some horses inevitably win anyway. Yet one of our members, *njcurveball* (Jim), took up the challenge and posted a set of parameters that seemed to do the trick with a decent sample size. So we'll test his query this month and see if we can also hit the 'goose egg' and get nothing but losers. We'll see how it fares on the next page, but first a few amusing anecdotes about negative handicapping.

My own experience with loser and contender elimination has not been that productive. In the early days of our *Stardust Report* -- still available until the hotel is torn down at the end of this year -- there was a comment for some of the bottom ranked horses as: "No Chance". You can probably guess the outcome of this story; suffice it say I learned the lesson of 'never say never' as author James Quinn did with Smarty Jones two years ago as he proclaimed to the world that the horse "cannot win the Kentucky Derby".

The "No Chance" horses designated on the *Stardust* handout would have been similar today to a K=9 with no early speed and a bad trainer and jockey with ratings < 150 each and a terrible lifetime record. In other words a clear combination of negative, low probability factors that should rarely win. My original research had shown less than 1% winners with them, so I figured it was a safe comment.

Man was I wrong. Suddenly a stream of these horses started to win -- at very high odds. In fact, for a period of time they were showing a big flat bet profit and the timing was amazing as most of them were winning the final race on the card, making these horses even more pronounced. Customers at the *Stardust* race book caught on. Some of them called me about it, as did the book manager. Lucky for me, they thought it was funny and the exposure actually increased the buzz surrounding the sheet and it became a popular 'grab' for local horseplayers. From then on, as it does today, the free *Stardust* handout is 'sold out' quickly nearly every day.

In the long run, the "No Chance" horses returned to their losing ways and eventually regressed back to the 1% win level. But because they paid so well, often more than \$100 to Win, and were getting attention at the end of the race day when the pick-6 and other bets are paid off, they stood out like a sore thumb for a time. Later, I removed the comments from the sheet and it actually drew protests from some players!

Concerning K=9, I'm often taken to task by some users when they win. Same situation as above, usually paying big odds they tend to win at critical times in the sequence of races, or perhaps even a major stakes, and that has the effect of sticking out as a big boner for HTR and the K rating. But we know that in the long haul, the win rate will land around the expected 2% level with a huge loss on the ROI for K=9. When a factor wins 2%, it is 98% losers, not 100%. So with K=9, that means 1 / 50 will score. Last year I tried a "@@" experiment on some K=9 combined with a bad race last out combined with the worst ranked speed rating. My tests had shown < 1% winners with this designation.

The "@@" turned out to be a similar bad experience with the "No Chance" horses at the *Stardust*, so I removed it from the latest version of HTR2. Despite the long run losing statistics, the "@@" were getting huge prices at key moments in the race card sequences. Or at least it seemed that way. Maybe this was a case of making these winners stick out too much with the "@@" because users noticed them so easily.

We have also tried various "false favorite" designators in HTR over the years. These were a big failure too. Although the success rate of the bad favorites was statistically under 25% winners (compared to the normal 33% wins) they seemed to always win when needed most in a pick-3 or key stakes race. If 25% of the 'bad' favorites still win, it really stands out day to day, so the markers were dropped.

So the lesson was clear to me. If a designation is made to flag a "loser" -- then these horses darn well better lose every time! Otherwise they stick out too much and become a quite a lark when they win at big mutuels. So let's see if *njcurveball* has found the 100% loser formula.

*Systems and Angles*  
**Picking Losers – 1000 in a Row**

Listed below is the set of parameters *njcurveball* used to uncover his unanimous string of losers.

- Class Type <> 1 (no Alw/Stakes)
- Unknowns < 4 (i.e. first time starters with no velocity figures)
- K rank > 6
- Fr2 rank > 5
- Fr1 rank + E/P rank > 15 (add the two rankings)
- Fr3 rank + S/P rank > 19 (add the two rankings)
- Longshot = 0 (not a \$ or \$\$)
- MLO odds >= 10/1 and MLO rank > 6
- C90 rank > 2
- Wk rank > 3
- TRN rating < 350

Analysis of Filters

Looks like a daunting set of negatives for any horse to overcome, especially the item with the Fr3 + S/P ranks added together must total 20 or more. This means the horse would have to be involved in a field of at least 10 horses to rank that badly in both factors -- sample size would seem to suffer if races with less than 10 field size are not included in the test.

Although *njcurveball* did not specify the calendar length of his test, I'll run an exact 365-day that will give us a fair appraisal of the query and determine a good estimate on sample size over any period of time. He also did not specify a track list or purse restriction, so I ran all races in my test. After we look at the results, let's see if anything practical can be gained from the data.

