

HTR Monthly Report
Thoroughbred Handicapping Newsletter
October 2006

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Handicapping with HTR2
Beat the (Heavy) Chalk I

All horseplayers are intrigued by favorites. Our late friend Ben Okamoto (original HTR member) believed the chalk was somehow blessed and had to be automatically included in all bets. As if the betting action reflected superior knowledge by wealthy insiders. Sometimes that may be true, but the majority of the time the favorites are predictable – usually speed figure plays or horses with popular connections (owner, trainer, jockey). The normal win rate for all tote-favorites is 32.8% in North America, but there is a subgroup below 2/1 odds that win at a much higher rate. That is our subject this month →

- Final Tote Favorite
- Odds 1/9 – 9/5
- Purse \$10,000 and up

You can run this same query in the HTR2 Robot by setting the Tote Odds between 1/9 – 9/5 and checking the box for 'favorite only' – be sure you have Chart files for all your results in order for the Robot to test the final odds.

The overall stats are impressive with these strong favorites.

Win	39%
ITM	74%
WROI	0.82 (-18%)
PROI	0.88 (-12%)
SROI	0.88 (-12%)
AvgWn	4.20
I.V.	3.02

When these heavy favorites lose, particularly when they finish out of the money, the inflation of exotic prices will be pronounced. Yet there is no getting around the strength of the numbers. Note that the Place and Show ROI are surprisingly good considering the average payoff is about \$4.20 - the public definitely over bets the chalk in the Win hole. I have listed the W-P-S ROI in all cases for this study, so keep an eye on those in all the charts below.

The venerable (K) rating can help us separate the heavy public favorites →

Tote Favorites < 2/1		Purse \$10,000 +						
Factor	Plays	Win	ITM	WROI	PROI	SROI	AvgWn	I.V.
ALL	26219	39%	74%	0.82	0.88	0.88	\$4.20	3.02
K=1	16400	42%	77%	0.85	0.90	0.90	\$4.00	3.27
K=2	5753	36%	73%	0.80	0.87	0.87	\$4.40	2.76
K=3	2438	32%	69%	0.75	0.79	0.79	\$4.70	2.49
K=4	1029	29%	62%	0.69	0.79	0.79	\$4.70	2.31
K=5	0362	22%	54%	0.52	0.67	0.71	\$4.80	1.81
K=6-9	0237	22%	49%	0.58	0.73	0.79	\$5.40	2.03
K=110	8496	46%	81%	0.87	0.91	0.90	\$3.80	3.37
HF	1794	53%	86%	0.92	0.94	0.91	\$3.50	3.80

Analysis

Clear distinctions between the (K) ranks are evident from the chart. The majority of the heavy chalk are ranked K=1 and they win well over 42% of the time; note those significantly improved Place and Show ROI. The superior top ranked K=110 and HF hit at very high rates and will be tough to beat. If you are handicapping a race that features a strong favorite and that horse is an HF or K=110+, your chances of getting it off the board are very slim. To beat the public with the low odds choice, wait for those that are not ranked K=1,2 and take a shot. The bad ROI on the K=3-9 indicate that the public does not back off their wagering enthusiasm despite these rankings. Unbelievably, there were 9 of these favorites that were ranked K=9, and just one of them managed to win.

Handicapping with HTR2
Beat the (Heavy) Chalk II

Next we'll look at various race scenarios and see if these strong favorites have any weaknesses. Keep in mind that this study is only dealing with horses that were the actual tote favorite with odds less than 2/1.

Tote Favorites < 2/1		Purse \$10,000 +						
Factor	Plays	Win	ITM	WROI	PROI	SROI	AvgWn	I.V.
Alw/Stk	8968	40%	75%	0.81	0.88	0.87	\$4.10	2.92
Clm	9191	38%	72%	0.81	0.86	0.87	\$4.30	2.83
Msw	4047	41%	75%	0.84	0.89	0.90	\$4.10	3.49
Mcl	4013	39%	75%	0.83	0.89	0.91	\$4.20	3.24

Analysis

The mild differences here are related more to average field size than the class levels. Claiming races have more horses and that reduces the chances of the chalk slightly. I also tested Age and Gender and there were likewise no differences. The tote action is everything with these horses and the low odds favorites win at the same rates regardless of race conditions.

