

***HTR Report***  
**Thoroughbred Handicapping Newsletter**  
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*Handicapping***Is the Rail Still an Advantage at 6.0f?**

In 1979 when William Quirin wrote his landmark statistical study on thoroughbred racing: "Winning at the Races" it included a compelling chapter on post-position (page 55). His statistics were based on small samples that are now 30-years old, but the data was enough for most horseplayers to believe that the inside was definite advantage at all distances. Throughout the next two decades his statistics held up well and horse bettors were quick to notice an extreme rail bias at tracks like Keeneland, Pimlico and Del Mar that tended to reappear every year. "Speed and the Rail" was all you needed to know

Something has happened in the decade since the year 2000 and the rail has become a liability at many distances, particularly one-turn sprints. The difficulty of winning from the inside post became most acute at the major tracks in Southern California. This occurred long before the installation of the synthetic surfaces and became such a problem that trainers would routinely scratch their horse out of a sprint if it drew the rail. The tracks tried lots of remedies including not loading the inside gate position and placing all of the horses out an extra slot to give the inside more room.

The problem was hardly exclusive to SoCal tracks though and has become noticeable at many locations, especially in large fields. Perception is not always reality though and we need to run some unbiased tests at each racetrack and specific distances to make valid judgments. Below you will find some of the parameters that I used in this test →

- When testing post-position, it just can't be done with a universal set of circumstances. The data need to be separated by specific track-distance-surface. You'll see an "ALL" statistic for all the tracks at a common distance tested below, but that is just to set up a benchmark impact value, as I'll explain in a moment.
- Field size is an important criterion when testing post-position. The gate crew may leave empty the inside-most slot to help the horses drawn on the rail to negotiate the start with a little more room. To negate this issue, I tested ONLY races with 8 or more starters because the horse that draws the rail will have to break from the usual inside slot in most cases (otherwise trainers would complain about pushing the outside horses out too far!).
- Wet dirt tracks are removed from this study, as a good or bad inside may be the result of water accumulation not post-position.

Test parameters summary used in this study

1. Track-Distance-Surface specific, in this case 6.0f, the most common thoroughbred race.
2. Field of 8 or more.

**Impact Values**

Why use Impact Value (I.V.) and what do the I.V. numbers mean? Impact values were first presented by Quirin as an alternative to win percentage statistics. They overcome two key problems for superior comparison of outcome: (1) multiple horses per race, (2) variation of field size. I won't get into the mathematics of Impact Value; you can read the details in Quirin's book. The chart below should help you understand what the stats mean in the charts that follow →

<b><u>I.V.</u></b>	<b><u>Meaning / Comment</u></b>
0.95 – 1.10	Neutral, no positive or negative, normal expectation
1.11 – 1.49	Mild positive indicator, slight asset to the horse
1.50 – 1.99	Moderate Positive Indicator, performance booster
2.00 – 9.99	Strong Positive Indicator, big performance assist
0.00 – 0.49	Strong Negative Indicator, detrimental effect
0.50 – 0.75	Moderate Negative Indicator, performance inhibitor
0.76 – 0.94	Mild Negative indicator, slight drawback

*Handicapping*  
**Is the Rail Still an Advantage?**

The chart below lists tracks that run enough 6.0f races in a year to create a reasonable impact value. The (\*) flag the tracks with smaller samples due to a short meet. A (\$) is shown if there is a flat-bet profit from betting the 1-post in every race (ROI > 1.00). Reminder these are 6.0f races on fast dirt or synthetic surfaces only with a field of 8 or more. The list is grouped by I.V. range and the analysis appears on the chart →

