**FINDING THE HIDDEN HORSE:**

Uncle Will's Notebooks

Introducing

Predictable Patterns of Performance

And

The 12 Killer Angles

by

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## Prologue: A Strange Late Night Visitor

It wasn't enough that my wife had left for parts unknown six weeks ago, having undoubtedly found a better offer.  Not that I blamed her.  We hadn't seen each other in a couple of years except to say something like "Coffee's made. Bye."

Me being a struggling accountant and she being the Queen Of Real Estate Sales made for few relaxed moments in front of the fire - or anywhere else.  And - I admit - I spent a considerable amount of what free time I had trying to find the ultimate handicapping tool - program, secret, hint, angle, whatever. Something that would let me quit my day job and spend the rest of my life doing what I loved to do most - play the ponies.

Alas, that magic had not been forthcoming.

No, it wasn't enough that she had left.  I had to go and break my leg when I slipped on a pari-mutuel voucher hurrying to the window to make a bet on a big gray that had just shipped in to run on the turf at Aqueduct.

No, I didn't get to make the bet.  And yes, he won and paid $128.60. Which would have given me my only winner on the day.  But I digress.

If there's one thing I'm really, really good at, it's feeling sorry for myself. Because of the way life's treating me, because my wife left, because I can't get a winner, because the jockey always knows what horse I bet on and pulls it up, because God hates me - you know, the usual stuff.

Anyway, so there I was, lying there on my imitation naugahyde sofa, doing that - feeling sorry for myself - and the doorbell rang.  I looked at the clock. 9 p.m.

Which made it impossible for anyone to be ringing my doorbell.  Not only do I not have any friends, acquaintances - or enemies, for that matter - who would be standing on my doorstep at 9 p.m. on a chilly Sunday night in mid-March; I don't have any friends, acquaintances or enemies at all that I know about.  I keep to myself.

But there it went again.

My wife in absentia had picked out the tune: "Ding, dong, the witch is dead."  We can only hope.

Now convinced that whoever was there had a purpose, and was not going away, I struggled off of the couch, grabbed my crutch, hobbled to the door and looked through the spy-hole.

An unfamiliar face looked back at me.  An older man, slim, wearing of all things a derby hat.  Even in the dim light of the Tudor lamp that hangs on the porch (another of my wife's choices) I was caught by his Byzantine blue eyes.

Shrugging, I opened the door.

"Good evening, William," he said, his voice crisp and neutral as a saltine.

"Uhhh..." was the canniest comeback I could come up with.

"I am your Uncle Will.  And I am prepared to stand out here until you regain the power of speech, but I'd really rather not."

"My Uncle Will?"

"Great Uncle, to be more precise.  Your grandfather's brother.  Your father's uncle.  Am I achieving any degree of penetration?"

"Uncle Will.  I forgot I had... I mean I..."

He pointed his umbrella at me.  "It would seem to me you have too few relatives left to be forgetting any."

Waving me aside, he strode into the house, set down his bag, and started stripping off his gloves.

"I can see I'm going to have to start using more single-syllable words." He doffed the bowler and put the gloves in it, glanced around for a clean area in which to set them down, found none, and put them under his arm.

"I'm sorry to be so slow," I said.  "It's just that... not that I'm not glad to see you... but..."

"What am I doing here?  An excellent question.  If someone in Cincinnati had asked it.  For someone standing here, in your - ahem - living room, the reason would be inescapable."

"Unescapable," I countered, and was immediately sorry.

"Let's not quibble," he said.  He took a step toward me and put a hand on my shoulder.  He smelled of cold, and tobacco, and wool, and something else - a faint, vaguely familiar scent I couldn't place.

"I am here to tend to you," he said, his blue eyes sharp and steady as

marbles.  He waved his other hand at the room.  "It's abundantly clear you can't do it yourself.  Your parents are dead, God rest their souls.  Your wife has left you.  As one of your only two living relatives, and the other supporting her family by herself, you are my responsibility.  And I accept you."

He picked a sheaf of newspapers off the seat of a wingback chair, using as little of his fingers as possible, dropped them beside it, brushed the cushion with his gloves, and sat down.  Back straight, knees together, feet planted firmly on the carpet - right where I'd spilled the cappuccino that very morning.

Forgetting for the moment that my leg was in a cast from ankle to hip, I took a step toward him.  Or tried to.  Instead I did a slow pirouette, as if I were trying to screw myself into the floor, and fell heavily at his feet.

"Oh, shit," I said.

He reached a hand toward me as if to help, eyebrows lowered in concern.

"Are you all right?"

"I'm just fine," I told the ceiling.  "Happens all the time."

Uncle Will nodded and took back his hand.

"The first rule is - vulgar or obscene language is not to be tolerated."

"Sorry," I mumbled, wondering why in the world I was apologizing to this strange old man in my own house.

"There will be a number of others," he continued.  "I am 73 years old.  In order for me to take responsibility for you and this house, each of us will have well defined duties and will be expected to perform them without fail."

"Uncle Will," I said, still looking at the ceiling, "I really appreciate you wanting to help, but..."

"Twaddle," he interrupted.  You don't appreciate it, and I certainly don't want to help.  But there it is.  You can't do it.  In fact I'm not certain you would even if you were physically capable of it.  Your sister is working 16 hours a day at her two jobs; she certainly hasn't the time.  And I seriously doubt that you can afford a full-time domestic.  So, as I said, there it is."

"Uncle Will," I started, "I..."

He interrupted again.  "You are living in a pigsty, eating Heaven knows what, wearing soiled, wrinkled clothing."

"That's just what I was going to say," I sighed, surrendering.

## My Uncle Will.

"There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in miseries."

I didn't say that; Shakespeare did.

Looking back, I can now see that Uncle Will was my "flood."  Not that I went "on to fortune," but there's no telling what might have happened if he hadn't re-introduced me to life - probably "shallows and miseries" a-plenty.

Uncle Will reached into my bowl of self-pity and forcibly dragged me back into the world, and the forceps he used was horseracing.

Not that I didn't already know all there was to know about handicapping and betting the horses.  I'd just been having a run of bad luck, bad jockeys, incompetent trainers, idiotic owners, and crooked stewards.  Because the "run" had lasted about seven years, it had reduced me to a lump of psychotic, neurotic, paranoid, blubbering rubble.  Had, in fact, finally convinced me that I was a loser.  That I always had been a loser.  That I always would be a loser.  And nothing could change it.

Enter my Uncle Will.  A winner.

Uncle Will came over from Scotland with his three brothers sometime in the forties.  Having grown up around horses, he naturally gravitated toward them in New York, and was able to pick up enough money on the backsides of Belmont, Aqueduct, and Saratoga to keep him alive - mucking out stalls, mostly.  But pretty soon he caught the eye of Smilin' Jack Daniels, a trainer of some repute in the area, and as soon as he was big enough to start hotwalking and grooming, he was moved up the chain.

Will's family was all small and wiry, and it didn't take long until he was exercising a few horses for Smilin' Jack.  Then a trainer in a bind asked him to ride one of his platers, and the rest is pretty much history.  Oh, he was never Chris McCarron or Jerry Bailey, but word got around that if you wanted a smart, controlled ride and a horse to come back sound, you could do worse than "The Sandman," Will Davidson.  So called because his patient and unostentatious riding style tended to put the other riders to sleep.

I could spend the rest of this book eulogizing my Uncle Will.  I won't, of course.  He might read it, and I'd never hear the end of it.  But I will say in all the time I've known him I've never seen him frown in anger (he's always frowning at the PP's), never heard him say a cruel or unkind word, never heard him moan about his station in life, never known him to be bored, never heard him say "no" when I asked for help (unless "no" was the right answer).

Uncle Will "retired" long ago.  But just because he doesn't have a job doesn't mean he has no work ethic.  He spent his early years in Scotland, doing chores practically from the time had could walk.  His work history after that was characterized by long days, dependability, and discipline.  When he took me under his wing he promised no easy solutions, no magic box, no knowledge without learning.

Certainly the best handicapper I've ever known - and for my money, the best on the planet - his method is to blend the past with the  present (the way the day is going) to predict the future (or at least the next two minutes of it.)

The world has changed substantially since my first session.  The tools are different, the tracks, and trainers, and jockeys are different.  We now have Beyer figures, and Bris figures, and past performances at the touch of a button, and computer programs costing anywhere from $5 to $5,000.  But the basic method is the same.

As my Uncle Will has said so many times "Find the horse with the best reason to win the race."

Whatever tools you use to do that are up to you.  My Uncle Will uses his head, his eyes, his heart, and the past performances.  But he is far from old-fashioned - testing, proving,  adapting to - and using whatever bits of today's tools and technology he thinks might help his ROI.

I go to the track for the excitement, the challenge, the opportunity to outthink the crowd, and for a dozen other reasons - not the least of which is the opportunity to be with my Uncle Will and the gratitude I feel toward him – not just for showing me a few forgotten card games and the arcane process of handicapping, but for helping me understand the meaning and the process of life itself.

God bless you, Uncle Will.

God bless the computer; full speed ahead.

The traffic was fairly light, so I took a chance and stepped up the pace, anxious to get to there.  I'd asked Uncle Will if he'd mind giving me a few handicapping pointers tonight, and after some fairly serious scowling, opening and closing of the Form, and harrumphing, he'd finally agreed.  A major concession.

I'd gotten hung up at work, and Uncle Will wasn't in his usual seat at the OutRider when I finally got there.

The OutRider is a simulcast facility in Yonkers, about twenty miles or so out of The City, just a couple of furlongs from Yonkers Raceway, where the trotters run. When I found him, he was standing underneath the monitors, looking up at the replay of a race.

He was holding his hat - a tam with the Davidson plaid - in both hands, wringing it as if it were a wet washcloth.  I called out to him and when he turned toward me, it seemed his face was, well, glowing somehow.  Blame it on the monitors.  But I had the strangest feeling that I'd been transported to some kind of holy place, and here in front of me was a holy man - either priest or penitent - who had just experienced something beyond this earth.

He stood there for a moment, his eyes glistening, and I saw a faint wet track on his cheek where a tear might have been not long before.  At last he spoke - reverently, in the voice of one who had seen God Himself.  If you believe in that sort of thing.

"God bless the computer," he said, at first so quietly I could barely make it out.  "God bless the computer," he said again, his voice rising.  And "God bless

the computer!" he finally fairly shouted, causing a few of the OutRider's inhabitants to start, and peer around to see if the shout had been by some chance hurled at them.

"What is it, Uncle Will," I asked, a tiny kernel of fear popping up in my gut. Had he gone 'round the bend at last?  Or was it just a few too many fingers of The Glenlivet he'd put under his Davidson plaid vest?

"Look, Billy," he said, pointing a trembling finger at the monitor.  "Tell me what you see."

I looked.  It was a replay of a race at Hollywood.  The #1 horse took off at the bell, ran seven furlongs like a scalded cat, and danced across the finish line, with no one behind him but the wind.  He paid $20.60.  The $1 exacta, with #8, was worth a pretty hefty $129.60.  $1 tri: $893.  $1 super: $5,045.

"Wow," I said.  "Did you have it, Uncle Will?"

"Did I have it?  Did I have it?  Did I have it!"  He was rolling the phrase around in his mouth like 30-year old private stock, emphasizing a different word every time, giving the phrase new meaning with each exclamation.

"God bless the computer," he said again.  Then, fixing his tam on his bushy white head, he stalked back toward his usual seat - the table at the end of the bar.  I followed just as if I'd been asked to.

Irish the bartender was waiting at the table, two glasses partially filled with amber fluid in his hand.  He gave one to my uncle.  "Here's to bets played, money made, and charges paid," he said, and winked.  My Uncle Will winked back; then they touched glasses and threw the scotch down in a gulp.  Uncle Will handed the glass back, then relaxed into a chair as if all the calcium had just left his bones.

"God bless the computer," he breathed again.

I sat down across from him and pulled an inch-thick brick of computer printouts from my briefcase.  "I wish you'd either stop saying that or tell me what in the heck you mean," I said.  "My computer is cursed, not blessed.  I can't make a nickel with it."

Uncle Will looked at me for a long moment.  "My point exactly," he said. Computers are all cursed things, byproducts of the devil's malice in a world gone mad."

"Okay.  I know you used to feel that way.  Now you're blessing them.  And I'm not getting it."

"Billy, my boy," he said patronizingly, crooking a finger at Irish, "I curse them for what they are, but bless them for their existence in this one tiny sliver of the world - the handicapping process."

"I don't get it," I said, starting to sulk.

"Consider, Billy, the thousands upon thousands of handicappers who pour

oceans of data every day through their cursed little boxes."

"Like me."

"Like you, indeed.  And consider where every one of them gets his or her private sea of data."

"Well, I guess Equibase, because that's where BRIS, and Trackmaster, and all those other people get their data.  It all comes from the same place."

"Excellent.  And what do they do with this excellent data?"