The VI rating does the best job of making race distinctions for the chalk →

Tote Favorites < 2/1		Purse \$10,000 +						
Factor	Plays	Win	ITM	WROI	PROI	SROI	AvgWn	I.V.
VI 15-25	2735	32%	63%	0.74	0.82	0.85	\$4.70	3.13
VI 26-32	8152	36%	70%	0.81	0.87	0.90	\$4.50	3.17
VI 33-37	7204	40%	75%	0.83	0.89	0.90	\$4.20	3.00
VI 38-50	8128	44%	81%	0.84	0.89	0.85	\$3.80	2.69
Chaos	905	32%	65%	0.76	0.84	0.88	\$4.70	3.26

Analysis

The VI could be separated further, but the obvious conclusion from this limited chart is that the short-odds favorites perform better with a higher VI and the win rates decline with the lower ones. Much of the value of the VI is dependent on field size. So how much of the decline in results is due strictly to having more horses in the race. The Impact Value (I.V.) reveals that even though these favorites win less often at the low VI levels, they do hold down the fort in terms of actual expectation. (*read the Sept 2006 newsletter for more details on Impact Value*)

One problem with that conclusion about field size is that expectation is much higher with low-odds favorites than it is with any other type of horse. The ROI is thus the key indicator. As the VI gets smaller, so does the ROI. The weakening ROI indicates that the public over bets the chalk despite the low VI rating. Sharp bettors can take advantage of that mistake by taking a stand against low odds favorites if the VI < 30. This is an important reminder for tournament players as well.

Vulnerability

On the next page there is a list of the key factors that produce the highest negatives with heavy favorites at odds under 2/1. It is a tall order to beat these horses as they have a rock-solid win rate near 40% and I.V. exceeding 3.00, so the key is to locate *vulnerable* favorites. Vulnerable does not necessarily mean the public has blown it in terms of win expectation, but that they have surely over rated the horse with their wagers. ROI is an absolutely perfect indicator for this type of test. There is always just one play per race here without any ties. The sample size is substantial and the data is dependable to go forward. Favorites are always a negative return and the ROI for the heaviest public choices is a (-18%) loss. Interesting that the ROI for the Place and Show isn't as bad (-12%) and that is an indication that the public is over emphasizing the Win pool on these horses.

Handicapping with HTR2
Beat the (Heavy) Chalk III

Negative Factors to Identify Vulnerable Favorites

To test for negative effect on the strong favorites I looked at all the factors in HTR if ranking ≥ 5 . We have already shown the effect of $K=5-9$ on the chalk, but the sample size was relatively small (599) for that group because most horses at low odds are ranked higher with the (K). But with other factors, the number of favorites we can bet against will be larger. I have listed the key items below in order of poorest Win ROI if there were at least 500 sample races. Notice if there is a similar decrease in the Place and Show ROI, a certain indicator of vulnerable chalk.

BTW: I did test factors such as $JKY < 200$ and $TRN < 200$, $RS = "R"$, $Lay > 90$, etc, but there was only a mild effect or the sample size was too small. The ranked items below had a far more negative impact on the chalk with decent numbers of horses to consider.

Tote Favorites < 2/1		Purse \$10,000 +						
Factor	Plays	Win	ITM	WROI	PROI	SROI	AvgWn	I.V.
K ≥ 5	0599	22%	52%	0.55	0.67	0.71	\$4.90	1.92
HTR ≥ 5	1579	26%	60%	0.61	0.73	0.77	\$4.70	2.16
PER ≥ 5	1974	28%	60%	0.66	0.77	0.78	\$4.80	2.35
A/P ≥ 5	2738	29%	62%	0.67	0.77	0.80	\$4.60	2.42
VEL ≥ 5	2757	30%	62%	0.68	0.78	0.80	\$4.60	2.46
Class ≥ 5	2538	32%	64%	0.72	0.80	0.81	\$4.50	2.62
TRN ≥ 5	4438	34%	69%	0.75	0.84	0.87	\$4.40	2.89
E/P ≥ 5	4916	34%	68%	0.76	0.82	0.85	\$4.50	2.85
PED ≥ 5	8685	36%	70%	0.77	0.84	0.87	\$4.30	2.95
FR1 ≥ 5	6546	35%	71%	0.78	0.84	0.88	\$4.40	2.95

Analysis

The test used PL-5 in all cases. The other PL modes were examined and the results were similar.

