

HTR Report
Thoroughbred Handicapping Newsletter
March / April 2009

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Tournaments

Championship Tournament Results 2008/2009**NHC - NTRA National Handicapping Championship held at the Red Rock, Jan 23-24****HPWS - Horse Player World Series held at the Orleans, Feb 19-21**

This year's championship tournaments held in Las Vegas have proven how valuable the contests have become for retaining enthusiasm in the sport. Thoroughbred racing has few opportunities to bring together its most energetic customers and honor them. We can only hope this 'enlightenment' continues and the industry recognizes that these hard core tournament players are ground zero for maintaining and building a fan base. If they lose the tournament players, there is little hope left for the game.

The 2009 championships were very exciting and exceeded expectations for our members again. HTR Players had a banner year at both events taking home tens of thousands of dollars in prize money. We had a record number of subscribers qualifying for one or both tournaments. There were some 30 HTR players in all, including an amazing 19 who qualified for the NHC - that really is an astonishing accomplishment for a relatively small subscriber base such as ours. Altogether we had at least 40 members participating in the two championships, either by qualifying or buying in to the HPWS.

Here are the top finishers from HTR that cashed at both contests -- congrats to each of you! Note that there were about 300 total players at the NHC and 680 at the HPWS.

NHC Cash

| | | |
|----------------------------|-------------|----------------|
| George Smith (IL) | 7th | \$16000 |
| Henry Damgaard (VA) | 13th | \$ 5000 |
| Mel Moser (KY) | 18th | \$ 2500 |
| Mike Acosta (CA) | 30th | \$ 500 |

HPWS Cash

| | | |
|----------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|
| Mike Brown (IN) | 4th | \$34000 (+Day Money) |
| Barb Buckley (CA) | 5th | \$20400 (+Day Money) |
| Mike Mayo (TX) | 9th | \$ 6800 (+Day Money) |
| Dennis Tiernan (TX) | 19th | \$ 3400 |

In addition, the following members finished 31-80th place and were awarded \$1000. We were unable to obtain their exact finish positions.

Jim Dowell (CA)
Rich Goodall (NV)
Bob Gregory (NM)
Ken Massa (CA)
Don Nadermann (IA) (+Day Money)
Wayne Kwan (Canada)
George Smith (IL)
Bobby Barbaro (CA)

Advanced Handicapping
Early Speed – 2009

This month's newsletter is all about early speed and creative ways of looking at it using a simple filter in Robot II to reframe our perspective. The typical racing publication will have a common statistic:

GG Main Track Sprints Wire to Wire 27%

This information is gathered by looking at the chart for the winner and taking note of whether the horse had the lead at every call. If it did, it is tallied as a "wire to wire" victory. How useful is this information and what does the 27% wire-to-wire statistic reveal about the track or the nature of racing at GG? Very little at face value actually.

1. What is the benchmark for high or low percentage anyway ? Is 27% strong or weak in terms of early speed and does it reveal anything about a track bias ?
2. Would separating distances (5.5f, 6.0f, etc.) make any difference to this statistic ?
3. Of the 27% that did go wire to wire, how many were obvious heavy favorites? This could skew the statistics because these horses dominated their field anyway.
4. Of the 27% wire-to-wire winners, were there any other factors (i.e. running style designations, pace ratings, velocity numbers, etc.) that could have been used to predict this outcome ?

These questions are all difficult to investigate without a lot of time-consuming, tiresome, manual research and chart review. It would be necessary to break down considerable data to find meaningful answers.

Robot II Comes to the Rescue

A new filter has been added to Robot II that makes this research a snap, eliminates all the grunt work and provides far greater depth to the issue because of the detailed reports generated by the Robot.

The technical details of the new filter are found on page-7. For now, let's look at the subtle difference between the Robot's ability to understand the early speed vs. the common statistic above.

