

HTR Report
Thoroughbred Handicapping Newsletter
March/April 2007

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Bi-Monthly Newsletter
Late News and Tournament Doings

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*Tournaments***HWS at Orleans – Jan 18-20, 2007**

The tournament championships in January are always an exciting couple of weeks in Vegas. Horse racing tourneys have not reached the explosive level of the big poker events, but more than \$1.5 million was paid out to successful contestants in this year's main events, a record for payouts and certainly plenty of cash for horseplayers to shoot for.

There were 715 entries at the Orleans 2007 *Horseplayer World Series* – far short of the 1000 needed to get the advertised \$1-million total pool. The HWS has never come close to the 'magic million' pot, and this year the top prizes fell below the NHC (see page 3) for the first time. Approximately 250 of the entries were freebies from other qualifying tournaments; all others paid \$1000 to get in. Multiple entries not permitted and that may be the reason why they haven't reached their quota.

The contest winner (\$357,000) scored just short of 3000 points, an excellent total considering the first day of the tourney was light on prices. A few HTR players grabbed a slice of the cash pie →

Tommy/Ruby Castillo (TX) finished 9th and collected \$14,300 with a total of 2,506 points. Tommy saved a bullet for the final race at SA – he was in position to win it if his last bet had been successful. That's the key, stay in contention until the end and be ready to pounce. It capped off a great tournament year for team Castillo.

Barbara Buckley (CA) scored 2475 points and finished in 11th position, beating more than 700 of the best horseplayers in America, yet she collected just \$3500. There has to be something wrong with the prize distribution structure when finishing that high and not being rewarded more money. Nevertheless, it was another excellent finish for *Leaky Eyes* who is probably the top female tournament player in the country.

Alan Noring (CO) won all the cash in the Sunday bonus contest, taking both 1st and 2nd prizes and winning \$9,000. He's made a habit of sticking around for the extra cash on Sundays!

There was a slight snafu on the first day of the contest (Thursday), the computer malfunctioned and some of the races were considered "no bet" – obviously angering those that had the \$20 winner in one of them. The main contest ballroom is always crowded during Orleans tournaments, but the auxiliary rooms were not. In fact, the overflow third room was quiet and sparse. Most of the tables in the 2nd room, where the HTR players were sitting, did not fill up either. After 3pm, a surprising number of contestants leave for the day and the empty seats are conspicuous.

During the busy part of the day, 11am – 2pm, the regular wagering lines seem crowded and I would guess Coast Casinos and Boyd management would be pleased with the betting handle. There is definitely more activity at the windows during the HWS than at Bally's during the NHC. As I mentioned above, after 3pm, with just the California tracks remaining, the crowd thins noticeably and the lines are gone.

As usual, there are lots of rumors surrounding the HWS, especially now that the Boyd Group has completed their takeover of the Coast Properties. Will these tournaments continue? Is there going to be a shake up in management? Will Boyd carry on the usual schedule of the Orleans and Gold Coast tournament for another year? It's all speculation, but there is the undeniable fact that the Orleans Hotel is packed with people during these contests. It just doesn't seem likely that the tournaments could be replaced with a standard convention booking and net the revenue that comes from a large cluster of horseplayers for the same time period.

Congrats to our excellent HTR finishers this year; most of us will be back and shooting for one of those 50 qualifying spots at the Orleans on March 22.

*Tournaments***NHC at Bally's – Jan 26-27**

The NTRA/DRF *National Handicapping Championship* is certainly the *Mecca* for handicapping tournament players and has the aura of *The Masters* golf championship in its own realm. This year, for the first time, the top payouts exceeded that of any other handicapping tournament including the *Horseplayer World Series* with total prize distribution exceeding \$800,000. Next level is \$1-million in prize money; the NHC will finally be able to step into the realm of the poker tourneys. There were 255 qualifiers for the 2007 championship – complete standings can be found with this link below. The NTRA has excellent coverage with news, photos, video and complete standings to check out.

<http://www.ntra.com/content.aspx?type=news&id=22984>

The NHC is a two-day contest (Fri-Sat) and requires 30 plays, 16 of which are mandatory. The remaining 14 plays are selected optionally from among the six contest tracks. It is a \$2 Win-Place scoring format with a firm cap of \$42/\$22.

Last year, Mel Moser was the first HTR member to finish in the top-10 at the NHC with an exciting 3rd place finish and took home \$50,000 that he shared with his contest partners. Despite an average of about 6-8 participants per year from our membership, only Henry Daamgard as part of a team prize, and Ronnie Hopkins who won a \$1000 in the ill-fated match race competition, had cashed anything at the NHC.