<u>Loser Spot Play</u>		<u>All Races March 1, 2005 - Feb 28, 2006</u>						<u>PL-5</u>	
<u>Plays</u>	<u>Wins</u>	<u>Win%</u>	<u>ITM%</u>	<u>WROI</u>	<u>PROI</u>	<u>SROI</u>	<u>\$AvgM</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>I.V.</u>
1076	0003	0.3%	03%	0.06	0.23	0.25	\$40.80	\$58	0.03

Analysis

First I want to thank Jim C (*njcurveball*) for his effort and excellent data mining.

Wow – just 3 winners in over 1000 plays. Well done *njcurveball*, that is quite an accomplishment. For the record the winners were in these races: **07/02/05 CBY-8 12/17/05 EVD-4 01/03/06 SUN-7**

There were about 300,000 horses involved in 34,945 races in my sample (no Alw or Stk races were tested per the parameters). So this elimination method flags just 1 in every 300 horses or about one horse in every 35 races. Probably not enough to concern us since they look pretty bad on paper anyway. But can we learn anything from the basic filters setup by *njcurveball*?

A Broader Elimination Factor

I think we can all agree that the quest for 100% losers is as futile as the search for 100% winners. However we may be able to learn something from the test in terms of locating a < 1% success-rate with a larger sample that will have some benefit.

The key items in the *njcurveball* query would seem to be the low ranked combination of (Fr1 + E/P) and (Fr3 + S/P) which finds horses that are both slow early and weakening late. One problem with using velocity numbers for eliminations in this manner is that lightly raced horses, those with just one or two lifetime starts can completely overcome their rough early outings. That's why he was wise to include the filter nLong=0, meaning that that no \$ or \$\$ horses would be picked as many of these are 'live' due to other factors beyond their pace and speed figures. Next page we'll test an easy visual method.

*Systems and Angles*  
**Picking Losers – 99% Solution**

I have mentioned my reasons for not putting flags or markers in HTR2 for eliminating losers anymore. Inevitably one of these horses will win at a critical time and the item will lose all credibility with the user. However, we can create an easy visual that produces close to 99% losers – with a disclaimer that some of them will inevitably win. A reasonable eliminator should include a fairly high sample size in a one-year period, at least 10,000 horses and will be encountered frequently by the handicapper.

Below is a quick method you can use to eyeball a horse that will win less than 1% of the time (99% losers). Looking for a 7-7-7 ranking combination of Ev-Lv-K and an “S” or “R” running style with no \$ or \$\$ →

- $K > 6$
- $Ev (Fr1) > 6$
- $Lv (L/P) > 6$
- Not \$, \$\$ (nLong = 0)

7-7-7 Negative Spot Play				All Races March 1, 2005 – Feb 28, 2006				PL-5	
Plays	Wins	Win%	ITM%	WROI	PROI	SROI	\$AvgM	High	I.V.
10110	133	1.3%	8%	0.39	0.43	0.41	\$58.91	\$266	0.14

Analysis

The final result produces 98.7% losers in 10,000 tries. That’s a significant negative impact result. The parameters make it a dire situation for a closer (“S” and “R” running style) – no early velocity, no late velocity and without the \$ or \$\$ we can’t identify any intangibles that would lead us to believe the horse is “live” today. Note that the ROI numbers were improved dramatically by the impact of several gigantic winners paying over \$200 else the ROI would have dropped below 0.30 in all cases. So if there is one category of horse that shows a profit with this method it would be 99/1 shots!

Incredibly, the data found 15 horses that were the actual betting favorite in their race – they all lost – so I suppose this is the ultimate chalk-buster play. Msw performed the worst of the class levels, about 1000 horses and just a handful of winners. The distance/surface categories showed no discernable differences, but the vast majority of the plays were in dirt sprints. Were there any categories that showed some strength? JKY > 300 had a 3% win rate (97% losers) in 500 tries with a 0.77 ROI and Class (+) won 4% with a 0.88 ROI in about 400 plays. The poorest performing item was the “@” (lost last by 20+), there were more than 2700 of them and they won just 19 of those with an ROI = 0.26 despite a bunch of 99/1 shot winners.

Practical Use?

With over 10,000 horses in the sample, the 7-7-7 spot-play will find about 3-5 qualifiers per race card. That may not help you much since these horses look pretty bad on paper anyway and we would rarely be considering them for a win bet as most go off at odds > 40/1. These horses finish ITM just 8% of the time, so that may be a more important fact to consider if playing the trifecta or superfecta.

*Book Review***The Power of Early Speed – by Steve Klein**

*Mel Moser generously contributes again this month with his review of the new Steve Klein book (DRF Press – Amazon.com \$10). Time and space limitation this month prevented me from testing and reviewing the ‘Klein Speed Points’ from the book, but I’ll get that into a future issue of the newsletter. Thank you Mel!*

[The Power of Early Speed](#) represents a major contribution to handicapping literature, which will come as no surprise to those who have read Steve Klein’s articles over the years. Those articles contain original ideas which Klein himself tested on hundreds of races, using nothing more than paper and pencil. In contrast, his book draws on the mighty drf database, specifically 201,237 dirt races and 32,347 turf races between January 1, 1996 and December 1, 2004.

