

## **SMARTsig Confidential 6.05, May 1999**

### **In this month's issue**

2	Up Front – News & Views	SMARTsig
6	Neural Network Soccer Draws	SMARTsig
13	Solidus Update	Mick Johnson
14	Tipsters - Some Personal Experiences	Robin Logan
22	Horses-to-Follow Lists - Final Results	Terry Collins
28	Age/Sex/Month Ratings for All Age H'caps	SMARTsig
35	A Modern Parable	Mike Gittos
40	Strategic Punting	Timefan
42	Artificial Intelligence Draw Bias Ratings	SMARTsig
46	KISS - Top Weight System	Bob Holman
47	KISS - Following Top Jockeys	Tony Symonds
49	The Punter's Revenge Serialisation IX	Drapkin & Forsyth
63	Natural Selectivity	John Gregory
67	Book Review - The Inside Track (A Potts)	Brian Harfoot
69	Interpreting Ratings	Peter May
75	SMARTsig advertisers	
76	Subscription Rates / Back Issues	

*Our next magazine (June 1999, issue 6.06) is scheduled for posting on June 3rd.*

# SMART

# UP FRONT

*The intelligent choice*

## **The good old days - before computers?**

**D**espite the proliferation of the computer culture, a stalwart band of non-computer users still flourish in the ranks of the SMARTsig readership. We refer to them as the “C-“ brigade, or the “Pen & Inkers”, and there will always be a place for them. The vast majority of these C- people do not feel as though they are missing out on anything or being left behind by the technology either. Indeed most of them would not allow a computer over the threshold of their house, even as a gift.

The question I suspect they would pose is “What hard evidence is there that the computerised world has made any significant steps forward in the world of betting?” A few years back some serious money was made, not by using computers to assist in selections, but by the early computer programmers selling their products to a betting public who had the idea that computers were somehow magical ‘super-brains’.

The market for computerised horserace selection software has dropped alarmingly since those heady early years as the public wised-up to the fact that all they were nothing more than simple paper systems, operated through a keyboard. However, in defence of the computer I would add that if all a program does is to automate something you can do just as well with a pen and paper, it is a misuse of the technology. Especially when in most cases a pen and paper is quicker, and in all cases a darn sight less expensive!

We are exposed to computers everywhere we look now and many would argue that if this is progress we should abandon all hope. Even what used to be the simple task of popping in the newsagent for your sporting paper can now be an obstacle course. They're

turning the paper over, one way then the other, then back again, looking for the illusive bar code. Why don't they place this digital information blob in the same place for all papers? Is that too easy or have I missed something here?

Once found you and they think it's all over . . . but all too often it's not! Wafting the paper under the scanner is not producing the 'beep' of recognition. Our hapless assistant feels it is necessary to give the small rectangle of thin & thick black lines closer inspection. Looks okay, which is followed by more frantic waving of the corner of your news-sheet trying to get the system to beep. Another inspection fails to reveal the problem. No bother though. *"I can type in the bar code reference on the keyboard"* you're assured through the gritted teeth of the unfortunate paper seller. Remember when you picked up a paper and threw your money into an old Oxo tin? That would never work now, far too complex a business.

As a child, the most sophisticated sales shop technology I remember was used at the Co-op building in town. The assistant would bundle your money and the bill into a torpedo shaped canister and feed it into a nearby suction tube. The package whizzed it way through the stores vacuum tube network and magically reappeared with a receipt and the correct change. The cutting edge!

Remember the bookies the pre-computer years? No multiple TV screens or technology back then. In those days of course you had to be a smoker, it was compulsory. Even for non-smokers a one hour stint in the bookies nicotine soup was the equivalent of getting through a 20 pack of Woodbines. And the board man, remember him? He who seemed to know everybody, scribbling with his multi-coloured chalks as the market moves came through on the 'blower'. Why is it that 100/8 is still far more pleasing a sight that 12/1?

Talking of the 'blower', those with memories of the commentary only, betting office days will remember how those words shouted enthusiastically from the speaker could feed the imagination. The listener would conjure his own minds-eye view of the race unfolding, even though often it would be a million miles from reality, the spoken word without pictures allows the imagination to flourish. Many is the time I can recall where, according to the commentary, my selection

was pulling clear in the home straight and I'd be mentally counting my winnings. Only for it all to fall apart when the final result was announced. The winner being some horse who had hardly merited a mention in the commentary. Still, it sometimes happened the other way around too! There was either some horses with lightning-fast finishes in those days, or some pretty ropey commentators!

But I digress. Don't run away with the idea I'm anti computer, I'm most certainly not. SMARTsig is managed entirely on computer and I'd be lost without it.

Horseracing programs have also come on leaps and bounds in recent times, but it is by moving away from the 'paper-system computerised' methods to far more rounded and competent products. Speedmax, by George McNaney a SMART member is a good example of the new breed. A product that allows the user a complete picture of his/her day's racing. Ratings are produced for sure, but there is far more emphasis upon the record keeping, form analysis, research, trainer/jockey statistics, etc. George speaks and listens to his customers too, and is always willing to implement new ideas or suggestions for improvement. A product then which is developed to fit the customers needs, not a program they are told they should have.

## **Neural Networks & AI**

Another breed of computer software has fired the public imagination in recent years, rekindling the idea of the magical super-brain. These are collectively known as Artificial Intelligence (AI) programs. I have expressed my disappointment with these in the past, but, like a dog with a bone, I've always been interested in how they're developing. Maybe because there are reports that these computer 'brains' are being successfully used in many areas of prediction – weather forecasting, insurance risk analysis, financial markets, etc. There are even those who are making a living from stock market trading, reliant entirely upon the recommendations generated by computer artificial intelligence.

A few months ago I gave a brief review of an AI neural network from the USA called Easy Predictor, from Ward Systems. For the first time I could report on a program that seemed to have a little more about it

than mere advertisers hype. Since that time many of the ratings, etc., published in SMARTsig have been generated, at least in part, with the help of artificial intelligence technology.

Ward have since launched newer, more powerful packages in their range and have dropped the 'Easy' tag from their names. Not because they are no longer easy to use – they are the friendliest programs of this type I have used – but because the feedback was that the prefix 'Easy' implied that the product was a simple 'toy' rather than the serious prediction tool they claim is the most advanced available.

The 'advanced' packages now available from Ward are Predictor and Classifier. I will be reviewing these two over the coming months. Predictor and Classifier are variations on the same theme, they are alternatives to each other to be aimed at specific problem/output types. As further explanation, (just how helpful this is I don't know) they explain the differences as;

***If you want to know if it will rain tomorrow, use Classifier  
If you want to know how much rain will fall tomorrow, use Predictor.***

So, what do neural networks actually do? Well I'm a user of these products and not a rocket scientist who understands entirely how they do it, but I'll borrow a question and answer that came up through our e-mail group to explain.

***From Graham Holmes:*** All this talk of Neural Nets is proving confusing - can anyone point me at any suitable publications along the lines of "Neural Nets for Imbeciles"

***My reply:*** For what it's worth, here's my view, speaking as a self-confessed Neural Net Rookie.

I take the view that an understanding of what they do (or have the potential to do) is more important to me than how they do it. If I'm a racing driver I figure I don't need to know the principles of the internal combustion engine to drive quickly, my mechanics will see to all that side of things for me. I can drive better and faster than my mechanics, they can fix and tune engines better than I.

A neural network is a tool to assist me in my work and what I hope it will be is a way of by-passing sophisticated statistical analysis. I want to feed in the data one end, get the best way of using them out of the other, and let the program worry about how it got there.

From a user's viewpoint here's what happens:

From records or on-going results, I assemble a set of circumstances and what happened as a result of these circumstances. I then assemble another set of circumstances and what happened on that occasion, and so on.

For presentation to the NNet for processing, the "circumstances" are the INPUTS and the "what happened" are OUTPUTS. The circumstances could for example be handicap top weights and distance winners, the "what happened" could be did it win or not.

Most NNet expect the inputs and outputs as numbers, so we need to code the events. For the inputs we could assigned the top weights as "1" and lower weights as "0", then assigned distance winners as "1" and non-distance winners as "0". Outputs could be simply winners as "1" and also-rans as "0".

Our first three observations for the NNet file may be;

- Top Weight, distance winner, horse won.
- NOT top-weight, distance winner, lost.
- NOT top-weight, NOT distance winner, lost.

As code then, these would read as;

inputs	outputs
1,1,	1
0,1,	0
0,0,	0

Assemble as many such examples as you can, (three examples is no good for anyone to learn very much), then feed this data into the NNet and press "GO". This is known as "training" the NNet, and the result will be a NNet that has (hopefully) learned from the data samples you have fed into it.

If you now feed in the circumstances from today's racecard, where the results (outputs) are as yet unknown, the NNet will have its best shot at predicting what the missing outputs will be.

You say, feed in;

1,0

0,1

0,0

The NNet will "predict" outputs of between 1 and 0, based on what it learned during its the training stage. In this instance it might show;

0.6977

0.4831

0.2229

Indicating that the first of these inputs is the likeliest one to win (i.e. the [top-weight] [non-distance winner] is predicted nearest to 1.00)

The example above is used for clarity rather than realism, only 2 inputs, both with only two states, allows for only 4 variations (2 x 2) of inputs, so we're hardly furnishing the Nnet with a wide knowledge base from a rich variety of circumstances.

You would not always want to go straight from learning to using either. Often the historical data is split, maybe 70%/30%, the 70% used for training, and the remainder used for testing, to examine just how well the NNet is at predicting the outcomes.

This is only intended as a very simplistic explanation, and is not a definitive user guide to NNets.

In summary then, feed data, made up of inputs (circumstances) and outputs (results) into a program, which then "learns" what results have been from given a sets of circumstances.

Feed in a new set of circumstances and the NNet will give its best shot at predicting the likeliest result, even if it has not seen this particular combination of inputs ever before.

Speaking again as a mere user, or "NNet Nerd", many programs I

have used before require the user to set all sorts of parameters prior to the NNet training. If the output is unsatisfactory, you tweak the settings and re-train, etc. etc. Ward's Predictor is very "Nerd" friendly in this respect, it "tweaks" the network buttons, knobs and settings on its own. It is by far the simplest and easiest NNet I've used.

But then again, my example racing driver would not come into the pits and start altering the valve timing. Others, who are experts in their own fields deal with these aspects, leaving our driver to concentrate on his driving.

Experts seem agreed that much of what comes out of a NNet is not only heavily dependant upon the quality and quantity of the data given for training, but the presentation of the data, or the way it is represented.

=====

Keeping in mind that last statement regarding how the data is presented can be illustrated with some simple models I assembled in response to an e-mail from SMART member Colin Miller.

Colin contacted me explaining how he had built a training model for Predictor aimed at soccer predictions, with some encouraging results. His 8 inputs consisted of Home team name/ Away team name/ Home team bookies odds/ Bill Hunter's Rateform rating/ then the opinion (h/a/d) from 4 newspaper experts.

The output values used were 10, 15 or 20, representing home win, draw or away win respectively. The predictions produced would therefore usually be in the range of 10 to 20 reflecting the NNet's idea of the outcome.

The sample weekend games used in his example was from 30/1/99 with 49 matches. By selecting the games where the NNet outputs were between 14 – 16 and checking these for draws produced 5 correct from 8 selections, an excellent strike rate. He did comment however that there were 16 draws though on the whole list, a rather higher than average 32.7%

Encouraging though this small sample was, it prompted me in to



thinking if a NNet is said to simulate 'intelligence' is there a way of presenting data, for the same problem to allow comparisons, to test just how clever it is?

Take your average human being, with no more than a passing interest in football, then ask him who he thinks will win if Arsenal are playing at home to Wimbledon. Chances are he'd go for Arsenal – but why? What information does he have to draw that conclusion? He certainly will not know the particular w/d/l record of each team or the odds on offer.

What he is likely to be aware of however, with his passing interest in results, is that Arsenal have a higher league position, he doesn't know just **how** higher a position it is. But from this human intelligence allows him to guess they have won more games, which in turn means they are probably the stronger of the two sides.

Purely as an academic exercise then, I will allow the NNet to see nothing more than results for the season to date, to see if it can make sense of a situation with no ratings or league statistics to work with. My proposed network inputs will therefore consist of just two elements, the home team and the away team, with one further element signifying the outcome, based, as with Colin's lead, 10, 15 or 20 for Home, Draw or Away.

So, we're attempting to use nothing more than a team identifier and the season's results to date as inputs - team A at home to team B, etc. No ratings, WDL figures, simply results to date, team by team. This means training a separate NNet for each division, and will work by training on all games prior to today's, with a training file consisting of merely: teamA played teamB and the result was X

To begin with I gave each team in each division a unique number (Arsenal=1, A Villa=2, etc.) The first two league games of season were, Blackburn 0-0 Derby, Coventry 2-1 Chelsea so the corresponding 2 training inputs and 1 output would be:

Inputs	output
3,7,	15
6,5,	10

This rather simplistic approach did not give very satisfactory results. I figured that a training model using just 2 inputs this way **could** (I don't know for certain) confuse the NNet into treating these inputs as values (lower numbers superior, etc.) I therefore decided each team should each be represented in a unique way, the way I achieved this was by using 20 inputs values per team, each of these would be zero, except a "1" marking the team number.

Team 1 would be represented as;  
1,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0  
team 6 would be;  
0,0,0,0,0,1,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0  
and team 12  
0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,1,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0  
. . . you get the picture . . .

So the complete training file would now consist of 40 inputs, home team identifier followed by the away team. 38 of these input values would be zeros, and "1"s would indicate the team number. Followed by the 10, 15 or 20 result identifier as the output variable. Divisions 1, 2 & 3 would need 24 inputs per team because of 24 teams in each division.

If you've followed this so far, you'll see all I'm giving the net to train on is still only the results of the season to date – who's played who and what the result was.

Using this revised input construction (the exact same information, but presented differently) dramatically improved the net performance across the board. The games looked at initially were the same as Colin's, from the 30th January, although I looked at only the English league games, but used all games from that weekend, not just the Saturday. The trained NNet predictions, using the same 14-16 range gave 11 games, 5 of which were draws. Widening the catchment area slightly to 13.5-16.5 gave 20 games of which 9 were draws. The English only games totalled 47, of which 16 were draws (34%)

The interesting thing for me is how good it seems to perform from so little information. Much of it is about just **how** you present the information the 'Net trains on.