<u>6.0f</u>	<u>Post=1</u>	<u>Fast Dirt or Synthetic Surface</u>	<u>Field Size 8-14</u>
<u>Track</u>	<u>Rail</u>	<u>I. V.</u>	
ALL	1.07		
CBY	1.95	\$	
AQU Inner	1.85	\$	
PI M	1.73	*	These tracks have a strong rail bias
CRC	1.67		
NP	1.56		
BEU	1.52	\$	
HAW	1.49	\$	
OP	1.48	\$	
BEL	1.47		Tracks w/ moderate boost for the rail horse
AQU Main	1.47		
SAR	1.46	*	
GP	1.44		
HOL	1.40		(HOL rail is much better since Cushion installed)
FE	1.24		
MTH	1.20		
PHA	1.19		
LS	1.16		These tracks have a slight to normal rail edge
IND	1.14		
FPX	1.11	*	
AP	1.10		
EVD	1.10		
HOU	1.09		
HST	1.09		
RP	1.08		
MNR	1.07		
FL	1.05		The rail is not positive or negative
FP	1.04		
FON	1.03		
LAD	1.03		
ELP	1.00		
DEL	0.98		
EMD	0.96		
WO	0.93		
RET	0.93		
PEN	0.92		
PRM	0.92		There is slight to moderate disadvantage here
ASD	0.90		
SUF	0.89		
TP	0.87		
GG	0.86		
LRL	0.86		
TUP	0.85		
TAM	0.83		
TDN	0.79		
KEE	0.72		
ZI A	0.71		Tracks with an anti rail bias
DMR	0.67		
CD	0.66		
RD	0.55		
SA	0.53		
PI D	0.36		

Analysis: the rail is bad news at several major tracks including two key locations in SoCal (DMR and SA) and KY (KEE and CD). A few tracks have a definitive rail advantage such as AQU-inner track, which will be in service for most of the winter in New York.

*Handicapping with HTR2***Looking Beyond the Workout Time**

We have discovered that using workouts in handicapping requires much more than a mere appraisal of the time of the workout. Many horseplayers believe that they can quantify workouts in the same manner that they use a parallel time chart for final time speed figures. For example, look at the chart below →

<b>Rating</b>	<b>Workout =</b>	<b>3.0f</b>	<b>4.0f</b>	<b>5.0f</b>	<b>6.0f</b>
100		36.0h	48.0h	1.00h	112.0h

This is a typical comparison chart showing a rating for various workout distances. The chart assumes, of course, that the times were run over the same track and surface with zero variant. That's a rather blatant assumption isn't it! Very few workouts would actually be so easily comparable on that basis anyway, but there are far greater issues as we'll discuss below. This type of chart is so far from reality that it boggles my mind that people would still use something like this, let alone actually wager on it. But they do and money pours in on horses that show the "bullet" or the best-of-morning drills.

HTR users should never analyze workouts this way. The key to finding live longshots and overlays – and I stress that word "live" because workouts are the best source of that information – is to understand how racehorses train and what types of workouts are the most indicative of fitness.

The [W] report in the HTR2 software is an excellent starting point for you to learn about workout patterns because of the commentary on the works such as "blowout" and "Strong Drill". Here are some of the key points you must remember about workouts.

- The single most important thing you have to understand about workouts is the value of a 5.0- fur-long drill. This is the optimal distance for speed, fitness and power and every trainer knows it. I have preached this for a decade to our users and realize that it often falls on deaf ears. Most people still want hard numbers, charts and stats, but workout appraisal tends to be more intuitive and requires greater scrutiny. But the [W] screen has overcome some of this trepidation by stating some hard facts with those comments as well as providing a Graded comparison. We have had tremendous success already with adding the workout information to the Robot (Razor Sharp only) and the Export (full details).

Fitness is built on a planned pattern of regular drills. Take a look at this workout pattern from the real world. I'll use just three columns for the appraisal.

<b>Ago</b>	<b>Dist</b>	<b>Comment</b>
005	3.0f	Blowout
011	5.0f	Strong Drill
017	6.0f	Stamina
023	5.0f	Breezing

This horse is extremely fit and ready to run a big race. First thing we notice is the regular spacing of the works at 6-days apart. This indicates that the trainer designed this fitness plan ahead of time and decided in advance when and how far to work the horse, including how much speed or pressure to ask of it. To perform each of these drills as expected, the horse must be very healthy indeed. The 5.0f and 6.0f drills each have some meaning, primarily to build stamina as well as create a very solid foundation that the runner will need at crunch time in a race so it won't tire out in the stretch.