I was hoping to see more weakness with the early speed items (E/P and Fr1). They do hurt the chalk a little and reduce the results, but I suspect the public will back off a bit anyway if the favorite lacks early speed. None of the late-speed factors (FR3, S/P, Lv) I tested had a significant effect.

The bad K rating is the winner here in terms of pure chalk busting, but the sample size is very small. HTR rank is an excellent source for killing the chalk as well and there were over 1500 of them found in the last 365-days. Betting on favorites ranked 5th or worse with HTR will cost a whopping (-39%) on the wagering dollar and hit just 26% winners. The HTR-Consensus ranking includes many of the factors in this test, so it was an excellent overall indicator of weakness with favorites.

An excellent dragon slayer here is A/P. It looks like A/P has considerable overlap with PER and VEL as would be expected, but A/P has a larger sample size than PER by far, and better results than VEL. A comparatively poor A/P rating (rank = 5 or worse) kills the heavy favorite and the public more often and more effectively than any other velocity or pace/speed factor in HTR. A/P (average pace velocity) tends to be more difficult to ascertain by the public than typical speed ratings, particularly if using a complex paceline selection method such as PL-5. Roughly 10% of heavy favorites will get an A/P rank ≥ 5 , so they will show up every day in the entries and cost their backers -38% on the Win bet. The ITM loss is definitive as the weaker ranked A/P favorites hit the board just 62% of the time vs. the normal 74%.

Conclusion.

You can reduce your search for vulnerable favorites to three basic rankings: (K), HTR, A/P. They are easy to spot on the various screens without too much digging. I'll explain on the next page why I don't mark these on the screens.

Handicapping with HTR2
Beat the (Heavy) Chalk IV

Sorry - No Flag for the Bad Favorites

Before we take a look at the TPG grade and the effect it has on the chalk, I'll comment on providing a marker for "false favorites" in the HTR2 software screens. Despite requests from users from time to time – it is not provided anymore. With the data this month, the tote was relied on for the test, so we can't possibly know ahead of time which horses will be the actual favorite let alone if they will eventually be bet below 2/1. So this prevents putting it in the *Robot* "Get My Plays" for the same reason.

In the past, some HTR versions did mark vulnerable MLO favorites. The indicated "bad" favorites would win about 23% of the time (vs. the normal 30% winning MLO favs). As always happens, someone would email or post on the discussion forum: "I threw out your 'false favorite' in the Pick-6 and it cost me a \$100,000!" or "your false favorites are hot at Fort Erie, winning all the time, you better check your stats". Well, 23% is still 23%, a win rate that is frequent enough to send frustrated comments my way even though the statistics proved severe losses in ROI betting on them. The formula for the 'false favorites' was accurate in terms of clearly reducing the number of chalk winners in the long run, but I removed it to avoid the negative feedback.

More recently, we had blowback with a different 'bad' flag placed on some horses marked with an @. Originally these were "non-contenders" with less than 2% chance of winning based on several negative factors. You guessed it, people claimed they tossed out a 50/1 winner and lost a tournament or a \$10,000 superfecta due to eliminating an @ horse! So I dropped it. But in the long run, those horses did lose more than 98% of the time and showed huge ROI losses. Today the @ is a simple designation for horses that lost their last start by 20 lengths or more – sometimes indicating a lame or injured runner.

It is wise to avoid fixed markings like those above anyway. Consider any favorite in context with the other horses. The old saying: "you can't beat nothing with nothing" often applies, and even a poorly ranked favorite may have such soft competition that it will win by default. This is particularly common in weak maiden claimers full of slow horses with long losing records.