1. The Robot II filter does not look at the winners only. Instead, it looks at all the race leaders and finds out what happened to them. This is a subtle difference that will become clearer to you as you read the rest of this newsletter and realize how you can manipulate it and gather useful insights.
2. Instead of thinking in terms of wire-to-wire winners, the Robot filter helps us understand "holding power". This is because we are able to find out what happens to all race leaders (not just winners) AND we can further filter this information by just about anything we want, including exact distances, class types, age/sex, as well as seeing how it relates to all of the other factors found in HTR. The (K) rating, as you will read later, is a valuable ally in determining actual track bias because we need to know if the winners were already dominant or were they truly being aided or impeded by a surface bias.
3. Detailed reports such as LEARN ALL and LEARN MORE provide massive feedback to raw early speed data that you just cannot obtain elsewhere, or at least gather without hours of work. For example on page-5 you'll find a list of tracks and their 'holding power' (wire to wire) at 6.0f. I extracted and sorted this list from LEARN MORE and it probably took me less than 30 minutes to get it all done for 80 tracks. Now I can compare all tracks and find out realistic benchmarks as well as understand the difference between Dirt and Artificial in terms of early speed.

Advanced Handicapping
Early Speed – 2009

Let's look at the nature of early speed in North American racing currently. We'll start with a fundamental sub-group to gather some solid comparative statistics. *As I mentioned on the previous page, you will be able to run similar tests on your own using Robot2 and a new filter (see page-7).*

- 6.0f Fast Dirt (no Wet or Poly)
- Non-Maidens
- Purse \$10,000+

Races in test sample: **4,463**

1st Call (2.0f) leaders that held on to win = **1301 (29%)**

1st Call leaders that finished in the money (1-2-3) = **61%**

Average Odds of the 1st Call Leaders that Won = **4/1**

Analysis

These are bread and butter fast dirt races and represent about 10% of all active horse races in N.A. with a purse of \$10,000 or more in the last 365-days. Of the 4,463 horses that took the lead at the first-call, about 29% went on to win the race (usually wire to wire) and 61% held on to finish 1-2-3. Although bettors cannot know exactly which horse will make the lead prior to the race, the public has a pretty good idea of who the front speed will be -- and tend to over bet them. The average odds of the leaders that won was just 4/1. Keep in mind that these were 6.0f non-maiden races with no FTS involved.

Take a look at a similar set of statistics at 6.0f, but this time for synthetic tracks:

- 6.0f Artificial
- Non-Maidens
- Purse \$10,000+

Races in test sample: **1,153**

1st Call (2.0f) leaders that held on to win = **276 (24%)**

1st Call leaders that finished in the money (1-2-3) = **54%**

Average Odds of the 1st Call Leaders = **5/1**

Analysis

Artificial tracks have changed the landscape for early speed, often to the frustration of horseplayers. Far fewer leaders are able to hang on and win (**24% vs. 29% Dirt**), or even hit the board (**54% vs. 61%**). It is interesting that the public continues to bet them nearly as enthusiastically as if the races were on dirt, as the average odds were just slightly higher.

Here are the overall results for the Maidens in the same two categories (6.0f Dirt or Artificial). We can see the same dichotomy between Dirt and Synthetic tracks for early speed. It is much tougher to hang on to the front on an all-weather Artificial surface.

6.0f Fast Dirt Maidens

Races in Test Sample: **2268**

1st Call (2.0f) leaders that held on to win = **746 (33%)**

1st Call leaders that finished in the money (1-2-3) = **64%**

Average Odds of the 1st Call Leaders that Won = **4/1**

6.0f Artificial Tracks Maidens

Races in Test Sample: **618**

1st Call (2.0f) leaders that held on to win = **144 (23%)**

1st Call leaders that finished in the money (1-2-3) = **50%**

Average Odds of the 1st Call Leaders that Won = **5/1**

Advanced Handicapping
Early Speed – 2009

Below is a list of the tracks with the most *holding power* at 6.0 Dirt or Poly. In other words, once a horse makes the lead, which tracks have the highest percentage of horses that stay in front and (usually) go wire-to-wire to win the race ? The data is from Feb 2008 - Jan 2009 with Purse \$10k+. Minimum 50 races required to make the list unless otherwise noted with (*).