We had 10 HTR subscribers qualified to the NHC this year →

Gabby Armstrong (TX)
Tommy/Ruby Castillo (TX)
Henry Daamgard (VA)
Cliff Hartnitt (TX)
Wayne Kwan (BC)
Ken Massa (CA)
Mike Mayo (TX)
Tony Montanino (NC)
Mel Moser (KY)
Daven/Gina Turner (OH)

Ken Massa and Mike Mayo finished 2nd and collected \$150,000, plus \$4000 day-money for a strong showing on Saturday. And it all happened in a rapid 2-hour burst of winners that is covered in full detail on the next page. The payoff was the largest ever won by an HTR player at a horse tournament.

Daven / Gina Turner finished 7th and won \$8000, but also had the highest single day score of anyone in the contest and added another \$10,000 to their total. Amazing late finish for them – read more on page-6 as Daven details the action.

Richard “Gabby” Armstrong finished 19th and collected \$4000 – great showing for the Texan and he was also our best cheerleader at the banquet with high-fives for everyone and a chant of “HTR-HTR-HTR”!!

HTR Party Central

Along with Dennis Tiernan (*Tejas Kid*), our Texas contingent rented a hospitality suite at Bally's and we had an ongoing party throughout the weekend and a place to meet and talk. Thanks very much to all of you that chipped in for the suite and help decorate it with *Longhorn* embellishment!

Low Scoring Friday Jan 27

The Friday portion of the contest depressed the overall scoring due to a lack of longshot winners. The favorites won nearly every mandatory race. The highest scores from Friday were just over 100 points – the lowest single day leaders in the history of the event. There was only one ‘cap’ horse that afternoon and very few other winners paying over \$20. Aqueduct cancelled due to bad weather and Tampa Bay Downs was substituted. The other tracks in play were GP, OP, FG, SA and GG.

Tournaments
NHC at Bally's – Jan 26-27

Action Picks Up Saturday

Saturday featured a lot more fireworks, some big prices, including bombs in the mandatory races. Yet surprisingly few of the 255 entries took advantage of it. The high daily score on Saturday was about 160 points, which is an excellent total (see Daven summary below). Apparently, most of the contestants were not stabbing at bombs early in the day because the point totals were so low and most players were within a winner or two from getting on the leader board (top 20). Not to mention there is a firm cap of \$42/\$22.

Hold the Bullets

First thing for me to do here is thank my tournament partner Mike Mayo for the opportunity to compete at the NHC this year. I didn't attend a single live qualifier in 2006 – but he insisted that we give the on-line contest a try and we got lucky in December and it put me on one of the 255 spots at Bally's for the finals.

On Friday, our two entries totaled about 55 and 35 points respectively. My ticket hit the first optional (\$15 winner) and that was about it for the day. I made a dumb mistake and forfeited an optional bullet. The horse I was going to play lost anyway, but it is amusing to think that we finished 2nd in the contest despite having made just 29 plays (everyone else made 30).

Mayo's 55 points were not all that far off the lead and we didn't feel any panic going into Saturday's early races. My entry with 35 points was about 135th place after the opening round. We played the mandatory races to no effect all day, but held tightly with our optional plays as usual. But time was running out. As the contest approach 3pm and its final 2 hours, we were still pretty much stuck with our original totals and far down the list on the standings. The leaders by now had accumulated over 150 points. Yet, unlike most players in this contest, who were down to their final chances, we had nearly all our ammunition remaining.

The final Gulfstream race (10th) on Saturday was a mandatory event and one of the last three required plays. It was the million-dollar Sunshine Millions Classic, with *Sweet Northern Saint* as the headliner and obvious betting favorite (and you would be amazed at how many contestants used the chalk on their tournament tickets). Mayo and I knew that we needed a bomb right away to have any hope cashing in this contest, so we were looking only at horses with odds 15-1 and higher in this race.

My selection was #8 *McCann's Mojave* at 30/1. He was underrated after having faced tough company in California, particularly the races at SA in 2006 that had him competing against many of the top horses on the grounds. Workout rating was strong and the connections solid. But most importantly was his early speed, the race setup for him to utilize his strong PAC figures. *Sweet Northern Saint* had drawn the worst post and was not likely to be forced into a speed duel with him.

McCann's Mojave ran the perfect race, sitting right behind the cheap speed and was able to put away the exhausted favorite. The winner paid the full 'cap' (\$42/\$22) and now my entry moved into 100-point range. Keep in mind again that we had most of our remaining optional bullets. We used one of those optional chances right away on the 6th at SA and hit a Place horse that added 7 points. That minor tally, along with another Place horse later, turned out to be worth tens of thousands of dollars in the end. The contest leader at this point had now exceeded 160 points though, so we had a big hill to climb.

The tournament is nearly over and it is past 3pm now. Many people are already packing up; most had no optional plays remaining. The camera crews are seeking out the leaders for photos and interviews. We were not on the radar yet, but Mike and I actually felt confident at this point because late afternoon SoCal races have always been our strength.

