HOW TO WIN AT HORSE RACING

A guidebook for picking winners at the track

Christian Blake

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By Christian Blake

www.HowToPickLongShots.com

Contents

Is this book for you?

This no-nonsense book provides important information for novice handicappers that wish to learn how to handicap at an accelerated pace.

Please note: I do not provide examples of races that I successfully handicapped. I don't feel that listing my previous successes will do much to further your handicapping abilities. Instead, I've provided a detailed breakdown on my handicapping process and what criteria I look for when picking winners. For those that handicap horse racing outside the United States, please know that my handicapping strategies are based on my experience with handicapping in the states. I do not know if the information found within this book will be applicable to horse racing outside the U.S.

For the beginner, this book explains basic information about horse racing, handicapping, and wagering. If you're new to handicapping, I suggest you follow the handicapping process I've outlined for beginners and, over time, implement the strategies outlined in the intermediate and professional handicapping sections.

At the end of this book there are two bonus sections; one describes a scenario where long shots often win, and the other describes how to maximize your profits on the Pick Four wager.

For handicappers that are interested in learning how to pick long shots, I recommend you read my book *How To Pick Long Shots*. You can find it at my website: http://www.HowToPickLongShots.com

About the author

My grandfather introduced me to horse racing when I was in grade school, and I've been handicapping since I was a teenager. Although playing the horses has mostly been a hobby, I have earned a full time living as a gambler at several stages of my life. Gambling on the horses is a tough way to earn a living and I don't recommend it as it can be very stressful. These days, I handicap and wager on a much more casual level but I still play for profit, and I still use the tactics outlined in this guidebook. I use them every time I go to the track.

For me, handicapping is mostly about the challenge. I like processing the information and coming to a conclusion, and then being able to see if I was correct or not when I watch the race.

I've studied and taken trip notes for thousands of races. I've probably seen everything that could go wrong during a race, from a horse jumping the rail to dumping its jockey to savaging a competitor during a stretch run.

Horse racing is the greatest game in the world. It's highly complex and there is a mountain of information available to every handicapper. If you study the horses long enough, you'll begin to see patterns and situations that can give you a competitive edge against other gamblers, and that's when you will start to become successful on a consistent basis. But first you must learn the basics. That's where this book can help you.

What this book will discuss:

The information in this book took me decades to learn. If you take the time to grasp the handicapping principles I've outlined herein, you will become a profitable horse player sooner rather than later. I'm hoping that, by presenting this information to you in an organized fashion, I can make your transition from beginning horse player to handicapping professional an enjoyable, low cost experience.

This book provides a 21 step process for learning how to handicap. I recommend you thoroughly learn the material presented in each section before moving to the next. Once you have a firm grasp of all 21 sections, I suggest you apply the information to the best of your ability.

Some of the topics that will be discussed:

- Money management
- How to pick winners
- How to spot the losers
- Class levels
- First time Lasix
- Layoff horses
- How to handicap like a professional
- A simple handicapping process that any beginner can use
- The horses you must always select when playing the Pick Four
- Video replays
- Trip handicapping
- Pedigree
- Race distance

Step #1 - Understanding money management

This section is listed first because it's the most important lesson to learn.

I don't care if your method of handicapping is based on horse names or if you throw darts to pick your horse or even if you roll dice, without money management you don't stand a chance at the racetrack. Managing your money is tantamount to everything, including handicapping!

When it comes to managing your bank roll, always remember what I call **The Five Percent Rule**.

The rule is easy to follow: you must never wager more than 5% of your total bank roll on a selection. If you have $100 to wager on horse racing, your wagers surrounding one particular horse should never exceed $5. By following that guideline, you can be an average handicapper and still break even or turn a profit over the long haul. Ignore that rule and you'll find out how quickly a bank roll can disappear.

Applying **The Five Percent Rule** is simple: if you have a particular horse that you like and 5% of your bankroll amounts to $75, then you cannot wager more than $75 on all bets surrounding that horse. Thus, if you place $25 to WIN, PLACE, and SHOW on that horse, then you cannot play the Daily Double or the Pick Four or even a Pick Three with that selection, nor can you play an exacta or trifecta or any other wager once you've reached your 5% wagering limit (in this case, $75). If you do, then you are risking too much money on one selection.

The reason for The Five Percent Rule is because even the best handicappers in the world are correct only about 30% of the time. That means you are going to be wrong an average of 7 out of every 10 races. Losing is part of the game, and strict money management is the cornerstone to long term profits.