Top Tracks for holding early speed at 6.0f

Track 1st Call Leaders that held on and Won

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| AQU (main) | 47% |
| STP | 46% |
| SAR* | 44% |
| PNL | 43% |
| EMD | 42% |
| TDN | 40% |
| AQU (inner) | 39% |
| PIM | 38% |
| CBY | 37% |
| SUF | 36% |

Tracks least likely to hold early speed at 6.0f

Track 1st Call Leaders that held on and Won

| | |
|------|-----|
| RP | 15% |
| CD | 16% |
| FPX* | 17% |
| SA | 18% |
| ZIA | 18% |
| RET* | 18% |
| HOL | 19% |
| KEE* | 21% |
| TAM | 21% |
| HOO | 21% |
| DMR | 22% |
| TP | 22% |
| GP | 23% |
| LRL | 24% |
| GG | 25% |

All other tracks ranged between 26-35%, which puts them into a median range for early speed. That median is not "normal" however, because of the difference between Artificial and Dirt and the individual nature of every track. Keep in mind this is a 6.0f chart only, the differences with other sprint distances can be considerable and you need to investigate them separately.

How times have changed. Remember when the NY racing press used to chastise the southern Cal tracks as "too hard and fast, speed biased for front runners, can't trust those fast fractions", etc. Now all four SoCal tracks are on the low end of the scale and two NYRA tracks are among the most speed favoring !

The surface tendency - at the specific distance - for holding early speed is important knowledge for any handicapper to attain. There can be a considerable variance in these statistics at each distance at the same track. 6.0f races may be entirely different from 6.5f and 7.0f for instance.

Research
Robot II Update

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The new Robot Filter information for "Leader" (early speed) that was discussed above is found on page-7. There are additional stats and ideas of how to interpret the data as well.

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New Items

You will be able to download the March version of the Robot II update and beta-test by the time you read this newsletter. Below are the key features that have been added. Hopefully I have also corrected all of the bugs and errors reported by users in the previous beta version.

Negatives "NO" Screen

The "NO" and negative items have all been grouped onto a separate module for easier access. Most of the items were previously found on the Angles screen. Here are the new ones --

- **NO Apprentice Jockeys**

Eliminates horses ridden by apprentice riders. This may have a positive effect on your spot play or test result. LEARN ALL report now includes the item "Apprentice Jock" as part of the test result so you can judge for yourself the impact (or lack thereof) of these rookies. Later, you'll be able to use the "Connections" screen to tag individual riders in your spot plays, including apprentices.

- **NO Dirt Sprints**
- **NO Dirt Routes**
- **NO Turf Sprints**
- **NO Turf Routes**
- **NO Wet Sprints**
- **NO Wet Routes**
- **NO Artificial Sprints**
- **NO Artificial Routes**

These 8 items are now available on the NEGATIVES screen. Although a Robot user can test specific distances and surfaces on the RACEFILTERS module, there are instances that are impossible to configure to eliminate a general category of distance/surface.

Using these distance/surface negative filters has a nice bonus as well. When you use one or more of them, the Robot speeds up dramatically. This is because these filters are quickly accessed as part of the race data prior to any other computations. So it rapidly skips the ones you don't want before any computations or handicapping has to be performed. Note that by putting a checkmark in all but one of these, you could run an extremely fast Robot test on a single distance/surface category.

The LEARN ALL report lists these 8 categories individually in the test result. If you find your spot play has a negative ROI with some of them, say "Turf Sprints" and "Artificial Routes" are showing ROI under 0.80, then use the NEGATIVE filters to eliminate those categories from the spot play by putting a checkmark in NO TURF SPRINTS and NO ARTIFICIAL ROUTES.