*Tournaments***NHC at Bally's – Jan 26-27****Final Furlong**

The time is now past 3:30pm, there is just 90 minutes left in NHC VII. The 7th (mandatory race) at SA was just completed and we picked up 7 more Place points and have about 114 total on my entry, but that still puts us about 50th place in the standings and the leader has already exceeded 170 points.

Now there is just one remaining mandatory race (Sa-9), but four optional races left: GG-7 thru 9; SA-8 and 10. Almost all the other players in the contest, including most of the leaders, are out of optional bullets by now. More than half the contestants sit below 100 points and are completely hopeless with nothing left to do but throw in the final futile mandatory selection. Many have already left the race-book.

We have 4 (!) optional bullets remaining on my entry at this point. The pressure is on, but Mayo and I realize that our "holdout" strategy has paid off today. We feel we can win this contest now and have come through late in the day many times before with Santa Anita's final races.

The 7th race at Golden Gate was weak maiden claiming \$8,000. We focused on the two horses with 'super trainers' including #4 *Navy Lass* trained by Jerry Hollendorfer. The other one had odds too low. We looked at the trainer stats and confirmed Hollendorfer's outstanding record with maiden claimers and second time starters. This pick was a no-brainer at 10/1. Easy winner added 33-points to our total and we were now hovering around 147 and had made it into the top 20.

Down to the Wire

There was no time to celebrate the GG winner, as the 8th at SA was just minutes away. We are looking for another horse above 6/1 to get us past 170 points and take the lead. The decision was easy as # 5 *Debie Ginsburg*, a FTS with a huge FT= 80 rating and powerful overall PED number; a B+ TPG and 33% T+J was the kicker. Winner rewarded us with 36 more points and our total hit 183 and we assume we had reached the top of the standings. Our goal now was to get the total past 200 points.

As we are perusing the 9th (mandatory) at SA, the ESPN camera crew comes calling for an interview. They were tipped off that we had the lead at that point. Mayo went on about our business while I gave them the smiley face chat. I wasn't distracted at all and the ESPN people were friendly and encouraging.

We had narrowed down the SA 9th-race to two horses and used the higher odds entrant. We were assuming it would take 200 points to win the contest. As fate would have it, the other horse with the lower odds won the race.

In hindsight, we needed just one more Place horse worth about 7 points to capture first place. Our final two optional plays were medium odds and did not hit the board. The important thing is that our planned strategy *allowed us to get into position to win*. The extra bullets, patiently held all day, were critical in amassing the points needed for a top-10 finish.

The final tally for 2nd place was about 183 points, but the contest was so close that it was less than 10 points between our 2nd place total and the 5th place finisher. Yet that was a difference of a \$125,000 in prize money! So every one of those seemingly unimportant Place points mattered tremendously and we are glad we held onto those bullets until the bitter end.

My first NHC was quite a thrill. Sure, it would have been sweet to win it all. No complaints or regrets though. The publicity has been tremendous, lots of new subscribers and our reputation enhanced. Thanks again to partner Mike Mayo and his wife Marsha, and to all our HTR friends who were rooting us on at Bally's on a Saturday to remember.

Keep reading, more excitement at the NHC from Daven Turner's perspective on the next page ---

Tournaments
NHC at Bally's – Jan 26-27

Daven and Gina's Incredible Saturday Comeback

Congrats to Daven and Gina Turner who had the highest score on day-2 and won the \$10,000 daily prize and finished 7th overall. What a remarkable comeback and the best single day score of the entire tournament. They were literally *dead-in-the-water* after Friday with just 18 points. Gina was a delight and stole the show at the awards ceremony with her wonderful smile. Daven was kind enough to tell us their tournament story in his own words →

Here are the key horses that we hit; there were other points accumulated with various Place horses and mandatory race points, but these were the most important wins →

1:21 PM Saturday

OP6 - #2 Slug Bug - \$14.40/\$5.80

Quite honestly, when I saw this name, my two daughters back home immediately came to mind.... as we are driving down the road in Ohio and they are hitting me in my shoulder trying to spot Volkswagen cars and yelling *Slug Bug* when they see one!

K8, \$\$, ev2, mdn spc wt dropping today, early speed with better company=gotta love it, betting action on the board for being 15-1 mlo, only 6-1 but I need points now.

2:45 PM

GP10 - #8 McCann's Mohave - \$69.80/\$30.40 (capped \$64 max)

K6, EV4, PAC1, WK86, FC2, B- tpg, good trn stats, best d/s speed score on fig2. Fig2 showed nice scores as of late, without a negative effect. I also wanted a front running type of horse for GP's speed favoring track. SweetNorthernSaint's favoritism did not scare me since the far outside post and the addition of front wraps in the last race left question marks in my mind. Also we need big points to catch the leaders so this is the time to do it.