The model was re-used again recently to support this article with the following results from 26/3/99

Hteam	Ateam	NN Pred	List Sorted by Nnet Prediction			
Sheff. Utd.	Oxford U	10.998	Sheff. Utd.	Oxford U	1 2	10.998
Tranmere R	Crewe Alex.	15.282	Gillingham	Reading	2 1	11.119
Crystal P	Bradford C	14.284	Bournemouth	Colchester U	2 1	11.620
Portsmouth	Barnsley	14.767	Wolves	Crewe Alex.	3 0	11.872
Wolves	Crewe Alex.	11.872	Cardiff C	Carlisle U	2 1	12.117
			Wigan Ath.	Bristol R	1 0	12.130
Bournemouth	Colchester U	11.620	Chesterfield	Blackpool	1 2	12.170
Bristol R	Notts Co.	14.498	Rochdale	Southend U	1 0	12.711
Chesterfield	Blackpool	12.170	Preston NE	Northampton	3 0	13.292
Luton T	Gillingham	15.574	Lincoln C	York C	1 2	13.496
Millwall	Wrexham	14.764	Exeter	Darlington	0 0 m	13.523
Preston NE	Northampton	13.292	Torquay U	Hartlepool U	3 0	13.607
Reading	Man. City	16.514	Southend U	Hull C	0 1	13.743
Wigan Ath.	Stoke C	14.086	Wigan Ath.	Stoke C	2 3	14.086.
Wycombe Wa.	Oldham Ath.	15.885	Plymouth Arg	Scunthorpe U	5 0	14.112.
Burnley	Macclesfield	14.608	Peterborough	Mansfield T	1 0	14.198.
Lincoln C	York C	13.496	Crystal P	Bradford C	1 0	14.284.
Wigan Ath.	Bristol R	12.130	Rotherham U	Scunthorpe U	0 0 m	14.397.
Gillingham	Reading	11.119	Bristol R	Notts Co.	1 1 m	14.498.
			Burnley	Macclesfield	4 3	14.608.
Exeter	Darlington	13.523	Millwall	Wrexham	3 0	14.764.
Halifax T	Leyton O.	14.863	Portsmouth	Barnsley	1 3	14.767.
Scarborough	Rochdale	17.495	Halifax T	Leyton O.	1 2	14.863.
Shrewsbury T	Cambridge U	15.000	Shrewsbury T	Cambridge U	1 1 m	15.000.
Southend U	Hull C	13.743	Tranmere R	Crewe Alex.	3 0	15.282.
Brighton &HA	Barnet	15.788	Luton T	Gillingham	1 0	15.574.
Cardiff C	Carlisle U	12.117	Brighton &HA	Barnet	0 1	15.788.
Chester C	Plymouth Arg	16.010	Wycombe Wa.	Oldham Ath.	3 0	15.885.
Rotherham U	Scunthorpe U	14.397	Chester C	Plymouth Arg	3 2	16.010
Torquay U	Hartlepool U	13.607	Reading	Man. City	1 3	16.514
Peterborough	Mansfield T	14.198	Scarborough	Rochdale	1 0	17.495
Plymouth Arg	Scunthorpe U	14.112				
Rochdale	Southend U	12.711				

In all 31 games, only 4 draws. The prediction zone of 14-16 however captured 3 of these draws from 15 selections.

Weeks since have also been checked on with the following results from the 14-16 predicted range;

A disappointing final week in the series, maybe getting a little too

date	all games	all draws	o/all D%	14-16 pred	draws	pred D%
3/4/99	44	14	31.8%	15	4	35.7%
5/4/99	44	13	29.5%	20	6	30%
10/4/99	43	11	25.6%	15	5	33%
17/4/99	44	13	29.5%	16	3	18.7%

close to the unpredictable season's end? But coupled with the 30 January it showed a positive trend in 5 out of the 6 weeks, showing what I would regard as an encouraging trend – and all from a very simple and unsophisticated input model.

Over the coming months I will be experimenting with both Predictor and Classifier on a series of projects. In particular I am interested in researching for useful insights into horseracing with course specific models and looking to get an edge with the Tote Placepot. I'm also interested of any other readers experiences with AI. Let me know how you're doing and what's happening.



## **SAVE ALMOST £50!**

*To help SMARTsig readers wishing to take the plunge in Neural Networks I have arranged substantial and exclusive 20% discounts with Ward Systems for their Predictor and Classifier AI programs.*

Usual price is \$395 + \$16 Air Mail shipping (to Europe)  
**20% discount SMARTsig reader price \$316 + shipping**  
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*\* A BT daytime call to USA is cheaper than a daytime call to a UK mobile!  
 ("Not a lot of people know that!" M Caine)*

# **THE SOLIDUS**

**(Book re-prints available and/or FREE PC software)**

**F**ollowing last month's Solidus variation from Tom Whitley, and our printed extracts from the original publication, I was informed of the books re-print. Mick Johnson, author of the SSR1 (Solidus Speed Ratings) PC program who worked with Davey in the early days has re-published the book to meet public demand. The PC program, now much improved, is still free upon request. Results files though are charged for as daily or weekly updates. I contacted Mick on SMARTsig members behalf and ask him to supply further details; his e-mail reply is printed here;

*With reference to the reprint of Davey Towey's 1993 book 'The Solidus'. This was the book the original MS DOS program was written from under Davey's direction. The book has 100 pages and all the original colour graphs and charts and explains the system in Davey's original style. It is not bound as well as the original but it is all there. Cost is £20.00, post free. We take the usual Access, Visa, Mastercard, Switch, Delta or Amex.*

*The SSR1 program is still free and is much easier to use than it was previously. It still has the full database of all UK runs since 1994 but any data can be exported using standard database SQL.*

*We now send out the results and declarations daily via e-mail (£9.99 per month) or results only weekly via floppy disk (£19.99 per month). Using the daily declarations, you don't even need a newspaper. All the runners, weights, jockey, owner, etc. information is sent via e-mail. There is now also a 'Do a whole day's racing on one go' button which reads the declarations and uses Davey's standard strategy, for those in a hurry.*

**Mick Johnson**

**SIMPLE SOFTWARE, 106 Berwick Avenue, Hayes, Middlesex. UB4 0NH**

**Telephone (Debit / Credit cards) to:- 0181-744-6744**

**Fax (Debit / Credit Cards) to:- 0181-744-6747**

**E-Mail (Debit / Credit Cards) to:- 101323.3272@compuserve.com**

**Web site: [www.simplesoftware.co.uk](http://www.simplesoftware.co.uk)**

***One subscriber, a betting rookie, has spent a small fortune trawling the depths, and some highs, of the UK tipster industry. Better to use the knowledge of the tipsters rather than gain the expertise yourself?***

## **TIPSTERS, SOME PERSONAL EXPERIENCES**

*Robin Logan*

**I** started backing horses a relatively recent two years ago when I received a letter from a tipster urging me to telephone a non-premium rate number on a particular day to receive a tip for a horse that “would not lose” and upon which I should have my maximum bet.

The idea was obviously to give me a sample of the organisation's information in the hope that I would subsequently become a fee-paying member.

An unexpected rebate had just been received from the Inland Revenue and I decided to invest £100 of it in my first ever bet on a horse. I had never been in a bookmakers before but luckily the letter came with instructions on how to fill in a betting slip. It all seems so bizarre in retrospect. I took the plunge and as it happens, the horse won at 11/2.

The easiest £550 pounds I had ever made. I was hooked.

The people that supplied me with that tip subsequently turned out to be complete crooks, but that is another story. For a long time I was puzzled as to how I had managed to back a winning fourth favourite in a field of five and assumed that it was beginners luck as those tipsters never managed to reproduce anything like that form again.

Since, I have heard that this particular scam works by having five telephone numbers with one different runner in the race given on each of them. That way they are guaranteed to have one fifth of the people they send letters to suitably impressed and hopefully willing

to part with cash for 'more of the same'.

The two years since that experience have been a fascinating learning process that has made me something of a tipster anorak. My interest in racing has steadily grown but where others might have spent their time studying form and all the technicalities of racing, I have preferred to embark on an in-depth study of suppliers of racing information.

***“ . . giving 10-12 bets per day in the hope that they will be able to advertise a winner or two the following day.”***

For someone who enjoys gambling and horse racing, but is relatively new to the game, it makes sense to take advantage of other's experience in the field. Benchmark gambling if you like. Trying to become a racing expert by starting from scratch seemed to me to be a short-cut to the poor house, and I am far too impatient by nature to spend years attempting to master form analysis, etc..

My next step was to try out some of the tipsters who advertise on Teletext.

You will soon realise that I have invested a lot of money in this game, and one of the most expensive ways of doing that is by telephoning premium-rate numbers. Many people in the racing world would turn their noses up at the idea of paying someone else for tips and I have seen many cynical articles written about tipsters, who are commonly regarded as sharks and their clients as mugs.

Needless to say there are a lot of con men around, but even amongst the premium-rate crew there is wheat to be sorted from the chaff.

Advertising can be very misleading without necessarily being dishonest. The most common ruse to look out for amongst this group is that of giving 10-12 bets per day in the hope that they will be able to advertise a winner or two the following day.

This is usually done by having more than one telephone number. So

you may start by being given 4 or 5 bets on the main number, and at the same time urged to ring the update number for extra special 'late information'.

On the update line there may even be another number issued along the lines of 'the secret confidential line' or something of that nature. So to get all of the advice you spend 15 minutes or more on the phone at a pound a minute and end up with a selection in almost every race on the day.

These people will usually give out couple of bigger priced horses every day, presumably so that they will eventually be able to advertise an 8/1 or bigger winner, not mentioning that it took them fifteen or more bets to achieve that. This is the worst scenario amongst the premium-rate tipsters. There are some who only give between 1 and 3 bets per day.

Amongst those there are good and bad. Some have a quite phenomenally poor strike rates, while others do make a reasonable profit in the long term.

Study the adverts carefully and read between the lines. Statements like "Call for Saturday's massive bets, last Saturday's best bet won by 10 lengths." reveal that they probably have not had a winner since last Saturday and even then, the winner they do mention almost certainly was odds-on - if a winner's price is not mentioned, it is because it is too short to mention.

The quality of these services varies hugely. There are one or two who are showing a profit of over £8,000 to £1 level stakes for 1998 and others who have losses in the thousands. My advice is to avoid the ones that give more than 3 bets a day and definitely do not be taken in by such statements as, "our bet of the decade", "our contact's biggest bet of his life", "our most serious all weather bet ever".

People who use such language recycle the same expressions over and over again and are almost certainly mostly nonsense.

Dabbling in the murky world of the premium rate telephone tipster



led on to me being enticed into some people's so-called 'private services'. You pay a monthly, six monthly or yearly fee for these services and supposedly get a more select, better quality type of information.

***“Some like to hype up the selectivity of their approach . . .”***

One of the first things that you notice is that tipsters who run both premium rate and private services openly admit to subscribers that most of the information on the premium rate number is not worth taking too seriously! Now that says a lot does it not?

There are exceptions to this, but generally 'private members' are made to feel that they are receiving information that is a cut above what goes out on the premium rate line.

There are some genuinely good and profitable services of this sort, some of them charging quite modest fees, ranging from £50 per month to a similar amount for a whole season. There are others for whom a profitable month is the exception rather than the rule. However, some of the cheapest ones from this group achieve better results than the next lot we come to, the big boys, some of whom charge well over £1,000 per year and whose advertisements are often seen in the racing press.

By now you may think I can't possibly have enough money left to get involved with this category of tipsters, but yes, I have quite a lot to say about them as well.

***“My record amongst this group is 20 consecutive precisely and selectively chosen losers.”***

There are two main categories amongst this group, who, by the way, do not like being referred to as tipsters but prefer such terms as 'racing advisory services' or 'betting syndicates'.

One type provides bets almost every racing day except on particularly poor ones, and the other sort are more selective, providing between one and four bets per week. While the latter like to hype up the selectivity of

their approach, my experience is that they do not on the whole perform any better than ones who bet more frequently.

I have found that you can wait and wait and see many seemingly reasonable betting opportunities pass only to be given one loser after the next.

My record amongst this group is 20 consecutive precisely and selectively chosen losers.

Be very wary of taking advertising at face value. Again, read between the lines and ask lots of questions. I have been involved with services experiencing horrendous losing runs while still sounding upbeat in their advertisements.

Beware of statements relating to last year's performance because that invariably means that this year is nothing to boast about. If reference has to be made to a good month a service had a year ago that does not say much about their consistency.

Make sure that profits quoted include deductions for tax and subscriptions. Following the suggested stakes can result in paying £2,000 to £8,000 just in tax per year if you are betting off-course. Add to that the substantial subscription fee and those profit figures do not look so healthy.

Having said that, it is possible to make a good profit with some of these services. I have made as much as £4,000 profit in a month to quite reasonable stakes.

That brings us to an important fact - the size of recommended stakes. Some of the huge profits quoted in advertisements would have required bet sizes of up to £1,000 at a time. If an advertisement states something along the lines of "to £50 per point recommended stakes" be aware that such a statement may hide the fact that a maximum bet may be a 20 point, or £1,000 bet.

Find out what the average size of stake is. The best services manage to make a reasonable profit with stakes averaging £100.

Once again, if winners are referred to without the prices being mentioned, ask questions.

*“Our last three maximum bets won by 5 lengths or more”*, may sound impressive but may hide the fact that they were at prices of 4/7, evens and 5/4 and the previous 5 maximum bets lost.

***“Some (tipsters) have a definite skill bias towards flat or jump racing. They may play down such differences while trying to recruit members”***

It may also ignore the fact that in between each maximum were several losing ordinary bets!  
*“Twelve out of sixteen winning weeks”* may sound impressive but backing short priced favourites and losing £600 per losing week can result in negligible profit after tax.

I have seen some outrageous statements in advertisements. An example was something along the lines of;  
*“Our latest winning maximum was forecast at 5/1 in the Racing Post”*.

It would have been far more relevant to know that it won at 5/4.

It is a unfortunate that I cannot name names as I have been very happy with some of the services I have been involved with. Today as I write, I have had three bets and two winners at 10/1 and 13/2.

There are some genuine people with real skill and with the right connections who will work hard to get winners for you. The ones that I have most respect for are those who are willing to talk about their losers and bad runs and who do not attempt to put a gloss on poor results or ignore their failures.

Before joining ask lots of questions and you will soon sense whether you are dealing with honest people or not.

Some have a definite skill bias towards one of the types of racing, flat or Jumps. They may play down such differences while trying to recruit members in their off season, so compare their performance in the two codes in previous seasons.

There is the organisation called the Racing Information Database ☆. who for reasons best known to themselves never seem to advertise, but who monitor most of the tipping services and provide a monthly and annual league table of the best and worst performers. There are many services that make brief appearances in the top ten and only a few who are regularly amongst the best. ( ☆ See endnote – Stef)

One of the most important things to remember of course is that past performance does not guarantee future success. Take a look at the Racing Post naps table. Last season's champion tipster Nick Fox (Templegate) who made over 60 points profit is currently in the red by about 85 points since joining the Racing Post.

## **Tote 10 to Follow**

My most remarkable achievement considering my very short time in this game is 2 whole weeks in joint first place in the Tote Ten to Follow, right up until the Grand National meeting 3 days before the end of the competition, when I was overtaken by the people snapping at my heels who had Direct Route, Joe Mac and Barton in their lists.

I ended up in 13th place, Just out of the prize money. My list, 'Bindot Flyers', appeared in the Racing Post weekly update list every week of the 98-99 National Hunt Season.

Not bad considering there were over 100,000 entries! I achieved this entirely by basing my one and only list on information received from tipsters last year and not at all on any of my own analysis or skill.

That is one of the real secrets - combine the best from different sources rather than rely on one person. This applies to another area too.

I read in the last couple of issues all sorts of intellectual, mathematical and statistical discussions about multiple bets. I can tell you that if you have the right information at your disposal, they can be amazingly profitable.

I don't bother combining bets from one tipster in multiple bets - the

strike rate is very poor doing that. Combining the best bets from a few different tipsters can be incredible however.

In the last 2 weeks I have had a 190/1 fourfold, a 63/1 double and a 27/1 treble by doing this! (Dave Nevison, Willy McFarland, NRS, Top Horse, The Watchman and A1 Racing used. Total of 33 multiple bets at £10 stake. Only 9% strike rate yet £2,500 profit!)

Making a profit from betting on horse racing is very difficult. Look at the Racing Post tipster table see how few of the experts manage to make any sort of profit at all over a period of time.

The big bookmakers are huge, very profitable businesses and the average betting shop punter is hardly a picture of affluence. That seems to add up to something rather obvious doesn't it?

Most so-called professional gamblers have to run tipping services to support themselves. The chances of beating the bookies on your own are very small indeed and it is worth drawing on other people's expertise, but be circumspect and do your research. This is always going to be a risky business for the punter. It is called gambling after all.



☆ According to our records, Racing Information Database were once used by the Sporting Life to verify their tipster advertising claims. However, a few years ago, following a Sunday paper investigation, information was uncovered indicating all was not well. The man behind R.I.D. was tried in Crown Court and convicted on several counts of fraud-related charges.