TPG Grade with Heavy Favorites

As a habit in the past, I did not download the Trainer text stats with every race card as we do now. So we cannot test the TPG for any long-term period. My database has about 3-4 months of continuous cards with the TPG grade though, so let's take a look at how the TPG grades do with the heavy favorites in a short sample from June to September 2006 →

<u>Factor</u>	<u>Tote Favorites < 2/1</u>		<u>Purse \$10,000 +</u>			<u>PROI</u>	<u>SROI</u>	<u>AvgWn</u>	<u>I.V.</u>
	<u>Plays</u>	<u>Win</u>	<u>ITM</u>	<u>WROI</u>	<u>WROI</u>				
TPG "A"	1066	42%	77%	0.84	0.88	0.88	\$3.90	3.02	
TPG "B"	3308	40%	60%	0.85	0.89	0.89	\$4.10	3.12	
TPG "C"	1804	39%	74%	0.83	0.86	0.87	\$4.30	2.97	
TPG "D" or "F"	0776	35%	75%	0.74	0.88	0.89	\$4.40	2.77	

Analysis

The results could be separated further with the (+) and (-) tag applied and it does improve the results, but the play count was limited and I did not want to slice it up too much. In fact, the number of "F" plays was so low (146) that it was combined with the "D" for greater clarity. We will have more data in a few months and can revisit the TPG using the +/- along with the basic grade for many other tests.

There is a modest correlation here in favor of the TPG. The "A" and "B" favorites won more than the normal 39% and the "D" and "F" below normal. Tough to back a horse with odds less than 2/1 that has a poor trainer grade – definite loser in ROI and they are good ones to try and beat.

*Wagering Strategy***Show Parlay**

One of the interesting results found with the chalk is that the Show ROI almost always exceeds the Win ROI. Show bets with low odds, high-percentage horses are surprisingly more productive than straight betting. This makes sense; the public is obviously over zealous with late action on the big favorites. Can we take advantage of this and profit from a high-percentage ITM bet with a parlay?

Rather than rely on the tote board, we should probably set some definitive parameters to identify our Show plays ahead of the betting action. K110 and HF are the logical places to look in HTR2 as they hit 75% and higher 1-2-3 finishers in many cases. The HF's are much less common though and there might not be enough plays in a day to run a parlay. Also, the HF horses have an average Show payoff of less than \$2.40. So we'll focus on the K110+ combined with the balance of the HTR=1 for our study. Here are the parameters to get plenty of Show parlay ammunition each day →

- Field Size ≥ 6 (avoid \$2.10 payoffs in short fields and "no show betting" races)
- K = 110 or higher ($nK \Rightarrow 109.5$)
- HTR=1
- Sprints Only (any surface)

Results with Purse > \$10,000 and 365-day test

Plays = **5329** (approximately 10-20 plays per racing day)

ITM = **76%**

Avg-Show-Price = **\$2.50**

Show ROI = **0.94**

How far can you go with the above information using a Show parlay?

Approximate Parlay Results with the above Stats and \$200

#	Wager	Return	Probability Parlay Hit
1	\$200	\$250	80%
2	\$250	\$300	60%
3	\$300	\$375	45%
4	\$375	\$475	35%
5	\$475	\$600	25%
6	\$600	\$750	20%
7	\$750	\$900	15%

Analysis

To double the bank it will typically take 3 or 4 parlay hits at this level. The variance is not wide with most payoffs at \$2.20, \$2.40, \$2.60 with an occasional lucky \$3.00 hit.

You can increase your chances of hitting the parlay by taking the most obvious low-odds favorites, but the payoffs will often be \$2.10 or \$2.20 and won't help your cause. Keep in mind I eliminated fields of less than 6 horses to avoid those puny payouts. If the parlay is played with a good rebate, such as the 7% on *Pinnacle*, the return is healthier, gaining an extra \$100 after the 5th bet. *Pinnacle* and others do not pay rebates for payoffs at \$2.20 or less.