Step #2 - Know thyself

What kind of horse player are you? Are you a weekend handicapper? Or do you show up at the track every day and grind out a profit on show bets? Or perhaps you only go to the racetrack on holidays? Or maybe you're altogether new to the game? Not only do you need to recognize what type of gambler you are at the moment, but you should set a long term goal as to how far you want to take your skill level.

While you may be a beginner at this time, your ultimate goal should be to become a professional handicapper, even if it's only on a part time basis. That's where the money is.

Weekend handicappers

If you have a steady paycheck and a full time job that prevents you from wagering during the week but you always find time to make it to the track on Saturday and Sunday, you fall into this category.

The plus side to having a full time job and being a weekend player is that you have a steady paycheck and you don't need to worry about making a consistent profit at the track. The downside to being a weekend player is that you have a steady paycheck and you don't need to worry about making a consistent profit at the track. Thus, you don't learn from your mistakes because next week you'll get another paycheck that will cover your losses and pay the electricity bill.

A steady paycheck should not be an excuse to lose consistently at the track, yet many gainfully employed handicappers will continuously feed the wagering pools every weekend and not have anything to show for it at the end of the day on Sunday afternoon when the races are over. Don't be that guy! For most gamblers, a reliable source of income is a crutch at the racetrack because they don't really know how much money they're losing.

The "bet every race" handicapper

If you wager on every race available in *The Daily Racing Form*, you're a "bet every race" handicapper. You play Thoroughbreds, Quarter Horses, Standardbreds, and you'd even play Greyhounds if they were available on the simulcast. You see every race as an opportunity to make money because, after all, every race has a winner, right?

While there is always a winner in every race, not every race will have the same outcome if it were run again. What does that mean? It means that most races are not predictable (at least not to a high percentage chance of success), and the outcome would be entirely different if the exact same race with the exact same horses were raced again and again.

The compulsive player that feels the need to wager on every gambling opportunity is not going to win on a consistent basis. That's my opinion based on what I've seen over several decades of playing the horses. The handicapper that plays every single race is only consistent at one thing: losing money.

The professional

The professional handicapper is extremely patient and can watch dozens of races without making a single wager. He will wait for the exact opportunity to arise in which he has a significant advantage over other gamblers, and then he will bet heavy on either a straight Win ticket or possibly a Win/Place/Show wager. The professional avoids exotic gimmicks and focuses on wagers with higher chances of success. And when the race is over, whether he wins or loses, the professional will patiently wait again for the perfect race in which to invest his money.

Some professional handicappers will disagree with relying on Win/Place/Show bets, and they will insist that handicappers play exotic wagers with the intent of beating the races with a single ticket. Personally, I don't believe in exotic bets beyond the Pick Four. I believe they are sucker bets, and will slowly deplete your bank roll over a long enough time line. In my opinion, it's better to play wagers that have a high percentage chance of success, such as a Win/Place/Show combination.

The beginner

So you've never set foot in a race track or fed a $20 bill into the voucher dispenser? If so, this book will help you learn the game. If you take the time to thoroughly study the information I've presented in this book, you'll become a competent player in no time.

Note: if you don't know how to use the wagering machines at the track, ask any employee for a lesson. The employee will gladly help you or send someone over to teach you how to use the machines. Remember, you are the track's customer, and the track has designated employees that are there to help you enjoy your day at the races. Don't be afraid to ask for guidance.

Step #3 - Buy a ledger

If you want to be successful at horse racing, the first thing you need to do is buy a ledger. Every time you make a wager, you must write down the type of wager you're making and all related information (date, track, race number, horse, etc). If this sounds too much like running a business, then you might not be cut out for handicapping horses on a professional level. In order to be successful, you must treat your handicapping and wagering as if it's a business, because it is! And, equally important, you need to know when you're winning and when you're losing.

If you lose, you need to note that you lost.

If you win, you need to note that you won and how much profit you earned.

There are three reasons for keeping a ledger:

1) Accountability - you need to be accountable for your handicapping selections. By forcing yourself to make an entry every time you make a wager, you'll become more thorough in your handicapping process.

2) Profit and loss - you need to know if you're winning or losing money.