As Quirin pointed out more than 17 years ago, the question is not whether horses with early speed have a decided advantage, but rather how one predicts which horses will be the early leaders before the race takes place, given both that the early speed tendencies of horses vary from race to race, and that the bulk of big payoffs and profits come from horses that show “surprise” early speed. Klein offers a number of original ideas for addressing this question, an example of which involves jockey changes.

The book contains a 38 page chart which is broken down by track and shows, for every jockey: (1) number of starts; (2) how many times and what percentage the jockey’s mounts were in front at the first call; and (3) the jockey’s ROI on such horses. Relying on hard data instead of perceptions allows Klein to point out, for example, that Jorge Chavez puts his mounts on the lead at the first call 50 percent more often than Victor Espinoza. Thus, if the price is right, a rider switch might be the only tip-off the handicapper needs to conclude that a horse will show more early foot than has been the case in recent races, and although the book doesn’t say so specifically, the reverse must also be true. A clever and original insight, which raises only one question: Was it really necessary for Mr. Klein to use *Musique Toujours*, whose nose win at 70-1 in last year’s Sunshine Millions cost my partners and I the WSH, to make his point?

The book also contains a chart of trainers whose horses are most likely to be leading at the first call, as well as usable statistics on the relative importance of early speed, depending on the age/sex of the horse, class level, and field size. Most HTR subscribers will not view Klein’s statistics on these subjects as controversial, which can’t necessarily be said about two other issues dissected in the book. The 1<sup>st</sup> suggests Klein speed points as a substitute for Quirin points, in large part because of four weaknesses in Quirin’s calculations: (1) a horse which is 3<sup>rd</sup> at the 1<sup>st</sup> call in a 5-horse field is treated the same as a horse in the same spot in a 12-horse field; (2) except for 7f races, horses in 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the 1<sup>st</sup> call earn the same number of speed points; (3) being on the lead is treated the same as being within 2-3 lengths of the lead; and (4) arbitrary cut-off points that treat a horse differently, depending on being 2 vs. 2.5 lengths behind the leader, for example, don’t reflect the reality of racing. Which method is better statistically is best left to those who know how to conduct robot tests, but it’s worth keeping in mind that in later books Quirin made clear that he is an “interpretive” handicapper, and never intended that his points be used in a mechanical fashion. Klein makes the same point explicitly and repeatedly, noting that while calculating the horse with the most points is a logical starting point and will identify horses which deserve consideration, such horses will not necessarily be the right bet.

Last, but not certainly not least, Klein unveils his entirely original method for objectively measuring track bias, one even a casual fan can use to follow multiple tracks. The value of the method depends in large measure on whether one believes that track biases exist which, as Klein notes, some handicappers think are less likely than a sighting of Bigfoot. Suffice it to say that as is true throughout the book, no detail on how to calculate, record and use the data is overlooked, right down to the best places and times of year to buy the notebooks Klein recommends for keeping track of the data.

In short, [The Power of Early Speed](#) is a book which should be part of the library of all who are seriously interested in beating this most difficult of games. ---- MM

*Movie Review - Television Review*  
**Two for the Money / NHC on ESPN2**

Two for the Money with Al Pacino and Mathew McConaughey.

I have not written a movie review since "Seabiscuit" because there really hasn't been a serious film about horse racing since -- unless you can count the delightful "Racing Stripes" about a zebra that wins a stakes race! Let's start right off by admitting that "Two for the Money" has some real flaws and did not deserve much critical praise. In fact, the film is not even about horse racing, its focus is entirely NFL football betting. But I recommend you watch it on cable when it comes on or maybe spend \$3 to rent it, as there are moments of interest.

The basic plot of "Two for the Money" concerns a broke ex-quarterback (McConaughey) who falls on hard times until he is suddenly thrust into the role of picking NFL games. He is a clever analyst and gets hot in a hurry, and that elicits the attention of a big-time sports tout from New York (Pacino). The good times roll, until, of course, he starts to lose. The sports and betting aspects will appeal to you as a horseplayer and much of it will hit home to anyone who gambles regularly. There are some silly sub-plots involving sex, betrayal, addiction, etc., but the film's credibility rests on the wagering aspects and they are well portrayed by these two top actors.

