"Sure Thing" Wagers

Are there horse races where the winning horse is pre-determined?

Well - of course nothing is absolute in racing - the strangest things can and do happen with surprising regularity.   But yes, unless you play with a "head-in-the-sand" philosophy, you should agree that there are a few races each day across America that could fall into the proverbial "lock" category.

Rather than go into the ethics of horse racing in general, or the dubious morals of a small percentage of the people involved in the game specifically - let's figure out how we can identify the most obvious of these "steam" horses.

If you are outside of the "insider" loop (lucky for you!), then there is only one way to try to get a handle on these type plays: NEAR POST-TIME ODDS.

> Sidebar - One thing that aggravates us most here at Horse Racing Gold is that we are contacted by so many players who think this should all be easy - who have the illusion that they should be able to just phone in their bets in the morning - go about their day (playing golf or whatever) and then cash the big checks in the afternoon when they get home - PLEASE - can they possibly be serious!

Yes, you need to actually participate in the game, and you'll need to watch the flow of wagering in order to spot these kind of horses that I'll be discussing here in this **horse system** 4 article.

Here is a recent example race run at Ellis Park:

It was a seven-horse field with no scratches. The winner of the race was the 6/5 favorite - who had been 20/1 on the morning line!

The results of his last four starts (in order of most recent first): 8th, losing 24 lengths / 7th, losing by 16 / 8th, losing by 17 / and 7th, losing by 27 - with the last race being at today's same claiming level and same track.

Now - what do you think - that just maybe there were some facts about this horse that were not accessible to you or me via the information in the past performances?!!

There is a lot of stuff that we are not privy to as players hundreds or thousands of miles away from the scene of the action . . .

- Trainers work some horses at private training tracks away from the eyes of the public, as well as other trainers and clockers. They are thus able to keep a horse's form/condition somewhat of a secret.

- There are drugs being used illegally - that are masked by legal drugs so as not to be detectable - heck, it was reported recently that some unscrupulous trainers are even using small doses of cobra venom?!

- Horses can show up in the paddock completely unfit for racing, and still get passed by the track vet.

- etc. etc.

. . . **but there are others who <u>are</u> aware of these things** - and their awareness will usually make itself known on the toteboard.

Sidebar - There is some scuttlebutt around: That many tracks allow an 11-15 second leeway for electronic transfer of funds from the offsite facilities. The reality is that for the best of high-speed transfers, it actually only takes a fraction of that amount of time. It is rumored that there is past-posting going on by outfits that wait 7 or 8 seconds to see how the break and first 150 yards or so of the race shakes out before either sending, changing and sending, or withholding their large wagers. This could account for the sometimes considerable odds changes that occur after the horses are already running.

Many good handicappers use, or have used toteboard watching methods. I have my doubts that a viable methodology can be formulated using odds changes exclusively, but every sharp player should be paying close attention to them, and factoring them into their final decision-making process.

The morning line is fallible - that's a given. The thing is - <u>most recreational players and newbies use it</u>. It's right there in their programs. They've heard the term "overlay" and they are willing to follow any lead, no matter how misinformed. Yet, it's precisely because the morning line is so used by the majority of players, that we need to take it into account - whether out-of-whack or not.

Large and attention-grabbing changes from the morning line should cause a player to quickly re-evaluate the race.

Scratches need to be accounted for of course. If an 8/5 morning line favorite has been scratched from the race, all sorts of wild fluctuations to the ML can happen. Still, I always pay extra attention to a non-favorite that is dropping seriously from the morning line against a

favorite that is taking heavy play and has also dropped from the ML (and this regardless of scratches)

Example: A recent race at Arlington (no scratches) - the favorite had dropped from ML 2/1 to post-time 4/5 - while - another horse in the field was simultaneously dropping from a 8/1 ML to 3/1 at post - guess who won?! That's one type of odds change that should get your attention. Ask yourself - whose money drove that 3/12 horse down against the "crowd money" - the heavily overbet 4/5 favorite?

There is another kind of race where a bet down horse could be totally false and just the result of betting action by the band-wagon jumpers: If there is no clear-cut ML favorite and a bunch of entrants are at medium low odds - one of them will often end up taking the majority of the action from the "follower" types.

Example: Morning line of the low 4 horses - 3/1, 7/2, 4/1, 4/1. If one of those goes off at 7/5 or 8/5 - I wouldn't pay it much mind - I wouldn't categorize it as "attention-grabbing" movement.

There are other races where odds information should cause you to pass the race:

Example: A horse is bet from 6/1 ML to 6/5 at post-time. Obviously there was surprise betting action, but how do we take advantage of it? I don't recommend betting on horses that low in odds. Unless you can get some kind of value in the other pools - that would be a pass situation.

As a very general guideline:

Horses bet down to half their ML or more should be given a second look. On-the-other-hand, I'm usually skeptical when a runner floats up to triple its ML or higher. I'd need it to have very positive signs for that horse that I'd already noticed in pre-race handicapping, and I'd like to see it in the post parade and warm-up before committing to a wager.

Below are some recent examples of actual races grabbed at random from our data-base. These races were all issued in the HRG Index, and a few of these odds-changes worked against the betting-rules choice in the Index.