3) Historical data - by keeping track of your wins/losses, you will eventually determine what types of races you are best at handicapping, and which types of wagers are most profitable. You might find out that you have a high win percentage when betting maiden races. Or, you might find out that your handicapping judgment is best suited for stakes races. For me, I'm an excellent maiden race handicapper, and I'm great at handicapping bottom level claiming races. In regards to wagering, I'm most successful with Pick Four wagers, and I do well with Daily Doubles and Win/Place/Show bets. It took me a while to figure out which types of bets I hit most often, but now that I know where my strengths are, I stick with those types of wagers.

By keeping a ledger, you will immediately elevate your sense of accountability because you know that you must enter each wager into your book, and by having access to your historical data of win/losses, you will discover what types of races your handicapping style is best suited for and you can then focus your energy into the types of races that you have a proven track record of handicapping correctly.

Step #4 - Learning the game: Terminology

Although this list is by no means all encompassing, I feel these are some of the more important terms that you will come across and hear people using at the track:

"First time starter" - a horse that is racing for the first time
"Moving Down" or "Dropping" - a horse that is dropping in class level
"Moving Up" - a horse moving up in class
"Winner Moving Up" - a horse that won its previous start and is now moving up in class
"First time Lasix" - a horse that is using the drug Lasix for the first time
"Layoff" - at least 45 days have passed since the horse last raced
"Steadied" or "Checked" - when a jockey pulls on reins/restrains a horse due to trouble.
"Green" - used to describe a horse with little racing experience
"Broke Maiden" - when a horse finally wins its first race
"First time versus winners" - a horse that recently won its maiden and is now competing for the first time against other horses that have won races
"Cold" - used to describe a one combination wager. Example: "A cold exacta, 4 over the 1" means you are betting a one combination wager in which the #4 horse must win the race and the #1 horse must finish second.
"Box" - means to play all available combinations of the horses you select
"All" - means to take all the horses in a particular slot for an exotic wager. Example: "An exacta with the #1 horse over All" means that you are taking an exacta with the #1 horse in the Win position and all other horses in the Place position.
"Morning Line" - starting odds as set forth by the odds maker
"Speed Horse" - a horse that likes to be on the lead in the early stages of a race

"Closer" - a horse that likes to sit off the pace in the early stages of a race, and then close or gain ground during the late stages of the race
"Connections" - refers to the horse's trainer, owner, and jockey
"Card" or "The Card" - refers to the current lineup of races for the day at one track

For a more comprehensive list of trip notes and racing terms, I suggest you perform an online search for the following keywords: "horse racing terminology".

Step #5 - Learning the game: *The Daily Racing Form*

Every handicapper needs to learn how to read *The Daily Racing Form*. It is the horseplayer's bible, and you will find plenty of information inside of it that will help you be successful at the track.

Breaking down a horse's past performance chart is beyond the scope of this book. The easiest way for you to learn is to visit DRF's website. They have extensive guides and a video tutorial that explains in detail how to read a horse's past performance.

The website for the racing form is www.DRF.com. You should visit the site and take a look at this page: http://www1.drf.com/help/help_drf_pp.html

At the top of that page there is a link to an excellent video tutorial that explains in detail how to read a horse's past performance line. Watch the video as many times as you need to in order to understand how to read a past performance. Here is the link:

Interactive Guide To Reading DRF Past Performances

In order to use the information I've presented in this book, you must learn how to find the following information from a past performance line:

1) Date, time, race number, and location of race
2) Class level of previous races
3) Class level of the current race
4) Whether or not the horse is returning from a layoff (there is a line above the date)
5) The fractional calls: where was the horse at specific points during its last race?
6) Trip notes (these are found at the far right of a horse's past performance)
7) The names of the horses that took WIN, PLACE, and SHOW
8) Is the horse racing with Lasix for the first time? ("L" will be highlighted in black)

Step #6 - Learning the game: Discipline

The information in the upcoming sections will allow you to pick winners on a consistent basis as long as you are thorough when performing your analysis.

Every aspect of the handicapping process I've presented in this guidebook is integral to your overall win percentage. While some parts of my handicapping process will not contribute to picking the winner in one race, they may be the deciding factor in the next. The lesson: never take short cuts! You must develop a handicapping routine for every race and for every horse, and you must follow through with that routine in its entirety whenever you handicap a race. That is the discipline of professional handicapping.

*** END OF BOOK SAMPLE ***

If you like what you've read so far, please purchase the full edition of this book at:

http://howtopicklongshots.com/howtowinathorseracingbook/