"They figure out how fast horses have run in the past, and against what kind of other horses, and how quick they can get out of the gate, and how well they close, and how much money they've made, and stuff like that."

"Then, armed with that information in one form or another, every one of those computer handicappers trots off to the races and does what?

"Well, they try to figure out who's going to win today and bet on him."

"And the result?"

It was beyond me.  Uncle Will was trying to drive home a point, but the nail wasn't responding.

"Think, boy.  It's no good if I just tell you."

"I'm an accountant.  I don't have to think."

"A little humor.  So humor me.  Think."

"Okay.  They all have computers.  And they all have the same data in one form or another, and their programs."  A dim light was starting to glow deep in my conscious.

"And... wait, they're all analyzing the same stuff to find the same statistics, is that what you mean?"

"Keep going."

"So you're saying they all have pretty much the same answers when they hit the track."

"Bingo.  So what do they do?"

"Well, if they bet according to their programs, or the popular handicappers - who use computer programs themselves or they couldn't get all those tracks analyzed - they must pretty much all like the same horses."

"Your brain is showing," Uncle Will said as Irish set another glass in front of him.

"The good stuff," Irish said.

"God bless this house and all in it," Uncle Will responded.  "And the computer."

This time he took only a sip and leaned back, his head against the cushion, savoring the scotch, the moment, his victory, and - hopefully - his pupil.

I was starting to get excited.  I knew Uncle Will was a horseman.  And a handicapper.  And a good bettor.  Maybe I was about to be handed the holy grail,

the black box, the magic wand.

"So what does that have to do with the race," I asked.  Stupidly, I must admit.

Uncle Will scowled, obviously irritated at my lack of understanding.

"Okay, Billy," he said, leaning forward and patting my hand as if I were five years old again.  "I'll explain it to you in terms I hope you'll be able to understand."

He held up his notebook.  From past experience, I knew it contained today's past performances.

"Those who have eyes, let them see," he said.  Then he shoved it over in front of me and pointed at the 9th race.  "What kind of a race is this?"

I looked.  "Hollywood.  A $40,000 maiden claimer for California breds.  Seven furlongs."

A good race to stay away from, I'd always thought.

"I don't play maidens," I added.  "Especially when there's a first-time starter."

From the look on his face I might have slapped him with a wet trout.

"You don't play maidens."

"Not enough information."

"Can't get an adequate answer from your computer?"

"Yeah, pretty much."

He took another sip of scotch, his face relaxing again into that beatific smile, and was silent.

After a few seconds I began to twitch.  After a minute or so I couldn't stand it any longer.  "So?"

He just shook his head as if his last hope for sanity in the world had died.

Even though no one had ever accused me of being the ripest apple on the tree, his attitude was getting to me.

"So are you going to tell me what in the hell you're talking about?  Or just sit there with that condensing grin on your face for the rest of the night?"

Finally he spoke.  "Condescending," he muttered, "but no matter.  I will yield to the deficiencies of your youth," he said, "and show you.  Not just how I won this race, but how computers continue to make money for me all the days of my life."

He pointed a long, thin finger at the Form.  "Find the early speed," he intoned.

I looked.  And looked again.  And once more.  "I don't see any," I admitted.

"That would be because there isn't any.  Now let's look at the works, to see if possibly someone's hiding some early speed they can use to steal the race.  Incidentally, the six horse was scratched."

I looked again.  A few horses had some good-looking works, including the first timer: the one horse.  "The one looks okay, but nothing really jumps out at me," I said.  "If I had to play the race I might bet on the eight."

"Why?"

"He came up on my computer.  His figures, I guess.  They look like they're the best in the field.  But he kind of has the look of a loser, too.  He's had a lot of tries."

"I couldn't agree more.  Who is on the one?"

"Mike Smith.  You don't like Mike Smith, particularly in California."

That look again.

"I never said I didn't like Mike Smith.  I said he's not been riding up to his potential for the past couple of years or so.  And the reason I say that is because of the talent he's blessed with, when he uses it.  But let me give you some information you don't have.  Would it affect your analysis to know that two races ago Mr. Smith got the three horse out like he'd been shot from a cannon and trotted around to a daylight win?"

"Ah," I replied.

"And would it further help if I told you the one horse was going off at nine to one?"

"*Now* it would," I said.

"And would it put the cap on it if I reminded you that all those little people out there who use their computers to predict the outcome of races can't even see the one?"

"Got it," I said.  "So they either pass the race or bet on their computer picks - the  eight, or eleven, or the nine, or maybe the five."

"Exactly.  And what do you do?"

"Play the one."

"No."

"No?"  That was a shocker, as everything we'd talked about so far seemed to have been pointed in that direction.

"Box the one-eight?"

"Help me Jesus," he sighed.

"Then what?"

"Of course you bet the one, but that's not the point.  The point is you have found a handicapping iceberg.  A horse that is under the radar of just about everyone else out there, including - much of the time - the trainer, jockey, and owner.  And you've found it by...?"

"By, uh, by, uh..."

"By analysis of the race and its place in the stream of today's racing.  Would I have bet the one if Mike Smith hadn't already wired the field in a prior

race at five to one?  Absolutely.  But because he had done that my bet became much more, uh, significant."

"Okay, okay.  I think I've finally got it.  What you're saying is the computers can pick winners, because the data they analyze is legitimate.  So the better the program, the more winners."

He was nodding, now - either in agreement or drifting off temporarily to a better world.

"But there are things the computer can't know or see.  Hidden Horses.  Things we can see sometimes if we look hard enough, and are aware of what's happening."

He drifted back up from his reverie for a second.  "Hidden Horses," he murmured, tasting the phrase.  "Exactly.  Which means?"

"All the people who rely on computers are going to drive the odds down on the computer's horses, which means the odds go up on yours."

"Eureka," he smiled, his eyes still closed.  Then, in a whispery kind of reverent voice he began reciting numbers, which I soon realized were the tickets he'd played.

"One, eight," he prayed.  "Frequently.  One, eight, all.  Several.  One, eight, favorites, all.  Many times."

"Wow," I said.

"Wow, indeed," he sighed deeply, opened his pale blue eyes, and knocked off the rest of the scotch.

"God bless the computer!"

Understanding the vagaries of past performances.

I'm going to assume you know at least the rudiments of past performances.  If not, you can find exhaustive explanations at BRIS, The Daily Racing Form, Trackmaster, etc., and in most track programs; I won't take up the space to do it here.  Suffice to say you must understand the data before you can use it properly.  I will, however, discuss the value of certain handicapping tools, and how they've changed over the years.

Speed Figures.

These have gone through monstrous metamorphosis in the past few years.  Once upon a time you needed to be an MIT grad to figure out how fast horses really ran, and how their speed compared from track to track and distance to distance.

Today BRIS figures do that for you, as do Beyer numbers, Handicapper's Daily, Trackmaster, The Sheets, and dozens of other computer information resources.  How accurately they do it is anyone's guess - compare the Beyers to BRIS to Handicapper's Daily figures someday and see for yourself.

At any rate, any of them is probably more accurate than whatever you or I could come up with.  The problem with all of them is there's enough margin for error in the raw information to drive a statistician (or an accountant) nuts.

Points of Call.

A "point of call" tells you where the horses were in relation to all the other horses during a race.  A "1" means a horse was in front, a "4" means he was in fourth behind the leader, and so on.  They're called points of call because a "caller" watches the race through binoculars and "calls" out the various horses' positions at five points on the track.  The Past Performances label these points 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th calls.  Most handicappers refer to them as "out of the gate," 1st, 2nd, 3rd (or "stretch" call), and "finish."  That's the terminology we'll use.

Some handicappers think these points of call are supposed to tell you with pinpoint accuracy where the horses were during the race.  Right.  Imagine someone (I don't care if he's Superman) watching as many as 14 horses running 40 miles an hour around a track a couple of hundred yards away and not only calling out their positions, but also estimating how far they are behind the horse in front of them.  You figure out how accurate that can be.

To make things worse, the exact length of a "length" is up for discussion, as is the length of time it takes a horse to run it.  In some circles it's still believed that a horse runs a "length" in 1/5th of a second: five "lengths" making up one second.  It's very convenient for doing the math, but seriously inaccurate.

Today it's accepted that horses run a "length" in closer to 1/6th of a second - six "lengths" to the second.  Which doesn't mean that much because horses' speed varies substantially during the course of a race.  At two furlongs he might be running 60 feet per second, or six and a half "lengths" per second.  At five furlongs he might be running 56 feet per second, at 8 furlongs 53 feet per second, or 6.25 lengths per second and 5.9 lengths per second, respectively.

These seem small inaccuracies, but when you are attempting to predict how fast a horse will run a mile today based on his pace and final time in his last race they can become huge.  A mile is, after all, about 500 "lengths," so you can imagine how the mistakes multiply.

Adding to the muddle is the comparatively huge amount of "slack" involved.  A fifth of a second, of course, is 0.2 seconds.  But suppose one horse runs 2 furlongs in 23.01 seconds, and another runs it in 23.39 seconds.  Both are noted in the PP's as 23 and a fifth, even though Horse "A" beat Horse "B" by almost half a length.

My Uncle Will believes if you base your handicapping on these "exact" figures you're in for a pounding.  His cardinal rule is: whatever calculations you make, base them on exact quantities first,  less exact quantities second, and unknowns last.

Exact quantities include horse, jockey, and trainer records, the age and sex of the horse, the length of the race, the race conditions, post position, the weight the horse carries, days since last race, positions at points of call, the

winner's final time, etc., etc.

Less exact quantities include beaten lengths at points of call, class, and other factors that require a relatively small amount of judgment.

Unknown quantities abound, including primarily speed figures, variants, and internal times.

Uncle Will is not a "figure" player, basing his choices on speed and pace figures.  He is an angle player.  You should be, too.  Because every race that was ever run was won with an angle.

## Where did that horse come from, anyway?

It is Sunday, November 20, 1994.  The end of a boring and unproductive day.  At least for me.  I can rarely tell what kind of day my Uncle Will has had simply by looking at him.  He tells me it's because he doesn't put his ego on the horse.  We'll cover that later.  Anyway, since I'm down to my last nine bucks, I idly look at the Form, hoping a huge longshot will jump out at me.  Remington Park's running.  The next race is the  eighth -- the Cimarron Stakes.

Bayou Bird, a horse who won her last by clear daylight, is the favorite.  She's the best horse by just about every important factor -- speed, class, pace, form, etc. -- but she's 2-5 on the board.

I muse.  $9 to win on a 2-5 shot will bring me back, um, maybe $13.  Whoopee.

My Uncle Will is through for the day.  I can tell because he's leaning back in his chair, savoring his Glenlivet, with the tiny hint of a smile twiddling his lips.

And I'm looking at his Form.

"Did you look at Remington?" I ask hopefully?

"I did," he answers.  "But your question makes me fear for your future as a handicapper."

Oh, fine.  All I want is a longshot and I feel a lecture coming on.  "All I asked..." I start.

"Is that my Form?"

"Well, yeah, but..."

"Is it open to the eighth at Remington?  The Cimarron Stakes?"

"Okay.  Point made.  I should have realized you looked at it."

"Do you know how important the powers of observation are in handicapping?"

"I think we've discussed that about 4 million times."

"And still you don't observe.  You look but you don't see.  You..."

"All right, already," I interrupt.  "I got it.  What I want to know is if you think Bayou Bird is going to humiliate everyone else in that race like the crowd thinks she will."

"Probably."  He glances at the board.  "She might even be worth her odds."

That's enough for me.  I start toward Fingers' window, my $9 burning in my pocket.

"However, I'm not certain she merits quite that kind of respect, particularly since this is only her second race."

I sit back down again.

Uncle Will taps the Form with a long, slender, slightly crooked finger. "Also," he sighs, "a familiar name beckons me from the one-hole."

"Miss Abbott?"

He points toward his notebook, where he keeps all kinds of important information gleaned primarily from watching the races - his "trip handicapping" stuff.

"I remember Miss Abbott from yesterday, when the trainer scratched her out of a maiden race she would surely have dominated."

I look at her past performance.  She's only run one race.  Came in second, even though she got a bad trip.  Who beat her?  Bayou Bird.

"So do I hear you saying if this horse was good enough to come in second to the odds-on favorite in their first race, even with a bad trip, why isn't she good enough to do it again today?"

Uncle Will was waving at Irish, the bartender.

"My sentiments exactly," he said.  "And what happens if Bayou Bird gets the bad trip this time?"

I look at the odds.  Miss Abbott is 21 to one.  Now I know where that little smile is coming from.  I leap out of my chair, knock over three people getting to the window, and put my money on Miss Abbot: $5 to win, $4 to place.  Then I think what the hell, if she comes in second again to a 2-5 favorite, she won't pay squat.  So I cancel my $4 place ticket and put the whole $9 on her to win.

Which she does, and pays $44 for each two dollar bet, putting $198 in my grateful pocket.  Above the roar of tickets being ripped in half, all I can hear from the crowd is "Where in the heck did that one-horse come from?  Who was that one-horse, anyway?"