The lessons from this film are predictable yet important reminders. The ups and downs and the rapid emotional roller coast ride of winning and losing. Ego and pride during the winning streak; despair and self-transformation after the fall. Probably everyone reading these words has experienced this dichotomy. No matter how good you think you are at the game, regardless of your proficiency and expertise, the tides of fortune will go in both directions. When the pendulum swings to the negative, our reaction will determine what defines us in the long haul.

**NHC Tournament Broadcast on ESPN2**

Last year ESPN produced a boring and confusing one-hour broadcast of the NHC Championship from Ballys. They deserve praise for learning from the first try and considerably improving the quality of the program this year. However, the broadcast was placed in a difficult Sunday afternoon time slot during the Olympic Games and other popular sports and few people saw it. There has been no repeat broadcast to my knowledge and the only reason I'm able to review it is because one of our subscribers (*Hbee*) sent me the DVD copy.

The Good

The NHC was an exciting, nail-biting contest this year that came down to the final race at Santa Anita and that helped to lift the broadcast until the very end. I liked the character profiles and personality snapshots involved in the tournament -- that was an interesting addition. The announcers were knowledgeable and knew their stuff and the explanation of the contest scoring was clear. The video of the races was enhanced with a graphic pointing to the selections of the spotlighted player -- nice touch.

The So-So

The full race replays were not necessary in most cases (but the final race was worth showing in full) and I often fast-forwarded to the stretch run. The grab and talk live interviews (during the contest) were annoying to the players in most cases and provided little insight. The cameras seem to gravitate to the loud and noisy people, but that's television and this broadcast was produced with the same attention to the flamboyant as any game show.

The Slightly Disappointing

Mel Moser was in contention the entire time but he was never shown or mentioned except as part of the top standings display. Only at the end of the broadcast did we see Tommy Castillo (23<sup>rd</sup>) and Mel (3<sup>rd</sup>) flashed on the screen for their one full second of fame!

*Seminar News***HTR Seminar 2006 – Wed July 19 at the Gold Coast Hotel**

We hope you have that July 19 date circled on your calendar by now. If you are not entering the Gold Coast tournament, make your room reservation by June 15. Check [www.goldcoastcasino.com](http://www.goldcoastcasino.com) for reservation info. If you don't want to stay at the Gold Coast, then you can reserve at the classier *Rio* or *Palms* hotels across the street. Those of you planning on participating in the tourney should have no problem booking by July 1st. They will put you up at the *Orleans* Hotel for a discount rate if you prefer.

Unfortunately Mike Dee won't be able to make the seminar this summer. His daughter is getting married and we congratulate him, but will miss his interesting insights with Access. Donnie will have to go solo on the data workshop, but webmaster Rick will be coming out and will be a great help to those of you keeping up with all the new stuff planned this year. The Access session is a unique opportunity to grasp intermediate and advanced concepts with database manipulation and extraction from HTR data. We do not offer tapes or transcripts of the workshop, only the live participants will get this information.

I am often asked if the seminar can be offered on tape or MP3. I have debated this with our other hosts and talked about it with our other seminar attendees. There is no substitute for a live interactive session that utilizes handouts, big screen presentations and individual laptop instruction. A tape, even a video would not do justice. There will be full details in the August newsletter of all the seminar/tournament happenings as well complete information on the updated material in HTR2. As far as the software upgrade is concerned, all HTR subscribers will get full coverage. But live sessions clearly offer learning impact beyond the written word. Virtually all seminar participants praise the benefits of being there in person and networking with like-minded handicappers and HTR veterans.

Our seminar fee is \$40, at the door, again this year. This includes entry in our handicapping contest. Here are some highlights →

- The Robot Tester is being expanded and will have some nifty new technology to enhance your analysis and spot play extraction.
- Angles- Angles – Angles; we'll be discussing lots of them, how to find them fast and a brand new screen that includes dozens of positive and negative angles, changes and other items of interest.
- We have a new Result / Chart file that will be part of our research tools.
- Donnie will teach you how to query Owner/Trainer combinations.
- Tournament discussion and strategy session, including our annual prize money handicapping contest based on all the new material we have learned that day.

Keep an eye on our discussion board at HTR2.com for more information on the seminar. A full schedule of events and itinerary will be available sometime in June.

*Back Page*Late News and AnnouncementsKentucky Derby Contest

Keep an eye on our discussion board -- "Triple Crown' forum -- for a Kentucky Derby contest with cash prizes if you can present a bold analysis of the eventual winner!

Upcoming Tournaments with NHC Qualifying

- **NTRA On-line April 8, 15, 22**  
<http://www.nhcqualify.com>
- **Arlington Park; April 8**  
[http://www.arlingtonpark.com/events/April/trackside\\_handicapping\\_contest.html](http://www.arlingtonpark.com/events/April/trackside_handicapping_contest.html)
- **Monmouth – April 29**  
[www.monmouthpark.com](http://www.monmouthpark.com)

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