The idea for these negative distance/surface filters was proposed by webmaster Rick and it is a very easy and productive way to increase your bottom line with spot plays as well as speed up the Robot.

These items have been repaired or added:

- **Current Race** - fixed bugs, but I suggest using the MaxVel Modeler for this purpose.
- **Scratch Screen** - manual only - unable to configure Auto-Scratch right now.
- **Bottom Report Labeling** - it's a little messy, but should help you ID those reports.

Research
Robot II Update

Testing the Early Speed - New Filter on Angles Screen

The new "Leader" filter is found in a green box on the Systems & Angles filters module. If you check-mark this item, you must have Result Charts for your races or the tester will skip over the race in the test. All of the test results you find in this issue were drawn from this filter.

[x]=====

(chart) Leader 1st Call

Test Item Only

Cannot be used in Spot Play

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When you run this filter, the Robot searches the Result Chart for the 1st Call leader of the race. The 1st-Call is the 2.0f pole in sprints, and 4.0f mark in routes. We could not necessarily have known who this horse is prior to the race. Yes, we often make an educated guess at the probable early leader with our handicapping, but this filter extracts them in hindsight only.

Obviously, we cannot predict 100% of the leaders before the race starts, so the filter is not available to be used in Spot Plays. This is similar to the Tote Odds item, also found in the Robot, it is only used to reverse engineer and look for trends.

The Win% results you get with this item reflect the number of early leaders that held on to win. Take a look at the following real example from SA, Artificial Sprints, current meet 2009 through most of February.

| Item | Plays | Wins | Win Pla | Sho | WROI | PROI | SROI | AvgPay | High | I.V. | |
|----------|-------|-------|---------|-----|------|------|------|--------|--------|------|------|
| Play All | 00205 | 00042 | 20% | 33% | 47% | 1.17 | 0.94 | 0.93 | \$11.4 | \$51 | 1.76 |

There were 205 horses that made the lead in their sprint race at SA. Note: this means that 100% of these 205 horses were on the lead at the 1st-Call. Of those 205 leaders, 42 of them held on to win the race. This is a win rate of 20%. That is very low compared to the national average.

Remember that we are running a test on horses that have accomplished something (leading the race) that we could not have known as bettors before the gate opened. But leaders are the most important horses to track after-the-fact because they tell us the most about the bias of the surface and the value of our early speed prediction factors.

The resulting ROI = 1.17, isn't that good? No, it is meaningless at face value. If you could have bet each of these leaders after it passed the 2.0f pole, you would have made that 17% profit - but that is impossible because we could never bet while the race is in progress!

You may be asking what is the use of a filter that cannot be used to predict an outcome before the race starts ? It's a valid question. The important aspect is to let us know the "holding power" or apparent track bias that is taking place. As you'll see on the next two pages, we can also glean a lot of important information from it by looking at it in tandem with other HTR factors.

Research

Robot II Update – Testing Early Speed

In most cases, a sprint "Leader" (in front at the 2.0f pole), that wins the race, will have gone wire-to-wire. Not every time though, sometimes they lose the lead after the 2.0f mark and then regain it to win. Remember, that with route races (8.0f or more) the 1st Call is taken at the 4.0f pole. Route "Leaders" may not necessarily have been in front after 2.0f, so some route winners will also not have 'wired' the field. The point here is to keep your mind on the "Leader" filter as assessing what happened to the front runner in the race regardless of where it finished and not just paying attention to winners.