The Sporting Life were embarrassed by the situation and immediately severed all ties with R.I.D.

So far as I'm aware, R.I.D., although still operating but under new management, are still unable to advertise anywhere in the sporting press. Even other advertisers are not allowed by the same papers/magazines, to mention that they feature well in their tables.

**- Stef**

***Three commercial National Hunt horses-to-follow lists have been monitored, head-to-head, over the Jumps season. Terry Collins examines the final outcome and tells us how they all performed.***

## **HORSES-TO-FOLLOW LISTS - FINAL RESULTS**

*Terry Collins*

**W**ith the jumps season 'proper' over with as far as most punters are concerned, we can now see exactly how our three chosen lists fared as they go past the winning post in this, the season's final instalment.

***Lists under the microscope were;***

***Jumping Prospects*** by John Morris

83 from the main list plus 15 'eyecatchers', 98 in total.

***One Jump Ahead*** by Mark Howard

50 nominated horses plus 14 'best of the rest', 64 in total.

***Racing Channel Video***

52 in total, obtained by Charlie Brooks interviewing trainers.

### **Constraints:**

when comparing results. Checking start date was 19<sup>th</sup> There may well be information to be gleaned from each publication regarding exactly when or when not to back any particular horse, etc. For the purpose of this analysis it is not possible to recreate individual tactics, and it makes my job considerably easier to record every run of every horse from the lists.

This restraint must be remembered October 1998 and will continue until after the Grand National in April 1999 when the Jumps season starts to wind down.

***Final monitoring period 21 March – 20 April 1999 inclusive:***

Bet-by-bet results over the page ➡

## Jumping Prospects

	selections	winners	LSP	win SP's
23-Mar	1	0	-£49.91	
24-Mar	1	0	-£50.91	
26-Mar	3	1	-£46.91	6/1
27-Mar	4	2	-£46.33	6/5, 11/8
29-Mar	1	0	-£47.33	
31-Mar	2	0	-£49.33	
03-Apr	3	0	-£52.33	
05-Apr	3	1	-£53.89	4/9
06-Apr	1	0	-£54.89	
07-Apr	1	0	-£55.89	
08-Apr	2	1	-£45.89	11/1
09-Apr	10	3	-£35.60	14/1, 3/1, 2/7
10-Apr	7	1	-£41.10	1/2
14-Apr	4	0	-£45.10	
15-Apr	1	1	-£42.85	9/4
16-Apr	3	1	-£41.35	7/2
17-Apr	2	0	-£43.35	

Résumé of final period:

Selections	= 49
Winners	= 11
Strike rate	=22%

Jumping Prospects records a small profit £5+ for the final period but it's a case of much too little too late as it has never been in profit at any time since I started the checking for this series.

With this in mind and thinking that I had been unfair by burdening it's list with the 'eyecatchers' at the start I rechecked it's results without them and the return would have been -£32.20 which is a slight improvement but obviously still quite a loss.

---

***“One Jump Ahead runs out the easy winner as predicted by the Alistair Watson ‘bootstrap’ method in SMARTsig 6.03 so well done that man!”***

## ONE JUMP AHEAD

	selections	winners	LSP	win SP's
27-Mar	2	0	£21.75	
29-Mar	1	1	£27.75	6/1
31-Mar	1	1	£30.50	11/4
03-Apr	3	1	£42.50	14/1
05-Apr	5	4	£47.38	1/2,5/4,11/4,11/8
06-Apr	1	0	£46.38	
08-Apr	2	0	£44.38	
09-Apr	2	2	£50.88	7/2, 3/1
10-Apr	2	0	£48.88	
12-Apr	1	0	£47.88	
14-Apr	1	0	£46.88	
15-Apr	2	1	£48.13	9/4
16-Apr	3	1	£50.13	4/1
17-Apr	3	1	£50.63	5/2

Résumé of final period:

Selections	= 29
Winners	= 12
Strike rate	= 41%

One Jump Ahead finishes Istabraq style by returning a £26+ profit for the final period and runs out the easy winner as predicted by Alistair Watsons 'bootstrap' method in SMARTsig 6.03 so well done that man!. It just goes to show that you can't judge a book by looking at the cover price!

Mark Howard also has a sister publication for the flat called 'Ahead On The Flat', also at £4.99, which is available in most branches of WH Smiths and elsewhere.

It's only in its second year in print and I have no knowledge of how it fared last year but at the price it's worth getting as it's breeding suggests it's a possible winner.



## RACING CHANNEL VIDEO

	selections	winners	LSP	win SP's
<b>23-Mar</b>	2	0	£23.14	
<b>24-Mar</b>	2	0	£21.14	
<b>26-Mar</b>	2	1	£26.14	6/1
<b>27-Mar</b>	3	2	£31.34	5/1, 6/5
<b>30-Mar</b>	1	0	£30.34	
<b>05-Apr</b>	3	1	£30.84	5/2
<b>07-Apr</b>	1	1	£37.84	7/1
<b>08-Apr</b>	2	0	£35.84	
<b>09-Apr</b>	5	1	£32.12	2/7
<b>10-Apr</b>	4	0	£28.12	
<b>13-Apr</b>	2	0	£26.12	
<b>15-Apr</b>	1	0	£25.12	
<b>16-Apr</b>	2	0	£23.12	
<b>17-Apr</b>	2	0	£21.12	

Résumé of final period:

Selections	= 32
Winners	= 6
Strike rate	= 19%

Racing Channel Video obviously didn't last the trip as a small £4 loss was returned for the final leg. It was obviously aimed at the better class of racing as there were no winners recorded for the last seven days of the checking period. It still ended with a healthy profit however so it must be commended for a good performance.

## Overall Performances

	selections	winners	Strike %	profit max
JP	320	71	22	£0.00
OJA	225	76	34	£50.88
RCV	180	49	27	£37.84

As can be seen above One Jump Ahead came top in the winners, strike rate and highest profit achieved during the season. So comes

out a worthy winner as it almost achieved it's maximum profit at the seasons end.

Racing Channel Video on the other hand, fell away towards the end with seven winner-less days. Prudent maybe to have cut and run when a decent profit had been achieved but it would have been a fight between your greed and your willpower as many of us know!

As stated Jumping Prospects was never in profit so this would have been case of cutting and running when your target loss had been achieved to minimise the damage.

That's it for this series and I hope you've found it both interesting and informative and I wish you all good luck for the flat season.

*Terry Collins operates a horse-tracking service by e-mail. You can be alerted to the engagements of your own list on a day-to-day basis. Find out more at: <<http://members.tripod.co.uk/HTS/tracker.htm>>*



## LOGISTIC CURVE FITTING

*Peter May*

In reply to Jim's question about fitting the logistic curve (SMARTsig 6.04) The aim of the method is to fit a curve to your sample data, in a similar fashion to fitting a linear regression line, for example. Therefore, the aim is to minimise the differences between the curve and the actual data by adjusting the curves parameters. Normally this is done by a Statistics package, such as SYSTAT: the function is input with dummy parameters and the package does the work for you. Alternatively it should be possible to perform a similar task in Excel using the Solver add-in, or by using a genetic algorithm. Naturally, the logistic curve isn't the only applicable function for this task however it does possess several qualities which are desirable for the estimation of probabilities. For non-computer users, the task of minimising the parameters is possible but not one I would want to undertake. Fitting a linear regression line is a simple matter, but as soon as the number of dimensions increases or non-linearities are introduced the computation required for each curve, surface or hyper-surface, increases exponentially. Maybe its time to buy a machine? Alternatively a neural network with a standard feedforward architecture trained by back-propagation to minimise the cross entropy error function will attempt to approximate the conditional probability of the outputs given the inputs, although a computer will still be required. Regarding your fruitless trip to the library, this type of problem would probably be covered by a numerical analysis text which examines optimisation tasks.



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## **FLAT (TURF) ALL-AGE HANDICAP RATINGS**

***SMARTsig Report***

**I**n conjunction with the work done by James Crawford (article in our April issue, 6.04, page 7), his system uses ratings based upon the results from Flat, all-aged handicaps, run on turf.

The selection criteria examined for the ratings were;

♣ Last 3 form figures ♣ Age of horse ♣ Sex of horse

This is further categorised into separate 'monthly' periods. Mar/Apr, May, June, July, Aug, etc. The figures for June onwards were published last year, to enable you to continue following the system Mar/Apr tables were published last month and the May tables are printed opposite. However, the other tables can also be re-printed at the appropriate times, if there is sufficient demand.

The form figures also include those with fewer than three runs, also incorporated are the seasonal change markers of “-” and “/”, but to aid identification the tables overleaf use just “-” to denote either case. For example, a form figure line of 020/1-, the last 3 form figures are “-1-” and can be found in the left-hand column of the table on page 29. The final published ratings are derived by further enhancing the bare statistical performances from the past few years, through a computer artificial intelligence Neural Network (Ward Easy Predictor).

The ratings may be used 'as is' for a rapid comparison of runners, but for best use of the figures please refer to Jim Crawford's article last month and the many other discussions throughout 1998/99.

Ratings tables begin on the next page ➡

**AI, all-age handicap ratings. Flat (turf) May © SMARTsig 1999**

		3yo male	3yo female	4yo male	4yo female	5yo male	5yo female	6yo male	6yo female	7yo+ male	7yo+ female	
-	1	1	389	370	329	373	326	345	338	319	248	245
-	1	2	309	286	289	325	331	338	272	287	262	249
-	1	3	299	286	305	292	298	305	300	279	275	276
-	1	4	254	225	213	191	201	203	215	235	267	255
-	1	0	196	225	226	224	243	223	224	226	207	208
-	1	-	151	152	140	136	149	150	154	146	98	98
-	2	1	386	392	344	334	323	318	306	308	231	225
-	2	2	282	293	341	314	304	316	240	253	218	236
-	2	3	241	233	271	259	264	253	245	264	266	256
-	2	4	199	213	200	228	202	193	209	215	240	229
-	2	0	184	180	186	186	198	203	204	209	179	198
-	2	-	143	144	140	139	147	149	129	126	81	81
-	3	1	351	363	312	316	283	282	245	256	204	194
-	3	2	295	278	288	308	280	275	254	250	231	250
-	3	3	213	208	222	218	222	223	219	223	189	203
-	3	4	196	195	203	225	218	220	217	218	212	211
-	3	0	124	124	139	139	160	154	162	164	142	147
-	3	-	137	136	142	142	147	147	131	129	97	93
-	4	1	308	309	275	272	261	259	227	224	204	194
-	4	2	249	254	248	264	265	259	255	254	289	283
-	4	3	201	200	217	222	211	207	179	185	171	165
-	4	4	171	166	196	195	207	210	199	205	185	184
-	4	0	106	106	117	117	133	135	139	138	125	120
-	4	-	108	107	121	120	136	136	142	140	110	110
-	0	1	256	250	263	246	230	254	219	217	201	211
-	0	2	195	221	220	231	235	247	260	255	273	302
-	0	3	206	192	215	210	189	189	142	151	140	147
-	0	4	151	162	170	178	175	191	184	191	159	161
-	0	0	107	112	118	113	125	127	134	131	110	121
-	0	-	93	93	107	107	130	130	143	139	115	111
		1	253	253	255	255	246	246	215	215	211	211
	1	1	383	383	340	339	334	332	320	320	248	250
	1	2	287	287	314	314	328	328	275	275	239	240
	1	3	297	284	320	320	295	295	285	286	251	252
	1	4	229	231	207	208	197	196	229	228	250	250
	1	0	223	225	216	215	234	235	230	230	209	209
	1	-	155	142	138	139	153	153	155	155	106	106
	2	1	388	388	334	334	315	314	314	315	231	233
	3	1	358	358	306	306	279	278	261	261	199	199
	4	1	293	301	273	273	254	254	220	219	194	194
	0	1	234	238	250	250	245	245	216	216	218	218

**AI, all-age handicap ratings. Flat (turf) May © SMARTsig 1999**

			3yo	3yo	4yo	4yo	5yo	5yo	6yo	6yo	7yo+	7yo+
			male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
1	1	1	355	352	355	368	389	340	304	342	235	255
1	1	2	275	252	345	313	350	389	415	374	293	298
1	1	3	315	315	285	306	373	318	403	440	533	579
1	1	4	195	217	237	190	203	252	262	241	285	251
1	1	0	261	253	264	234	234	229	213	200	192	165
1	1	-	173	159	156	154	159	159	96	82	43	35
1	2	1	399	382	353	367	349	328	291	278	206	222
1	2	2	324	325	338	350	351	351	277	279	265	209
1	2	3	260	261	275	236	295	284	371	354	353	505
1	2	4	211	230	248	237	230	220	218	218	207	256
1	2	0	240	234	215	234	216	202	198	197	171	177
1	2	-	161	166	169	151	135	159	92	86	50	46
1	3	1	398	381	314	338	316	307	240	273	198	207
1	3	2	354	355	343	363	300	301	226	214	203	203
1	3	3	236	237	246	249	245	241	258	242	316	315
1	3	4	240	239	230	237	248	239	254	242	259	278
1	3	0	164	170	166	175	176	177	174	176	145	155
1	3	-	134	128	144	149	145	145	105	105	70	72
1	4	1	362	374	317	317	302	309	283	265	224	225
1	4	2	302	319	335	322	286	273	231	222	227	227
1	4	3	260	261	272	263	251	246	215	219	261	261
1	4	4	226	225	231	226	250	243	221	236	219	208
1	4	0	129	127	135	135	143	146	142	145	116	119
1	4	-	114	111	129	128	144	142	135	135	94	97
1	0	1	308	307	286	295	262	312	261	237	200	173
1	0	2	240	252	282	261	255	278	230	254	239	220
1	0	3	263	254	267	267	239	241	221	218	235	248
1	0	4	218	194	202	201	210	201	184	174	145	128
1	0	0	121	122	124	126	136	137	127	140	111	112
1	0	-	107	112	130	128	151	145	150	144	115	91
1	-	1	359	316	296	313	295	309	269	261	206	213
1	-	2	292	304	322	278	275	269	226	233	229	228
1	-	3	266	265	272	262	239	253	232	219	229	261
1	-	4	225	218	231	226	220	231	217	211	173	173
1	-	0	119	118	132	126	144	142	144	143	119	113

**AI, all-age handicap ratings. Flat (turf) May © SMARTsig 1999**

			3yo	3yo	4yo	4yo	5yo	5yo	6yo	6yo	7yo+	7yo+
			male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
2	1	1	386	410	374	373	341	364	333	333	261	242
2	1	2	285	269	345	324	391	384	359	317	308	311
2	1	3	252	305	315	314	325	325	369	408	425	469
2	1	4	198	213	220	220	208	226	263	250	269	268
2	1	0	248	243	224	237	231	235	206	216	189	181
2	1	-	156	157	153	154	147	147	90	92	47	47
2	2	1	381	390	363	373	324	330	300	290	220	198
2	2	2	321	321	346	346	358	348	283	284	236	237
2	2	3	245	245	243	270	267	277	343	319	382	381
2	2	4	210	209	222	222	218	211	233	224	275	258
2	2	0	216	218	204	216	211	206	204	203	176	182
2	2	-	151	151	146	152	154	151	95	95	61	54
2	3	1	391	391	353	336	303	308	263	256	220	193
2	3	2	334	334	355	349	311	305	226	234	236	228
2	3	3	222	222	241	236	240	237	233	236	266	265
2	3	4	232	230	245	248	244	246	243	242	238	258
2	3	0	153	156	156	163	170	170	165	170	144	147
2	3	-	135	134	133	148	143	145	119	113	87	81
2	4	1	353	353	303	307	297	297	253	253	196	186
2	4	2	310	301	305	315	275	276	226	231	251	251
2	4	3	244	245	263	244	236	225	211	206	218	218
2	4	4	218	217	233	235	238	245	224	219	213	213
2	4	0	122	120	130	129	143	144	147	144	115	117
2	4	-	110	110	127	126	145	142	142	140	104	104
2	0	1	293	286	297	293	293	280	233	233	204	187
2	0	2	238	237	259	243	270	256	256	230	283	248
2	0	3	243	238	245	240	225	213	181	192	217	200
2	0	4	188	201	207	204	204	209	188	188	139	144
2	0	0	116	119	124	122	133	135	135	136	120	115
2	0	-	104	105	117	120	135	146	149	141	114	102
2	-	1	290	332	300	301	298	294	236	249	209	210
2	-	2	280	279	288	293	267	269	237	237	246	254
2	-	3	247	231	245	262	237	234	200	203	208	215
2	-	4	196	210	221	215	236	233	222	214	192	182
2	-	0	117	117	123	124	139	139	136	140	120	114