>   Sidebar - last one I promise ;-)   - Another weakness of the
>   average player is that they want hard and fast rules to
>   follow. But the game is far too fluid for that. I would advise
>   obtaining the best information you can get - then using your
>   innate sensitivity to intuit when to play and when to stay on
>   the sidelines- when to use the "rules" and when to break
>   them.

There is no truly viable horse system per se - that is, in the usually understood meaning of the term - i.e. a paint-by-the-numbers approach that is never altered.

To hone your method - be on the lookout for the kinds of moves shown below. They occur with great regularity, and you should be ready to alter your thinking on the race - not always changing your bet - but be flexible.

7/25 Elp race 5 - runner drops from 5/1 ML to 6/5 - wins
7/25 Elp race 7 - runner drops from 5/1 ML to 5/2 - just misses
7/30 Ap race 3 - runner drops from 5/1 ML to 3/5 - wins (If you had been high on another runner in this race - even though this horse is too low to bet - saving a wager by not betting another runner here helps the bottom-line too you know!)
7/31 Sar race 10 - runner drops from 15/1 ML to 4/1 - wins
8/6 Ap race 2 - runner drops from 10/1 ML to 3/1 - wins
8/7 Sar race 8 - runner drops from 8/1 ML to 7/2 - wins
8/8 Sar race 5 - runner drops from 5/1 ML to 9/5 - wins
8/12 Wo race 5 - runner drops from 12/1 ML to 5/1 - wins
8/13 Dmr race 4 - runner drops from 10/1 ML to 8/5 (!) - wins
8/15 Mth race 2 - runner drops from 5/1 ML to 2/1 - wins
8/18 Mth race 8 - runner drops from 10/1 ML to 4/1 - wins
8/22 Elp race 8 - runner drops from 5/1 ML to 8/5 - wins
8/25 Sar race 6 - runner drops from 12/1 ML to 5/1 - wins
8/27 Sar race 4 - runner drops from 10/1 ML to 5/2 - wins

The opposite side of this coin is the "dead-on-the-board" horse. A horse that should be taking action, but isn't - throws up warning flags for you.

Be careful here though - especially if you are a longer-odds bettor - you don't want to miss the good overlays simply because they've gone up a bit farther than you expected. Think, "Is there a weak favorite - a bandwagon type that is taking far more money than it should? Are there a couple of big-name trainer/jockey combinations in the race that are attracting all the attention?"

Yet - keep the "triple-overlay" guideline in mind.

If a horse has gone to triple its ML or more - I'd require the existence of very good pre-race reasons why I wanted to wager the horse before following through with my bet (as long as one of the above two situations didn't exist).

Remember, if you're not at the track with the skills to look at a horse's legs and overall demeanor before qualifying it for a race - that horse could have shown up half-lame and still be allowed to run. It could be giving off all sorts of "tells" that savvy players at the track have picked

up on. If they are shunning him at the windows, you should be ready to take your cue from their more-informed opinion - as reflected on the tote board.

Keeping all this in mind - below are a few examples of this kind of pattern:

7/24 Crc race 6 - runner rises from 6/1 ML to 17/1 - loses
7/24 Crc race 10 - runner rises from 12/1 ML to 50/1 - loses
7/25 Ap race 3 - runner rises from 4/1 ML to 13/1 - loses
7/28 Elp race 9 - runner rises from 5/1 ML to 15/1 - loses
7/29 Sar race 3 - runner rises from 5/1 ML to 34/1 - (!) loses
7/29 Sar race 9 - runner rises from 6/1 ML to 19/1 - loses
7/24 Elp race 2 - runner rises from 12/1 ML to 44/1 - loses
7/24 Wo race 3 - runner rises from 10/1 ML to 35/1 - loses
7/30 Sar race 1 - runner rises from 4/1 ML to 16/1 - loses
7/30 Sar race 9 - runner rises from 6/1 ML to 27/1 - loses
8/4 Sar race 8 - runner rises from 5/1 ML to 18/1 - loses

etc.

As I said, be sharp on these - if you have solid evidence that they have the potential to win at today's conditions - and you haven't seen anything out of the ordinary in the lead-up to the race - be willing to go ahead on them.

Examples: 7/25 Dmr race 6 - Ml was 6/1 - horse went off at 18/1 - BUT - it had top 3 scores in all the attribute variables we track and was ranked third in the HRG Index . We went ahead with the play and were rewarded handsomely. 7/30 Elp race 9 - ML was 7/2 - horse went off at 10/1 - same as above example and this one also had one of the top trainers at the track - it won well.   8/15 Dmr race 5 - 7/2 ML off at 8/1 with all variable scores in top three - won easily.

I'll close with this . . .

Have you ever been out walking in the country - or even in your own yard - and suddenly had that "hair standing up on the back of the neck" sensation - looked down and seen a poisonous snake?

Its kind of like that - you need to develop a super sensitivity to these "warning" signs in the odds movements in a race. You need to get in the zone and be open to these feelings - positive or negative - that you get from strange-seeming odds movements.

There are plenty of ultra-sharp shakers and movers in this betting game. If you can't know what they know - at least be perceptive to the clues they leave via the toteboard.