Try not to compare human runners or fitness methods to racehorses. There are major differences. The most important is that the fragile thoroughbred cannot withstand too much hard running before the legs suffer injuries. It is a very difficult margin a trainer deals with between encouraging fitness yet being careful not to over train to the point of damage. Human runners, such as Olympic champions, train with unbelievable workloads and it often takes it toll on the knees and joints. Racehorses would quickly breakdown under such strain. Unfortunately, with human and equine runners, drugs can alleviate the pain and allow training to continue despite injuries.

*Handicapping with HTR2*  
**Looking Beyond the Workout Time**

Let's discuss some issues that you should be aware of when scrutinizing a workout pattern.

Work over the track/surface

Later in this article we will look at some test results with "Razor Sharp" that help us to understand if a workout over the same track and surface is an advantage. Here are some interesting angles for you to consider regarding the horse's familiarity with the racing surface during workouts.

- Artificial Tracks are perhaps the most important surface acclimation awareness for the trainer (and handicapper) to be aware of. These tracks are all different: *Poly, Tapeta, Pro-Ride*, etc. It is very difficult to judge from pedigree alone if the horse will appreciate such unusual footing in its first outing. A set of crisp morning drills is a major positive toward believing that it will. A strong 5.0f workout is particularly impressive.
- Smaller tracks or "bullrings" require the horse to complete a 5.0f drill around two-turns. A solid drill is highly indicative that the horse is both fit and can handle the tight turns.
- Grass workouts are fairly rare as they require special permission from the track superintendent to get on the turf in the morning with the "dogs up" (barriers to protect the inner part of the grass course). But the extra effort indicates the trainer is serious and went a step further to train the horse over the same turf course it will race on. A strong 5.0f drill on the lawn is a powerful fitness motivator.
- Workouts of 6.0f or more are considered stamina drills. They build wind and teach the horse to run at a steady pace (rate). A workout pattern that combines one or two of these longer workouts over the track and also shows a good 5.0f drill is highly indicative of fitness and acclimation. Younger horses, 2yr and 3yr are most impressive when they work at longer distances.

Gate Drills

Most workouts are listed as "handily" or "breezing" meaning the horse began the workout from a jog and just takes off at the pole. But a gate workout requires the actual starting gate placement. As with the grass works, this requires some extra effort and permission in the morning. Most gate works are also team drills and another horse will be involved. The purpose is to school the horse, remove the fear and teach the racehorse to break more quickly. A sharp gate work from a FTS is a great indication of a runner ready to race. An experienced horse that shows a gate work may be in need of extra help to break alertly. In any case, it is almost always a positive sign to see a gate workout, regardless of the workout time.

Watch for a follow up gate drill from a 2TS (second time starters) that may have broken slowly in the debut, it will be much improved runner next out. Second and third time starters must be forgiven for early poor races and virtually all of them improve with experience. These "greenhorns" are an excellent source of live longshots, but you must be willing to ignore speed ratings and look at other factors that portend improvement, especially workouts and the trainer's rating with 2TS.

Blowout

A "blowout" is short duration workout run just 2-3 days prior to the race, usually 3.0f. These serve a very important purpose to completing a workout pattern in taking the "butterflies" out of the horse before a race. It releases pent up energy and gets the horse into the quick rhythm necessary to handle the start of the race a day or two later. Many top trainers use the "blowout" regularly to prepare their stock.

The HTR2 [W] screen lists "blowout" definitively for you. Later in this report, we'll find out statistically whether it has any impact on performance.

*Handicapping with HTR2*  
**Looking Beyond the Workout Time**

Significant Changes

Notice any of the following changes the horse may have listed for today's race →

**bo** = Blinkers On

**bx** = Blinkers OFF

**G1** = Gelded Since Last (1st start as Gelding, don't confuse with Gr1 = Grade One)

**L1** = 1st Lasix

**L2** = 2nd Lasix

Most equipment changes are also reflected in the horse's recent workouts. If the workouts are sharp, improving and show some new life, there is an excellent chance that the horse is going to improve today with the equipment change. This is a subtle, yet powerful handicapping angle that very few horseplayers will be thinking about.