**AI, all-age handicap ratings. Flat (turf) May © SMARTsig 1999**

			3yo	3yo	4yo	4yo	5yo	5yo	6yo	6yo	7yo+	7yo+
			male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
3	1	1	379	385	371	368	341	353	298	323	237	238
3	1	2	279	280	319	336	332	370	330	331	292	249
3	1	3	295	296	316	325	312	312	344	356	354	354
3	1	4	181	206	201	201	215	215	225	249	226	270
3	1	0	234	231	225	222	234	229	230	234	189	195
3	1	-	150	140	146	142	139	142	117	113	72	66
3	2	1	394	408	363	358	323	339	293	293	201	202
3	2	2	286	311	347	319	329	336	275	276	256	246
3	2	3	254	235	265	260	257	267	288	288	306	306
3	2	4	211	210	215	214	211	206	224	224	251	250
3	2	0	198	197	198	197	211	206	209	204	194	188
3	2	-	144	144	146	146	150	148	110	113	69	65
3	3	1	391	390	330	330	288	295	253	252	192	187
3	3	2	309	309	327	318	299	300	241	244	243	243
3	3	3	209	209	229	226	228	228	233	233	226	226
3	3	4	218	216	240	243	236	235	229	234	224	243
3	3	0	133	140	150	150	166	165	167	166	146	145
3	3	-	135	135	145	146	148	149	125	123	78	89
3	4	1	336	336	306	292	284	281	240	238	200	200
3	4	2	281	280	292	293	269	270	247	243	251	269
3	4	3	223	223	237	239	222	222	197	194	185	185
3	4	4	199	198	226	223	232	235	225	225	194	203
3	4	0	112	112	125	124	140	141	140	141	120	118
3	4	-	110	112	127	126	138	141	141	142	104	107
3	0	1	263	264	261	268	271	274	233	227	204	204
3	0	2	234	229	241	243	239	250	242	250	266	274
3	0	3	221	218	226	230	192	197	157	163	175	172
3	0	4	184	185	181	193	206	206	181	184	159	154
3	0	0	110	115	118	121	135	132	133	134	116	117
3	0	-	99	101	121	117	142	131	136	142	101	107
3	-	1	310	310	293	287	260	277	228	234	208	204
3	-	2	263	262	257	272	264	262	244	245	280	274
3	-	3	225	228	230	232	208	215	176	182	186	179
3	-	4	191	196	196	211	221	225	213	209	167	181
3	-	0	112	109	120	120	136	136	136	137	117	116



**AI, all-age handicap ratings. Flat (turf) May © SMARTsig 1999**

			3yo	3yo	4yo	4yo	5yo	5yo	6yo	6yo	7yo+	7yo+
			male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
4	1	1	392	391	354	342	346	344	338	318	241	242
4	1	2	308	285	336	310	349	349	320	300	231	266
4	1	3	302	271	299	322	302	302	312	303	295	280
4	1	4	217	218	202	207	201	201	211	247	274	261
4	1	0	221	226	218	216	227	237	236	228	214	205
4	1	-	147	152	134	135	153	146	131	136	94	87
4	2	1	404	404	343	350	323	322	302	302	215	217
4	2	2	307	299	307	322	319	320	266	261	256	240
4	2	3	240	232	245	257	249	257	269	269	275	265
4	2	4	213	220	225	213	211	204	228	223	238	238
4	2	0	186	185	192	190	204	204	212	207	204	194
4	2	-	145	143	139	139	141	148	123	121	84	76
4	3	1	377	365	320	319	291	286	264	259	191	190
4	3	2	287	287	301	298	284	290	245	246	256	249
4	3	3	203	203	218	218	220	220	224	223	214	207
4	3	4	203	202	222	231	226	226	221	221	221	221
4	3	0	129	130	140	143	159	160	165	164	147	146
4	3	-	135	136	134	143	148	148	125	128	94	93
4	4	1	317	317	285	286	268	266	224	228	198	194
4	4	2	265	261	271	271	264	262	254	251	296	280
4	4	3	205	206	222	221	210	212	187	187	166	169
4	4	4	177	176	207	206	213	218	212	211	190	190
4	4	0	107	107	120	119	136	136	140	140	121	120
4	4	-	109	109	123	121	137	139	134	141	110	109
4	0	1	247	249	258	262	257	257	223	223	219	216
4	0	2	221	220	226	228	252	238	246	252	302	292
4	0	3	197	202	208	210	183	182	155	148	154	152
4	0	4	164	159	180	181	196	195	192	191	164	160
4	0	0	113	112	119	117	128	128	132	131	122	119
4	0	-	96	96	102	109	129	130	137	141	113	110
4	-	1	281	290	271	275	262	263	222	222	205	202
4	-	2	253	243	250	257	257	254	251	251	276	287
4	-	3	205	208	216	223	200	202	175	172	161	161
4	-	4	170	169	191	194	205	208	203	201	176	175
4	-	0	108	107	117	117	131	132	135	136	116	118

**AI, all-age handicap ratings. Flat (turf) May © SMARTsig 1999**

		3yo	3yo	4yo	4yo	5yo	5yo	6yo	6yo	7yo+	7yo+	
		male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female	
0	1	1	368	375	350	348	312	334	322	323	248	254
0	1	2	256	288	339	316	309	319	260	265	281	224
0	1	3	282	297	315	318	289	292	288	258	279	244
0	1	4	258	163	197	211	189	204	240	222	217	258
0	1	0	224	219	202	220	219	239	244	236	220	211
0	1	-	153	154	147	119	154	157	122	162	103	114
0	2	1	387	377	335	325	308	326	311	276	280	223
0	2	2	294	285	277	305	317	290	270	239	213	232
0	2	3	239	238	236	257	255	247	268	259	218	234
0	2	4	223	231	221	204	216	198	216	208	237	194
0	2	0	175	176	183	176	206	198	213	203	189	196
0	2	-	149	147	164	140	154	142	133	137	102	88
0	3	1	348	354	289	309	287	275	241	264	208	204
0	3	2	264	264	290	281	277	268	253	244	268	251
0	3	3	173	206	221	221	214	216	222	222	212	200
0	3	4	184	183	206	211	208	209	195	204	196	203
0	3	0	121	119	138	132	151	156	156	163	143	148
0	3	-	142	123	132	142	139	151	137	131	97	93
0	4	1	300	294	272	269	240	249	215	218	203	196
0	4	2	243	249	251	243	258	255	251	260	280	282
0	4	3	196	196	210	203	203	204	176	185	173	165
0	4	4	152	153	184	182	194	196	202	192	176	178
0	4	0	101	102	111	115	132	132	136	139	120	121
0	4	-	102	111	114	116	133	136	135	140	114	110
0	0	1	237	240	248	251	259	233	225	210	206	220
0	0	2	217	216	227	219	233	230	262	259	267	305
0	0	3	190	195	205	193	171	177	157	142	143	144
0	0	4	152	144	175	155	186	181	171	189	159	164
0	0	0	106	108	112	116	129	126	128	131	121	120
0	0	-	86	98	113	110	123	122	131	133	117	117
0	-	1	263	260	266	261	244	247	224	219	190	206
0	-	2	225	224	236	245	261	228	248	260	305	303
0	-	3	197	200	220	202	190	192	172	159	143	156
0	-	4	147	158	172	177	191	195	181	198	170	171
0	-	0	107	105	115	120	126	128	133	132	128	117

***Guaranteed winning bets with a cast iron certainty will still make more money for some than for others. Does one of the two characters below describe you?***

## **A MODERN PARABLE**

**Mike Gittos**

*“Remember - Lady Godiva put all she had on a horse.”*

**W.C. FIELDS.**

**T**he last dog in the last race of the day at Hackney had just reached the spot where it had, micro-seconds before sighted the hare, only to find that some humourless track hand had covered it. Winston thought he knew exactly how the dog felt at that moment in time.

He himself was methodically rolling his ticket in the palms of his hands prior to flinging it in the direction of the waste bin, which he invariably missed. His companion, Lou also had nothing to draw. What was different? Wasn't this the routine for the pair of them for most weekdays?

Didn't they always promise themselves they would leave after the last horse race - and didn't they always break that promise? Where there's life etc., would they never learn?

As Winston intensified the balling of the about to be discarded betting slip he felt a strange heat within his hands, suddenly there was a sound like a clap of thunder and a large oriental gentleman dressed in red and white appeared as if by magic. Come to think of it, it must have been magic since only Lou and Winston could see the thing.

*“I am the Genie of the Betting Slip,”* he announced. *“I am here to grant your hearts desire - well almost,”*

He went on; *“Every three months throughout the flat season I will give you both a 2/1 winner.”*

*“In other words, I will lay you 2/1 to whatever cash you can produce at the appointed hour on the appointed day.”*

Lou and Winston could only stand and gawk in amazement. Lou kept peering around the shop as if waiting for Jeremy Beadle to pop out from behind the counter or some other hidey-hole.

*“Now of course,” said the Genie, “There are rules, after all I am a Ladbrokes’ genie, so we must have rules.”*

*“The stake money for your bets can only come from the fruits of your honest toil, be it won from betting or work.”*

*“No borrowing, re-mortgaging of your homes or selling your worldly goods.”*

*“You must still give your wives their full entitlement of house-keeping and you cannot defer payment on any of your bills.”*

*“Now if you promise to adhere to these rules I’ll meet you both here at 12-30pm on April 1<sup>st</sup>.”*

*“Just to show you I’m genuine, you Lou have got fourteen pounds and thirty pence in your pocket and Winston has twenty-seven pounds and fifty pence.”* So saying, the Genie disappeared in a puff of smoke.

Lou was still looking for Jeremy Beadle when Winston assured him they hadn’t dreamt it, and that Gwen and Sue were still tidying up behind the counter and Mike was still wiping away the last vestige of board prices. None of them had been privy to the “miracle” witnessed by Lou and Winston.

The two men left the betting shop and stood under the arch-ways on the car park outside where they could discuss the matter privately.

Both confirmed to the other that the amounts of money they were carrying were those told to them by the Genie. What have we got to lose, they concluded. See you at 12-30pm on April 1<sup>st</sup>. Of course they intended seeing each other in the interim. It was just that they felt comfortable making a pact to feel like prats together if the “Genie” didn’t show!

As it happened, they didn’t see as much of each other as they usually did. Winston was working like a mad thing, he’d even taken a

night job working in a bar and only enjoyed the occasional bet.

Lou was enjoying a fairly good run. He'd managed to limit his betting to the horses, never staying back for the dogs anymore. Everything was going according to plan until Doncaster and then a couple of bad results took a sizeable chunk out of his betting money.

There was still the Lincoln, if only his horse got a good draw. It didn't.

Winston met Lou at 12-20 on the car park and they decided they would wait inside the shop. No sign of the Genie.

"Shit," said Lou, "I should've known it was a joke, April the bloody first too," he said. Just then, the door to the shop opened and in walked a bloke in a pin striped suit. Walking straight up to Winston he said;

***"Waiting for the Ladbroke rep are you?"***

***"Certainly am,"*** replied Winston.

***"If you'd follow me outside,"*** said pin-stripe making his way back out of the shop. Winston and Lou followed quickly.

Once under the comparative privacy of the archway, the rep asked them how much they had with them.

***"I've got fifty quid,"*** said Lou,

***"This time last week I had over three hundred, but Doncaster was never my lucky meeting."***

The rep reached into his inside pocket and drew out a bundle of notes.

***"There's one hundred quid there, I believe that was the arrangement, was it not?"***

Lou took the money, counted it quickly and stuffed in his pocket, mumbling something that sounded like

***"Thanks."***

The rep turned to Winston,

***"How much do you have?"***

Winston couldn't help but blush as he said;

***"Fifteen hundred quid."***

*“I got a part time job and only had a couple bets . . . .”*

*“No need to explain,”* said the rep handing him a bundle of twenties which Winston later confirmed held £3,000;

*“See you both on 1<sup>st</sup> July.”*

Both were well pleased. Obviously Winston was far more pleased than Lou, but Lou resolved to have a bigger bundle by the time the next meeting came around. Winston worked hard and Lou became more selective in his betting habits. So selective did he become that he stopped doing Yankees and concentrated on singles.

The meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> July was almost an action replay except for the amounts of cash handed over; Lou had turned his £150 into £733 and it would have been nearly twice that amount but for some terrible Royal Ascot results!

Winston had £8,000 thanks to a lot of hard work and some smart buying and selling.

Both men were jubilant. But Winston was a good deal more jubilant with his £24,000 than Lou with his £2,199. Lou assured Winston that he'd have a really big stash for the next meeting scheduled for 1<sup>st</sup> October

*“I've got this system now you see, can't go wrong,”* said Lou confidently.

*“Read about a bloke who had a system for roulette“,* countered Winston, *“Him and his best mate pooled their money and he went off to Monte Carlo to clean up.”*

*“After a couple of weeks his mate got this telegram which read: <<SYSTEM WORKING BEAUTIFULLY - SEND SOME MORE MONEY!>>”* Winston told him.

*“Oh very droll,”* said Lou, *“But you'll see - clever bollocks!”*

The first day of October dawned and found our two protagonists enjoying mixed fortune.

Lou had once again fallen foul of the dreaded Doncaster and

Winston's wife had insisted that he (and she) take a holiday before he put himself in an early grave.

The three weeks they'd had away cost over £2,500 and had also meant that Winston had needed to take time off from both his jobs. Nevertheless he was looking forward to meeting the Genie or his representative. This time they didn't even have to go into the betting shop.

Pin stripes was waiting by the archway.

*"Let's get down to business gentlemen,"*

Turning to Lou he said,

*"I believe £2,000 is what I owe you."*

At Lou's nodded affirmation he handed him a bundle of money.

Turning to Winston he handed him a package,

*"There's fifty- thousand pounds in there for you, you've just hit the limit."*

*"Limit?"* spluttered Winston,

*"I didn't know Ladbrokes' had a limit on singles."*

*"They don't, I do."* said Pin Stripes as he turned with a flash and a puff of smoke into the Genie dressed in red and white,

*"Besides, don't you think your a little too old to believe in fairies?"*

Both men knew that just as the Genie finally disappeared in swirl of star spangled mist, their dream was over.

Neither was complaining, Lou had finished up three grand ahead and there was still The Arc to come. Winston had close to eighty-thousand pounds and had taken his family on an expensive holiday. All this from three winners at 2/1. Who says you need big prices to be big winners?

There's just a couple of things missing from this tale ,Winston and Lou were brothers; and Winston was known to all his friends as "Win". Their common surname was Somme.

Now you have it all, Win Somme and Lou Somme!  
Here endeth the lesson.