My Uncle Will's smirk has grown almost to the proportions of a real smile.

I wave at Irish again for more Scotch.  "My treat."

"Okay," I ask, when my insides slow down.  "So why didn't the crowd have that horse?  Just inobservant?"

"Unobservant, yes.  And lazy.  And that's your pathway to riches, my boy.  The crowd is only right a third of the time.  The other two-thirds they're wrong, and sometimes they're catastrophically wrong.  This time they chose the easiest angle -- the big win by Bayou Bird in her last race.  So they bet their rent money on a horse to win that came in third and paid $2.20 to show."

"Oh, the old 'bet on the wrong horse' angle."

"Billy, Billy.  Tell me again: what is an angle?"

I sigh and repeat the mantra for the thousandth time: "An angle is an irregularity in a horse's past performance that leads you to believe he or she will run better or worse than his or her figures would indicate today."

"And what irregularity are we discussing in the 8th at Remington?"

"Miss Abbot's bad trip?"

My answer causes no visual reaction.  Uncle Will merely looks at me for what seems like a half an hour, then shakes his head slowly, as if watching the remnants of a terrible automobile accident, and waves at Irish again.

"Not her bad trip," I said, retrieving my answer as quickly as possible.

Irish brings the Glenlivet.  My Uncle Will takes a small sip and rolls it around on his tongue.  He swallows, then says "Was there not anything else about Miss Abbot that caused us to seriously consider her in this race?  I know it was all of five minutes ago that we talked about it, but wrack your tiny brain and see if you can remember."

"The scratch!" I blurt out, causing a few heads to turn in our direction.  "That's one of your angles!  The significant trainer scratch!"

"Is it now?  What a surprise."  He pulls his solid gold Bulova from his vest pocket and peers at it.

"Your sister will be expecting us," he says.

"But... but... we've still got the ninth at Remington.  And..."

"The greatest lesson of all," Uncle Will says, pushing his chair back.

"Know when to quit."

The Killer Angle

Horseracing is full of opportunities like that.  In fact, almost every time I go to the track I find at least one.  To take advantage of them, you must be able to identify the most important factor - what Uncle Will called the "Killer" angle -- in the race before the race starts.  This is the route to the Hidden Horse.

What distinguishes an "angle" from a "Killer Angle?"  An "angle" suggests the horse might run better - or worse - than his or her figures indicate.  A Killer Angle is an irregularity in a horse's past performance that leads you to believe he or she will run significantly better than any other horse in the race today.

This is an important distinction.  You've probably seen hundreds of "angles" defined over the years, starting with the 77 or so in the back of Ainslie's first book.  Some use math, others use trainers, jockeys, surface switching, class switching, arcane mixtures of positions at different points of call in their recent races, speed figures... the list is endless.

So what do you do, scan each horse in every race for a thousand or so angles before you bet?  Not unless you're HAL.  And even if HAL could be programmed to find them all, it wouldn't tell you which one is the most important - the Killer Angle - in a given race.

You simply can't consistently find the Killer Angle with computer programs. At least not any I've ever seen or used, and I've seen plenty.  In fact, you can't do it with any conventional form of comparative handicapping.

Let me explain.  I've been in the figure trap.  Before I finally decided Uncle Will knew more about it than I did, I handicapped the horses with reams of lined yellow paper, calculators, slide rules, Daily Racing Forms, probability tables, par

figures, linear regression tables, and you name it.  Going to the track with me was about as much fun as watching a semi-bright sophomore take his Aerospace Engineering final.  I used everything from the law of gravity to quantum theory to rate the horses.  I spent an enormous amount of time, money, and energy.  I read every handicapping book I could find, from Ainslie to Dr. Z.  I wrote computer programs NASA would have been proud of.  I often spent 12 hours or more handicapping a single race card.

Occasionally I won; more often I didn't.  Sometimes a horse who could win running backwards lost bigtime.  And every once in a while a horse won who, according to the statistics, couldn't possibly win unless all the other animals in the race dropped dead.

And nothing -- absolutely nothing -- worked consistently.

Years of this slowly took their toll, emphasized by watching my Uncle Will's strolls to the window after a race, and the exchange of paper that took place.  And finally I began to understand his philosophy.  More than understand, I began to see the truth in it.  The truth of the Killer Angle and the Hidden Horse.

It sounds simple, and it is.  But as Uncle Will often said to my non-understanding ears, it is the basic truth you must learn and believe if you are ever going to be a consistent winner at the track.  Sure, you can hit a horse here and there with luck, or with good handicapping, or by whatever method "works" for you.  But you will never be able to win predictably unless you always keep this truth in the front of your mind.

**Every race that ever has been run or ever will be run was won with "a Killer Angle."**

Write that down and paste it in your hat.  Put it on the refrigerator.  Stick it in your wallet.  Glue it on your computer.  Inscribe it on the inside of your eyelids.  It's the only infallible truth in handicapping.  It is Uncle Will's First Law.

Sometimes the Killer Angle is excruciatingly obvious, as when a horse is simply faster than all the others in the race, or a better distance runner, or when a horse's class sticks out like a sore thumb (imagine Cigar in with a bunch of $2,500 claiming horses.)

When the angle is that obvious, everyone at the race track sees it, and the horse gets bet down past the point of prudence.  Worse yet, sometimes those obvious angles are dominated by another, less obvious angle (the Killer Angle) and the "sure" winner finishes back in the pack (remember Dare and Go? Volponi?  Funny Cide?).  The smart bettor's job -- find the most important angle in the race -- the Killer Angle.  It's not something as simple as "bet on the gray." Nor is it so complex you have to be a rocket scientist to understand it and make it work.

In fact, you can forget about finish times, and turn times, and internal

times, and feet per second, and all that balderdash.  Why?  Because all that nonsense depends on exact measurements, and as we've seen there is no such thing in horseracing.  Do you actually think you can handicap for a tenth of a second variance?  Forget it.  And forget the endless hours it takes you to figure up all that stuff.  You don't need it.  You don't want it.  It doesn't work.  It can't work, because you can never get information accurate enough to make it work.

Think of the guys with the big cigars who bet $1,000 or more on a race.  They have access to information most of us never dreamed of having.  Do you honestly think they'd let a horse go off at 21-1 if they thought he or she had the slightest chance of winning?

And even if all that stuff did work -- even if you could find beyond a shadow of a doubt the fastest horse in the race -- would that mean you've found the winner?  I've got a closet full of losing tickets to prove it wouldn't.  The Killer Angle relies on things much more powerful than whether one horse ran two-tenths of a second faster than another in their last race.

Which brings up Uncle Will's Second Law.

"You are not trying to find the fastest horse in the race, or the classiest, or the most consistent, or the one with the best form, or the one with the most early speed, or the best closer."

**"You are trying to find which horse will cross the finish line first."**

Another deceptively simple truth.  The fact is, we often lose ourselves in "meaningful" statistics, and can't see the tree for the forest.  But to be a winner, we must find that tree -- that winning horse -- and there is only one way to find it -- by determining which horse demonstrates the most powerful angle: the Killer Angle.

During the years I've spent at the track with Uncle Will, he's described a number of positive angles, any one of which could become a "killer" angle, depending on the characteristics of a specific race.  At the very least, they can make a good bet better. He's also described some negative angles, any one of which may make a horse a bad bet.

We'll look at those angles in detail as we go, with examples, but first let's look at what my Uncle Will called "The Mother of Angles."  Predictable Patterns Of  Performance.  PPOP for short.

## PPOP: Predictable Patterns Of Performance

The OutRider was still asleep as I walked in on a warm June morning. Here and there shadows moved - Irish and his crew preparing for the day ahead. A mixture of familiar smells greeted me as I walked past the bar to the Paddock - where the action took place. Coffee, stale beer, Lysol, and a touch of sweat. Uncle Will was sitting in his usual spot, back against the wall, with a commanding view of the big-screen TV monitors on which the day's racing would appear.

It was the seventh of June, 1997. Today's plate was full, with sixteen tracks available via simulcast. My accountant's case was bursting at the seams with printouts. I heaved it up on a chair at Uncle Will's table and sat down, ignoring the contemptuous look he gave my long hours of work.

"Got anything hot?" I asked, just to irritate him even more.

He closed his Form and leaned back, eyeing me.

"Actually, I've been waiting for your erudite electronic evaluations of the equinity. I see you've brought them. Who do *you* have that's hot?"

"How would I know? I haven't even looked at them yet. Took me three hours just to download the data, put it in my database, run it through my program, sort..."

"Enough, enough," he said. Looking toward the ceiling, he addressed the Big Steward in the Sky.

"Three hours spent already and he doesn't even know who's running."

The next few hours were spent in the usual way, with me making frequent last-minute dashes to the window, placing my bets, and then tearing up the tickets.

My Uncle Will, on the other hand, walked slowly and purposefully to the window three or four times an hour, often returning with that infuriating little smile as he tucked a few more bills into his vest pocket "safe."

Also as usual, as my funds dwindled away, I kept sneaking peeks at Uncle Will's Form, trying to figure out what in the hell he was doing.  There were weird numbers by the name of every horse, like .046, and 1.34, but I couldn't see any rhyme or reason to them.  Finally, down to my last twenty, I broke down and asked.

"You wouldn't be interested," he said.  "It's just a simple manual system.  No computers involved."

"So this is fun for you?  Watching me die slowly every day, twisting in the wind like..."

"Enough.  I would be happy to show you, but I really do believe it's too simple for you.  You wouldn't trust it.  Wouldn't take the time to work with it.  Wouldn't even sit still long enough to learn it."

"Please," I pleaded.  "I'm desperate."

"If you insist," he finally yielded, leaning back in his chair and looking into the distance.

"A few months ago," he began, "we saw a classic example of the most important factor influencing any thoroughbred horse race.  When DARE AND GO went around CIGAR in the final furlong, it was a heart-wrenching example of how an unsuitable pace can defeat even the best horse of the era."

"Oh.  Pace stuff.  I've got all that in my..."

Uncle Will raised an imperious index finger.

"Without question," he continued, "the pace of the race is the crucial factor - in any race.  But I believe horses have a comfort zone they must stay in to win – at least, in a competitive race.  When a lone speed horse gets out in front and wins, he does it by establishing a pace that works for him – staying in his comfort zone and requiring other horses in the race to exceed theirs.  If he exceeds his own comfort zone by going too fast, he burns up and is passed in the stretch.  Too slow, and he allows the closers to stay in their comfort zones, giving them a chance to catch him."

"That's not to say races are not decided by many, many other factors.  But all of these other factors, or angles, from blinkers to buzzers to workouts to internal times, work because of their effect on the pace and/or the horse's adaptation to it."

"Pace makes the race," I said.

"A brilliant summation.  I must remember to laminate that and carry it in my wallet.  At any rate, given that truth, our initial task in handicapping a race is to discern the most likely pace scenario, and then determine who will benefit

most from it.  Many handicappers - like you - try to do this with complex computer programs, or with slide rules, or calculators and reams of paper, determining such things as turn-time, final fractions, initial fractions, etc., etc."

Uncle Will opened his notebook as he spoke.

"Since I formulated this little system, all that has become largely unnecessary for me.  It shows you the single most important aspect of handicapping: Predictable Patterns Of Performance for all the horses in the race.  So I call it PPOP.

"You don't simply see how your horse will run today, you see how he or she will run against all the other horses in the race.  And that's how you pick winners -- by finding the one horse among all the others who's right for the race, who displays the right strengths in the right combination to win this particular race."

He peered at me over the edge of his notebook.

"In a way, it's like having a videotape of the race -- before it starts."

"Okay," I said.  "I'm panting already.  So show me."

Uncle Will opened the form and spread it out on the table before him, pulling an ancient gold Waterman out of his vest pocket.

"Many years ago Bill Quirin invented a handicapping tool he called 'Speed points,' which used a horse's position and beaten lengths at the first point of call to determine which horse would get the early lead, and therefore which horse would be the speed factor in the race."

"Yeah.  I've got that in my program.  Somewhere."

He nodded.  "Somewhere," he said.  "My PPOP System simply takes Quirin's excellent idea and puts a new spin on it -- a way to use the points of call to define a pace pattern for each horse."

He pointed at his notebook with his pen.  It was open to Prairie Meadows 7th race: The Heartland Derby.

"It's ridiculously easy. Just add up each horse's position at the second point of call, and at the finish, in its last five races.  The result is two figures I call Pace Points."

Putting his pen by Crafty One, he said "In his last five races, this horse, for instance, was 7th, 4th, 3rd, 5th, and 5th at four furlongs.  Add those together and he gets a 24 for position number one - what I call 'P1.'  He finished 1st, 2nd, 2nd, 2nd, and 3rd in those races, giving him a 10 for position two (P2)."

"If he was first at both calls in all his five races, he'd get a perfect score -- 5/5.  Worst possible - figuring an outside possibility of 12 horses in each race -- would be somewhere in the neighborhood of 60/60."