I want to start our statistical tests with a Layoff Test using the theory of the solid 5.0f workout. On the [W] screen, or in the HTR Past-Performances, we would note that the horse has a 5.0f workout graded "A" or "B" since its last start. This could be a "Razor Sharp", "Strong Drill", or even a "Gate Drill". Note the criteria again →

1. Workout took place since the horse's last race.
2. A 5.0f drill within the last 28 days rated "A" or "B".

We'll begin by looking at general Layoff Statistics chart. There are no parameters applied to this as these are simply bare bones results for all horses in races with purse \$10,000 +. The key statistical factors are ROI and I.V., as win percentage has no meaning if there are multiple horses in the same race with the same layoff range.

**All Races Purse \$10,000+**

<u>Layoff Days</u>	<u>Horses</u>	<u>WROI</u>	<u>I.V.</u>
002-010	14983	0.74	0.96
011-020	92968	0.77	1.06
021-028	67485	0.75	1.12
029-065	76616	0.78	1.17
066-165	18043	0.77	1.01
166-999	13907	0.70	0.85

**All Races Purse \$10,000+ "A" or "B" 5f Workout L28D Since Raced**

<u>Layoff Days</u>	<u>Horses</u>	<u>WROI</u>	<u>I.V.</u>
002-010	00005	0.00	0.00
011-020	01134	1.15	1.38
021-028	04387	0.90	1.46
029-065	10726	0.93	1.47
066-165	03487	0.95	1.39
166-999	00521	0.91	1.16

Analysis

The top chart shows how horses perform with various layoff levels with no other factor applied. The second chart shows how these same layoff levels perform if we require a strong 5.0f workout prior to the race. The results are amazing, with massive increases in ROI and I.V. at all levels. No question about it, horses that have worked a solid 5.0f are generally going to outperform those who don't.

*Handicapping with HTR2*  
**Looking Beyond the Workout Time**

We recognize the synergism between a strong 5.0f workout and positive race performance. Let's look into further evidence of this. I mentioned in the early part of this article that synthetic and artificial surfaces seem to have a larger impact on these noteworthy 5.0f drills (especially if the drill was on the artificial surface to be raced). The next chart lists the same horses separated by the various distance and surface they raced on after the workout was noted.

<b>All Races</b>	<b>Purse \$10,000+</b>	<b>"A" or "B"</b>	<b>5.0f Workout</b>
<b>Dist/Surface</b>	<b>Horses</b>	<b>WROI</b>	<b>I.V.</b>
Dirt Sprint	08267	0.92	1.42
Dirt Route	03237	0.91	1.44
Turf Sprint	01749	0.79	1.15
Turf Route	03819	0.90	1.35
Artif Sprint	05749	1.02	1.35
Artif Route	02166	1.09	1.47
Wet Sprint	01517	0.86	1.33
Wet Route	00780	0.90	1.43

This is a very important chart for you to keep in mind. Let's look at all the details from top to bottom.

Dirt race impacts are solid. Most horse bettors of means are keenly aware of fast working young thoroughbreds on dirt, especially from top barns. There are very few secrets left on the backstretch for these workouts. Yet we still see very good statistics overall on dirt and money can be made with additional separation and odds discrimination. Keep in mind these results are for blindly betting every horse with an "A" or "B" 5.0f workout (within the last 28 days since raced) with no other handicapping or comparison to the other horses or their trainers.

Turf Sprints seem to have no correlation with these workouts. Why would that happen? Most of the horses entered in these races did not perform their 5.0f workout on the grass course, but on the main track. Even so, I would have expected better results simply on the basis of the apparent fitness from a strong 5.0f drill. Perhaps the nature of turf sprints is part of the problem; they are the most volatile races for lots of reasons, one of which is the short dash nature of the event. Perhaps speed and position is the key to a 5.5T dash, and physical fitness is not a major issue.

Turf Routes got much better results than the sprints. There is a greater dynamic present perhaps in that many routers are higher-class runners and the route distance requires greater stamina and fitness. Many grass winners are able to work on the turf course for their quality 5.0f drill as well.