Now we'll turn to the factors in HTR that may predict early speed. Using the "Leader" filter can help you identify them and determine how much impact these factors have on the outcome. Look at the following example from Santa Anita. These are all sprint races on the main track (Artificial) for the current meet.

| <u>Artificial Sprints</u> | | | <u>Santa Anita</u> | | | <u>Current Meet thru Feb 27</u> | | | | | |
|---------------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------------|------------|------------|---------------------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|
| <u>RunStyle</u> | <u>Plays</u> | <u>Wins</u> | <u>Win</u> | <u>Pla</u> | <u>Sho</u> | <u>WROI</u> | <u>PROI</u> | <u>SROI</u> | <u>AvgPay</u> | <u>High</u> | <u>I.V.</u> |
| ALL | 00205 | 00042 | 20% | 33% | 42% | 1.17 | 0.94 | 0.93 | \$11.4 | \$51 | 1.76 |
| RS= F | 00046 | 00007 | 15% | 24% | 39% | 0.56 | 0.63 | 0.77 | \$7.4 | \$13 | 1.26 |
| RS= E | 00089 | 00019 | 21% | 36% | 52% | 1.17 | 0.97 | 0.95 | \$10.9 | \$51 | 1.79 |
| RS= P | 00032 | 00008 | 25% | 44% | 50% | 1.21 | 1.23 | 0.99 | \$9.7 | \$25 | 2.10 |
| RS= S | 00019 | 00002 | 11% | 11% | 32% | 1.46 | 0.53 | 0.95 | \$27.7 | \$33 | 1.09 |
| RS= R | 00001 | 00000 | 00% | 00% | 00% | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | | | |
| RS= N | 00018 | 00006 | 33% | 50% | 56% | 2.42 | 1.62 | 1.16 | \$14.5 | \$36 | 3.04 |

Note: "RS= N" category are FTS or other non-rated horses that made the lead.

Take a look at the "F" group. These horses were rated (running style) RS="F" prior to the race and 46 of them actually did make the lead. Of those 46 leaders, just 7 held on to win (15%).

There were 89 leaders that were tagged with an "E" and 19 of them won (21%).

32 leaders that were tagged with a "P" and 8 of them held on (25%).

There were even 19 "S" horses and even an "R" that made the front, but few were able to hold.

Let's look at what this information tells us - and does NOT tell us. Remember, by using the "Leader" filter, we are handicapping *after the fact* - "red boarding", but we can learn a lot about the nature of the track and our HTR factors from this information.

We have found that RS = "F" is no advantage for horses making the lead, and only a few are able to hold on and win. The "E" and "P" group tend to hold on better, which may indicate that these horses were under less pressure. The problem with running style (RS) is that there are often multiple horses in the same race with the same running style designation. Let's look at a factor that has one and only one horse in every race. The most obvious choice would be Fr1=1 for predicting early speed -

| <u>Item</u> | <u>Plays</u> | <u>Wins</u> | <u>Win</u> | <u>Pla</u> | <u>Sho</u> | <u>WROI</u> | <u>PROI</u> | <u>SROI</u> | <u>AvgPay</u> | <u>High</u> | <u>I.V.</u> |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|
| ALL | 00205 | 00042 | 20% | 33% | 42% | 1.17 | 0.94 | 0.93 | \$11.4 | \$51 | 1.76 |
| Fr1=1 | 00070 | 00017 | 24% | 37% | 50% | 0.97 | 0.89 | 0.84 | \$8.0 | \$21 | 1.90 |

Ties are rare with Fr1 as with all velocity numbers because they are carried out two decimal places. Here we see that 70 of the 205 leaders (*Plays*) were rated Fr1=1. Reminder that the '205' is the total number of races tested in the sample and therefore also the number of horses that actually led at the first call in the sample. The '70' is the number of leaders that were also rated FR1=1. This tells us that Fr1=1 was able to predict 70/205 = 35% of the actual leaders before the race. Fr1=1 leaders held on to win 24% of the time, which is just a tad better than the normal rate of 20% (ALL).

While Fr1=1 had a slightly better than normal (24%) hold rate for leaders, there were many factors in HTR that performed much better in terms of 'holding power' (leaders that carry on and win the race). We'll list those on the next page.

