Picking the Derby Winner
by
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Street Sense Made Sense!

My dad taught me two things in life – how to throw a curve ball and how to read *The Racing Form.* Both complex actions I learned by the age of ten. My dad wasn't around much when I was a kid, but when he was home his alcohol soaked temper made life miserable for my mom and me. During those impressionable years, going to the track with my mom remains one of my favorite memories. She loved going to the races, and I learned to feel at home at the track because of her.

 Gambling was as much a part of my life as reading the sports section or going to school. I remember stacking pennies and tossing quarters in the elementary school bathroom. Playing penny-ante poker while on vacation with my aunts and uncles was like a rite of passage that mom allowed, and as a college student I learned how to play a variety of lottery games thanks to the state of Pennsylvania. A few years later, I learned how to bet on the not-so-legal football tickets and punchboards that I would find at the local bar. An occasional trip to the casinos in Atlantic City offered me an opportunity to advance my gaming information base. I seemed to be following the normal learning curve of a gambler's education as I moved from adolescence to adulthood.

Fresh out of college, single and living in my first apartment, thoroughbred handicapping had become a recreational hobby that I enjoyed tremendously. Two or three trips to the track every week became routine. Using data from *The Racing Form*, I was convinced that I would be able to devise a system that would point out the top contenders in any given horse race. Soon, "telebet" made it possible for me to stay at home, do my research, and phone in my bets from the comfort of my computer chair, thus saving time and money. After charting and studying hundreds of races over the next few years, I finalized a simple mathematical formula that establishes a numerical rating for each horse. The higher the rating the better the horse's chances are of winning.

I hadn't bet on a horse race for many years. But after being introduced to BETUS.com last fall in time for the 2006-07 College and Pro football season, I realized that it was time to return to one of my favorite recreational hobbies, handicapping thoroughbred racing. Early May holds two important celebrations, my birthday on May 1st and the Kentucky Derby on the first Saturday. About a week ago I turned 56 and sure enough, the 133rd "Run for the Roses" followed on May 5, 2007.

I found my old notes and decided to handicap the race. My work began midmorning with a trip to the news agency to get a copy of *The Racing Form.* At home, I assembled my tools, three pencils, sharpened, some red ink, highlighter, a calculator and my clipboard. With music behind me and my Diet Coke beside me, I looked at *The Racing Form* in front of me. I was ready

to do my homework. Using the time-tested formula that I perfected in the mid 1970s, I finished handicapping the Derby's 20 horse field in two hours. No rocket scientist calculations here, just basic math. My equation used simple addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. I use a few key numbers easily found in the *The Racing Form*. I take those key ingredients, arrange them in a particular order, then in the proper sequence and did the math. The result was a listing of each Derby entry's numerical rating which enabled me to narrow the Derby's field of twenty horses considerably. I decided to look more closely at the top ten contenders.

After ranking the top ten horses, it was obvious that there was a significant gap between the third rated horse, **Scat Daddy** (160.1), and the fourth rated horse, **Curlin** (155.7). Here are the top ten horses ranked according to my formula: **Street Sense** 165.4; **Hard Spun** 163.1; **Scat Daddy** 160.1; **Curlin** 155.7; **NoBiz**. 155.3; **Any Given Saturday** 154.7; **Circular Quay** 154.4; **Dominican** 151.9; **Zanjero** 151.5; **Imawildandcrazyguy** 149.8.

At first glance, these rankings clearly indicate two distinct levels. The top tier included three horses with a rating over 160. The second tier grouped seven of the ten top contenders within a 6 point range from **Curlin's** 155.7 down to **Imawild's** 149.8.

When comparing the three top rated horses, **Street Sense** (165.4) and **Hard Spun** (163.1) matched up well, indicating the possibility of a great stretch run. Third rated **Scat Daddy** (160.1), although scoring high in my system, showed a significant difference of 5.3 points between the top three horses and as such had to be considered a contender, yes, but a strong contender, no. On paper, my numbers predicted a two horse race which is exactly how this year's running of the Kentucky Derby played out. It clearly predicted the outcome with **Street Sense** (165.4) winning and **Hard Spun** (163.1) finishing second. **Curlin**, my 4th rated horse garnered third place money.

I decided my flat bets would include the two top rated horses, **Street Sense** and **Hard Spun**. And of course, being a sucker for the big payouts, I used a portion of my bankroll for a few exotic bets.

Not only picking the winners, but also knowing how to bet is critical in making a profit. I decided that I'd play **Hard Spun**, the horse with the higher odds, across the board. His past performances indicated that he would take the lead early, and I felt he had a chance to steal the race by going wire-to-wire which he almost did. **Street Sense**, my top rated horse, would get a large percentage of my money as a place bet. Why second? I've learned that in races where a lot of money is being wagered, most times there isn't a big difference between the win payout and the place payout. This makes the place bet the smart money wager with a built in safety feature (just in case your top horse gets beaten, you still cash in).

How'd I do? First, all of my exotic bets lost. I played a few trifecta's and an exacta just for the Hell of it. Exotic bets are like playing the lottery with only slightly better odds. To me, exotic bets are for fun – lucky numbers, birthdays, street addresses and such. Flat betting is for the serious horse player who wants to win some money! As I mentioned earlier, I made a sizable bet on **Street Sense** to place and I played **Hard Spun** across the board. I tripled my money. It was a good day at the races.

Looking ahead to the Preakness at Pimlico Race Course on Saturday, May 19th? **Street Sense** and runner up **Hard Spun** along with **Curlin** (3rd) are expected to be entered. **Sedgefield** (5th) and **Teuflesberg** (17th) may be the only other Derby horses that will make the trip to Pimlico. New challengers expected to compete at the Preakness are: **King of the Roxy**, **Chelokee**, **Slew's Tizzy**, **Xcharger**, **Starbase**, and **Flying First Class**.

I can't wait to get out my calculator again!