Artificial surfaces have the best results, particularly striking with the ROI above profit range. A large percentage of these winners had their impressive 5.0f drill over today's surface - a clear indicator that they like it and are fit at the same time. There are other possible reasons for the high ROI including the perceived greater handicapping challenge by most players because speed figures do not work as well on these surfaces. Surface acclimation may be a key factor with synthetic track winners and these workouts are firm signal of the horse's ability to run on it.

Wet (sloppy, muddy, etc.) had reasonable impact value success with the 5.0f workout factor, but profits are tough to come by. I don't need to detail all the reasons here why wet tracks produce unexpected results but at least these statistics far out perform those pesky turf sprints!

*Handicapping with HTR2*  
**Looking Beyond the Workout Time**

The Blowout

Of all the workout types, the “blowout” has the least meaning in terms of the time of the workout. The clock is completely irrelevant and blowout works are designed to get the ‘butterflies’ out of the horse just days before the race. But there are risks involved with setting the horse off at a strong clip so close to the afternoon objective.

Blowouts are a very tricky situation for the trainer and exercise rider. If the horse takes off – and this has happened to many top stakes stars – it may leave its best stuff on the training track and deplete the peak energy needed for the race. Trainers are acutely aware of this and most tend to shy away from blowouts these days. However, there may be a feeling that the horse is too edgy approaching a race and needs to disperse the extra energy with a quick but controlled blowout. It’s a balancing act to get the horse to run hard enough to settle its nerves while not letting it go too fast and take the edge off the race.

There are three test result tables below.

First I tested all horses that had a 3.0-4.0f “blowout” workouts listed in on the [W] screen with various benchmark categories such as favorites and K=1.

**Blowout = 3.0f or 4.0f workout drilled 3-days or less before the race.**

<u>All Races Purse \$10,000+ “Blowout”</u>				
<u>Dist/Surface</u>	<u>Horses</u>	<u>WIN%</u>	<u>WROI</u>	<u>I.V.</u>
All	20590	---	0.70	0.92
Favorites	02263	32%	0.77	2.61
K=1	02221	28%	0.81	2.77
HTR=1	01932	26%	0.83	2.14

Analysis

There is a negative correlation between the “blowout” workout and general performance. This is a significant finding that may prove these works are detrimental to most horses. Favorite, K=1 and HTR=1 are all normally strong contender selectors but each drops a bit below its normal output if the “blowout” is present.

There were three factors that produced positive results when the blowout was added =

1. Early speed. (E/P = 1 in particular)
2. Blinkers OFF
3. Razor Sharp workout

In these three cases, the addition of the “blowout” workout improved statistical performance. The sample size was small enough in the Blinkers Off category (186 horses) to render it questionable (ROI = 1.09) and I would recommend other methods of playing of blinkers off for better results. The early speed factors slightly exceeded their normal output. This is worthy of note because front-runners are often nervous and high-strung and perhaps the blowout helps to sedate them somewhat.

Razor Sharp workers improve to a strong positive ROI and we’ll cover that on the next page.

*Handicapping with HTR2***Looking Beyond the Workout Time**

According to the stats on the previous page, the “blowout” is a negative attribute. So is the blowout a training method that no longer works? We have shown considerable data in the newsletter in the past that proves that quick return layoff (LAY < 10 days) as detrimental to performance and to bettors. The same principal may be happening here.

A quick return, whether race or workout, is not beneficial to positive race performance anymore. Or was it ever? Dozens of systems, books and methodologies sold between 1975-1995 used the quick return and recent blowout as key factor. I was unable to locate a published record of winning statistics to support these claims. Hence thousands of handicappers were probably duped.

There were some positive results with the blowout found in my workout study, which included a combination of a Blowout + Razor Sharp. Here are the stats →

<b>All Races Purse \$10,000+ "Blowout" + "Razor Sharp"</b>				
<b>Dist/Surface</b>	<b>Horses</b>	<b>WIN%</b>	<b>WROI</b>	<b>I.V.</b>
All	00778	18%	1.12	1.55
Males	00467	19%	1.29	1.63
Females	00311	17%	0.87	1.45

Analysis

The overall ROI is an excellent 1.12 (+12% profit) with nearly 800 races. It's a viable sample and in fact astonishing in light of the information we previously learned about the generally negative consequences of the blowout. As we presented last month, any Razor Sharp workout will show near flat-bet profits by itself (ROI = 0.97), so there is reason to believe the blowout has additional effect.