The overall Show ROI was very good for the spot play using K110 and HTR=1. Hit rate was nearly 80%. The Show ROI = 0.94 compared with the Win = 0.88. So a Show parlay is a sound option if you want to take a shot at increasing a bankroll with these low-odds horses.

One problem with playing Show parlays is the temptation to continue the parlay despite already doubling the bank. It takes some discipline to stop at that point. Realizing it is possible to triple and quad the bank with just a couple of additional hits, greed tends to win out over pragmatism!

Stat Profile

SA 6.5T Downhill Sprint

Santa Anita's downhill turf course is one of the most unusual races run in North America. With large and diverse fields, the outcomes of the 6.5f sprints are often unpredictable with big payoffs. The horses begin the race at the top of a hill, run down a modest slope, and then they make a quirky right hand turn before turning back left toward the main track. At the bottom of the hill, they must traverse about 40 yards of the dirt course before entering the long grass stretch. This will often confuse some runners who lug out sharply or bolt quickly to the outside, while others cut the corner and grab the lead with a large opening on the inside. The long stretch gives late runners a fair chance but there are periods of bias that tilt toward early speed. Fr1 plays have done very well over the course and are not usually over bet.

I found 103 of these races during the last 365-day period preceding the October 2006 Oak Tree meeting. That represents about one per racing day at Santa Anita. The Racing Secretary loves to card these races because they tend to fill easily with large fields and the public loves to bet them. The 6.5T is immediately cancelled during periods of wet weather though due to the unsafe situation with a wet hill and muddy dirt crossing, so virtually all the races are run under "Firm" conditions -- with the exception of some Stakes races that they will allow to go if the surface is labeled at least "Good".

One of the key successful factors as we will document below is the PED (pedigree) rating. The 6.5T downhill is also one of the ultimate "horse for course" distances and that rings up the tally for various Sire and breeding families. Let's look at the results of the PED rating for the 103 downhill grass sprints →

<u>SA 6.5T</u> <u>Factor</u>	<u>Plays</u>	<u>Win</u>	<u>ITM</u>	<u>WROI</u>	<u>PROI</u>	<u>SROI</u>	<u>AvgWn</u>	<u>I.V.</u>
PED=1	0111	16%	36%	1.36	0.98	0.79	\$16.7	1.51
PED=2	0097	16%	39%	1.80	1.15	0.97	\$21.9	1.63
PED 450+	0260	13%	37%	1.14	0.94	0.87	\$17.0	1.31
PED 600+	0124	15%	39%	1.63	1.12	0.91	\$22.5	1.39
PED < 200	0098	06%	23%	0.67	0.68	0.69	\$21.7	0.60

Analysis

No question, the PED is king of the longshots down the hill at SA. Notice the average win payouts for these horses – typically around \$20, which indicates lots and lots of prices hitting. Place ROI is also strong and that means many bombs are finishing 2nd as well. When PED < 200 is compared, the numbers drop way down, except the average win price, which is amazingly lower than the PED 600+. This tells us the public has limited knowledge of the pedigree factor in these races.

Early or Late Speed?

<u>SA 6.5T</u> <u>Factor</u>	<u>Plays</u>	<u>Win</u>	<u>ITM</u>	<u>WROI</u>	<u>PROI</u>	<u>SROI</u>	<u>AvgWn</u>	<u>I.V.</u>
RS= F	00048	25%	35%	1.28	0.89	0.69	\$10.2	2.35
FR1= 1	00104	15%	35%	1.42	0.95	0.87	\$18.4	1.44
FR1= 2	00102	14%	37%	0.80	0.89	0.84	\$11.7	1.28
E/P= 1	00103	17%	37%	1.19	0.87	0.66	\$13.6	1.63
E/P= 2	00103	18%	43%	1.34	1.03	1.00	\$14.5	1.72
A/P= 1	00103	16%	47%	0.79	0.84	0.78	\$10.2	1.45
L/P= 1	00103	12%	40%	1.18	0.78	0.82	\$20.3	1.09
FR3= 1	00103	09%	50%	0.99	0.95	1.02	\$22.6	0.82

Analysis

Excellent results with E/P (2nd call velocity rating) as the 1-2 ranks accounted for 37 of the 103 winners in the sample. Strong ROI and many long prices with the early speed velocity ratings. Fr3 has an impressive ITM rating with high-odds horses, indicating some big trifecta scores that included FR3=1.