Research

Robot II Update – Testing Early Speed

Below are the top performers in terms of 'holding power'. This tells how often a runner with this factor was able to hang on to the lead and win the race after leading at the first call. There is a lot that can be understood about track bias by noticing these factors at each venue.

Top EPS 365d 42%
 HTR=1 38%
 K=1 35%
 PER=1 35%

The entrants with the top Earnings Per Start (EPS) in the last 365-days, was a strong bias buster at SA in the sprints, holding on an amazing 42% of the time when they made the lead. Compare that to the normal 20% rate among all leaders in SA sprints. Perhaps EPS is a more useful indicator of consistency than we would expect. HTR=1, K=1 and PER=1 leaders also held on at much higher rates than normal.

The issue with all these factors is that they may be too obvious and related to horses that were favorites and dominated their field anyway, perhaps at low odds. This is something we need to look at carefully before deciding if there is a true track bias.

You may already have the wheels spinning in your head with ideas on using this Leader filter to find out critical information and bias detection. Perhaps filtering by odds. Let's look at another example, this time from Gulfstream and glean some surprising insights about the reality of early speed and track bias.

GP Turf Routes 2009 through March 7

| Item | Plays | Wins | Win Pla | Sho | WROI | PROI | SROI | AvgPay | High | I.V. | |
|------|-------|-------|---------|-----|------|------|------|--------|--------|------|------|
| All | 00124 | 00020 | 16% | 32% | 40% | 1.20 | 1.27 | 1.11 | \$14.8 | \$49 | 1.75 |
| K=1 | 00014 | 00006 | 43% | 57% | 71% | 1.51 | 1.16 | 1.10 | \$7.1 | \$11 | 4.13 |
| K=2 | 00004 | 00000 | 00% | 50% | 50% | 0.00 | 0.90 | 0.75 | | | 0.00 |
| K=3 | 00014 | 00002 | 14% | 50% | 64% | 0.38 | 1.44 | 1.48 | \$5.3 | \$6 | 1.54 |
| K=4 | 00009 | 00004 | 44% | 67% | 78% | 2.40 | 3.11 | 2.08 | \$10.8 | \$15 | 4.79 |
| K=5 | 00010 | 00002 | 20% | 40% | 50% | 1.65 | 1.76 | 1.31 | \$16.5 | \$22 | 2.18 |
| K=6 | 00014 | 00003 | 21% | 29% | 36% | 2.57 | 1.52 | 1.42 | \$24.0 | \$47 | 2.20 |
| K=7 | 00012 | 00003 | 25% | 42% | 42% | 3.98 | 2.56 | 1.65 | \$31.9 | \$49 | 2.71 |
| K=8 | 00008 | 00000 | 00% | 25% | 25% | 0.00 | 0.85 | 0.66 | | | 0.00 |
| K=9 | 00039 | 00000 | 00% | 05% | 10% | 0.00 | 0.35 | 0.55 | | | 0.00 |

So far this meet there have been 124 turf routes (and obviously 124 1st Call leaders in those races) and they were able to hold on and win the race just 16% of the time. However, notice the difference the (K) rating makes top-to-bottom. Those leaders that were K= 8 or K= 9, failed every time in 47 tries to hang on if they made the front. So much for playing early speed bombs at GP on the grass.

What does this data reveal about a possible bias? Although the 'hold rate' is just 16% overall, K=1 runners -- typically low odds contenders -- had no problem holding on if they made the lead. The K=1 leaders won 43% of the time and finished 1-2-3 some 71%. If there were a strong anti-speed bias on the GP lawn, wouldn't we find that all sub groups are having problems? Instead, most of the negatives comes from horses which had low (K) ratings. The jury is out on this bias. There does seem to be some evidence of difficulty for front-runners, but some contrary data also exists to counter that opinion.

The point here is to demonstrate the usefulness of this filter in getting information. Every race will have a leader and it is imperative that we understand what is happening to them from all angles if we are going to stay ahead of the public. Dig deeper to find genuine track bias.