3:38 PM

GG7 - #4 Navy Lass - \$23.40/\$9.60

K4, \$, lv2, trn2, trn # to 436 Hollendorfer, jk2, 24% tr +jk, A-tpg, good trn stats. The 10 was the strong betting favorite but did not look good to me on the track or in the PP's, it also helped our cause that at even money the #10 stumbled from the gate.

If memory serves me correct, I think I overheard TommyC late in the day say that we had moved into 2nd place behind Massa and Mayo with approx 3 or so races to go ...and we still had bullets (ala Ken's tootledge - hold one til late) !!! Could have been an HTR 1-2 finish if that had held. Just like everyone else though, we had our share of *woulda coulda shoulda* ...but after the dismal day-1 total of \$17.80 and numerous Show finishes, we were trying hard just to finish with a check. So we are happy and blessed to finish as well as we did. Thank you Ken and the rest of the HTR group for all of the fun that we had that weekend. The Texas suite on Friday night was lots of fun too. Dennis T, his wife Laurel, Gabby and his wife Dottie and TommyC were quite the hosts. Thank you for inviting us.

Traveling to Vegas is always a nice break from day to day life and is something that my wife and I look forward to each year. This past year was a very sad one for our family as we experienced the passing of my 87 year old Grandmother Blanche, who was also known to friends and family as "Granny". She was like a 2nd Mother to me and was instrumental in my upbringing. Both her and my Grandfather were avid horse racing fans and used to take me to the horse races with them as a small child. I learned about horse racing, but also learned to treasure our time together, and the memories we shared are forever priceless. I sure miss my horse racing buddy of 44 years. Without her influence I would not have the love of the sport that I have today. With that being said, my wife and I dedicate our never-give-up attitude and our NTRA finish, to the memory of my beloved Granny. We know that she was looking down on us, and enjoyed it as much as we did.

---Daven and Gina Turner

*Handicapping with HTR2***Spot Play Mania**

You may have been reading our discussion board forum fueled by a spot play contest. My idea for putting up a \$500 prize for the most profitable set of criteria in HTR was to generate ideas and creative thinking for all users. The rules were simple:

- 600 minimum plays in 365-day period.
- Win rate of greater than 10%
- Play must utilize ALL racetracks – but any other criteria from the *Robot* or Export were allowed.
- Winner must exceed 1.10 ROI (+10%).

The goal was to promote and highlight the strength of the various HTR factors. Looking back I should have either required 1000 plays minimum or used a PLAYS x ROI format that awarded the prize to the most total earnings. At the beginning of the contest I received several emails from people who felt the contest would end up a “battle of *back fit*”!

What’s Wrong with Back Fitting?

Everything we do in handicapping is essentially a ‘back fit’. No matter how we analyze a race, it is based fundamentally on a previous winning pattern – or the belief in one. The past is our only guide. We determine every aspect of a race contingent on the success or failure of the past races, trainer, jockey, sire, running style, betting action, etc. There is no other method except guessing or random selections. Either we choose our selections based on the analysis of past information and patterns, or horse race is nothing more than a spin of the roulette wheel.

During our spot play contest, players began to submit and tweak criteria that were deemed *extreme back fit* in the realm of ‘reverse engineering’ the results. Typically they would take a sound premise and expand on it by narrowing the filters to the positive items and eliminating the negative ones. Let’s look at this process in action with real data and comment on the effects of back fit.

The *Robot* = LEARN ALL function is an extremely valuable tool for spot play construction as well as trend analysis. Unlike a standard test or database query, the LEARN ALL separates the results into more than 100 different categories for immediately analysis.

We’ll start with the 2007 season at GP (at this writing, thru Feb 23). I’ll run a LEARN ALL on every **Fast Dirt** race and take a look at the results. So at this point, the *only* criteria I have unselected are the **Turf** and **Wet** races. Everything else goes for now. Look at the basic class separation →

Alw/Stk	00473	00060	13%	25%	38%	1.04	0.91	0.78	\$16.4	0012	\$219
Clm	00814	00104	13%	26%	38%	0.92	0.86	0.85	\$14.4	0017	\$134
Msw	00259	00027	10%	21%	31%	1.02	0.78	0.71	\$19.5	0008	\$130
Mcl	00504	00054	11%	21%	32%	0.81	0.77	0.68	\$15.0	0012	\$72

There are no factors or rankings involved so far. These results are based on betting *every* horse in each of these races. Already we can see that ROI will be strongest with Alw/Stk and Msw due to high average mutuels and some huge prices. The Mcl races have the fewest big prices, so let’s toss that category right away from our back fit.

As we continue through this spot play creation, remember that the only goal right now is to produce the highest ROI possible. Later, you’ll read comments on the positive and negative effect of doing this and whether or not it has any value to your daily play.