*Stat Profile***Jockey Corey Nakatani**

During the 1990's, the Southern California jockey colony was the nation's elite. Hall of Fame riders such as Laffit Pincay, Chris McCarron and Gary Stevens were getting all the best mounts. Into this mix came young Corey Nakatani. His talent was unquestionable and he was beginning to draw the attention of many trainers. The new decade in 2000 saw many down periods for Nakatani due to personal problems and injuries. But his experience and natural skills have put him back onto the "A" list again and he is now one of the leading earners in North America among jockeys.

The stats presented below were produced with the HTR2 Robot using the 'Connections' box. Any HTR subscriber with sufficient data files can run similar reports on an individual trainer or jockey. Read the *Robot User Guide* in the HTR Library for more details.

Corey Nakatani - All Mounts Last 365-Days

Factor	Plays	Win	ITM	WROI	AvgWn	High
All Races	00825	18%	48%	0.87	\$9.90	\$45
Female	00340	15%	47%	0.64	\$8.40	\$29
Males	00485	19%	52%	1.03	\$10.70	\$45

Analysis

Stop the presses! Nakatani showing a flat bet profit with Males and dreadful returns with the Distaff races. I have noticed this unusual pattern in the past with many top riders. There is sometimes a significant dichotomy between the male and female results. Why does that happen? Many theories may explain it – including the rider being more cautious and patient rather than aggressive and hard-hitting. Overall he is an 18% winning jock and gets nearly half his horses into the money – that's excellent on any circuit with more than 800 mounts in a year.

Corey Nakatani - All Mounts Last 365-Days

Factor	Plays	Win	ITM	WROI	AvgWn	High
Dirt Sprint	00299	13%	45%	0.64	\$10.40	\$45
Dirt Route	00148	23%	53%	1.03	\$8.90	\$24
Turf Sprint	00098	12%	38%	0.88	\$14.30	\$31
Turf Route	00242	22%	52%	1.04	\$9.30	\$30

Analysis

Definite distinctions again; here we see it between sprint and route. Nakatani has certainly earned his reputation as a "smart" rider as his strength is clearly the more demanding routes. His winning record and positive ROI with Turf Routes is particularly impressive.

Corey Nakatani - All Mounts Last 365-Days

Factor	Plays	Win	ITM	WROI	AvgWn	High
TRN=1	00137	23%	55%	0.82	\$7.30	\$30
TRN>=400	00037	19%	46%	1.05	\$11.10	\$30
TJ>=30	00054	28%	61%	1.43	\$10.30	\$31

Analysis

He's a "go to" jock with the top barns. Those win percentages and ROI increase dramatically if riding a male horse in a route race for a top trainer. Nakatani is a niche jockey (routes, grass and males) and that is largely unknown to the public but obviously is known by the best trainers - and can be exploited by sharp horseplayers as well.

Stat Profile

Super Trainer @ Minor Tracks**“Super Trainer” = TRN rating 400 or more**

We have often discussed the strength of the ‘super trainer’ in this newsletter. The results are usually positive, even surprising with strong ROI for such obvious top barns. Most of those queries were done with Purse > \$10,000. This time the Purse less than \$10,000 is tested. This will exclude the major tracks and the slot machine locations as well. We’ll find out if the high-percentage trainers have as much impact on the smaller circuits →

Factor	TRN >= 400		Purse < \$10,000			
	Plays	Win	ITM	WROI	AvgWn	High
ALL	03964	26%	57%	0.90	\$6.90	\$56
Favorite	01585	41%	73%	0.91	\$4.40	\$8
K=1	01753	37%	70%	0.96	\$5.20	\$31
K=2	00892	23%	56%	0.86	\$7.40	\$28
K=3	00472	18%	51%	0.94	\$10.60	\$48
K110+	01162	41%	74%	0.96	\$4.70	\$18
HF	00123	58%	90%	1.00	\$3.40	\$6

Analysis

Overall the 0.90 ROI is pretty good with a win rate of 26% with no other handicapping. Important distinction with the minor track test is that they are 98% dirt races; there are very few grass events with a purse under \$10k. Long shot winners are rare with this group and only a handful of them paid over \$25, so ‘super trainer at minor track’ is *not* a good price play angle.