Advanced Handicapping
FTS – Predicting Early Speed

Let's review some stats on first-time-starters (FTS) to remind you of two critical realities about thoroughbred races:

1. FTS are among the best longshot plays and overlays as the public is timid with betting them.
2. It is a daunting task for a FTS to win a race without a standout factor(s) in its favor.

Here are the parameters I used in this study. Notice the exclusion of 2yr races because they are run at shorter dash distances and often have a majority of entrants, if not all, who are FTS.

- Maiden Sprints, Purse \$10,000+
- 3yr or 3up/4up maiden races only
- Artificial and Fast Dirt Surfaces

| FTS | 3yr/3up/4up | Maiden Sprints | Dirt or Artificial | | Purse \$10,000+ | | |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|------------|------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Item | Plays | Winners | Win | ITM | WROI | AvgPay | I.V. |
| All | 7,759 | 577 | 07% | 23% | 0.68 | \$18.40 | 0.69 |
| Fast Dirt | 5,842 | 488 | 08% | 24% | 0.66 | \$17.10 | 0.71 |
| Artificial | 1,917 | 129 | 07% | 22% | 0.77 | \$22.80 | 0.66 |

Analysis

The average FTS winner is let go at odds of more than 8/1. You would be hard pressed to find a subgroup of common winners in thoroughbred racing with wins paying that high in a large sample. The key stat to look at here is I.V., not win%. This is because there is often more than one FTS in the race and impact value takes that into account. Win% is distorted when there are multiple data matches in the same race simply because only one horse can win at a time.

The I.V. is definitely in the 'red zone' (0.69 overall) for negative statistical inference. Anything under 0.75 indicates the factor is detrimental to winning. The ROI reflects this also, with a return that is far under the takeout or nominal ROI of 0.80 for a random selection.

So we have proven our two points from the beginning of the article: (1) FTS are a tough call; (2) if you can catch one though, they tend to pay great and fool the public. FTS longshots are also outstanding hits in tournaments because far fewer others players will have them, and they usually inflate the horizontal exotics (P3, P4, P6) because most people tend to leave them off of their tickets to save money.

Early Speed

Of the **7,759** FTS in this study, just **587** of them managed to get to the lead at the first call in their debut race. Of those, **175** held on to win. That's a decent **30%** rate of success for the FTS front runners. The numbers were much better on Fast Dirt (33% of the front runners held on to win) vs. Artificial tracks (just 18% went on to win after gaining the lead). As we have read earlier in this issue, it is no surprise that the Poly, Cushion and Tapeta tracks are tougher for wire-to-wire victory and FTS are no exception to this.

HTR Factors that Portend a Live Effort at a Price

We are certainly aware of the importance of finding live FTS to boost our profits; and we have shown that early speed may be a key to that goal. Yet it is a tough sell to back a FTS knowing the woeful percentages against us. Most rookies have logical excuses: (1) green, scared and inexperienced the newcomer simply does not run a smooth race in the debut; (2) many trainers don't force the debut and give their greenhorns an acclimation race for learning purposes. You can spot these trainers quickly by looking at the Trainer Report Card [T] screen in HTR2. A well regarded trainer that shows a "D" or "F" in the FTS column is most likely "not just having bad luck", he is allowing his FTS to lose with a purpose.

Next page we'll discuss factors from HTR that portend a live effort from a FTS.

Advanced Handicapping
FTS – Predicting Early Speed

We cannot use pace or velocity numbers with first time starters, nor do we have the availability of a running style (RS) designations or Quirin Speed Points (QP) to review. So how can we possibly predict which FTS will run to the front in their debut ?

A healthy percentage of the FTS that reached the lead at the first-call in their debut and/or won the race showed two or more of the following attributes in HTR =

- PED 450+
- FT > 50
- Razor Sharp
- Wk 85+
- TRN= 1
- TRN 400+
- JKY+TRN 30%+

If you find a FTS with a combination of these factors its chances of winning are far higher than normal and it might make the lead as well and that would greatly improve its chances.