*Handicapping with HTR2***Spot Play Mania**

The next step in the process is to eliminate the Mcl races and run the *Learn All* report again. This time we focus on the VI - and find an obvious elimination = VI 38-50.

VI 15-25	00323	00032	10%	20%	30%	1.02	0.87	0.83	\$20.6	0008	\$134
VI 26-32	00642	00076	12%	24%	36%	0.96	0.90	0.82	\$16.2	0013	\$219
VI 33-37	00394	00053	13%	27%	40%	1.02	0.85	0.83	\$15.1	0010	\$130
VI 38-50	00187	00030	16%	32%	48%	0.84	0.72	0.66	\$10.5	0006	\$40

The Learn ALL is set in motion again, this time without Mcl and VI 38-50. With our new report, take a look at the gender →

Females	00474	00057	12%	24%	36%	0.65	0.81	0.81	\$10.8	0006	\$49
Males	00885	00104	12%	24%	35%	1.17	0.92	0.83	\$19.9	0025	\$219

No good on the distaff – let's toss the fillies. Run another Learn All and now take a look at the (K).

K=1	00104	00022	21%	45%	59%	0.70	0.90	0.89	\$6.6	0000	\$14
K=2	00104	00024	23%	48%	61%	1.20	1.28	1.08	\$10.4	0001	\$26
K=3	00104	00013	13%	27%	46%	0.79	0.78	0.89	\$12.7	0002	\$29
K=4	00104	00012	12%	23%	36%	0.62	0.71	0.75	\$10.7	0001	\$20
K=5	00104	00010	10%	18%	29%	1.00	0.90	0.71	\$20.9	0004	\$42
K=6	00103	00008	08%	15%	26%	1.22	0.79	0.74	\$31.4	0004	\$70
K=7	00096	00005	05%	08%	19%	0.79	0.46	0.69	\$30.2	0003	\$57
K=8	00068	00002	03%	07%	19%	1.17	0.64	0.79	\$79.5	0002	\$130
K=9	00098	00008	08%	12%	15%	3.14	1.72	0.90	\$76.9	0008	\$219

Here is where we can really begin to reverse engineer our result. The (K) = 1, 3, 4, 7 have bad results. We can exclude them in the *Robot* by de-selecting the boxes and re-run the test.

Races = 52

Type	Plays	wins	Win	Pla	Sho	WROI	PROI	SROI	AvgW	Long	High	I.V.
ALL	00477	0052	11%	21%	31%	1.56	1.09	0.85	\$28.6	0019	\$219	0.99

That was easy, **1.56** ROI for betting 477 horses to win with the following specifications →

GP 2007

Dirt Fast

No Mcl

No Vi 38-50

No Females

K = 2, 5, 6, 8, 9 (exclude 1, 3, 4 7)

How realistic is this test at forecasting future profits? Can we learn anything from such a tailored and contrived sample?

Some key clues that help us decide if this targeted back fit will continue forward →

- The win percentage. The lower the win rate, the higher the volatility of the play. In this case we hit just 11% of our horses. But Win% might be misleading because we are betting multiple runners per race in this spot play. The Impact Value (next page) is a superior method of understanding the result.

Low win rates under 15% have two other practical problems: (1) A low win% spot play is dependent on high priced winners and is sure to experience long losing streaks. Will your patience and bankroll run out before hitting the \$130 bomb? (2) Timing is also critical; a few major hits are going to make or break the ROI, if we happen to miss some of those big winners while out and about with our busy lives - poof - there goes the profit.

*Handicapping with HTR2***Spot Play Mania**

- **Tracks Used.** If minor tracks and county fairs are included in your test results, it is unrealistic to assume you could have made a bet on those horses. Use Purse \geq \$10k to avoid them.
- **The Impact Value (I.V.)** – if it is under 1.00, indicates the spot play is built upon ‘shifting sand’ – that is the results are just as likely a random coincidence or lucky streak as a definitive trend.

I.V. certainly doesn't represent money in the pocket. Favorites have an impact value that approaches 3.00 and yet they show a (–20%) return. But it is important to remember: the higher the impact value the more likely the spot play will carry forward at the same rate of profit.

Impact values tend to be low or below 1.00 with longshot methods or factors. Groups of winners over \$30 rarely win at a rate that is high enough to show significant results with the I.V. If the ROI is profitable, this means the handicapper has overcome a great challenge – beating the probability of winning. Yet, the low impact value is indicative that the method is shaky, volatile and has a lower probability of going forward in the long run.

- **Consistent Place and Show ROI.** A spot play built upon the back of few select monster longshot winners will be composed of flukes and lucky breaks instead of truly live runners. But if the Place and Show return is also strong, that means the spot play is getting its share of live horses overall. In the GP spot play created above, we have a decent Place ROI = 1.09 and Show = 0.85. So it's a mixed result, but the Place gives us some hope.