***It's inevitable that every system, no matter how well researched, will experience losing runs. Lessen the impact on your resources by using a few well chosen ideas in parallel.***

## **STRATEGIC PUNTING**

*Timefan*

### ***“BACK FITTING” VERSUS “TOOL KIT SELECTIVITY” A PORTFOLIO APPROACH TO SYSTEMATIC BETTING.***

**T**he view that ‘back fitting’ is some sort of crime in designing a system with a view to making a profit from gambling has been expressed several times both in the e-mail discussion group and here in the magazine.

I would like to examine what the object of a gambling system should be and whether that can be achieved in any other way than by a retrospective examination of the available *past* evidence. If anyone has a sure-fire provable method of looking at *future* evidence then I'll be first in the queue!

Many system inventors seem to look for maximum profit but I would suggest that the real test is profit on turnover. A method which makes £100 profit on total stakes of £1000 is really a lot less profitable than one which makes £80 on stakes of £500. This may all seem to be a matter of presentation but what it boils down to is a combination of strike rate and odds available on successful wagers.

The ideal combination being high odds and frequent success. It is unlikely that any one systematic approach is going to produce a large number of bets in a season. It is for this reason that I am suggesting a ‘portfolio’ approach to methodical punting. If several techniques can be devised which each throws up a high percentage of winners at odds against prices then a viable betting strategy has emerged.

One candidate for such a portfolio is the method described in my piece on following a list of 2-y-o as 3-y-o (page 62, last month) in



which an original list of 232 bets has been reduced to a mere 6 by the application of a few simple rules. It is this idea of having a 'tool kit' individual tools from which can be applied to a basic list of system qualifiers to see whether an improved result ensues.

What sort of 'sieves' or 'filters' should we have in our tool kit?

The first, I would suggest, is price i.e. forecast SP odds. Another method I used last year involved backing top weights in handicaps under certain defined conditions. The full list of bets amounted to 68 in which there were 16 winners giving a post tax LSP of 34.88 units. The 28 selections which started at less than 5/1 produced 7 winners but a post tax LS loss of 3.52 units.

The work done by Stef, following on from James Crawford, has shown that different age groups and sexes are favoured at different times of the season. This was also true in my series of handicap top weights where it definitely paid to distinguish the races confined to 3-y-o from those for all ages. Similarly, the 12 races confined to fillies produced no winners.

For some systems, the class and/or race value may help to sort the wheat from the chaff; as may the 'class' of the course on which the races are run. Race distance may be important; sprints may need to be distinguished from middle or long distance races. Should 'Rated' handicaps be included with other types of handicap? What about Nurseries? I am sure other readers can think of other relevant filters and will find that their application increases the profitability of their method.

During the last flat season my own strategies meant I had four methods in my portfolio. My first bet was struck on May 10<sup>th</sup> and the last on September 26<sup>th</sup>. There were a total of 24 bets (just over one per week) and 14 winners, a very healthy strike rate of 58%.

Develop a portfolio of solid and well researched strategies for yourself, many little gems have - and no doubt will continue to be - published in SMARTsig. Once established, stick by your guns and don't go searching for something to back, bide your time and wait for the selections to present themselves to you.

 SMARTsig

# DRAW BIAS MULTIPLIERS

SMARTsig Report

**W**hat a fuzzy picture it all is. Exactly how influential is the draw at different courses? All too often, when draw bias is quantified, it is less than clear just what degree of impact it may have on the result. What, for instance, are we supposed to do when informed that in a 5f race at a particular course, there is a draw advantage to low numbers of 7 (on a scale of 0-10). Just **how much** of an advantage is 7/10? Only one thing for it I thought, calculate some figures of your own that can be used numerically. The resultant multipliers we'll be publishing over the coming months are intended to be used in the final analysis of selections. Whether you're calculating your own form/speed ratings or using someone else's, convert the ratings to percentage chances. Multiply these figures by our draw figures for your final conclusions.

## **Specifications:**

All flat courses have been researched and the final figures further enhanced by using Ward System's Predictor artificial intelligence software.

For the purpose of our tables, all distances are in whole furlongs only, where a course quotes distances with fractions, the decimal part is removed. e.g. for 5½ furlongs use the 5f table, etc. Only distances that were recorded in the research are included with each course table, many courses do not run 9f races for example. The figures for 12f include all races of 12f and longer. The highest draw in each table is the highest encountered during the research *for the whole course*. It will often be the case that some distances at certain courses will not have such high numbered stalls. Different distances may have differing numbers of starting stalls. No account was taken of stall positionings or straight/round races where the same distance is run from different locations.

Key to table columns:

'Any' or 'All' Draw bias without reference to going.

GF+ Bias for races run on Good to firm going or firmer.

G Bias for races run on good going

GS- Bias for races run on good to soft going or softer.

### SMARTsig AI Draw biases © 1999

### ASCOT 5f, 6f, 7f & 8f races

Any	GF+	G	GS-	dist	draw	dist	Any	GF+	G	GS-
1.017	1.057	1.032	1.021	5	1	6	1.032	1.052	1.035	1.032
1.015	1.043	1.022	1.011	5	2	6	1.026	1.041	1.025	1.021
1.013	1.031	1.013	1.003	5	3	6	1.021	1.030	1.017	1.012
1.011	1.020	1.005	0.996	5	4	6	1.016	1.021	1.010	1.004
1.009	1.010	0.999	0.990	5	5	6	1.011	1.013	1.003	0.997
1.006	1.002	0.993	0.986	5	6	6	1.006	1.006	0.998	0.991
1.003	0.994	0.989	0.983	5	7	6	1.001	0.999	0.994	0.987
0.999	0.987	0.986	0.981	5	8	6	0.996	0.993	0.991	0.984
0.995	0.981	0.984	0.980	5	9	6	0.991	0.989	0.989	0.981
0.991	0.975	0.983	0.980	5	10	6	0.987	0.984	0.988	0.980
0.987	0.971	0.983	0.981	5	11	6	0.982	0.981	0.987	0.979
0.982	0.967	0.983	0.984	5	12	6	0.978	0.978	0.987	0.980
0.978	0.963	0.985	0.987	5	13	6	0.975	0.975	0.988	0.981
0.974	0.961	0.986	0.991	5	14	6	0.972	0.973	0.989	0.983
0.971	0.958	0.989	0.995	5	15	6	0.969	0.971	0.991	0.985
0.968	0.956	0.992	1.001	5	16	6	0.967	0.969	0.993	0.988
0.966	0.955	0.996	1.006	5	17	6	0.967	0.968	0.995	0.992
0.964	0.954	1.000	1.013	5	18	6	0.967	0.967	0.998	0.996
0.964	0.952	1.004	1.020	5	19	6	0.968	0.966	1.001	1.000
0.965	0.952	1.009	1.027	5	20	6	0.969	0.965	1.004	1.004
0.966	0.951	1.013	1.035	5	21	6	0.972	0.964	1.007	1.009
0.969	0.950	1.018	1.042	5	22	6	0.975	0.963	1.011	1.014
0.973	0.949	1.023	1.050	5	23	6	0.979	0.961	1.014	1.019
0.978	0.948	1.028	1.058	5	24	6	0.983	0.960	1.017	1.024
0.984	0.947	1.033	1.067	5	25	6	0.988	0.958	1.020	1.028
0.990	0.946	1.038	1.075	5	26	6	0.992	0.956	1.022	1.033
0.996	0.944	1.043	1.082	5	27	6	0.995	0.954	1.025	1.037
1.003	0.942	1.047	1.090	5	28	6	0.997	0.951	1.027	1.041
1.009	0.940	1.051	1.097	5	29	6	0.997	0.947	1.028	1.045
1.013	0.937	1.054	1.104	5	30	6	0.994	0.943	1.030	1.048
1.038	1.043	1.034	1.038	7	1	8	1.037	1.030	1.030	1.043
1.030	1.034	1.025	1.027	7	2	8	1.028	1.024	1.022	1.031
1.023	1.026	1.017	1.017	7	3	8	1.020	1.018	1.015	1.021
1.016	1.018	1.011	1.009	7	4	8	1.013	1.012	1.010	1.012
1.010	1.012	1.005	1.001	7	5	8	1.007	1.008	1.005	1.004
1.004	1.006	1.001	0.994	7	6	8	1.001	1.004	1.001	0.996
0.998	1.001	0.997	0.989	7	7	8	0.995	1.001	0.998	0.990
0.993	0.997	0.994	0.985	7	8	8	0.991	0.999	0.995	0.985
0.988	0.994	0.992	0.981	7	9	8	0.986	0.997	0.993	0.980
0.984	0.991	0.990	0.978	7	10	8	0.983	0.995	0.992	0.976
0.980	0.988	0.989	0.976	7	11	8	0.980	0.994	0.991	0.973
0.977	0.986	0.989	0.975	7	12	8	0.978	0.993	0.990	0.970
0.974	0.984	0.989	0.974	7	13	8	0.977	0.993	0.990	0.968
0.972	0.983	0.990	0.974	7	14	8	0.976	0.992	0.991	0.966
0.971	0.982	0.991	0.975	7	15	8	0.977	0.992	0.991	0.964
0.971	0.981	0.992	0.975	7	16	8	0.978	0.992	0.992	0.963
0.972	0.980	0.994	0.977	7	17	8	0.980	0.992	0.993	0.962
0.973	0.979	0.996	0.978	7	18	8	0.982	0.991	0.994	0.962
0.975	0.978	0.997	0.980	7	19	8	0.985	0.991	0.995	0.961
0.978	0.977	0.999	0.982	7	20	8	0.989	0.990	0.995	0.961
0.981	0.976	1.001	0.984	7	21	8	0.992	0.989	0.996	0.960
0.985	0.975	1.003	0.986	7	22	8	0.996	0.988	0.997	0.960
0.988	0.974	1.005	0.988	7	23	8	0.998	0.986	0.997	0.959
0.991	0.972	1.006	0.990	7	24	8	1.000	0.984	0.997	0.958
0.993	0.969	1.007	0.992	7	25	8	1.000	0.982	0.996	0.957
0.995	0.967	1.008	0.993	7	26	8	0.997	0.979	0.996	0.956
0.994	0.964	1.008	0.994	7	27	8	0.992	0.975	0.994	0.954
0.991	0.960	1.008	0.995	7	28	8	0.983	0.971	0.992	0.952
0.984	0.956	1.008	0.995	7	29	8	0.970	0.966	0.990	0.949
0.973	0.951	1.007	0.995	7	30	8	0.950	0.961	0.987	0.945

**SMARTsig AI Draw biases © 1999**

Any	GF+	G	GS-	dist	draw
1.024	0.998	1.017	1.048	10	1
1.017	0.997	1.012	1.036	10	2
1.011	0.996	1.008	1.026	10	3
1.005	0.996	1.004	1.016	10	4
1.001	0.996	1.001	1.007	10	5
0.996	0.997	0.999	0.999	10	6
0.993	0.998	0.997	0.992	10	7
0.990	0.999	0.996	0.985	10	8
0.988	1.001	0.995	0.978	10	9
0.987	1.003	0.994	0.973	10	10
0.987	1.005	0.994	0.967	10	11
0.987	1.007	0.994	0.962	10	12
0.989	1.010	0.994	0.957	10	13
0.991	1.012	0.994	0.953	10	14
0.994	1.014	0.994	0.948	10	15
0.997	1.015	0.994	0.944	10	16
1.001	1.017	0.994	0.939	10	17
1.006	1.018	0.994	0.935	10	18
1.010	1.019	0.994	0.931	10	19
1.013	1.020	0.993	0.926	10	20
1.016	1.020	0.992	0.921	10	21
1.018	1.019	0.991	0.916	10	22
1.017	1.018	0.989	0.911	10	23
1.014	1.016	0.986	0.905	10	24
1.008	1.014	0.984	0.899	10	25
0.998	1.011	0.980	0.892	10	26
0.982	1.007	0.976	0.885	10	27
0.961	1.002	0.971	0.877	10	28
0.932	0.997	0.966	0.869	10	29
0.895	0.991	0.960	0.860	10	30

**ASCOT 10f & 12f+**

Any	GF+	G	GS-	dist	draw
1.005	0.963	1.002	1.054	12	1
1.002	0.967	1.001	1.043	12	2
0.999	0.972	1.000	1.033	12	3
0.997	0.978	0.999	1.024	12	4
0.996	0.983	0.999	1.015	12	5
0.994	0.989	0.999	1.007	12	6
0.994	0.995	1.000	0.999	12	7
0.994	1.002	1.001	0.991	12	8
0.994	1.008	1.001	0.984	12	9
0.996	1.014	1.002	0.977	12	10
0.998	1.020	1.003	0.970	12	11
1.001	1.026	1.004	0.963	12	12
1.004	1.032	1.005	0.957	12	13
1.009	1.037	1.006	0.950	12	14
1.013	1.042	1.006	0.943	12	15
1.018	1.047	1.007	0.936	12	16
1.023	1.051	1.007	0.929	12	17
1.028	1.054	1.006	0.922	12	18
1.032	1.057	1.005	0.915	12	19
1.035	1.060	1.004	0.907	12	20
1.036	1.062	1.002	0.898	12	21
1.034	1.063	1.000	0.890	12	22
1.030	1.063	0.996	0.881	12	23
1.021	1.062	0.993	0.871	12	24
1.008	1.061	0.988	0.861	12	25
0.989	1.059	0.983	0.850	12	26
0.962	1.056	0.977	0.838	12	27
0.928	1.052	0.971	0.826	12	28
0.884	1.047	0.963	0.814	12	29
0.829	1.041	0.955	0.800	12	30

**SMARTsig AI Draw biases © 1999**

Any	GF+	G	GS-	dist	draw
1.022	1.019	1.016	1.004	5	1
1.015	1.010	1.005	0.995	5	2
1.009	1.003	0.998	0.989	5	3
1.004	0.999	0.994	0.985	5	4
1.000	0.998	0.991	0.984	5	5
0.997	0.998	0.991	0.985	5	6
0.995	0.999	0.992	0.988	5	7
0.994	1.002	0.994	0.991	5	8
0.993	1.005	0.997	0.996	5	9
0.993	1.008	1.000	1.001	5	10
0.994	1.011	1.003	1.006	5	11
0.994	1.014	1.005	1.010	5	12
0.995	1.016	1.007	1.014	5	13
0.995	1.016	1.008	1.016	5	14
0.994	1.015	1.007	1.018	5	15
0.991	1.012	1.004	1.017	5	16
0.986	1.007	0.999	1.014	5	17
0.976	0.998	0.991	1.008	5	18
0.962	0.987	0.980	1.000	5	19
0.942	0.971	0.965	0.988	5	20

**BATH 5f & 8f**

Any	GF+	G	GS-	dist	draw
0.973	0.999	0.985	0.960	8	1
0.977	0.995	0.983	0.960	8	2
0.982	0.994	0.983	0.963	8	3
0.988	0.995	0.984	0.968	8	4
0.994	0.997	0.987	0.974	8	5
0.999	1.000	0.991	0.981	8	6
1.005	1.003	0.996	0.989	8	7
1.010	1.007	1.001	0.997	8	8
1.014	1.010	1.006	1.005	8	9
1.018	1.013	1.010	1.013	8	10
1.021	1.014	1.013	1.020	8	11
1.023	1.015	1.015	1.025	8	12
1.024	1.014	1.016	1.030	8	13
1.023	1.010	1.014	1.032	8	14
1.020	1.004	1.010	1.032	8	15
1.015	0.995	1.003	1.029	8	16
1.006	0.983	0.993	1.023	8	17
0.993	0.967	0.980	1.013	8	18
0.975	0.947	0.962	1.000	8	19
0.950	0.923	0.940	0.982	8	20