He tapped the form and nodded at me.

"This gives you -- in about two minutes per race -- a thumbnail of each

horse's running style and competitiveness. You now have each horse's race shape -- the way it can be expected to run today's race based on recent past performances. If the first number is small, the horse is a front-runner. The smaller the first number, the more he or she needs the lead."

"If the second number is bigger than the first number, the horse is a fader. If the second number is smaller then the first number, the horse is a closer. The more contrast there is between the two numbers, the better defined the horse's running style."

He raised his blue eyes up to mine for a moment and tapped the table with his fingers for emphasis.

"Remember, however, these pace points have relatively little to do with speed. If the figures show the horse to be an early speed horse, a fader, or a closer, they're showing how the horse has run against a certain level of competition in the past. He or she may have been running in very small races, tougher races, easier races, at tougher or easier tracks, against much faster or slower horses."

"Once you've determined the PPOP, you need to determine how the horse will run against the kind of competition it will be facing today. For instance, if one of the horses shows a spectacular PPOP, but has been running at a tiny track against untalented stock, you must take that into consideration. That's an exaggerated example, but rarely do you find a race in which all the races of all the horses were run at the same track and class level."

"Even so, the Predictable Patterns Of Performance will generally hold true; a closer is a closer and an early speed horse an early speed horse, no matter where they run or at what level. You can adjust for differences in track, class, and distance by using only ratable races whenever possible -- those races in the horse's past performances run at the same or similar class, distance, surface, and class."

"Ideally, the horse you are rating has run five recent races at today's exact distance, track, and purse size."

"Which happens about as often as a paid vacation," I broke in.

"Exactly," Uncle Will nodded. "So we have to deal with reality. To refine the system a little further, try to throw out races that won't tell you what the horse is going to do today. If today's race is on the dirt, start by throwing out the turf races, and vice versa. If today's race is a sprint, throw out the routes, and vice versa."

"If today's race is a $5,000 claiming race, and nine out of ten races in the horse's past performances are $5,000 claiming races, and the horse has one $20,000 allowance in which it ran like a pig, throw out the $20,000 race."

"If the horse was shut off at the gate, or had enough trouble to make that

race identifiably unrepresentative, don't use it.  In other words, try to throw out the unusual races, and use races that give you a fair picture of the way the horse runs under today's circumstances."

"Okay," I asked, "What if you have a horse running on the turf for the first time?"

"You have no choice but to use his dirt races."

"And a sprinter in his first route, or vice versa?"

"You must use what you have.  Sometimes you have a horse with only five races in his or her past performances, and they're a mixture of turf, route, sprint, dirt, allowance, claiming, and so forth.  Use the five races, anyway.  Fortunately, the tendencies are often the same.  Closers are closers, early speed horses are early speed horses, on the dirt, on the grass, whether the races are short or long. Not always, of course, but it's remarkable how horses tend to run the same way no matter what the surface, distance, or price.  Not having representative races to look at, of course, makes it more difficult to know how well they'll run compared to the other horses."

"Okay.  That's fairly simple.  Now what about those other numbers you've got on your pp's?  The 1.34, and 0.65, and stuff like that?"

"That's what I call the Closing Factor.  Once you have determined the horse's Pace Points, you perform one very simple calculation on each horse. Divide the Pace Point figure at second call (P1) by the Pace Point figure at the finish (P2).  In other words, if you have a horse whose Pace Points at second call are 15, and at the final point of call are 10 (15/10), just divide 15 by 10, which gives you a Closing Factor of 1.5."

"A closing factor of .50 or less means the horse must have the lead. Between .50 and 1.0 are horses who need and/or want the lead.  Between 1.0 and 1.5 are moderate closers, who usually need to be toward the front in order to catch the leaders.  Between 1.5 and 2.0 are sustained closers.  Horses with a Closing Factor above 2.0 tend to be deep closers - the higher above 2.0 the deeper the closer."

"You'll find certain closing factors tend to be more suitable for different lengths of races.  The first thing to watch for is the presence of lone early speed. If there's only one horse with a Closing Factor of .50 or less, and the rest of the field is over 1.5, you have the possibility of lone or dominant speed.  Based on my experience to date, I always bet such a horse to win unless it goes off at 3 to 1 or lower.  Always.  I've won hogsheads of money betting on such horses.  Even though they only win about 30% of the time, they often go off at ten to one or higher, so the ROI is outstanding.  I've also won many races by simply isolating the horse with the best Closing Factor for the conditions.  You'd be amazed, for instance, at how many routes are won by the horse with the highest Closing

Factor. And how many mammoth longshots just happen to have the lowest."

"Always look for horses that could "get away" on the front end. If you have more than one, the possibility for a speed duel exists. Of course, early speed is always important in the shorter sprints. When there's no lone or dominant speed, I find moderate closers have a tendency to win anything under a mile seventy on the dirt. Sustained closers -- 1.500 - 2.500 - have a tendency to win anything over a mile seventy on the dirt. And deep closers have a tendency to win marathons and on the grass. For some reason closers also tend to do well at odd distances - that is five and a half furlongs, six and a half furlongs, seven and a half, eight and a half, and so on. This, of course, is just a guideline."

He turned a few pages in his notebook to Prairie Meadows' Heartland Derby.

"For an example," he said, "we'll take the horses in the Heartland one by one so you get a clear understanding of the process.

I looked at the pp's. The Heartland was a 12-horse race for three-year-olds. The morning line liked the 12-1-10.

Uncle Will took his pen and drew a line through the 1, BATTLE MOUNTAIN's turf race.

"At second call in his last four races this horse has run 5th, 1st, 3rd, and 2nd, for a total of 11. He has finished 4th, 2nd, 1st and 1st, for a total of 8. His Pace Points are 11/8."

Beside the horse's name he wrote "11/8".

I did a little simple mental math, dividing the horse's total by the number of races Uncle Will was using.

"So he averages second or third at four furlongs, and second at the finish?"

"Exactly. A good horse who's been running in pretty good company. Since he has the rail, we'll expect him to go for the lead."

"Crossing out DAYJOB's turf race, we see he ran 1st, 1st, 5th and 3rd at second call, and 1st, 2nd, 4th, and 4th at the finish, giving him a 10/10. Starts out fairly fast but doesn't get faster. We expect he'll be fighting BATTLE MOUNTAIN for the lead."

"Throwing out THATSUSINTHEOLBEAN's 7-furlong race, we see he has run 5th, 9th, 11th, and 6th at four furlongs, and 5th, 11th, 5th, and 8th at the finish, for a 31/29. Forget him."

"BOY STUFF ran 3rd, 3rd, 7th, and 9th in his dirt races at 2nd call, and finished 1st, 1st, 3rd, and 5th, for a total of 22/10. A dedicated fairly deep closer."

"Throwing out BANJO's marathon, we see he's run 4th, 5th, 5th, and 3rd at second call, and 1st, 7th, 4th, and 1st at the finish, for a total of 17/13. Starts

out slow and doesn't close enough."

"Throwing out O'WINNIGAN's 1996 race, we see he has run 8th, 2nd, 1st, and 3rd at four furlongs, and 4th, 1st, 1st, and 1st at the finish, for a 14/7.  Starts out fairly quickly and closes very well.  A contender if there's a hot pace to run against."

"CRAFTY ONE has run 7th, 4th, 3rd, 5th, and 5th at four furlongs, and finished 1st, 2nd, 2nd, 2nd, and 3rd, giving him a 19/7.  The same kind of horse as O'WINNIGAN, except he starts a little farther back and closes a little better."

"In his three races, ULTIMATE RIDE has run 1st, 1st, and 5th at second call, and 1st, 1st, and 8th at the finish, for a 7/10.  Without his Oaklawn race he'd be a 2/2 for two.  Figure him to go for the lead and try to wire it; that's the only way he's shown he can win."

"RATHMAN has run 3rd, 1st, 4th, 3rd, and 7th at four furlongs in his five races, and 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 8th, and 5th at the finish, for an 11/14.  Might contribute to the pace, then fade."

"MAN THE SHIPP ran 3rd, 2nd, 2nd, 2nd, and 1st at second call in his last five, and 1st, 1st, 2nd, 1st, 2nd at the finish, for a 9/5.  He'll be among the leaders without a doubt."

"TEJANO RED gets 5th, 6th, 2nd, 3rd, and 2nd at second call, and 5th, 7th, 1st, 3rd, and 1st at the finish, giving him a 16/16.  Won't be there at four furlongs; won't be there at the finish."

"HAMILTON CREEK ran 8th, 7th, 5th, 7th, and 5th at second call in his last five, and 4th, 6th, 2nd, 1st, and 6th at the finish, for a 27/13.  A pretty deep closer.  He'll be at the back, trying to make it up on the turn."

With all the numbers neatly written in his program, Uncle Will pulled out a pocket calculator.

"Now we'll figure the "Closing Factor" for each horse.  This gives you a much better indication of how big a closer - or fader - he is.  Remember, we divide each horse's Pace Point at second call (P1) by their Pace Point at the finish (P2).  BATTLE MOUNTAIN's, for example, is 11 divided by 8, or 1.375.  Remember, any figure under 1.000 indicates a fader.  Any figure under 2.000 indicates a moderate closer.  Any figure over 2.000 indicates a serious closer.  Sometimes you'll have a powerful closer whose Pace Point figure at second call is so large it's doubtful he can get to the finish line first no matter how fast he closes.  This is especially true in shorter sprints.  Generally you'll find the longer the race, the bigger a closing factor you want."

"Time for you to go to work," he said, handing me the calculator.

When I'd finished, here's how they looked.

| HORSE | P1/P2 | Closing factor |
|---|---|---|
| BATTLE MOUNTAIN | 11/8 | 1.375 |
| DAYJOB | 10/10 | 1.000 |
| THATSUSINTHEOLBEAN | 31/29 | 1.068 |
| BOY STUFF | 22/10 | 2.200 |
| BANJO | 17/13 | 1.307 |
| O'WINNIGAN | 14/7 | 2.000 |
| CRAFTY ONE | 19/7 | 2.714 |
| ULTIMATE RIDE | 2/2 | 1.000 |
| RATHMAN | 11/14 | .7857 |
| MAN THE SHIPP | 9/5 | 1.800 |
| TEJANO RED | 16/16 | 1.000 |
| HAMILTON CREEK | 27/13 | 2.076 |

Peering over his silver-rimmed half glasses, Uncle Will analyzed the numbers.

"It appears we have five horses who will want the lead - DAYJOB, THATSUSINTHEOLBEAN, ULTIMATE RIDE, RATHMAN, and TEJANO RED."

"If this was six furlongs, we'd be interested in whether one of those horses could get in front and wire the field.  At this longer distance, since no obvious early speed horse pops out at us, we'll figure the speed will duel and die, letting the closers in.  If this was a mile, we'd be looking at the horses with closing factors between 1.000 and 1.500.  Since it's a mile and a sixteenth, we'll be looking at horses with the biggest closing factor."

"That leaves us with...?"  His voice trailed up in question.

"Uh," I instantly replied, "Uh, uh... BOY STUFF. O'WINNIGAN, CRAFTY ONE, and HAMILTON CREEK."

Uncle Will looked at the board.  The four horses were 49-1, 42-1, 12-1 and 6-1 respectively.

"Very well.  We believe the winner and the place horse will come from this group.  The show horse might be from this group also, but very often a speed horse or moderate closer will last long enough to get in for show, or sometimes even for place, depending on the track and the actual pace scenario."

"So how do we bet them?"  My mouth was watering from looking at the odds.  Suppose the old codger's calculations actually worked!

"Well, since racing is by nature unpredictable, and since by our reckoning all these horses are dramatic overlays, the safest thing to do is bet them all to win and place and box them all in an exacta/quinella and trifecta.  If we don't want to spend that much money on exotics, we might take the deepest closer

and put him over our three other horses in the exacta (or key him with them in the quinella) and trifecta, a total cost of only $12, but we're taking a much bigger chance in doing so, and eliminating the possibility of our two 40-1 shots coming in together."

Ultimately, we decided on win bets and an exacta box.  We also played the trifecta with our deepest closer on top.

How did the horses run?  CRAFTY ONE, unhurried early, blew by the pack in the stretch and won.  O'WINNIGAN stalked the pace and held second. BOY STUFF, seven wide, finished well for third.

CRAFTY ONE paid $26.20, $11.40, and $9.20

O'WINNIGAN paid $26.80 and $18.20

BOY STUFF paid $15.40 to show.

The exacta paid $537.80.  The trifecta paid $7,194.

I wet my pants.

The Killer Angle: Another example.

June 27, 1997. The 9th race at Churchill Downs.  Allowance for three-year-olds and up.  Seven horses in all.  Morning line selection: 2-3-6.  Let's run the system.

Including his two recent sprints, COUNT THE BLUES runs 2nd, 2nd, 2nd, 2nd, and 4th at four furlongs, and 2nd, 3rd, 1st, 5th, and 2nd at the finish.  A 12/12.  Gets out early and stays there.