One other comment about the Place and Show and long shot wins. If the average win payout is above \$20 for the spot play (as in our example above), the Place and Show win rates should be approximately twice and triple the win% respectively. Again, this is consistent with the fact that a method built on overlays and high priced winners will have characteristics that are dependable with predicting *live* runners, not just a few fluky winners.

- **Factor rankings out of sequence.** Notice how we *cherry picked* the (K) ranks in the above example spot play = removing K=1, 3, 4, 7 and keeping the others. This is clear sign that the play is unlikely to carry forward and has been built on a series of targeted coincidences. Spot plays that keep the ranking in a series, such as K = 2, 3, 4, are far less volatile.

There can be more extreme examples of this – such as “JKY = 138-149 or JKY = 347-392”. Here is case where the data is completely tailored and reverse engineered to create a profitable scenario, but there is no reality basis to this back fit except that it makes our ROI go up in a specific sample.

Key Factors to Build Spot Plays with HTR Robot

HTR = 1 / HTR=1, 2: The HTR-Consensus ranking is a great starting point for building a profitable spot play. Try running a LEARN ALL with individual racetracks and no other filters at first, then look over the list and find positives to continue with. The Robot runs considerably faster when you select a single track as it pre-loads all the files with a specific file extension and ignores the others during the test.

\$\$: The “doubles” have a built-in MLO 6/1 or higher. You can find profitable overlay situations with almost any parameter setup and race type and lots of longshot winners.

Low Vi: You may as well hunt for profits in the largest pool of high-priced winners, as we know that the lower the Vi the higher the average win price and the greater the chance the favorites will lose.

K110 and HF: the most reliable and plentiful spot plays are those with *no downside* and a high Win/Place percentage. You won't get huge ROI using these as the basis, but you will not experience losing streaks and will never sacrifice your original bankroll. The probability that spot plays utilizing HF or K110 will continue forward is almost 100%.

Handicapping with HTR2
Chronic Losers – Desperate for a Win

Chronic Loser = 10 straight losses (L10)

Some “L10” entrants are shown on the [KM] screen.

If looking at a 10-Line PP screen, a chronic loser is easy to spot – no wins showing.

Regardless of the class level, the habitual loser can be a challenge for the trainer and jockey. Many have excellent ratings and are often top-ranked in key factors and even out-class their field. But they may be a “bridesmaid” – the term applied to horses that are fast enough to win, but just will not put their head in front or pass up the leader - a difficult herd instinct to break in some horses. They will also be burning a lot of wagering dollars as the public tends to over bet chronic losers if the speed figures are strong.

On the next page are some selected stats on the chronic losers and commentary follows. Our goal is two-fold =

1. Find out why some of these horses eventually win.
2. Gain the confidence to beat them when they are low odds or favorites.

Maidens that have lost ten or more consecutive starts are in a more anxious situation for the owners, particularly if they are age 5 or older. No one wants to be paying the bills for an older “maiden lifer”. As the racing calendar moves past the summer months, attrition in the maiden ranks becomes apparent. This is a facet of handicapping that few horseplayers consider. Late in the year, most of the younger talented horses have long since broken their maiden on the circuit and left the chronic losers behind to race against each other – someone has to win those races.

Many claiming races are carded specifically to help the chronic loser. They are restricted to “non winners of two races lifetime”. Someone has to win the futile ‘battle of the brides maids’, so we don’t want to test these races if the entire field is basically qualified in our ‘chronic loser’ category. Those races are removed from this research.

Trainers and owners are well aware of the mounting losses for their non-claiming stock. If the horse is well bred, has a high PED rating and was an expensive purchase, it has to be a difficult decision to drop the “chronic loser” into the claiming ranks where they risk taking a huge loss if the horse is tagged. So they tend to be more than patient despite their disappointment and keep working on solutions to end the losing streak.

Here are the basic stats for all “L10” runners with Purse \$10,000 and up. Remember that I eliminated races that featured 100% “chronic losers” such as claiming race with conditions “NW2 Lifetime”.

Plays	33268 (about 1 in every 11 horses qualifies)
Win	9.7%
ROI	0.75
I.V.	0.87
ITM	33%

Analysis

With multiple “chronic losers” entered in some races, the Impact Value (I.V.) becomes a more important statistic than win%. The I.V. drops below danger line of 1.00 (winning less often than a random expectation). The ROI shows a (–25%) loss despite average odds of around 9/1 and an average win payoff over \$15.00. No surprises that the results are negative. Let’s see if we can find any positives.

Handicapping with HTR2
Chronic Losers – Predicting the Win

There's no need to list the factors in HTR that have a negative association with these horses. We already realize the "chronic loser" is going to fail us most of the time anyway. Our main interest is in finding out which (rare) factors portend a win today.