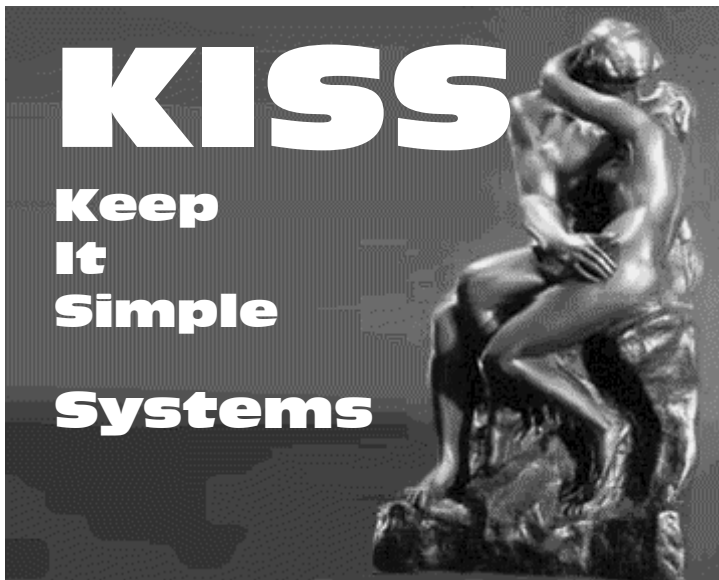
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**BATH 10f, 11f, 12f+**

Any	GF+	G	GS-	dist	draw	dist	Any	GF+	G	GS-
0.966	0.992	0.977	0.949	10	1	11	0.967	0.990	0.978	0.949
0.975	0.992	0.979	0.955	10	2	11	0.977	0.992	0.982	0.957
0.984	0.993	0.983	0.962	10	3	11	0.987	0.994	0.987	0.967
0.993	0.996	0.988	0.972	10	4	11	0.996	0.998	0.993	0.978
1.001	0.999	0.994	0.981	10	5	11	1.005	1.002	1.000	0.990
1.009	1.003	1.000	0.992	10	6	11	1.013	1.006	1.007	1.002
1.016	1.007	1.006	1.003	10	7	11	1.019	1.010	1.014	1.014
1.021	1.010	1.012	1.013	10	8	11	1.024	1.013	1.020	1.025
1.026	1.013	1.017	1.023	10	9	11	1.028	1.015	1.025	1.035
1.029	1.015	1.021	1.031	10	10	11	1.030	1.015	1.029	1.044
1.031	1.014	1.024	1.039	10	11	11	1.030	1.014	1.031	1.051
1.031	1.013	1.025	1.044	10	12	11	1.028	1.011	1.031	1.057
1.029	1.008	1.024	1.048	10	13	11	1.024	1.005	1.028	1.059
1.025	1.001	1.020	1.049	10	14	11	1.018	0.996	1.023	1.060
1.019	0.991	1.013	1.047	10	15	11	1.009	0.983	1.014	1.056
1.009	0.978	1.002	1.041	10	16	11	0.997	0.967	1.002	1.050
0.996	0.960	0.988	1.033	10	17	11	0.981	0.946	0.985	1.039
0.979	0.938	0.970	1.020	10	18	11	0.961	0.921	0.964	1.024
0.956	0.911	0.947	1.002	10	19	11	0.936	0.891	0.938	1.004
0.927	0.880	0.919	0.980	10	20	11	0.904	0.855	0.907	0.979
0.969	0.991	0.981	0.953	12	1					
0.979	0.994	0.986	0.964	12	2					
0.989	0.997	0.993	0.976	12	3					
0.999	1.001	1.001	0.989	12	4					
1.008	1.005	1.008	1.002	12	5					
1.015	1.010	1.016	1.015	12	6					
1.020	1.013	1.023	1.028	12	7					
1.024	1.016	1.029	1.039	12	8					
1.026	1.017	1.034	1.050	12	9					
1.026	1.017	1.038	1.059	12	10					
1.024	1.014	1.039	1.066	12	11					
1.019	1.009	1.038	1.071	12	12					
1.013	1.001	1.034	1.073	12	13					
1.003	0.990	1.027	1.072	12	14					
0.991	0.975	1.016	1.068	12	15					
0.976	0.955	1.002	1.059	12	16					
0.957	0.932	0.983	1.047	12	17					
0.934	0.903	0.959	1.030	12	18					
0.906	0.869	0.930	1.007	12	19					
0.872	0.829	0.895	0.980	12	20					

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## **TOP WEIGHT SYSTEM**

***Bob Holman***

**A**bout thirty years ago I remember reading of what was then considered to be one of the best flat systems available and whilst obviously I do not therefore profess this to be something new, I feel that it may be of some interest.

The details are as follows;

- 1 Look at any all-aged handicaps of one mile two furlongs only.
- 2 Support the top-weight providing the horse carries at least 5lbs. more than the next handicapped weight.
- 3 The staking system used was 2-2-4-6-6

- 4 In the unusual event of a winner not occurring in the series then the series was considered closed and a new series commenced using the same staking sequence, starting again on 2.
- 5 All-aged handicaps meant any handicap that included a number of horses of mixed ages other than selling races and apprentice races. Races for three and four year-olds were absolutely out.

The system is easy to check as you only have to look at the difference in the weights of the top two horses concerned. The claims of success all those years ago were good with very few completely losing sequences being reported. Whether or not this still hold good today I do not know.

The odd winners do however still oblige as whilst not following the system as such, I do on occasions include such top-weight with my selections.

Perhaps I am prejudiced, but I have fond memories of the system as I vividly recall as a youngster using this method and very early on backing a horse called Dionysis which won at 20/1! I recollect from my then experiences that the system met with varying success but I lost interest due to the very few qualifiers and patience was not in my curriculum.



## FOLLOWING TOP JOCKEYS

*Tony Symonds*

**M**y own recent experiences may be of interest to other SMARTies who are still searching for a reliable and profitable approach to betting the horses.

Last flat season I used quite a successful method involving top trainers. In November I transferred the method to the National Hunt season, again with reasonable successes. After monitoring the results for a few months however, certain other principles became

more relevant, these were;

- Use top jockeys rather than trainers
- Use the top form rated horse only
- Limit the number of runners in the race

From the beginning of March to the start of the flat I laid my money down based upon these criteria, the results speak for themselves;

L, 10/1, 2/1, 10/1, L, 11/4, 4/1, 5/4, L, Evens, 8/13, L, 5/4, 8/11, 5/4, 8/11, 5/6, 6/1, L

19 runners, 14 winners, 5 losers.

I should say that no horses were forecast at odds-on were backed, although several went off at odds-on SP. From the start of the flat using the same method limited to just four top jockeys the results, at the time of writing have been;

11/8, 11/10, L, 5/4, 3/1, 5/1, 7/2, 5/4

8 runners, 7 winners, 1 loser.

I must emphasise these are genuine results and not back-fitted. There is obviously not a selection every day, but with such reliable results so far they are worth waiting for and I believe will be in the future.

Although I have not given precise details of this method I feel sure many SMARTies will have little difficulty working it out to their advantage.

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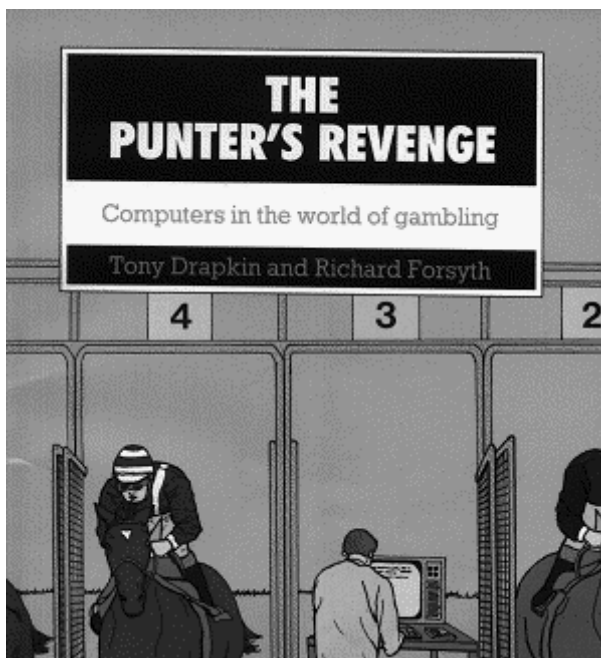
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we're  
continuing  
chapter 5  
handicaps,  
non-  
handicaps  
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statistics.**



## **THE PUNTER'S REVENGE** **(Serialisation part IX – Chapter 5)**

*Tony Drapkin & Richard Forsyth*

### **5.7 Getting the distance - hurdlers and chasers**

**L**ike their flat race counterparts, jumpers are particular about their best distance. It is not impossible for a horse to win over a distance other than its optimum by virtue of superior class or jumping ability. By and large, however, it is better to take nothing on trust and to look for proven ability to get the trip.

Over both hurdles and fences, the minimum trip is 2 miles, which would be an out-and-out staying contest on the flat. Flat racers whose best trip is a mile on the level may nevertheless be quite capable of getting two miles over hurdles or fences. This is partly

because economical, fluent jumping conserves energy, and partly because hurdle races and steeplechases are run at a more sedate early pace than their equivalents on the flat.

The most common intermediate distance is 2 miles, and the stayers' trip is 3 miles. As on the flat, at certain tracks they race over odd distances such as 2¼ miles or 2 miles 5 furlongs. Distances in excess of 3 miles are a real test of endurance which only a select band of specialists can be guaranteed to pass. The ultimate test is the Grand National run over 4½ miles.

## **5.8 Working under a handicap**

We have seen how the amount of weight that a horse carries affects its performance relative to its rivals, and that consequently a horse's ability is frequently expressed in terms of pounds weight. It is part of the received wisdom of racing that weight is the great leveller. For this reason alone, it contributes in no small manner to that unpredictability which makes racing so fascinating and so frustrating for the punter.

Under both codes races may be broadly divided into two types: handicaps and non-handicaps. In handicaps, the appointed handicapper allots different weights to the contestants according to ability so that in theory, the race should end in a multiple dead heat.

In non-handicaps, all runners carry the same weight or are weighted according to age and/or the conditions of the race.

Handicaps exist partly to give a sporting chance to less talented horses, and partly to provide a medium for exciting racing with more open betting than is generally found in non-handicaps. Given the principles of handicapping, it is inevitably much more difficult for the punter to spot an outstanding betting opportunity in such contests. This fact alone induces many experts and professionals to discard the handicap as a serious betting proposition.

On the other hand, there are those who argue that in the right circumstances a handicap can offer the kind of value bet that the serious punter must seek. In actual fact, there is bound to be a trade-

off between the greater unpredictability of the handicap and the more attractive odds which are offered. However, it is worth noting that when the large betting shop chains go in for race sponsorship, it is usually in the form of a valuable (and therefore highly competitive) handicap. Since bookmakers are not fools, the conclusion to be drawn from this is obvious.

Owing to the play of different variables in horseracing, handicapping is an art rather than an exact science. Nevertheless the handicapper's judgement is frequently vindicated especially in a blanket finish with barely a length covering the first five or six home. In such instances the formula with which the handicapper operates works out virtually to the nearest pound.

This formula (which the successful punter must master) introduces a mathematical element into the assessment of racehorses. It consists of a series of allowances representing the amount of weight to be added to the superior horse or deducted from the inferior horse in order to make them finish dead level in future races. This is calculated according to the distance in lengths separating them in a previous true-run race.

Up to 1 mile on the flat it is generally reckoned that 3lbs. is equal to 1 length. From 1 mile to 15 furlongs, the allowance is 2lbs. per length, while for distances in excess of 2 miles or more, 1lb. per length is allowed. Let us illustrate this by imagining a race over 1 mile 4 furlongs in which all the contestants carry 9 Stones (126lbs.). Our task is to use the information which the result has given us to readjust the weights for a future race to give an equal chance to all (Table 5.3).

Note that the distances given are the distances the horses finished behind each other, and not cumulative distances behind the winner. Thus horse E finished 2 lengths behind horse D but a total of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  lengths behind the winner. The allowances however are given in cumulative form.

Thus, horse D receives a total allowance of 3lbs., consisting of the 2lbs. it receives from C plus the 1lb. that C receives from B. B of course receives no allowance from A as the difference between them

is virtually negligible.

A number of issues arise in connection with the principle of allowances. Firstly, it is clear that the longer the distance of the race, the greater the effect of any change in the weights.

Table 5.3

horse	original .weight st. . lbs.	placed	distance between	total allowance (lbs)	future .weight st. . lbs.
A	9 . 0	1		0	9 . 0
B	9 . 0	2	head behind A	0	9 . 0
C	9 . 0	3	½ l behind B	1	8 . 13
D	9 . 0	4	1 l behind C	3	8 . 11
E	9 . 0	5	2 l behind D	7	8 . 7
F	9 . 0	6	short head behind E	7	8 . 7

Less weight is needed to affect a horse's performance in a staying event than in a sprint. Secondly, the handicapper applies the scale much more conservatively than we have done in our example.

For one thing, the greater the distance separating the horses, the less it is acceptable at face value. Although most authorities would allow 3lbs. for a length in sprints, it would be absurd automatically to give 18lbs. to a horse beaten 6 lengths.

The beaten horse might not have been completely fit, or the jockey might have refrained from knocking it about once all chance was gone. There are a host of possible reasons for a horse to be beaten out of sight.

In an ideal world, the handicapper (and indeed the punter) would wish to base his assessment on a fast-run race on decent going with horses finishing within a couple of lengths of each other.

This does not always happen, but even when it does, the handicapper does not necessarily work to the hilt allowance in

framing the handicap for future races. He must work cautiously in an attempt to be scrupulously fair to all concerned.

The handicapper's craft therefore does not involve the mechanical application of a mathematical formula. Like any other expert he relies on experience, judgement and a complex system of rules.

In the days before handicapping was centralised, when there were over a dozen official handicappers operating independently, it was quite possible for a horse to be 'well in' (i.e. not unduly weighted) in one handicap, and 'badly in' in another, simply because of a difference of opinion regarding the horse's merits among the two handicappers concerned.

When framing a handicap nowadays, the handicapper refers to a horse's position in the official handicap ratings which are stored on computer. The ratings express each horse's ability on a scale from 0 to 100, where the difference between any two consecutive positions is equivalent to 1lb. Thus a horse rated 65 would be 3lbs. better than one rated 62. Naturally, the scale is not static. It is constantly updated in the light of the season's results, and horses may move up or down as they improve or deteriorate.

The official ratings are also used to ensure that horses race within their class so as to stop the best animals from creaming off races for which they are over-qualified and to prevent mediocre horses from cluttering up top class fields. Thus the conditions of a poor handicap will stipulate that it is for horses rated 0-35, while a top class contest will be for horses rated 0-75.

If we suppose that in the top class contest, top weight of 10st. (140lbs.) is carried by a horse rated 70, the lowest viable rating for a horse set to carry bottom weight of 7st. 7lbs. (105lbs.) is 35.

Any horse rated lower will be obliged to carry more than its long handicap weight (i.e. the weight it would be set to carry if the minimum weight were not set at 7st. 7lbs.). It will therefore carry overweight - an effective deterrent against running poor horses in top class handicaps.

It is frequently said that the punter cannot hope to beat the handicapper at his own game. Nevertheless, the handicapper is vulnerable in certain areas.

To begin with he must frame his handicap at least two weeks, and frequently three weeks or more before the day of the race. If a horse shows improved form after that date, there is nothing the handicapper can do unless the horse has won in the process. If the latter is the case the race conditions may stipulate that a winner after a certain date must carry a fixed penalty say 5lbs. or 7lbs. extra. This is frequently enough to stop the horse from winning again, but if the improvement is greater than the penalty, or if the horse shows improved form without actually winning, the handicapper is powerless.