A large dichotomy exists here between Male and Female horses. Males have a far better overall return and slightly better impact value with this workout combination. The disadvantage is enough that Females could be eliminated in a spot play. The win rate was not that far apart though (19% vs. 17%) so the problem is the bettors seem to over rate the fillies and mares while allowing the males at fair odds.

Frankly, I'm not sure what to make of the Blowout + Razor Sharp results. On one hand we see negative consequences of the blowout overall, yet only one sub-group shows a significant edge (Razor Sharp + Male), leaving us with a quandary (except that Razor Sharp is one impressive indicator!).

Quick Return (Layoff 2-10 Days) and Females.

The poor results with females and blowout workouts led me to retest Layoff < 10 days and see if there is a similar difference between the sexes. Here are the results →

<b>All Races Purse \$10,000+ Layoff 2-10 Days</b>				
<b>Dist/Surface</b>	<b>Horses</b>	<b>WIN%</b>	<b>WROI</b>	<b>I.V.</b>
All	14983	12%	0.74	0.96
Males	10467	12%	0.77	0.97
Females	04516	12%	0.71	0.95

Analysis

As we have reported in the past, the quick return (Layoff 2-10) is a major negative to performance and especially to bettors – with ROI far less than the takeout. Males and Females show similar win rates and impact ratings on short rest, but the females do have a significant drop in the ROI from the males, though not nearly as extreme as we saw with the blowout workout play. A negative ROI separation indicates that more low odds horses are losing among the females. Maybe the ladies need a little more time off to run their best!

*Book Review****Betting Synthetic Surfaces: Conquering Racing's Newest Frontier*  
by Bill Finley / DRF Press**Review by Mel Moser

By reducing the cost per copy for small print runs, digital printing technology revolutionized the economics of niche publishing, resulting in a sharp increase in recent titles from DRF Press. This change is mostly for the better, but it also increased incentives to be first rather than best. Sad to say, that appears to apply to Finley's book, the first to deal exclusively with synthetic surfaces.

Even Finley's title is problematical, since the book covers handicapping, and devotes no attention to the very different subject of the need for changed vertical and horizontal betting strategies for races on synthetics. This omission might be because, as the author acknowledges, he has never bet a race run on a synthetic surface, and in fact has not made a bet on any race on any surface for close to eight years.

In contrast, rare is the day when James Quinn does not make a bet, and his well written and well reasoned "Del Mar, The Polytrack, and You" outlines the logic for adopting different betting strategies for synthetic races. Moreover, there's no need to pony up \$24.95 to learn Quinn's views on the subject, since his article is still available for free on the Del Mar site.

To make matters worse, 6 of the 14 chapters in Finley's slim volume have nothing whatsoever to do with handicapping, and instead covers marginally interesting subjects like the history, composition and future of synthetic surfaces.

Serious handicappers searching for an edge based on breeding will learn little from Finley's book, as two thirds of his chapter on sires consists of *Thorograph's* database of overall and first time synthetic win percentages through December 18, 2007, which already qualifies as ancient history. More importantly, even though what Finley copied from *Thorograph* is accurate, simply presenting win percentages without any explanation or qualification is misleading.

If there's one thing virtually everyone agrees on, it's that no two synthetic surfaces are alike. That's why Premier Turf did a separate analysis of sires whose progeny are best suited for Presque Isle's tapeta surface, and this also explains the logic behind Kristufek's list of Arlington Park sires. And although *Brisnet's* free and frequently updated databases are not track specific, the information is organized by state, and has the added advantage of including each sire's production index, which allows for a comparison of foals' performance on synthetic tracks.