In my study there were 3274 winning "chronic losers" out of the 33,268 tested. Below are the factors predicted the most winners in the sample (ROI profit/loss) →

PER=1	877	(-12%)
K=1	776	(-14%)
VEL=1	749	(-11%)
PAC=1	685	(-13%)
K=2	650	(-10%)

Analysis

The PER was the obvious champion of the *chronic losers*. But the public bets heavily on them if the speed figures are top ranked and the PER=1 is an obvious indicator of that. However, if the "L10" is one of the favorites and NOT highly ranked as above, they are a terrible bet. These factors above do not produce any profits on their own, but they are the keys to predicting the win at low odds.

Profits with Chronic Losers

With the overall ROI at 0.75 (-25%) it would seem incredible to come up with a factor association that can produce profits. Here are the top ranked factors based on ROI →

Factor	Plays	Win	WROI
Bx	561	10%	1.10
Wk 85-95	1622	15%	0.99
TRN 400+	572	28%	0.97
JT>30%	596	24%	0.96
\$\$	4584	11%	0.94

Analysis

Blinkers OFF always seems to beat expectations! In this case though, it did *not* raise the win rate (10%), but fattened the ROI with a few big hits. Nevertheless, it is another excellent outcome for a factor that rarely lets us down in the long run with ROI.

Wk 85-95, another amazing success story for the powerful HTR Workout rating is that it can predict so many turnarounds for "chronic losers". There is little question about the validity of a factor that can raise even the most statistically negative category of horses. The \$\$ results are clearly aligned with the success of the Wk rating.

TRN 400+ (super trainer) hum right along with "chronic losers", no problem turning them around and getting a high win percentage, and they even pay pretty good (ROI = 0.97). The T+J > 30% is probably an overlap with the *super trainer*.

Two important points to remember when faced with a horse that has lost 10 or more in row: 1) if the odds are low and the horse is not top ranked in one of the primary HTR factors (K or PER), it is a great bet-against and will probably lose again. 2) The key signal for a "chronic loser" turnaround at high odds is a strong Wk rating (85+) or a 'super trainer'.

Handicapping with the Robot
FIG2 = 1 Top Rank Projected Figure

FIG2=1

This filter is found in *Robot* 2007 versions. A better label for this would have been “top-ranked projected FIG2”, but space was limited on the filter screen. To view the FIG2=1, click into the [FIG2] screen and look at the header for each horse. A rating appears in the center of the bottom heading surrounded in brackets, such as [21]*. The * = top ranked in this factor. The “21” is the projected rating (lowest is best).

- The projected rating is the estimated figure the horse will run today based on its FIG2 form-cycle.
- PL Modes have *no* effect on the projected rating.
- Projected ratings are ambiguous and can be distorted, particularly with young horses.
- Most speed figure ratings are *not* very good at predicting improvement, the purpose is to enumerate past-performance and create a comparison of final time speed.

If you test the FIG2=1 in the *Robot*, use the *Layoff* filter and set it for [002 – 999], this will prevent first timers (FTS) from entering the picture. FTS do not receive a projected rating, but if the field is composed of 100% FTS then they will all tie for the top rank and distort the statistics. Removing maidens or 2yr from the test would accomplish the same thing.

Let’s look at the record with this projection →

FIG2=1 Item	Purse \$10,000+		No FTS			
	Win	ITM	WROI	AvgM	High	I.V.
All	27%	61%	0.83	\$6.20	\$75	2.18
Favs	38%	73%	0.84	\$4.40	\$9	3.04
K=1	35%	70%	0.85	\$4.90	\$36	2.80

Analysis

FIG2=1 is not a longshot factor by any means. With over 10,800 winners in my sample, just 157 of them paid over \$20, and the high was a mere \$75 winner. The average winner paid about \$6.20, so the projected rating is primarily a chalk picker. While the impact value is strong (2.18) the ROI is not much improved over random picking.

Tote favorites and K=1, combined with FIG2=1, win at much higher rates than normal. However, it seems to be due to selecting all the lowest price horses in these categories as the average win price is way down and the ROI did not improve.

Despite its affinity for predicting the obvious, the FIG2=1 has a few strong points →

FIG2=1 Item	Purse \$10,000+		No FTS			
	Win	ITM	WROI	AvgM	High	I.V.
Bx	32%	63%	1.08	\$6.70	\$22	2.08
Lay<=10	28%	63%	0.92	\$6.50	\$36	2.25
WK90+	34%	66%	0.91	\$5.30	\$55	2.04
FR1=1	33%	67%	0.90	\$5.40	\$60	2.61

Analysis

If you run a *LEARN ALL* report from the *Robot* on this factor, you’ll find low variance with the ROI and the average win price across nearly all the factors. There are few surprises with this or other speed figure prediction methods as the public is attuned and the horses generally over bet. Blinkers OFF (bx) is the best performer with the FIG2=1 and scores a flat bet profit. But that was it for profitable combinations. The only other factors that combined to produce ROI above 0.90 are shown above.