Occasionally, as in the case of Chaplin's Club quoted earlier, improvement is so dramatic that a horse runs up a sequence of wins before the handicapper catches up with him. Such animals are the true friends of the punter capable of spotting genuine improvement.

Another problem for the handicapper arises from the fact that although weight is a great leveller, some horses are more affected by it than others. A big, strapping sprinter may be able to carry big weights and will be less affected by having his handicap rating increased than a small, slightly built sort.

It is often worth the punter a while to identify such animals since they frequently beat the handicapper. There is much to be said for making a note of horses which win in a fast time carrying weights in excess of 9st. 7lbs. (135lbs.). There are not a vast number of them but they often win again, and at good prices.

Conversely mediocre horses may not respond as anticipated when dropped in weight. There may well come a point at which they simply can't run appreciably faster. Some authorities believe that as a general principle, the relative form of two horses is more affected by adding weight to the superior horse than by deducting weight from the inferior horse. In other words, it is easier to stow a horse down than to make it run faster by juggling with the weights.

If this is true it is always worth considering whether the allowance a horse enjoys is in the form of a reduction of its own weight or an increase in that of its rival.

Furthermore, weight has a more telling effect on soft or heavy going than on firm going for obvious reasons. Moreover, some horses seem to have a threshold up to which weight increases have little effect but beyond which their performance falls off dramatically. For this reason, anyone who considers betting in a handicap should ascertain whether the horse has successfully carried the weight in a similar class of race before.

Finally, there is the question of apprentices allowances. A young inexperienced jockey may claim 7, 5, or 3lbs. according to the total number of winners he or she has ridden. This allowance is deducted from the weight that the horse is set to carry. Thus a horse handicapped at 8st. 7lbs. (119lbs.) and ridden by a 5lbs. claimer will in fact carry 8st. 2lbs. (114lbs.).

It is usually reckoned that the reduced effectiveness of the inexperienced rider is just about cancelled out by the allowance given.

The handicapper does not take apprentices' allowances into account when framing a handicap. However an exceptionally talented apprentice may be worth more than his or her allowance. This may encourage trainers wishing to reduce a horse's weight to put up an apprentice particularly if the animal is an easy ride or goes well for a claimer.

Broadly speaking, handicaps on the flat may be of three kinds: those reserved for two-year-olds (known as nursery handicaps) those reserved for three-year-olds, and those open to all horses aged three and upwards (known as all-aged handicaps).

Over the sticks there are handicap races reserved for novice hurdlers and chasers but the vast majority of handicaps are all-aged affairs. Most racecards have two or three handicaps on them to tempt the punter. If you must bet in such races, be selective and go for small fields, with ten runners as an absolute maximum.

## **5.9 Non-handicaps**

There are many experts and professionals who argue that non-handicap races are the only ones the serious backer should concern himself with. In such contests, the handicapper does not intervene with a view to creating parity.

Therefore those horses which have a clear chance on form are more easily identified, and it is a simpler matter to narrow the field down to two, or at the most three, with a realistic chance of winning.

Once this is done, it may well be possible to pinpoint one horse with the outstanding credentials which make for a good bet.

This view seems to be confirmed by statistics for the flat which show that in two-year-old and three-year-old stakes (non-handicap) races and in three-year-old maiden races, the forecast favourite produces about 40% of all winners. Around 75% of all winners emerge from the first three in the betting forecast in such contests. These figures compare favourably with those for handicaps in which only around 50% winners are to be found in the same range.

However it is also fair to point out that the number of real value-for-money opportunities in non-handicaps is likely to be strictly limited because of the cramped odds which are frequently offered.

Although many non-handicap races involve horses all carrying the same weight it would be wrong to assume that this is always the case. We have already seen that in weight-for-age races, younger horses benefit from weight allowances designed to compensate for their comparative lack of physical maturity.

Apart from this, the most common allowance is that given to fillies when racing against colts. (A young female is called a filly until the age of five when she officially becomes a mare. An immature male is called a colt and becomes a horse at five.) On the flat this allowance

***“Around 75% of all winners emerge from the first three in the betting forecast “***



is generally 3lbs. which is reckoned to be the average difference in maturity between a colt and a filly, at least during the early part of the season.

Towards the autumn, many fillies make rapid physical progress to the point at which the 3lbs. allowance may give them a distinct edge. Hence the good record of fillies in the big international races such as the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe which takes place in the autumn. Over the sticks, the allowance given by colts, horses and geldings to fillies and mares is 5lbs.

In other non-handicaps, horses may be penalised for having won once or more than once, or for having won a race or races worth more than a specified amount. This may, on occasion, give the impression that the weights have been distributed on a handicap basis, but it is not so.

Further analysis will reveal that one or two contestants are particularly well favoured by the conditions of the event, or that they have sufficient class to compensate for the allowances given to their rivals.

The occasions when there is but one candidate at odds against in a small field with a realistic chance of winning are rare. However, the selective punter who is prepared to bide his time is unlikely to go far wrong if he confines his betting to such contests during the course of a season.

## **5.10 Horses and trainers - enter the computer**

Much has been made in this chapter of horses, their physical development their style of racing and the ways in which their performance may be affected by the weight they are set to carry.

However, looking at the horses themselves gives only part of the picture, since racing under the conditions devised by man does not necessarily come naturally to them. The trainer, who is responsible for his horses' day to day well-being whose job it is to bring them to peak fitness and whose craft involves teaching them how to race and

win plays a crucial role in determining how his charges perform on the racecourse

It is therefore remarkable that a comprehensive and systematic analysis of trainers methods was not generally available to the betting public until 1978 when ***Trainers Record*** the brainchild of Peter Jones came into being.

Until then, the only guidance given to the punter was the list of top trainers for courses which accompanies the racecard in most daily newspapers. This information in its traditional format is worse than useless. As Jones realised the really significant statistic is not the number of winners a trainer has on a certain course or at a certain time of the year, but his or her strike rate i.e. the proportion of winners to runners expressed as a percentage.

Moreover, a trainer's strike rate under a given heading is only significant when the data on which it is based goes back at least three, and ideally five seasons.

The most remarkable feature of the first editions of Trainers Record was that they were compiled manually. This involved the processing of thousands of races with a view to identifying strike rates under various headings such as trainers for courses, significant jockey engagements, trainers' results with favourites, and so on. It was a Herculean and presumably tedious task for a human being, but a comparatively straightforward data processing job for a computer.

It was therefore not long before the work was computerised. Initially on a mainframe using the traditional punched-card system of data entry. In 1980 with the advent of the micro, this unwieldy method became unnecessary. The present extremely efficient system, uses a micro with half a megabyte of RAM connected to a hard disk. Operators are employed on a more or less permanent basis to update the files regularly.

The most obvious revelation to emerge from the Trainers Record analysis is that the overall strike-rate among top trainers differs widely from around 5% to around 33%. Even allowing for seasonal variations, it is clear that some stables are consistently better at

***“Even trainers with modest overall strike rates seem to show a pronounced preference for certain courses”***

placing their charges to win. It is not unreasonable to assume that a high ratio of winners to runners is the hallmark of the most talented and able trainers

Thus, horses running for the handful of trainers with a strike rate of 20% or more are twice as likely to win as those from the average stable. When they have other favourable factors going for them and are offered at odds against, they offer an extremely reliable, value-for-money bet.

Naturally, these stables attract a large public following which ensures that many of their runners start at false prices. The bookies fear them. In spite of this, it is possible in some cases to make a small profit over the season simply by following blindly every single one of the stables runners. The publication gives profit or loss figures for all the major yards, making it easy to identify the promising ones. The punter who is prepared to be more selective can cut out the no-hopers and the poor value bets, thus improving the rate of profit.

We have seen that the popular papers provide statistics which illustrate the ‘trainers for courses’ theory. Peter Jones’ publication, with its concentration on strike rates, has placed this theory on a statistically sound basis.

Even trainers with modest overall strike rates seem to show a pronounced preference for certain courses and occasionally for certain meetings. There are many cases in which a trainer's overall strike rate is doubted at certain tracks, indicating that all the stable's runners must be given serious consideration. There are few racecourses which do not have one or two course specialists whose strike rate gives their runners a particular edge.

Another characteristic of a trainer's style is the time of year when a significant proportion of runners come good. These purple patches

are regular features in the life of many yards, and in certain stables, they are predictable on the basis of performances over the previous five years. For example, although the season commences at the end of March, many of the best stables do not get into top gear until May or even June.

There are a number of factors which account for this including the general stamp of the animals in the yard, and the overall quantity and quality of racing which improves as spring gives way to summer. It is particularly noticeable that certain stables tail off dramatically in the months of October and early November as the going changes and the season draws to a close.

It is important for the punter to be able to identify or anticipate a stable running into form since this may corroborate the assessment of a horse as a potential winner.

However, the 'time of year' factor on its own is not a sufficient basis for a betting strategy, since a yards form pattern in a given season may be drastically affected by illness or injury among the stable stars.

The engagement of a particular jockey is another aspect of a stable's arrangements which may be highly significant. Many top jockeys have lucrative retainers from the big stables so that their strike rate tends to be at best equal to, or more usually slightly below, the rate for the stable as a whole. However, most retained jockeys will be offered 'outside' rides by trainers unable or unwilling to retain a permanent stable jockey.

It is not uncommon for a jockey to have a strike rate for an outside stable which is two or even three times better than that stables overall percentage. This statistic, which is clearly indicated in Trainers Record, should never be ignored. The fact that the favoured jockey is riding may well indicate that the stable is 'on the job' information which is particularly useful when it corroborates other factors.

Conversely some jockeys have a dreadful record for certain stables, and are rarely put upon fancied runners. The fact that an unfavoured

D. R. C. ELSWORTH Fordingbridge, Hants

	Runners	Winning runners	Races run	Won	2nd	3rd	4th	Unplaced
2 yo	21	7	92	8	9	7	15	53
3 yo	12	3	58	5	3	4	1	45
4 yo+	13	7	65	11	7	5	3	39
All	46	17	215	24	19	16	19	137
B Rouse		6-56	A McGlone		6-37	S Cauthen		6-24
C Asmussen		2-3	L Piggott		1-4	A MacKay		1-5
Pat Eddery		1-5	P Cook		1-5			

Also: 11 B Procter 10 R Fox 7 W Newnes 5 W R Swinburn, R Cochrane  
 R Curant 3 G Duffield, T Rogers, J Matthias, R Street, R Hills  
 2 T Ives, M Hills, C Baxter, Janice Coyle 1 W Carson, A Bond  
 C McCarron, D Atkinson, Miss M Leonard, D McKay, E Hide, R Lines  
 C Morgan, S Keightley

	2 yo	3 yo	4 yo+		2 yo	3 yo	4 yo+
March/April	0-1	0-5	1-9	Non-handicaps	8-88	4-48	2-6
May	0-11	0-14	3-12	Handicaps	0-4	1-10	9-59
June	1 0	3 12	2 10	Amat/Ladies	0-0	0-0	0-1
July	2-15	2-12	1-8	Apprentices	0-0	0-0	0-3
August	0-10	0-6	1-6	Selling	2-4	0-1	1-9
September	3-23	0-3	1-8	First time out	0	0	2
Oct/Nov	2-23	0-6	2-12	Profitability	-29.87	Favs	4-19

Form summary 1979-83: 10; 12; 10; 17; 24 Total: 73-844 8.6%

Followers of Trainers Record who purchased the 1983 annual in time for the opening meeting of the Flat kicked off with a bang when Steve Cauthen teamed up with 14-1 shot Mighty Fly to land The Lincoln Handicap at Doncaster. We had drawn readers' attention to the significant partnership struck up between winning trainer David Elsworth and the young American rider, whose eight wins from 40 rides in 1982 resulted in a level stakes profit of 18 points. A further five wins in addition to Mighty Fly, from 24 mounts, boosted the profit by another 34 points this time. Although both Brian Rouse and Tony McGlone also finished on the six winner mark we need hardly stress that Cauthen's engagement is the one to support.

Having begun the season in such great style it was only fitting that David Elsworth should go on to record a career best score on the level of 24 winners, an increase of seven on 1982. The most encouraging aspect of this performance was a small, though much needed increase in the stable's strike rate, only 7.8% over four years but 11.2% in 1983. Mighty Fly contributed more than her fair share to that increase scoring twice more, including in Royal Ascot's Hunt Cup, before being sold to Paul Mellon and leaving the yard. The filly's subsequent efforts in Group company confirmed her astonishing rate of improvement.

Royal Ascot was the highlight of Elsworth's year, as later in the meeting Melindra gave him a big handicap double when holding on by a rapidly diminishing neck to land The Wokingham. The performance of both horses paid further tribute to the Whitsbury handler's reputation as a big race trainer. Neither had an illustrious background; Melindra cost a mere 500 gns as a yearling at the Ascot Sales, while Mighty Fly's dam cost Elsworth only 400 gns before he passed her on to the Torgys, her owner/breeders.

Only in the senior age group are horses likely to win first time out, especially if they are fit from a campaign over jumps. Two and three year olds should not be supported during the first four months of the season, and there has yet to be a juvenile scorer before June. From then on, winners are evenly spread during the remainder of the season, with June itself the top month in each of the last three years.

Miss Silca Key collected the stable's most valuable juvenile prize in The Clarence

Figure 5.1 Specimen page from *Trainers Record*.

jockey is riding is normally sufficient reason to dissuade the thoughtful backer from considering a bet on a horse which might otherwise have come into the reckoning. In many cases the trainers and jockeys approach is more useful than the attempt to quantify in itself the comparative merit of different jockeys. The question of a stable's record with fancied horses in general and favourites in particular is also an interesting one. There are two areas for consideration.

Firstly, if a high percentage of a stable's winners start favourite, this may indicate either that the stable has a large public following, or that the gov'nor and/or owners are involved in betting activity at the course. If this percentage is low, it could mean either that the stable is not a betting one or, as is more likely, that horses are being prepared for long-priced betting coups. The range here is very wide, with only 15% of winners from some stables starting favourite whereas for others, the figure is as high as 50 or 60%

Secondly, the percentage of a stables favourites which actually win is also a useful indicator. From the viewpoint of the backer who relies on form, it is probably better if this figure is high. A bad record with favourites either indicates that horses are starting at false prices or that the stable is looking for long odds with its winners in which case form is likely to be disguised to put the public off the scent. The Trainers Record team produce computer-aided analyses of both flat and National Hunt trainers based on the previous five seasons records.

These coupled with perceptive commentaries covering all the major yards and many of the minor ones, have established the study of trainers' methods on a sound basis adding significantly to the punter's armoury. Its success has prompted a number of imitations but it remains the best publication of its kind. A specimen page from the flat edition for 1985 is given in Fig. 5.1



*The Trainer's Record later became known as "Trainers Review" and was published under The Sporting Life banner. With recent take-overs, mergers and amalgamations I suggest anyone looking for a copy should try a major bookstore and/or WH Smiths. Alternatively give the Racing Post a call.*

*-Stef*

***Systems for horseracing, or anything else for that matter, are a myth. But there are, argues this SMARTie, simple techniques to increase your productivity and profits.***

## **NATURAL SELECTIVITY**

*John Gregory*

**M**y own belief is that there is no such thing as a system to ensure success with horses or ladies. But by practising selectivity and following a few simple procedures you can definitely increase your strike rate in either field.

After two decades searching for the ultimate system the light finally dawned at the start of the 90s. Now, at their conclusion, the way ahead, for me at least, is clear. Only bet on grade A to C flat turf non-rated handicaps over 5 to 8 furlongs with 12 or more runners.

There are several reasons why it pays to concentrate on such races.

Firstly, the prize money is large enough to ensure a competitive race which most serious contenders are actually trying to win. In this case, such races are run at a true pace giving fewer shock results and only require a modest standard of jockeyship. The winner will usually have displayed previous winning form over a similar set of track/distance/going circumstances and, most importantly, a live selection can often be backed at a double figure price with the bonus of a ¼ the odds place saver option.