Let's look at an effective factor with FTS: WK 85+ and find out how well it combines with the other ratings listed above. Minimum 40 plays or it is labeled "insufficient data". Please note - the "Leader" filter is not involved with this data, this is a test of all FTS.

| FTS | WK 85+ | 3yr/3up/4up Maiden Sprints | | Dirt or Artif | | Purse \$10k+ | |
|--------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|----------------------|-------------|---------------------|-------------|
| Item | Plays | Winners | Win | ITM | WROI | AvgPay | I.V. |
| ALL (Wk 85+) | 00658 | 00111 | 17% | 42% | 0.97 | \$11.50 | 1.52 |
| PED450+ | 00092 | 00037 | 40% | 67% | 1.82 | \$9.10 | 3.37 |
| FT > 50 | insufficient data | | | | | | |
| TRN=1 | 00042 | 00021 | 50% | 69% | 1.45 | \$5.80 | 4.15 |
| TRN 400+ | insufficient data | | | | | | |
| JK+TR 30%+ | insufficient data | | | | | | |
| Razor Sharp | 00457 | 00086 | 19% | 45% | 1.00 | \$10.70 | 1.69 |
| Males | 00394 | 00059 | 15% | 39% | 0.82 | \$11.00 | 1.33 |
| Females | 00264 | 00052 | 20% | 47% | 1.19 | \$12.10 | 1.81 |

Analysis

Wk 85+ is far less common than I expected among FTS, less than 10% of the debut runners have it. The vast majority of those also have a "Razor Sharp" workout. When combined with any of the other factors, the data is sparse - but it is always very potent, even among the ones labeled "insufficient data" the win rate was over 40% in all cases.

At first it looks like a promising data find: FTS & WK 85+ combined get near flat bet profit (0.97), however, all of the profitable ROI comes from the females and the males are a loser at ROI = 0.82.

There is a definitive advantage in having a comprehensive report from the Robot LEARN ALL rather than obtaining raw data matches such as with a database query. Had I run a simple query on Wk 85+ & FTS on my database, the result would have appeared strong with the ROI= 0.97 overall. Without the ability to review the entire spectrum of information though, I might not have been aware of the extreme difference between Male and Female. There were other indications on the report that might temper the enthusiasm also, such as a high ROI on Wet surfaces.

We could still create a spot play from this result, using Females only, and now have an awareness that Male FTS appear to be over bet and under-perform when showing Wk 85+. The battle for those elusive FTS winners continues.

Announcements and Reminders

Can Horseplayers Make a Difference? Check this Out.

<http://blog.horseplayersassociation.org/2009/03/quest-post-united-we-stand.html>

NHC Qualifiers

Congrats to Don Nadermann for winning the initial NTRA Tour on-line tournament. He beat 800 other players to qualify and get a freebie to the Red Rock in 2010. And he used a nickname that makes me look good - "HTR Rocks!" - thanks Donnie. Richard Goodall, the 2007 NHC champion, also qualified again at the SA money contest on March 1st by finishing 5th. He must be pretty good at this. Nice going guys, that's a big monkey off your back for the rest of the year. Best of luck on the tour.

Software Upgrades

Robot II update (beta-test) should be available as you read this. The March 8 version has many new features and filters outlined in this issue.

MaxVel software needed an update due to an error in the PAC ratings with Artificial tracks. You can download the March 1 version from the Subscriber Zone. The same is true of the HTR2 program, it has an update that fixed the odds range in the LEARN MORE report.

Seminar 2009

We are tentatively scheduled for the annual HTR Seminar on Wednesday, July 22 at the Gold Coast. However, this has not been finalized as of this writing. The Gold Coast tournament is scheduled for July 23-25. I'll have more information regarding the seminar on the bbs and in the next newsletter.

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