COME ON GET HAPPY = 13/12.  Also gets out early and stays there.
RECOUP THE CASH = 11/27.  Gets out early and fades.
PLUNDERING = 28/18.  Gets out mid-to-back of the pack and closes.
STRAWBERRY WINE = 18/20.  Gets out mid-pack and fades.
DANVILLE = 27/19.  Gets out fifth or so and closes.
BUNKER HILL ROAD = 20/22.  Gets out fourth or so and fades a bit.
Here's how they look.

| HORSE | P1/P2 | Closing factor |
|---|---|---|
| COUNT THE BLUES | 12/12 | 1.000 |
| COME ON GET HAPPY | 13/12 | 1.083 |
| RECOUP THE CASH | 11/27 | .4074 |
| PLUNDERING | 27/18 | 1.500 |
| STRAWBERRY WINE | 18/20 | .9000 |
| DANVILLE | 27/19 | 1.421 |
| BUNKER HILL ROAD | 20/22 | .9090 |

It's a mile and a sixteenth.  Make your selections.

Right.  We have one horse who at .4074 must have the early lead to win: RECOUP THE CASH.  We have a gaggle of early speed types who can win on the front or coming from just off the pace.  Unfortunately for RECOUP THE CASH, two of those are inside of him, and they both seem to be faster than he is.  What we don't have is a come-from-out-of-the-clouds closer (a horse with a closing factor of 3.000 or higher.)  What we do have, then, is a bunch of early speed types and faders, and two fairly honest closers (PLUNDERING at 1.500 and DANVILLE at 1.421).

At a mile and a sixteenth, we figure both PLUNDERING and DANVILLE will go by the leaders in the stretch, benefiting from the speed duel.  A look at the board tells us they're at 16-1 and 13-1 respectively.

The bet: play both of them to win and place (show, too, if you want).  Box them in an exacta/quinella, and do a 4-6, 4-6, all trifecta, because we have absolutely no idea whatsoever who's going to come in third.  Unfortunately, this race did not have a trifecta, so we doubled up on the exacta and win bets.

The result: COUNT THE BLUES, COME ON GET HAPPY, and RECOUP THE CASH all got caught up in a speed duel.  Then BUNKER HILL ROAD made his try, actually got the lead for a brief moment, with STRAWBERRY WINE trying to keep up, then DANVILLE and PLUNDERING went by like the others were tied to a post.

DANVILLE paid $28.00, $10.40, and $7.00
PLUNDERING paid $12.20 and $6.80
BUNKER HILL ROAD held on for third and paid $9.60
The exacta paid $232
And all we did was box the two closers.

Now let's look at a sprint.

June 27, 1997.  Calder 5th race.  $5,000 claiming for fillies and mares.  12 horses.  Morning line: 5-11-4-7.  Here's how they look.

| HORSE | PP | Closing factor |
|---|---|---|
| JIVORY | 12/18 | .666 |
| HIGH TECH JOY | 16/18 | .888 |
| MOROCCAN JO | 32/28 | 1.142 |
| SKIFALETT | 16/12 | 1.333 |
| VENTURESOME LADY | 19/9 | 2.111 |
| ELLEN'S WING | 24/19 | 1.263 |
| POLITE ENERGY | 24/14 | 1.714 |
| SPANISH MAJORETTE | 7/13 | .538 |

| HINDU HANNAH | 18/11 | 1.636 |
| TRIPLE SEVEN | 19/20 | .950 |
| TARA BLUE EYES | 20/12 | 1.666 |
| OLYMPIX | 11/24 | .458 |

Got it figured?  Five early speed horses, none dominant.  Three moderate closers (under 1.5).  Three fairly deep closers, and one very deep closer.

Analysis: the speed will duel itself to a stop.  If it was a route I might come down all over VENTURESOME LADY.  However, since this is a long sprint with no dominant speed, it's highly probable a moderate closer will win, followed by the other closers.  We'll play the speed to run out.

The bet: This one's tough to pick, but my first selection for a win bet would be the best of the moderate closers (POLITE ENERGY).  Next I would have HINDU HANNAH, TARA BLUE EYES, and VENTURESOME LADY, then in the third leg of the trifecta I'd add SKIFALETT and ELLEN'S WING for sure, and perhaps SPANISH MAJORETTE - as the best speed horse -- as well, in case she got lucky.

$27.40, $12.40, $4.80
$4.00, $2.80
$3.00 to show
The exacta paid $119.80
The trifecta paid $459.20
The superfecta (with HIGHTECH JOY in 4th) paid $2,960.80

So there you are.  Predictable Patterns Of Performance.  A way to define the shape of an upcoming race and identify and separate the contenders, in about 30 seconds a horse.  With no computer, no downloads, no heavy-duty math, no speed figures, no turn-times, no smoke.

Use it religiously, bet intelligently, and you'll win.

Finding The Hidden Horse

To make money betting low-priced horses to win you must have a monster bankroll, nerves of steel, a cast-iron butt, and know more about horses than Bob Baffert.  That doesn't exactly describe me.  So because I can't wait a month to bet $10,000 on a 4-5 favorite, I have to find other ways to make money at the track. That necessarily involves the use of longshots.

What produces longshots?  As Uncle Will often proclaimed, angles, of course.  And sometimes other things over which we - the punter - have no control.  Take the use of Lasix, the bleeder medication. I don't mean this as commentary or criticism, but in addition to Lasix's ability to help a horse breathe better, and therefore run faster, it's said Lasix can also cover up a variety of performance-enhancing drugs, which will make the horse run even better.  Whether that's true or not, horses who are put on Lasix for the first time outrun their odds (and the competition) with a frequency you can't ignore.  So first-time Lasix is an "angle."

So is stuffing sponges up a horse's nose.  The sad fact is, there is a contingent of unsavory people in horseracing - just as there is in any other field - who will bend the rule, cheat, lie, or do whatever else they have to do in order to win.  If you can't live with that, then you need to find a nice desert island somewhere.

Over the years Uncle Will developed some rules for finding angles, the most powerful of which he called "Killer Angles."  There are twelve of them, and you should check for each when you're looking for the hidden horse.  Don't throw up your hands; you can scan for these angles very, very quickly. In fact, you can

check a race in less than a minute to see which of them exist, and another very few minutes deciding which is most important in the particular race you're looking at.

In no particular order, they are:

- The Improving Three-Year-Old And Four-Year-Old
- Best Last-Race Speed Figure
- Best Speed Figure At The Distance/Surface
- The Ppot Horse (Pressed Pace From Outside And Tired Last Out
- The Lone Speed Horse, And Other Angles Associated With Early Speed,
- The Third Off A Layoff Horse
- Changes In Medication And/Or Equipment
- The Hidden Gain Horse
- The Significant Works Horse
- The Right Back Horse
- Top Jockey At Odds
- Top Trainer At Odds

Before I begin to define them, however, you must recognize two crucial facts.

First, while the general betting public may have heard of some of these angles, 99% don't understand or use them. That's good; it provides overlays.

Second, while many jockeys and trainers may have heard of some of these angles, most don't understand or use them, either. That's bad; it reduces the angles' reliability, and can cause you much pain and heartache.

I have ripped up hundreds of tickets on, for instance, dominant lone speed horses - some the fastest on paper by as much as two seconds at the four-furlong pole, and many of those on the rail in sprints - whose jockeys took the horse up and tried to rate it, thereby destroying any possible chance of winning. I don't know whether it's stupidity, dishonesty, or an out-of-condition horse, but it's just as maddening no matter what the cause. It's also a fact of racing life. Live with it.

If you've never done it seriously before (and even if you have), handicapping and betting with longshots can tax your brain, courage, and determination, because you'll be flying in the face of convention - betting on horses going off at 10-1, 20-1, 30-1, 40-1, even 100-1. Believe me, that takes guts.

The Improving 3 or 4 Year Old.

Okay, let's start our definitions with my very favorite angle: The improving three-year-old and four-year-old.  I can't say enough about how wonderful this bet can be.  I can and will, however, show you.  I first discovered this angle at Del Mar about four years ago.  It was June.  I noticed that a horse who had been off since December, who hadn't run a step as a two-year old, and who had always gone off at 100 to one or higher, showed some absolutely blistering recent works.  I wasn't smart enough to bet him then, but I would be now.

Incidentally, he paid over $300 to win and keyed some absolutely monstrous exotics, including a superfecta.  Keys to this angle:

1.  The horse must be a three- or four-year-old who hasn't run since last year, and last year is at least 90 days away, preferably longer.
2.  The horse must have at least four well-spaced works since the layoff, at least one of which is in the 12-second-per-furlong range.  These are the only inescapable requirements.

However, this becomes a better and better bet if...

- The horse's speed figures from last year are roughly comparable to the horses he's running against today.  This usually brings the price down somewhat.
- The horse has a top trainer and/or top jockey. (This also has a tendency to bring the price down.  However, a couple of years ago I hit a $1,000 pick three using a Calvin Borel/Bobby Barnett improving youngster whose speed figures and works were excellent.  He went off at 20-1.)

*Examples: Hollywood, Race 7, 7/10/98.*
*Saratoga, Race 7, 8/14/98.*

In the Hollywood race, SABOTEUR, the #1 horse, hadn't raced since November of '97.  His speed figures were among the best in the field.  His works were splendid.  He won and paid $6.40.  The 2 horse in the same race was third off a layoff and the inside speed.  He finished second; the exacta paid $54.40.

In the Saratoga race, Mike Smith was on HEAVENS EAST, the 4 horse, who hadn't raced since the previous December, which meant he'd had eight months of growth, and possible improvement.  His speed figures were competitive, and he had excellent works.  He won and paid $30.

Best time for this bet is from April through June. Look for a 3 or 4 year old who hasn't run since last year. If his/her speed figures are fairly competitive, and he/she has at least four good works on the form, at least one of them excellent (below 12 seconds per furlong), he/she's a live longshot. Especially if he/she has

a top trainer and/or top jockey.

### Best Last Race Speed Figure.

This is pretty simple. The horse that ran the fastest last time out has a good chance of doing so again today. Almost a 40% chance, the statistics say. If he/she goes off at 5-1 or better, he/she's automatically in contention to be your longshot. Check the horse's last race to see if there's a reason why it won't run as well this race: big class jump either way, got lucky last time, etc.  If you can't find a good reason, you've probably got your longshot.

*Example: Canterbury Downs, Race 2, 8/14/98.*

C L STORMY, the #2 horse, had the best last race speed figure by 3 points.  He was also third off a layoff, and 10-1 in the morning line.  He finished second to the favorite.

### Best Speed Figure for the Distance/Surface.

If this horse ran faster than anyone else on this distance and surface once, can he/she do it again?

*Example: Evangeline Downs, Race 7, 8/14/98.*

Eight races back, NATIVE WILLIE, the 7 horse, had the best speed figure on the form for this surface and distance.  He won and paid $23.

### Pressed Pace from Outside and Tired

Look for horses close to the rail in today's race who pressed the pace (within two lengths of the lead) in their last race from a far outside post position. Optimum example would be a horse who pressed the pace from the 12-hole and now breaks from the one-hole.

*Example: Penn National, Race 6, 4/1/98.*

BUNGALESE, the 1 horse, pressed the pace from the 3-hole in her last against tougher, and tired.  She has a work since then, Chin Sue stays on, and her early speed is at least as good as anyone else in the race.  Her morning line odds were 10-1.  She won.

### Lone Speed/Dominant Speed/Flashed Speed

The lone speed horse by definition must be the only speed in the race, and have a history of early speed domination at both the first and second call.  If

a horse has that, it's bettable, because there's a good chance it will set the early fractions and have enough left to hold off the late runners. If it didn't run first at the first two calls in its last race, it must have an excuse. Perhaps there was an even stronger and faster speed horse in the race. Perhaps there was a big-time speed horse inside this horse. Perhaps he or she was in the eleven hole and after a quick early fraction the jockey let the horse relax. Perhaps this horse is a router, and the last race was a sprint. Perhaps the horse is a dirt horse, and the last was on the turf. These horses can hide in the middle of the speed ratings; you must look at and compare fractions to find them.

The "flashed" speed horse doesn't have a recent history of early speed, as by definition he shows an uncharacteristic display of speed at the first call -- and perhaps the second call - not so much in terms of time, but of position. If he's been running in the back of the pack at first and second call for the past half-dozen races, and in his last race runs within a length or two of the leader, he's showing uncharacteristic early speed. This is often a sign that the horse has rounded into form, and is all that's required for the angle. However, it's usually a more powerful angle if the horse is making a significant change in surface and/or distance.

*Examples: Turfway, Race 8, 4/1/98*
*Evangeline, Race 8, 8/14/98.*

At Turfway, BADASIWANTABE, the 7 horse, flashed speed in his last race by running closer to the pace than in his previous race, even though the 4-furlong fraction was faster. He was also third off a layoff, and rising dramatically in class, from non-winners to an open claiming race, dropping nine pounds. He won, and paid $78.