I feel this item may be a good candidate for removal from the Robot at the next upgrade!

*MAXVEL Software User Guide***Maximum Velocity Software (MAXVEL) – Update**

The MAXVEL was released in January and was met with positive reaction from most. There are some problems with it, such as lack of printing capability (added, see below) but it is a work in progress and I have plans to add to the Modeler for the Seminar version.

For the “March 7, 2007” version update I fixed a few bugs and added a simple printing function. You should be able to download the update by the time you read this.

Users sent in some excellent suggestions. I’ll consider adding them for the summer update. Here are the most popular →

- Add more information to the Modeler, such as PED, TRN, JKY, FC and WK.
- Expand the “Full Stats” report to include those factors above.
- Put a date range in the Modeler
- Add more filters to the Modeler, such as currently found in the *Robot*.

Printing Options now Available

Maxvel software is a visual and interactive experience. But a basic printing function is a necessity and I added some simple options to get the velocity information to your printer.

- **Print Screen (top):** prints a single race with whatever velocity screen is currently shown on the top panel and uses any sort options or PL-mode you have specified. Options are Full Card and Landscape (large) print – see below.
- **Print 3-Part Report:** this prints the current race with all three velocity screens on one-page.
- **Landscape:** select this item to print the report in larger font and horizontal mode.
- **Full Card:** if selected, it cycles through every race on the currently selected race card and prints them all.

Notes on the full card printing

1. Unlike HTR2 Full Card Print, this one does *not* have race-specific selection; it prints the entire card at once.
2. Sorting and PL-mode will be the same for all races if you select full card printing. It will print all the races in the current mode selected. Use the single race print option if you want different sorting or PL selection on each race.

*News and Information***HTR Newsletter – Quality not Quantity with Bi-Monthly Publication**

People ask me all the time if I'm burned out writing a monthly newsletter. I enjoy researching and presenting ideas and statistics and want to absorb everything new just like most of our readers. Having an appetite for learning new stuff has always been part of the attraction to horse handicapping for me.

It is true that our *Discussion Board* has largely replaced much of the purpose of the monthly newsletter. Tournament results and general thoroughbred racing news and commentary are quickly discussed on the bulletin board. So I sometimes run out of ideas and end up repeating previous material with updated stats. There is only so much data that can be deemed fresh and creative every 30 days.

Almost every major tournament in the USA and Canada has some HTR subscribers entered. We have great live coverage on the bulletin board and Tommy Castillo has begun real-time reports right from the scene from each contest he participates in. We don't need the newsletter for getting hard news and contest results anymore, so we'll use it for event summaries, human-interest aspects and strategy tips.

With a few exceptions, I think we have published nearly every month for about the last 10 years. All the on-line issues are found on in the HTR Library archives. Issues printed prior to the year 2000 were mailed to customers in paper format. The longevity of the newsletter is impressive by itself and it also provides me a great excuse to avoid writing a user manual! The overall quantity of documented research is probably hard to exceed in the handicapping business. The consistent approach to honest testing of the material in HTR and allowing users to verify it is certainly a key part of the positive reputation that HTR enjoys. From that standpoint, I have never contemplated ending the publication entirely.

With a bi-monthly approach I'll be able to focus on the nuts and bolts, analysis and research with the software and not be at all concerned with current events or predicting current race outcomes or commenting on trends in racing. We'll stick to the handicapping ideas and using the various factors in HTR software for enhanced profits.

The quantity of newsletter pages will decline slightly, but the quality of information will continue to rise. Thanks for all the kind feedback, comments and suggestions for the newsletter, please keep them coming.

Late Announcements and Reminders

Bi-Monthly Newsletter starting 2007

HTR newsletter will be published bi-monthly beginning this year. This is the March/April edition, the next issue, May/June, will come out after the Kentucky Derby weekend. See page 14 for more information and details about the future of the HTR newsletter.

Congrats to Daniel Graham (FL) as the winner of our competitive spot play contest! *DanG* produced the only qualifying spot plays that exceeded 2.00 ROI – awesome! – he wins \$500.

Annual Vegas Seminar July 25, 2007

We have been confirmed at the *Gold Coast Hotel* in Las Vegas for **Wednesday July 25 10am-10pm** for our annual meeting. Make your plans to spend the day with us; always an enlightening learning experience and fun get-together with other sharp handicappers. Next newsletter issue we'll have details on the seminar itinerary and presentations and will post any news of the seminar on our bulletin board.

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