Taken together, these factors lend themselves to using some kind of rating procedure. But anyone who has used ratings will acknowledge that they just can't be followed blindly even if you have an almost Hoddle-like faith in them. What's needed is some method for eliminating the dross so that enough time can be spent making a final selection.

The following suggestions are divided into three parts. First part, defining a qualifying rating. Second part, eliminating unlikely winners. Thirdly, the application of various modifying factors to sift

the remainder. Thereafter the application of any further tests is left to the backer's discretion.

## **Defining A Qualifying Rating**

This is essentially a subjective matter; but a good starting point is to say that a qualifying rating is one within 15 points (roughly a stone) of the top rated.

A further refinement could be to vary the 15 points according to race distance or some other preferred parameter.

## **Eliminating Unlikely Winners**

- a Reject any runner which has not achieved a placing of 6 or better in its last 3 races.
- b Reject any runner which hasn't won during its last 6 races.

## **Sifting the Remainder**

### ***a. Horse Age***

Reject 7 year olds and upwards, in any race worth £15,000 or more to the winner, unless the horse has already won such a race in the current season.

Reject any 3 year old in an All Aged race before 20 June.

### ***b. Today's Race Weight***

Reject any horse carrying less than 8-00, rider's allowance excluded, unless the going is soft or heavy.

### ***c. Previous Races' Distance and Course Type***

Reject any horse which has not achieved a qualifying rating over today's distance on a similar course.



#### 4. Previous Races' Number of Runners

Reject any horse which has only achieved a qualifying rating in a race with fewer than 7 runners.

#### 5. Previous Races' Going

Query any horse which has not achieved a qualifying rating on a going type as shown by the following table:-

Today's Going	Form Line Going
Heavy	Heavy or Soft
Soft	Heavy, Soft or Yielding
Yielding	Soft, Yielding or Good
Good	Yielding, Good or Good to Firm
Good to Firm	Good, Good to Firm or Firm/Hard
Firm/Hard	Firm/Hard or Good to Firm

#### 6. Today's Draw

If the draw is a factor, query any horse which has not been allocated a reasonable draw using the following formula:

Favoured Number +/- (No of Runners x 0.3)

Example 1 (Field of 18 runners; high draw best)

$$\begin{aligned} 18 - (18 \times 0.3) &= 18 - 5.4 \\ &= 12 \end{aligned}$$

... so any draw from 12 to 18 is reasonable

Example 2 (Field of 18 runners; low draw best)

$$\begin{aligned} 1 + (18 \times 0.3) &= 1 + 5.4 \\ &= 6 \end{aligned}$$

... so any draw from 1 to 6 is reasonable

Example 3 (Field of 16 runners; middle draw best)

a.  $1 + (18 \times 0.3) = 6$

b.  $18 - (18 \times 0.3) = 13$

. . . so any draw from 6 to 13 is reasonable.

## **Summary**

### **Reject if:-**

- a last 3 races = 000
- b no win in last 6 races
- c 7-y-o or older and race value more than £15,000 unless already won such a race this season
- d 3-y-o in All-Aged race before 20 June
- e weight less than 8-00, excluding allowance, if going not heavy or soft
- f sole qualifying rating achieved in race with less than 7 runners.

### **Query if:-**

- a no qualifying rating on acceptable going
- b no qualifying rating over today's distance at a similar course
- c draw a factor and not reasonably drawn.

Of course using any elimination rule carries an attendant risk of throwing out the baby with the bath water.

No doubt someone out there will run these sift parameters against a 10 season results database and tell me that the remaining horses made a level stakes percentage loss. Well, good on you sport. That's why there's no such thing as a foolproof winning system. But don't despair. Follow these simple guidelines and as your knowledge base increases you'll find yourself thinking its not such a difficult game after all.

## ***A SMARTsig Member's Book Review***

# **Review of: THE INSIDE TRACK (Author, Alan Potts)**

**Brian Harfoot**

### **Details:**

**Publisher : Rowton Press 01691 679111**

**RRP £18.00**

**(Currently on Offer @ £16.00 + £1.50 p&p)**

**A**ll books on betting will be of some interest to the serious punter but *The Inside Track* instantly has greater credibility because it is written by successful gambler who practices what he preaches. That credibility is further enhanced by the author's down to earth style that tells it as it is without the embellishment often associated with those who have to try harder to convince.

Alan Potts's aim is not to suggest systems that lead to easy riches but to make the reader think about his own methods by describing the principles that have sustained Alan's success.

The book is logically divided into sections on the Flat, All Weather, National Hunt and Spread betting with further chapters on general betting issues such as staking and multiple bets.

Each of the specific sections describe the factors Alan takes into account in that sphere together with a workshop that provide real examples of Alan's bets both successful and not. It can be expected that many of the factors will already be used in some guise by the serious punter but Alan's perspective may well add to the knowledge while each single new idea will be worth reading the book for alone.

I found the sections on handicap chasers and on anticipating effect of draw and pace on turf and all-weather the most thought provoking; the most surprising was the section on Spread betting where my conviction that SP and favourite were the gambler's

Placepot needs a rethink given the success Alan has achieved on those bets.

The workshop provide a greater insight into this pro gambler's thought processes and methods although they inevitably lose some value in that they relate to 1997 races and most readers will be unable to compare with their own thinking on those races (it would be fascinating to do so; perhaps there an opening for a pro-punters diary in one of the specialist publications)

*If a pro-punter were to oblige with that request Brian – I will print it*  
-Stef

The book stresses that success requires hard work and discipline and that the difference between winning and losing can be a thin line. I guess Alan will not lose any sleep on giving away his secrets away; his introduction draws an analogy between the theory, practice and practice under pressure. The mental strengths to take advantage of the hard work can not be learnt from a book.

Success and confidence go hand in hand so the reader can expect to disagree with some of the author's assertions such as, in my case, the almost total rejection of each way bets but if the opinion prompts a review of that strategy then the book will have succeeded in one of it's stated objectives to make the punter think about new ideas. Indeed the need to continually monitor your methods because of changing circumstances (an example is the impact of Pricewise type columns on Alan's betting) or new information (keeping up to date with impact of the draw on courses is an example here) is an allied message.

Books, like racing tips can be very subjective, and my conservative nature makes me very reluctant to provide tips (the need to keep friends is another good reason!) or recommend books. However I can readily recommend this book without reservation to anyone interested in serious punting whether they be a novice or already punting profitably.

A tipster's selection may last just a few minutes, the general advice in this book will last a lifetime.



**Many readers have subscribed to the SMARTsig/Peter May NH speed ratings by e-mail. Peter discusses how best to use them, techniques which can be adapted for use with ratings from many other sources.**

## INTERPRETING RATINGS

*Peter May*

**S**ince I started the ratings services in January I have been asked one question more than any other: "What is the best way to use ratings?". Now, this is not a simple question to answer and I usually reply by saying that it depends on the individual and ideally they should come up with their own approaches. Not particularly helpful I know but I don't want to direct subscribers to particular methods with which they may feel uncomfortable.

However, after talking to several ratings users and analysing the data myself the ways of applying the figures seem to be divided into two distinct categories: the systems approach and the value approach. In the following sections I will attempt to explain how these methods are applied. But first an example of a race to show the various components of the ratings which will be discussed in the following sections.

Horse	97	3rd	2nd	1st	98	Av.
LANNKARAN	121	108*	107 <sup>1</sup>	0 <sup>0</sup>	0	112
JUST NIP	102	145 <sup>4</sup>	128 <sup>1</sup>	165 <sup>2</sup>	<b>165</b>	<b>158</b>
COTTSTOWN BOY	125	62 <sup>1</sup>	99 <sup>0</sup>	87 <sup>2</sup>	147	91
LORD OF LOVE	0	100 <sup>2</sup>	112*	0 <sup>2</sup>	118	114
DANGEROUS GUEST	111	111 <sup>1</sup>	92 <sup>5</sup>	131 <sup>5</sup>	131	124
CLAUDIA ELECTRIC	123	0 <sup>p</sup>	0 <sup>p</sup>	0 <sup>p</sup>	0	61
QUISTAQUAY	<b>167</b>	0 <sup>0</sup>	99 <sup>5</sup>	126 <sup>5</sup>	140	125

This is a recent example of a handicap hurdle race. The columns refer to the following: 97: best speed rating of 1997/98; 3<sup>rd</sup>: third most recent rating; 2<sup>nd</sup>: second most recent rating; 1<sup>st</sup>: most recent rating; 98: best rating of 1998/99 season; Av: master/average rating. The superscripts denote finishing positions with an asterisk \* denoting an easy win. Clearly, in this example, Just Nip appears to

have an outstanding chance based on the figures whereas Claudia Electric could not be fancied.

## **The Systems Based Approach**

As the title suggests this approach is purely systematic. It involves analysing the ratings and generating profitable rule-based methods. For instance, some users back horses which are top rated on each of their last three runs; or top rated on the average figure and have produced the highest rating of the season. Subscribers develop their own rules and understandably tend not to release them.

But as an example, using the data for the period September 1998 to February 1999, handicap chasers which have the top average rating and finished third, fourth or fifth on their latest outing produced an average return of 56p/£1 staked at SP before tax from 140 bets. Systems of this type are easy to identify but need thorough checking. For example, in the period January to February 1999 backing all (av) top rated horses would have yielded an SP pre-tax profit of over 100 points from over 500 bets, but in March would have produced a loss of about 9 points.

Calculating confidence intervals for the return is one way to estimate the stability of a rule but it should be remembered that this only applies to the population from which the sample is taken, and not future races.

## **The Value Approach**

This method is slightly harder to explain, but is just as easy to apply as the systems approach. The first question which needs addressing is how to approach a race. Two methods are normally suggested: the race should be taken as a single entity, or each horse should be considered separately and a normalisation procedure used to account for the within race competition. I will use the latter approach.

The aim is to convert the output of the forecasting model (or a set of race ratings) to a probability of success which can then be compared to the prices on offer. (Of course, the model could produce the probability itself, without going through this extra step,

but for ratings this is not possible.) If we consider the ratings to be the output of a model then the conversion to a probability simply involves generating a relationship between the ratings and the success rate.

For a single output model (ie as in ratings) this relationship is defined by a line (possibly non-linear). For forecasting models which output two values this line becomes a surface etc. Naturally as the number of dimensions increases the complexity of the relationship increases, so this is where a neural network comes in handy if the relationship is thought to be non-linear, otherwise a multiple regression model could be used.

For our simple one variable problem, to generate the relationship the success rate for each rating value needs to be determined. As an example I have taken novices' chases for the period September 1998 to February 1999. And the following table (Figure 1) shows the success rate by rating group.

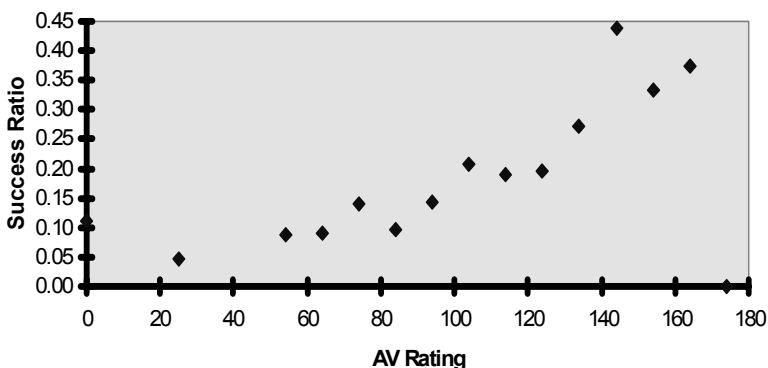
Figure 1

<b>Rating Group</b>	<b>Winners to Runners Ratio</b>
0	0.11
1-49	0.05
50-59	0.09
60-69	0.09
70-79	0.14
80-89	0.10
90-99	0.14
100-109	0.21
110-119	0.19
120-129	0.20
130-139	0.27
140-149	0.44
150-159	0.33
160-169	0.38
170-179	0.00

From Figure 1 it can be seen that the horses with an AV rating of between 140 and 149 had a success rate of 44%. The aim then is to generate a relationship between the ratings and the success rate as shown in figure 1, however the number of observations for each category also need to be considered.

The interesting feature about novices' chases is the number of horses with no previous chase form, and hence no av rating. In the previous figures these are shown with a rating of zero.

**Success Rate By Rating**



Clearly, this needs to be considered separately. From the graph the relationship (excluding the zeros) appears to be linear (as with most horseracing variables).

Consequently a simple linear regression model should work well although in most cases I prefer to use the logistic curve. Using a statistics package the following model was calculated:

$$\text{Success Ratio} = 0.000965 + 0.001644 \times \text{Rating}$$

There are two important facts about the equation. Firstly it does not produce any negative outputs (i.e. for all positive values of the rating the output will be positive). And secondly the rating variable has a



positive coefficient indicating that as it increases the success rate increases, which of course is the aim of any ratings service.

In this simple example, the zeros (horses without form) can be given an estimated success rate of 0.11 which is taken directly from the data.

To calculate the fair prices for a race it is simply a matter of generating the success ratios for each horse From the equation then applying a normalisation procedure. As an example consider the following race :

Horse	97	3rd	2nd	1st	98	Av.
IRBEE	0	0 <sup>p</sup>	0 <sup>f</sup>	113 <sup>2</sup>	116	114
NATIVE FLING	0	91 <sup>2</sup>	104 <sup>2</sup>	104 <sup>2</sup>	104	104
ROMANCER	135	80 <sup>2</sup>	77 <sup>4</sup>	64 <sup>1</sup>	77	74
DUNNICKS TOWN	0	127 <sup>4</sup>	0 <sup>6</sup>	0 <sup>p</sup>	127	113
EXTINGUISHED	0	0	0	0 <sup>f</sup>	0	0

In this example the model produces the following success rates and normalised probabilities:

Figure 3

Horse	Calculation	Ratio	Norm. Odds
Irbee	$0.000965 + 0.001644 \times 114$	0.20	3/1
Native Fling	$0.000965 + 0.001644 \times 104$	0.18	7/2
Romancer	$0.000965 + 0.001644 \times 74$	0.13	5/1
Dunnicks Town	$0.000965 + 0.001644 \times 113$	0.20	10/3
Extinguished	-	0.11	13/2

Figure 3 shows the forecast success ratios based purely on the ratings. It does not take account of other factors such as recent form, suitability of going etc.

One way to do this is to simply use a set of elimination rules then calculate probabilities for the remainder. For instance, Dunnicks View would be removed due to its poor recent form, similarly Extinguished. This would make Irbee and Native about 13/8 chances with Romancer on 3/1.

However a better solution is to build the ratings in as part of a more complete model which would consider going suitability, distance suitability etc.

Naturally the professionals, like Alan Potts, do not need a forecasting model, they determine the acceptable prices as part of their race analysis. However, I believe that using a model of this type helps you to assess the races in terms of prices instead of the likely winner. And after a while the value prices seem quite clear from the ratings and form comments without resorting the computer.

## **Summary**

The two approaches discussed are equally applicable. For people without access to the latest prices the systems based method is more appropriate but for those on course or with the prices available the value approach is preferred.

Whichever method you adopt ratings are a key component of race analysis and should be given a great deal of consideration.



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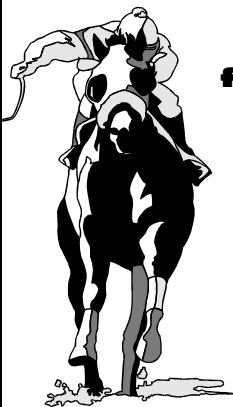
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 phone and fax **01736 754400**

email **stef@smartsig.com**

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