### The dominant early speed horse.

This is a bit more difficult to isolate, but can result in big payoffs because more than one speed horse in a race confuses the crowd. This angle, of course, presupposes more than one horse with early speed. Use a variation of PPOP to see if one of the early speed horses shows dominant early speed:

- Look at the first and second points of call in each horse's last five races.
- Give him one point at each call for every time he's been in the top three and for every time he's been two lengths or less from the leader. Maximum possible points: ten. The higher the total, the more the horse will try for the lead.
- Once you've done this for every horse in the race, which takes

about ten seconds a horse, scan everyone's time at second call (4f in sprints, 6f in most routes) to see if a horse absolutely jumps out at you.  If not, there probably isn't a dominant early speed horse.  If one does, there probably is.

Suppose a scan of the past performances shows five out of the six horses in your race to be incapable of running faster than :46 at second call.  The sixth horse, ELMER'S LIGHTNING, shows he's capable of running a :45, or even a :44 and change, without crumpling.  Empty your wallet on ELMER'S LIGHTNING; he's the dominant early speed.

*Example: Evangeline, race 5, 8/14/98.*

SHIP OF FOOLS, the 2 horse, had only one horse who might match his early speed.  That was the 7, PATRIOT SHAM.  SHIP OF FOOLS was inside that other speed, and the PP's showed PATRIOT SHAM'S jockey, Gerard Melancon, definitely did not have a history of getting that horse out of the gate.  In my mind, that made SHIP OF FOOLS the dominant speed.  He won, and paid $13.  The 1 horse, a "Hidden Gainer," at 10-1 in the morning line, finished second.

 All of these early speed angles start to become more and more of a big-time bet:

- if your horse is inside any other early speed...
- if your horse has won a comparable race of this distance wire to wire in its past performances...
- if your horse was on the outside last race and now moves close to the rail... (Maybe you ought to stop and get just a little more money on your way to the track.)

## Third Off of a Layoff

Some horses run spectacularly well on their third race back from a layoff.  I'm not smart enough to know why, or even to be able to refine this angle very much, but I do know it helps when the horse has comparable or dominant speed figures in its past performances.  I use this angle in two ways: as reinforcement for a horse showing some other very positive handicapping factor, and as an almost must include in exotics.  I most certainly bet them if the horse also displays a second "killer" angle.  As for betting them "blind" - I hit a $3400 exacta at Penn National just by boxing in an absolutely undecipherable race the only four horses who were coming third off a layoff.

*Example: Lone Star, 7th race, 7/12/98.*

In this very interesting and profitable race, the 5, 6, and 1 horses were all third off a layoff. Their speed figures were competitive, they all had excellent trainer/jockey combinations, and they were 8-1, 6-1, and 4-1 in the morning line. The 8 horse had won by a neck on the turf in her last out; she figured to bounce. The 4 horse looked like the righteous favorite, with exceptional works and an excellent trainer/jockey combination.  Even though he hadn't run in almost two months, he figured to win. But he didn't even get in the money.  The 5, 6, and 1 came in first, second, and third.

### Changes in medication and/or equipment.

I think Joe Takach did a study some years ago that showed a significant profit betting Lasix-one horses without regard to any other form of handicapping. There are lots of explanations and arguments about why this is true, but who cares?  When they display a second Killer Angle, I almost always use them as at least one of my longshots.

*Example: LAD, Race 10, 9/4/98.*

RIO AMAZONAS, the 11 horse, was first-time Lasix, as were two other horses in this race, both of whom had run one race - miserably. He was a first time starter with decent works and a light rider.  Most all the other horses else had already disgraced themselves at least once.  He won, and paid $64.

As far as equipment changes go, I've found any equipment change is usually a positive sign because it means the trainer is trying to make the horse competitive.  However, I don't usually bet equipment changes unless some other important angle is present.

### The Hidden Gainer

Look for a horse that closed strongly on the leader at some point in its last race.  For instance, a horse that was 12 lengths behind at first call, and only five lengths behind at the second call.  Or 6 lengths behind in the stretch, and only 1 length behind at the finish. I've found stretch moves to be more predictive than other gains, and found them to be particularly predictive when the horse finishes within one length of the winner.

*Example: Evangeline, Race 9, 8/14/98.*

MAJESTY'S LEGEND, the 7 horse, closed like a freight train in his last race against the same kind of company to finish 1 length back of the leader.  He's 6-1 in the morning line.  His speed figures are competitive, even if the one and three horses' figures are a bit better.  He won, but only paid $6.

### The Significant Works Horse.

Simple.  If there's a horse with a really spectacular work since his/her last race -- much better than any other work in the field -- you have a possible live longshot.

*Example: Del Mar, Race 5 and Race 3, 9/4/98 (also an example of a class raise).*

Behold ENZO THE BAKER, the 2 horse, ridden by Corey Nakatani, who knows how to get a horse out.   A first time 2 year old with a 1:12.4 six-furlong work.  Is that evidence he can run fast against other horses?  Evidently.  He won and paid $12.  The best works on the page in the third race at Del Mar are easy to spot.  They belong to the 5 horse, DIGATREASURE, who is also taking a suspicious jump up in class.  He won and paid $92.

### The Right Back Horse.

Frequently, if a trainer runs a horse back within six days or less, he/she thinks the horse is ready to win. Sometimes he/she is right. Very frequently these horses run better than it looks like they have a right to.

*Example: Oaklawn, Race 3, 4/9/98.*

PEGAMARRA, the 2 horse, ran just six days ago, on April 3rd, as did the 1 and the 6.  She has a race under LeJeune, today's rider, that's as good as anyone else's.  She's the only horse that gained in the stretch in her last race except the 5 and 8, and they were both going a mile, while PEGAMARRA stretches out for the first time - at least in her last five races.  She also drops in class.  She won, and paid $38.

### Top Jockey/Trainer at Odds

Someone has figured out the best bet in racing is on a top jockey going off at odds of better than 5-1. And why not? He has a wider range of horses to choose from than other jockeys. Top trainers are, after all, top trainers. Their horses can wake up any time. When you have a top trainer and a top jockey going off at 5-1, you've got a double live longshot.

*Example: Oaklawn, race 7, 4/1/98.*

At this point of the season, Tim Doocy is Oaklawn's top jockey by a mile, and Jim Gaston, while not in the Oaklawn standings, is an excellent trainer. They are the connections for GOSHEN CONNECTION, the 11 horse, at 10-1 in

the morning line.  Lonnie Meche and Cole Norman, another excellent combination, have the 7 horse, the favorite.  The 11 has at least one race as good as anyone else on the page.  He placed to the seven.

Belmont: June 25, 1997

I walked into the OTB at about 11:30 Oklahoma time.  The first race at Belmont was due to go off at noon.  I looked at the program.  The 1A had been scratched.  No improving three or four-year-olds.  Four horses coming third off a layoff.  No medication or equipment changes.  As far as speed goes it looked like there was plenty in the race.  Since this was a sprint, I drew a line through the routes in the PP's and ran the modified System.  10/10 for the one, 9/8 for the two, 4/6 for the three, including a route, 2/3 for the four, 0/0 for the five, 6/10 for the six, 5/6 for the seven, 0/1 for the eight, and 10/9 for the nine.  Obviously the 1, 2, 6, and 9 all liked the front end.  So the question changed from "Is there a lone speed horse?" to "Is there a dominant speed horse?"  And if so, where is he?

Take a look.  Is this a race you'd look for a speed duel in and try to find a closer?  If so, you really don't understand the dominant/lone speed angle.

When you check the four-furlong times of all the horses that show a tendency toward early speed, what do you find?  Still nothing?

Okay.  The one and the six can't run faster than 46 without blowing up.  The three only did it once, when he broke his maiden.  The nine has shown he can run a 45 and finish, but only when he can get a clear lead, and he is well outside of the only other honest early speed horse, the two, who earlier this year ran 45 twice, from the 2- and 3-holes, in tougher races at Gulfstream, and held on pretty well.  I do not believe the nine will get the lead today, and will crash.  I consider a full second of lead speed on all the other speed horses in the race - except for the far outside horse, who I have scratched from contention - to be a

significant edge, particularly when the horse is close to a good rail.

The tote board shows him to be 11-1. A terrific value, because he's more like 3-1 to me. I look at him again, to see what other angles he might display. I'm not nuts about Mike Luzzi (sorry, Mike), but:

- the program shows Moschera to be the number two trainer at Belmont
- the horse shows a turf to dirt angle (not a Killer Angle, but can produce improvement)
- the horse is coming third off a layoff (but so are four others in the race)
- the horse pressed the pace and tired from the 10-hole last time out (this was the final key for me - the second true Killer Angle)
- the horse's back speed figures compare favorably with everyone else's in the race
- the horse was claimed for $20,000 in his last out at Aqueduct, and runs again today for that price (recent claims obviously show someone had faith in the horse, and when Moschera's that someone, you probably should pay attention)

How many angles do you need? At eleven to one, the two-horse is an absolutely fabulous overlay - one of the best value bets you'll ever find. The only question is, will Luzzi get him out and put him on the lead? And that's a question that won't be answered until the gates open.

When they do, KING'S COUNCILLOR comes out on top, with POSITIVE on his shoulder. At about the four-furlong pole KING'S COUNCILOR begins to feel the heat. POSITIVE goes by him, holds off a few wanna-be's, and wins convincingly. Just as he should have.

He also should have paid $6.80, but instead pays $22. When was the last time you found a $22 horse you were convinced would win as long as he got a decent ride and didn't step in a hole? Well, that's too long.

Good as the first race was, the third was even better. Much better. And the fifth was better yet. Much better. Much, much, MUCH better. Look at the PP's for those two races. Without calling up the results first, can you find the two HUMONGOUS winners I found today? Both demonstrate Killer Angles. Both paid HUGE!

Take a look. I'll give you a moment.

Dum de dum de doo doo de doo (humming to myself.)

Okay, let's go through it.

The third. A race where systematic handicapping is almost utterly non-predictive, making it a perfect race for a Killer Angle to dominate.

Speed figure guys might look at the five and the six. Early speed guys

might find four or five horses.  Looking for a closer?  There are some of those, too.  There are even some pretty hot works.  Some horses are going up in class, others down.  There's a recent claim, three turf-to-dirt horses, many jockey changes, horses switching distances... in a word, it's a mess.

Viewed in the light of Killer Angles, however, it begins to take shape a little.

1. No angles.
2. Showed uncharacteristic speed in her last, a month ago.  A couple of excellent works since.  Main speed?  We'll see.
3. No angles.
4. No angles.
5. Third off a layoff, dropping out of an allowance at Delaware.  Phil Teator, a bug jock up.
6. Showed a little uncharacteristic speed at first call in last, a sprint.  Only route was awful, but she was steadied in that one.  Switch to Mike Smith.
7. Showed uncharacteristic speed in her last, an allowance race on the turf ten days ago.  Has only been within three lengths of the lead in two other races in her PP's, both on turf.  Switches back to Frankie A.  Interesting: her PP's are almost all turf, but her only win was on the dirt - who knows where or when?
8. No angles.  She looks the main need-the-lead speed type, but buckles if she can't get a slow, clear lead.
9. Turf-to-dirt; that's about all.

So who do you like?  The only angle horses I see (other than turf-to-dirt) are the 2, 5, 6 and 7. I make the five 5-2, the six 5-1, the two 9-2, and the seven 10-1.  I don't give anyone else a chance.  (I only make a line on horses I think have a chance; I don't really care what the probabilities add up to.  So sue me, Barry.)

A few minutes before post the board has the 1 at 4-1, the 6 at 4-1, the 5 at 5-2, the 2 at 7-1, and the 7 at 19-1.

Only one horse offers any value to me: the seven at 19-1.

And here's where the hard part I told you about comes in.  The question is: do you have the guts to put your money on a 19-1 shot who doesn't have competitive speed figures, who is trained and ridden by connections that don't show up in the standings, and who's 1 for 23 lifetime, just because she shows a Killer Angle?

And the answer is: if it's an otherwise completely unpredictable race, why not?  Besides, she's also dropping to a new low class level, and shows a turf-to-dirt angle.

And the rationale for buying the ticket is: if you don't ever bet on a longshot, you ain't ever going to hit one.

The bet.  I've only got four horses in the race.  I could box them in an exacta, but that's not my style.  I'm a longshot kind of guy; I don't really care about an exotic that has a favorite on top.  So my exacta bet is to wheel the 2-7 over the 2-5-6-7.  This costs $12 for a $2 bet. I also bet the seven and the two to win and place.  Another $8 for a $2 bet.  My trifecta bet - had there been one - would have been to wheel the 2-7 over the 2-5-6-7 over all.  This would have cost $30 for a $2 bet.

The race.  The eight comes out hot, grabs the lead after a few hundred yards, and dies.  The seven wins and pays $66.50 and $22.40.  The five places; the two shows.  The exacta pays $278.50.