Finley does not mention these or any other breeding resources, and while he too believes that each synthetic surface is different, Finley says nothing about the wisdom of relying on breeding results which lump together Polytrack, Cushion Track, Tapeta and Pro-Ride.

The second and bigger issue with the sire data Finley copied from *Thorograph*, a fundamental statistical problem that permeates the book. As explained in Dr. Quirin's 1979 classic: *Winning at the Race*; a book Finley acknowledges is authoritative; an accurate statistical analysis must compare the percentage of winners having a particular characteristic with the percentage of all starters having that same characteristic. This the statistic that readers of the HTR Newsletter will recognize as the formula used to determine Impact Value (I.V.). Put another way, for a popular sire like Giant's Causeway, absent additional information, knowing that his foals won 15.57% of their starts on synthetics through December of last year is impossible to interpret.

*Book Review****Betting Synthetic Surfaces: Conquering Racing's Newest Frontier***  
***by Bill Finley / DRF Press***Review by Mel Moser-- continued

Last but not least, is Finley's central claim that the widespread belief that "turf horses" are more likely to handle synthetics is wrong. For starters, most of Finley's support for this claim is anecdotal, consisting of his handicapping opinion on specific horses in specific Keeneland and Hollywood races. More to the point, if anything, the only statistics Finley cites, not to mention results from the just concluded Breeder's Cup, actually seem to support the opposite conclusion.

Finley's only statistical support are the 12.67, 15.48, and 11.3 win percentages for "turf horses" in synthetic races at the inaugural synthetic meets at Keeneland, Hollywood, and Woodbine. However, even putting aside the questions of what these numbers mean and whether relying on such win percentages makes sense, Finley's claim is based in large part on an artificial and peculiar definition of "turf horse", which only includes horses which have already won a race on the turf.

Even using that definition, the only claim Finley is actually able to support is the wholly unremarkable one that "at the 2006 Keeneland fall meet, no one did themselves any favors by blindly betting on grass horses running on the Polytrack."

I hasten to add that anyone will not be doing themselves any favors by buying or reading this superficial and disappointing book.

Editors Notes

Thanks very much to Mel for contributing his review and opinion of this book. The first thing that occurred to me after reading it was that Mel's article is more informative about the subject than the book he just reviewed! As he alludes in the first paragraph of his assessment, the DRF Press has become a pulp-handicapping source. It replaces the mass production system sellers of the 1970-1990 era by using marketing as the key weapon for sales – not quality information or new ideas. They continue to churn out a new book each month that is recycled from previous material. It's the same old stuff: new title and new cover, lots of marketing and clever slogans but nothing in it for the serious handicapper. --km

## **Late Announcements and Reminders**

### **Exclusive Subscriber Content**

Webmaster Rick and Ron Tiller from HDW have combined to provide us with a special subscribers-only website (regular download password required). The newsletters will be found there and they will not be available in the public archive for 1-year to preserve our edge. We will also be posting spot plays, articles, data tests and maybe some special software that will never be put out on the public website. You can access this special area by clicking this link [http://htr.horsedata.com/HTR\\_Protected/membersonly.htm](http://htr.horsedata.com/HTR_Protected/membersonly.htm) or by entering the Discussion Board forum "Subscriber Zone".

### **MaxVel and HTR2 Upgrades**

I had planned a small upgrade to the MaxVel to fix a few minor bugs, but I have decided to wait until I have synchronized all aspects of the software with HTR2 in December. Thanks for the suggestions and error reports; most of them should be fixed and the new MaxVel may include some helpful new features as well. HTR2 software will have a major upgrade after the New Year in either late January or early February.

### **Happy Holidays and New Year**

The next newsletter will be available in early January 2009, so I want to thank all of our subscribers for a successful year on HTR and here's a toast hoping that 2009 brings you a bounty of luck, winners and victories.

## HTR Software

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[www.homebased2.com/km](http://www.homebased2.com/km)

HTR Report is an on-line newsletter and is published bi-monthly, then placed on the HTR member (download) web site around the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month. Monthly subscribers to HTR can view the current newsletter for no charge on-line, Adobe Reader software (free) required. Past issues are available in our web-site archive library.

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