A high percentage of the ‘super trainer’ plays are favorites and top-ranked (K). They do just fine and close in on flat bet profit with strong win percentages. K110+ and HF plays are always live ones with very high ITM rates.

Next we’ll look at some trainer angles that might prove profitable →

Factor	TRN >= 400		Purse < \$10,000			
	Plays	Win	ITM	WROI	AvgWn	High
Claim Last	00154	31%	64%	1.04	\$5.70	\$42
Layoff 90+	00337	22%	52%	0.76	\$6.90	\$19
Class Drop	00582	33%	57%	0.92	\$5.70	\$22
WK 80+	00542	31%	61%	1.00	\$6.60	\$48
FTS	00130	19%	48%	0.74	\$7.70	\$24
TJ >= 30	01450	31%	62%	1.03	\$6.60	\$48
JKY=1	01127	34%	65%	0.94	\$5.50	\$48
Poly Track	00070	32%	52%	1.33	\$8.80	\$25

Analysis

The minor track ‘super trainers’ have several key positives in common with their major track counterparts. The last-out claim is always a strong angle with the TRN >= 400 and the sudden turnaround is often a reason cited for drug suspicion. But it is jockey strength that commands the most attention here with a large and profitable sample of 1450 plays the T+J >= 30% (trainer and jockey combo) reveal an excellent +3% profit despite lots of chalk. Although workout ratings would seem less trustworthy at the minor tracks, the ‘super trainers’ prove they are viable with excellent results.

*Stat Profile***Poly Track Preliminary Results**

Don't have a lot of data yet – about a year of Turfway and few weeks of Woodbine, but it can't hurt to take an early look at the Poly track results and see if anything emerges →

Data: **All Races Oct 1, 2005 – Sept 30, 2006**
Any Poly Track race (TP and WO only)

Races: **1,352**

Horses: **11,990 (average field size = 8.9)**

\$20+ Winners: **243 (18%) Avg Win Pay: \$14.20**

Analysis

Full fields, nearly 9 per race, and a healthy percentage of longshot winners with 18% paying \$20 up. Next set of stats looks at whether experience matters on the Poly surface.

Poly Track Races

Factor	Plays	Win	ITM	WROI	AvgWn	High	I.V.
Never Raced Poly	10615	11%	34%	0.80	\$14.20	\$245	1.05
Experienced Poly	01375	12%	36%	0.83	\$13.90	\$92	1.08
Win on Poly	00323	16%	41%	1.09	\$13.30	\$92	1.42

Analysis

Poly is brand new, so obviously most of the horses will be making their debut over it. But general experience does not raise the impact value (I.V.). However, a win over the Poly was a key to profits and the I.V. increase is significant, so it is likely that positive experience counts over the Poly surface.

Poly Track Races

Factor	Plays	Win	ITM	WROI	AvgWn	High	I.V.
Favorites	01352	33%	67%	0.85	\$5.10	\$10	2.83
K=1	01352	28%	61%	0.87	\$6.20	\$23	2.05
K=2	01352	19%	52%	0.83	\$8.70	\$48	1.69
K110+	00341	40%	73%	0.98	\$4.90	\$13	3.25
HF	00051	59%	90%	1.05	\$3.60	\$5	4.58

Analysis

The main contender factors hold up at about their normal stat levels, but the K110 and HF actually won at higher rates than expected with a solid ROI. Next a list of the key positive factors for profits and prices.