In the fourth, the five (improving 4-year-old) blew by the six (third off layoff) in the stretch for a 5-6 finish.  Even though they were the only two Killer Angles in the race, I didn't bet.  The exacta paid $30.

The fifth - a mile on the turf for maidens - was another race that was completely unpredictable by any method of systematic handicapping.  The figures told one story, turf breeding and performance another, recency and works another, and so on.

The Killer Angles looked like this.  Both the 1 and 1A were coming third off a layoff.  The 7 was running her first race as a three-year-old.  The 5 was L1 and blinkers on, the 11 was L1.  The 9 had finished well in a similar race a month back, and showed a spectacular workout 5 days ago - maybe too spectacular.  I saw nothing about any other horse in the race that would lead me to bet on it.  Do you?

The crowd figured the Bailey/Mott/workout combination of the 9 was good enough for them; she was at 6-5.  I wouldn't have bet it at that price with your money; too many unpredictables.

Although the seven's numbers weren't very competitive, she did show four works - three of them in the last two weeks, one of which was at least decent.  I really liked the connections: Hall of Famer (at least in my book) Scotty Schulhofer and Joe Bravo (the Russel Baze of Monmouth till he left for Belmont - an excellent rider and judge of horses); a daughter of CRYPTOCLEARANCE; bred in Kentucky by Schulhofer himself.

I looked at the board again.  The seven was hovering around 70-1, making the choice crystal clear.

The bet.  I simply couldn't find another decent angle in the race; if the seven won, I had no idea who'd come in second, much less third.  So I used the money I would have otherwise spent on exotics on her nose, with some backup money on her to place and show.

The results.  The seven won and paid $147, $42, and $26.

If I'd put her over the field in an exacta, it would have paid $739, but I didn't.  Still, I was happy with the result.

Did any serious player have this horse?  Did Andy Byer, Len Ragozin, James Quinn, Dick Mitchell, or Tom Brohamer have it?  Did anyone in the Trustee's room have it?  I don't think it would have paid $147 if they had.  And that's the beauty of Killer Angles.  Some days almost no one has your horse but you.

It was a day for Killer Angles.  I could go on and on, but will spare you.  I'll also tell you I went back on Friday, just two days later, and practically got skunked.  It was not a day for Killer Angles.  Like the Eagles' song says, "Don't ask me why."

Which brings up a crucial point.  When you have a horse that's a "mortal lock" going off at 1-5, does it win 100% of the time?  No.

Killer Angles don't win 100% of the time, either.  Or even 50% of the time.  But they do add a totally new dimension to betting.  CHLOE, in fact, the longest shot on the board, beat an even money favorite ridden by Jerry Bailey and trained by Bill Mott.

Let's say you bet $10 to win on that even-money (or less-than-even-money) favorite ten races in a row, and it comes in five times, as it should (but doesn't always).  You invest $100, and you get back $200.  A profit of $100.

Now suppose you bet $10 to win on a Killer Angle horse like Chloe ten times, and she only comes in once.  You invest $100, and you win $735.  A profit of $635.

That's why I look for Killer Angles before I look for anything else.  And why when I find them, I don't just plunk my money down.  I study the horses demonstrating Killer Angles very carefully, looking for other positive angles and/or factors.

I think the two-horse in the first at Belmont today was about as good an angle horse as you'll ever see.  He probably should have gone off no higher than 5-2, and paid $22.  That's the kind of horse you're looking for.

Another example is CZARVENA, in the 2nd at Arlington that same day, an improving blinkers-off 3-year-old positive-jockey-switch horse I thought should have gone off at 2-1, but who paid $28.

More often you'll find sweaty palms horses like CHLOE, with a very positive Killer Angle and a few other things to like about her.  They aren't "dependable." But the payoff is in enormous odds.  The fewer obvious things there are to like, the higher the price.  And, unfortunately, the less often they come in.  But they do come in.  And one's all you need to make your day - or maybe your year.

Which brings us to Uncle Will's negative angles. A group of red flags that might make a horse a bad win bet. Why? Because these horses lose much more than their share of races, and when they do win they go off at such low odds they don't provide any value.

Graduating maidens. The toughest class jump of all, from non-winners to winners. No bet, with this exception: when a graduating maiden's last speed figure is the best in the race, it shows a Killer Angle, and goes off at 5-1 or better. LOL finding one of those.

Older horses (7+) that have just run their personal best. No bet. They're tired.

Winner last race. No bet unless it shows a Killer Angle and the crowd's overlooking it.

Winner last two races. No bet, period, except in very, very rare circumstances.

Inexplicable class drops. A horse runs like a scalded dog in 6 allowance races at Santa Anita. Now - after a layoff -- it's running in a $10,000 claiming race at Lone Star. Forget it.

Claimers staying put. A horse wins a $10,000 claiming race by a length last out and comes back at the same level. Phooey. This is a little tricky because a horse can actually be moving up at that price, from non-winners of two to open claiming, for instance. I rarely bet them, anyway.

Girls against boys. No bet for me.

Horses that showed physical trouble in their last race, such as "pulled up lame," "vanned off," etc. I'll wait and watch this time, thanks.

Bandaged two-year-olds. Especially sporting bandages for the first time, and especially after a tough race last time out. I'll wait till the bandages come off.

Older first-time grass horses. If they didn't try the grass at 2, or, 3, or even four or five, the connections obviously didn't feel this horse had what it takes on the lawn. No bet.

First-time starters. The rule I heard somewhere is "never bet a first-time-starter to win who isn't bet down on the board." I think that's probably a good rule -- if you absolutely have to make a bet. I go one farther. I don't bet them at all, except in extremely rare circumstances - usually when the works show blistering speed, the horse is in the one-hole, the field promises to give it an easy lead, and the odds justify the bet.

Layoff horses. These horses also win less than their share. The exception, of course, is the improving 3- or 4-year-old.

Angry horses. These girls and guys have their ears flat on their head, they kick the stall, they buck, they try to bite the jockey, they refuse to go in the gate. Heck with 'em. I find most either come out running and die, or don't come

out at all.

      <u>Negative jockey switches</u>.  You've got a powerful horse in a race that seems written for him, a great trainer, and a one for thirty-seven jockey up. Forget it.  But don't miss those times when a horse shows a Killer Angle and the trainer puts a good no-name jockey on him - an Oliver Castillo, for instance.  That can mean big bucks, as it did on June 11 in the 9th at Churchill, when Oliver brought MESSER, the dominant early speed horse and a PPOT, in ahead of Shane Sellers, Pat Day, Willie Martinez, et al, and paid huge.

      There are exceptions to every rule, but in general: don't make serious win bets on horses showing these negative angles unless the horse also shows at least one potentially dominant Killer Angle (preferably two), and is going off at least twice as high as you think it should.  If you make the horse 3-1, don't bet it at lower than 6-1.

The Impossible Dream.

It's taken me almost twenty years, but I've finally given up my impossible dream, which was to invent, or develop, or find the magic key to handicapping: the simple angle, or system, or method, or program that would permit me to go to the races, enjoy myself, and come home a winner.

It started with my Apple IIe, and a program whose name escapes me, but which launched me on my glorious quest. Several hundred systems, thousands of dollars, countless hours of programming, and 20 years of handicapping later, I have thrown in the towel.

I can now say without fear of contradiction by anyone in this galaxy that there is no such magic key, no "simple little secret" (to quote the Broadway play) that can turn you into a guaranteed winner.

There is, however, a way to turn yourself into a winner.  The trouble is doing it's about as easy as quitting smoking or losing 25 pounds, and not too much more fun.  You may already know this system.  It's called "Taking the time and making the effort to become adept at handicapping and develop a plausible betting system, complete with long-range and daily goals, doing your homework, playing only those races in which you can to your satisfaction determine a reasonably sure winner, when that winner is going off at decent odds, betting it correctly, and writing your bets down and keeping good records."

That's the long name.  The short name is "Duhhh!  Everyone knows that."

True enough.  Trouble is, almost no one really believes it.  Admit it.  You're still out there, as I was, looking for the genie, the angel in disguise, tomorrow's newspaper, the time machine -- the magic secret.

Trust me on this. It doesn't exist. It ain't out there. Forget it. Stop wasting your time. If you must continue to go to the track and bet, as I must, get out of that dream world and get into reality. There is no R2D2 who will process the races, pick out the winners, and tell you what to bet. You must do it yourself. By yourself. For yourself.

If you can't afford to keep losing, and you can't develop the discipline to bet only on key races, according to a pre-defined, practical betting plan, and bet only when your horse is going off at decent odds, you have a serious problem. The only way to solve that problem is to somehow give up your impossible dream. You may not be able to. I held onto mine for years, believing the dream was more valuable than reality, believing the holy grail was actually out there, and one day I'd find it and change my life.

FORGET IT. Uncle Will finally made me see there are only two ways to win at the track. 1) Be disciplined, or 2) Be lucky. I've tried lucky, and it don't work for me.

How to turn yourself into a winner.

First let me explain why you are not currently a winner. A) you are not a good enough handicapper, B) you do not have a sensible betting plan, C) you play too many races, or D) some combination of A, B, and C.

The first step in turning yourself into a winner is specialization. In a typical ten-horse race, the Daily Racing Form provides five thousand or more specific bits of information for you to consider. Permutations of that information are infinite. That's what's so tough about picking winners: too much information to assimilate, analyze, and come up with an accurate prediction. Yeah, you already knew that. So what do you do? Specialize.

What has worked for you in the past? What kind of horse or race or angle do you feel most comfortable with? Class? Beyer figures? Early speed? Late speed? Horses coming off a layoff? Horses coming right back? Trainer/Jockey stats? It doesn't matter what angle you pick as long as it's a valid one. The validity check is a simple one. "Do horses displaying this angle win with some reliability?" If the answer is yes, it's probably a valid angle. Proving the validity is another matter. That's what you're about to do. Like My Uncle Will, I happen to like early speed, so that's where I concentrate.

Once you've picked your angle, learn everything you can about it. Why do horses showing that angle win when they win? Why do they lose when they lose? If you have access to past races and results, study them. If not, study current races. Bet if you must, even before you've become a specialist.

But *never bet anything except your angle*.

Suppose you've chosen the last highest Beyer figure as your area of specialization. How often does the last highest Beyer win? How often does it

lose?  What factors affect it (jockey switches, surface switches, distance switches, post positions, improving Beyers, irregular Beyer patterns, bounces, etc.)

There are books on the subject.  Read them.  Become a specialist in predicting the outcome of a race based on the last highest Beyer figure.  Devise a method and system of betting based on your learning and experience.  Study this angle and only this angle.  Handicap every race, make a prediction in every race based on your current state of knowledge, watch every race carefully, record and analyze the results, make bets if you must.

Your goal is development of a situational strategy -- an iron-clad set of rules to follow when betting this angle, including other factors that must be in place.  Keep modifying this strategy as experience dictates.

Your initial strategy, for instance, might be to bet the horse with the highest last Beyer if he's going off anywhere between three to one and nine to two, meaning a reasonable amount of confidence in him has been demonstrated, but not so much that he's been bet down to underlay status.  Your next modification would involve class drops, distance switches, pace evaluation or some other factor.

During this period, pay no attention to any other factors *except as they affect your area of specialization.*

In other words, if you've chosen the last highest Beyer as your angle, forget about early speed, closers, class, trainers, jockeys, and every other angle except for the influence it will have on your area of specialization.

Is your LHB a stone cold early speed horse, and are there three other early speed horses inside of him?  Is your horse a closer and is there just one early speed horse, and is he on the rail on a rail/speed biased track?  Did your LHB get lucky in his last race, or did he earn it in such a way that he's almost certain to equal or improve it today?

Focusing on this single angle allows you to see all the other information in a new light.  You no longer open the form to a race and ask yourself "Who's going to win this one?"  Instead, you ask yourself "Will the last highest Beyer (or whatever angle you've chosen) win this race?  You therefore look at jockey switches, and trainer tactics, and class, and distance, and early speed, and weight, and win/loss records, and all those other thousands of bits of information only as factors affecting your horse's chances to win the race.  This dramatically reduces the amount of information you have to analyze, and the resulting permutations (see *Occam's Razor).*

Once you have developed a reasonably complete situational strategy, you begin betting as a check to its accuracy.  When you make a bet during this period you only bet your horse to win.  This forces you to focus more intently, and to

make an ultimate decision.  Betting him to win and place, for instance, or boxing him in an exacta, is saying "I think he can win, but I'm worried some other horse might jump up and beat him."  This is copping out, and it's the certain, well-worn path to Loserdom.

Keep doing this until you can predict when your angle will win a race reliably enough to make win bets when the odds justify it so that over the course of 200 bets or so you find you have earned a minimum 10% ROI.  That is, if you've bet $1,000 over the course of those 200 races your bankroll now totals $1,100.  Can you do this making bets on paper, as many experts tell you to do?  No.  Sorry.  You must back up your selections by risking your own hard-earned dollars.