Poly Track Races

Factor	Plays	Win	ITM	WROI	AvgWn	High	I.V.
\$\$	00576	09%	30%	1.14	\$26.10	\$149	0.82
Wk 85+	00707	16%	43%	1.07	\$13.00	\$149	1.55
bo	00445	10%	29%	1.05	\$21.30	\$100	0.93
FT>50	00462	12%	21%	1.02	\$16.90	\$138	1.21

Analysis

It's too early to make concrete judgments, yet the workout rating is a clear strength here and it was the key factor involved with the good \$\$ results as well. Perhaps a pattern of solid drills over the Poly in the morning has a major effect. I can't prove that statement without checking the workouts of all these winners individually, but it is worth looking at in the future. The overall PED stats were average in this limited sample, but the FT>50 did offer some potential. Remember, that all of the FT horses were either FTS (debut) or first time routers. Our pedigree data is not yet separated between Poly/Dirt, so the PED ratings are to be viewed with caution for now.

We'll revisit the Poly/Artificial statistics again after the HOL and KEE meeting are over. Combined with additional data from Woodbine some clear patterns will probably emerge.

*Software Upgrade***HTR2 Upgrade – Poly/Artificial Surfaces**

You can download a new upgrade to HTR2 / HTR2006 by the time you read this. The update will show “Ver: Oct 2006”. This was not a scheduled revision, but the changes were in response to situations that have arisen with the Poly/Artificial surfaces.

Screen Headers and PPs Surface Corrections for Poly / Artificial

The race distance will be correctly suffixed with the “A” for all races run on an artificial or synthetic surface, past and future. Example: **6.0A** = a six furlong Poly race. There were a few quirks in the previous version such as a race taken off the grass at WO and moved to the Poly - the header incorrectly displayed the default “D” (dirt). If the user changes surface on with the Scratch screen, the “D” might still show up temporarily for the Poly surface, but after the results are added the correct “A” will appear.

Workout listings on the PP screens will also now list the “A” if the work took place on a synthetic surface, but the Wk rating does not utilize specific surface information, so that is a visual addition only.

These changes are further reflected in the *Robot* and Export for full accuracy now. Export users will find correct output from the October 2006 HTR2 version for Poly races in the data fields below →

nCOURSE = 5

nSURF = 4

nDS = 5 or 6

Artificial (Poly) Record Added to HST Screen

If the race is taking place at TP, KEE, HOL or WO today, the [HST] (Horse History) screen will provide a new record display “Artificial Surface” that replaces the “Wet”. This record is based on scanning the last 10 PP lines only. It is possible that this listing will understate a horse’s complete record on the Poly if it has more than ten lines. But in this early stage of Poly track transition, it will probably be complete lifetime Poly record for just about every horse until next year. The “Wet” has no meaning as Poly type surfaces are listed as “Fast” 100% of the time.

HDW has begun the process of separating the Artificial surfaces from the Dirt. But I agree with their decision to wait awhile before providing separate stats for the horse records or pedigree until more tracks have converted and plentiful races have been run.

One small addition to the [KM] screen

Under the ‘CLA’ column, a horse making its first ever start in a claimer (minimum 2 lifetime starts) will be designated with a ^ suffixed to the class level last raced. Examples →

Msw[^] = exits a maiden special race, and today is its first start ever in a claimer (maiden claimer).

Nw1[^] = last raced in an allowance non-winners, making first ever start for a claiming tag today.

There are good and bad implications with this move. Most often it is a logical drop in company to give a losing runner an improved shot at winning. The categorical class change can be a welcome benefit for many horses that have been racing over their head against much tougher. On the other hand, the trainer may be ‘dumping’ damaged goods and looking to get rid of a money burner.

Back Page

Late News and Announcements

Orleans Tournament

I will be out of the office October 5-8 participating in the Orleans Fall Championship Tournament. We'll have results and commentary on the HTR Discussion Forum and perhaps some analysis in next month's newsletter. Looking forward to seeing many of you there and hoping someone from our group catches the big fish again.

HTR2 Upgrade Available

Download the upgrade for HTR2 and HTR2006 (same program, different file name) if you want 100% accuracy with the Poly/Artificial surface -- particularly export users. This is not a critical update, but most subscribers will want it with the KEE meeting upcoming and the new Poly surface making its debut on Friday Oct 6. Next major update scheduled for January 2007.

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