This, of course, requires you to keep records.  Simple.  Every time you make a bet, jot it down in the program or on the form.  You're not going to be making that many, so it's not that big a deal.  When the bet wins, write down the payoff.  When you get home, put your results into a notebook or computer.  Check the ROI every fifty races or so, to see how you're doing.  When it gets positive and stays positive over the course of two hundred bets, you're a guaranteed winner and can start confidently making win bets of whatever size you're comfortable with.

How long will it take you to reach this plateau?  It depends on you and where you are now.  If you're a brilliant handicapper, or a gifted and earnest pupil, it could happen very quickly.  All you require is patience and discipline.

Where do you go when you've reached that plateau?  Celebrate, luxuriously and unendingly.  You've won.

If you have the physical and mental resources, you may choose another angle and go through the entire process again, in hopes of finding one that's more profitable, or occurs more frequently.

I suggest, however, that once you find something that works, keep improving it, and honing it, and finding out more about it so you can make it even more accurate and reliable.

Then you can give up your day job.

One thing at a time: the specialty bet.

We'd been in the OutRider since eleven o'clock.  It was now almost six.  We'd seen Belmont, Churchill, Arlington, Louisiana Downs, Lone Star, and most of Hollywood, plus a few other, less famous tracks.  I'd started with my usual $200, which had dwindled to a lousy nine bucks, also as usual.  Oh, I'd hit a few - even had a $50 longshot winner - but it hadn't been enough to carry me.  And I still had my bar bill to pay, which meant adding to an already severely overloaded credit card.

My Uncle Will was leaning back in his chair, the Form spread out on the table in front of him, his eyes glued to the monitors overhead.  Or so I thought.

"Seventy years ago," he said, "my father - God rest his soul - gave me one of his most cherished possessions."

Not knowing whether or not the comment was meant for me, I didn't respond.  Sometimes Uncle Will talks to the world in general.

"It was made by the king's own smithy," he continued, his voice rising and falling like the morning mists in the highlands that were once his home.  "A steel blade, sharp as the tongue on the devil's wife, set in a handle of ebony as black and hard as her husband's heart, in a snow white ivory case."

"Does this have a point?" I finally interrupted.

"No, no point.  Just a blade fit to shave a king.  I though you might want to borrow it to slash your wrists."

"Thank you," I said.  "That is certainly taking the long way around to make a point."

"How much did you bring in your jumpers today?"

"You know.  Two hundred dollars."

"And now you're pretty much fresh out."

I grunted - the only response I could come up with.

"The nine horse looks a bit gimpy today," he noted, eyes still on the monitors.  "And I don't like the one's ears, or the way he's jerking his tail around."

"Jockey, master handicapper, and part-time veterinarian now, are you?"  I said it in a sneering sort of way, and immediately regretted it.

"Give me a minute," he replied.  "And we'll discuss your profligacy, and your rudeness."

He stood up and walked over to a betting machine, inserted a voucher, and punched buttons for about ten minutes - or so it seemed.  Then, stuffing an enormous wad of tickets in his vest pocket, he returned, a stern look on his leathered but pleasant enough face.

"So how many races have you bet today, Billy?"

"All of them," I answered - as I usually do - without thinking.

"All of them.  Let's see.  Maybe ninety races?  And your average bet is about $12 a race?  So you've put more than a thousand dollars through the window in the past six hours?  Made eight hundred dollars - four times your starting capital - and you're broke?"

"Why don't you rub it in," I asked, draining the last three drops of my last Fosters.

"Didn't you have a $50 winner in there somewhere?"

"Yeah, but I only had two across on him."

The look he handed me could have blackened tuna.  "Two across?"  He said it as if he were discussing Attila the Hun's bathroom habits.

"You bet two across on a horse?"

"Yeah, yeah, yeah," I said, motioning for Irish to bring me another beer.  What the hell, if the card bounced, the card bounced.

"I boxed him with the three favorites, but another longshot came with him."

"You boxed him?"  He made the word sound like it should only be spoken in men's locker rooms.  "Boxed him?"  He repeated, shaking his head, his eyes developing a slight film.

"Boxed him.  That means putting him with..."

"It's worse than I thought," Uncle Will sighed.

"Irish - " his eyes turned to the owner, a little Jewish guy who was halfway to the table with my beer.  "Irish - whiskebaugh, and plenty of it."  Irish spun on his heel and headed back to the bar.

"Billy," my Uncle Will said, peering at me with mournful eyes, "suppose you've found a horse that you believe will win the race unless it's struck by lightning coming out of the gate.  You look at the odds.  It's going off at one to

three.  Do you put two dollars on him to win?  Five dollars?"

"I put my whole bankroll on him."

"All nine dollars?"

"How'd you know I only had nine dollars left?"

"Wrong, Billy," he went on, ignoring the question.  "What you do is pass the race, and watch a wonderful horse humiliate his fellows."

"But I thought we were supposed to bet on overlays.  And a horse who wins unless lightning strikes him - isn't that an overlay at any price?"

"Quite true.  It is.  And the bank of Scotland might put their bankroll on him, but not you.  Because if you win, you'll only win twelve dollars."

"Thirty-three percent interest," I said quickly, calling on my accountant background.

"As I said, good for the bank of Scotland, bad for you.  For these reasons.  First, you bet every race.  Including 60 or so that aren't even remotely predictable.  Second, you'll bet your horse to win.  But that won't be good enough, so you'll look for a longshot or two that might come in with him and make the exacta pay a little better.  But maybe, just maybe there's a chance that one of those pitiful animals can get by your superhorse, or maybe your superhorse doesn't feel good today, so you box them.  Then you play a tiny little trifecta with your superhorse on top.  Won't pay much, but at least you'll have it.

Then when the superhorse wins, and your second horse doesn't come in second, you've won twelve dollars on your $9 win bet, lost $12 on your exacta box, and probably another $8 or so on your trifecta bet..  So with a runaway winner, you wind up losing eleven dollars."

"But if I don't bet the exacta, I..."

Uncle Will silenced me with a look.  "When was the last time you didn't bet an exacta?"

The drinks came.  Uncle Will took a sip of the amber fluid and rolled it around in his mouth, then swallowed and smacked his lips.  I chugged about half my Fosters.

"The point is that you -- like almost everyone else at the track -- lose money not so much by picking losers, but by not backing the horses you like enough, and by throwing money away in the exotics.

"But how do I know when I like a horse enough?  I mean, I liked that $50 winner, but how did I know he was going to win?  I mean, almost every race I like someone.  Most of 'em don't win.  So how do you know which horse to go heavy on?

"Very simple.  You need to specialize."

"Specialize," I repeated, like Jim Carrey in Dumb and Dumber."

"Specialize.  For instance.  What's your win percentage on early speed

horses?  Closers?  Drops in class?  Shippers?  What's your ROI on positive jockey switches, route to sprint horses, horses who are third off a layoff?"

"Zero," I replied disgustedly.  "Look, Uncle Will, no one knows all that shit."

"Three offenses in one short sentence.  A new record for you.  First, you know I don't favor that kind of language except in extremity.  Second, some people do know all that.  I, in fact, do.  Third, while your ROI may be zero at the moment, remember that in order to have played ninety races with $200 you somehow had to win more than eight hundred at the same time."

He glanced up at the monitor.  The horses were going in the gate.

"The trouble is you don't know where that money came from.  You haven't the foggiest notion of how good or bad a handicapper/bettor you are.  You go to the track with some money and you come home with more or less money at the end of the day, and you have absolutely no idea how you got from A to B."

The bell clanged and Uncle Will held up his hand, signaling a short intermission.  Or the end of the lesson.  I couldn't tell which.

I looked up.  The one-horse came out of the gate like his tail was on fire, followed closely by the seven, then by three or four others.  Then there was another bunch a little farther back, and two stragglers - the nine and the six.  They stayed just about that way until they reached the turn, except the one had stretched his lead to about four lengths over the seven, who was about six lengths ahead of the rest of the field.

"The one's gone," I said, not without some satisfaction, remembering Uncle Will had passed on it because of the ears and tail.

"The one is history," he said.  "He'll throw out his anchor in another furlong or so, and the seven will go by him like MacGregor at the Loch."  Whatever that meant.

They flashed the numbers and odds.  The one was eight to five; the seven was sixteen to one.  The nine was beginning to step it up from the back of the pack, cruising effortlessly by horses.  The one was now obviously tiring, letting the seven pull even with him.  The nine had closed to within a couple of lengths of the leaders.

"There's your winner," I said meanly.  "The gimpy nine."

By the time they came out of the turn the one had dropped completely out of it.  The nine, however, was right on the seven's shoulder and still coming.  "I hope you've got the nine," I said.

At the top of the stretch the jockey touched the seven with his whip and he accelerated like a BMW, drawing away from the nine and winning by a good three lengths.  The six, who had shared the rear with the nine in the beginning of the race, ran third.

Uncle Will reached in his vest pocket, took out his packet of tickets, and

started going through them.  He put seven or eight in a different pocket and sat the others on the table in front of him.  There must have been twelve or fifteen.

"This is the sixth race I've bet today," he said, a little dreamily.  "Missed half of them.  But still it's been a very, very good day."

"See, Billy - I am primarily an early speed handicapper.  That's my specialty bet."

"And you just bet speed horses."

"I bet *using* speed horses."

"That's what I said."

"No.  Sometimes I don't even bet the speed horse to win - just key it in exotic combinations.  Or even throw it out altogether.  By now, you see, I have a pretty fair idea when I look at a race of who the speed is, and how long it's going to last.  Your brain, limited by your own unfortunate experience, can't encompass the money I've made by isolating the speed and estimating what effect it would have on a race.

"Why early speed?"

"Because I seemed to have an affinity for it.  Because the lead horse has less opportunity to get into trouble.  And because the crowd loves closers.  A specialty bet does other things for you, too.  For instance, when you pick up a form you look at speed figures, and turn times, and pars and class and Crom knows what else, trying to figure out which one of those thousands of bits of information is going to be the most important.  No wonder you have a hard time.  When I pick up a form I don't look to see who's going to win the race.  I look to see who's going to get out in front and stay there.  Greatly simplifies things."

Somehow the words were beginning to make sense.  "Wait a minute," I said.  "A specialty bet.  That changes the whole way you look at the Form."

"No shit," said my Uncle Will.

No time like the present.  Except maybe yesterday.

"When your Da' was in school, they had atom bomb drills."

My Uncle Will was leaning back in his usual chair at the OutRider, eyeing me as I furiously thumbed through my computer printouts.

"My Da'?"  I asked, my mind on the fifth at Arlington.

"Your father.  The children would all get under their desks and cover their eyes.  In case the Rooshans dropped the bomb on New York."

"I didn't know that.  And it's fascinating.  Especially since today's the Fourth of July.  But I'm trying to keep up with my bets, here.  Can we have a history lesson later?"

"'Twas the bomb that started it all, you know.  The whole world changed when Truman dropped it on the Japs.  That's when we became a disposable society, because who knew how long anything would last after that?  When first-graders had to get under their desks, and were told not to look at the flash or they'd go blind - when they were aware that at any time of the day or night they and their parents and schoolmates could be blown up - when famous scientists told us they were worried the Bomb might start a chain reaction and blow away the world - how could anything seem permanent to that generation?"

By now I'd shifted to the second race at Lone Star.  "You're right," I agreed.  "I've said so myself.  What do you think about the six in the fifth at Churchill?"

"So we got stuck in the present.  But because tomorrow was a broken promise, we couldn't appreciate it.  Just had to start cramming as much as we could into right this very minute.  It's an odd contradiction, don't you think?  All we

have left is this very minute, but in our frenzy to do as much as we possibly can in it, we don't have time to appreciate it."

I put down my red Pentel extra fine point pen, shut my three-ring binders, and folded my arms.  "This is leading somewhere.  I can tell."

Uncle Will locked his fingers behind his head and stared into space.

"In the old days," he said dreamily, "we'd get up, have a leisurely breakfast studying the Form, choose our horses, go to the track, look at the scratches, check the shoes, look at the track condition, get a program, write the program numbers and jockey changes into our Form, check the morning line, and start isolating our bets for the day.  At most - when there were ten races - we had one hundred horses to consider."

He looked up at the dozen or so monitors, all alive with different tracks.

"With the benefit of that devil's work - television - we now have more than a thousand to consider every day.  Of course you can't make a reasonable decision about a thousand horses - each with thousands of bits of data to analyze.  So now comes another bit of the devil's work - the computer, into which all these thousands of pieces of data are fed, and out comes - supposedly - the winners."

"And?"  I was ready for the discourse to be over, so I could move on to my Hollywood printouts.  The carryover today was almost $700,000 and I hadn't even looked at it yet.

The pale blue eyes bored into me.  "Pick up your binders."

"But I..."

"Pick them up and follow me."

I followed him out the back door, to the alley, where sat a large dumpster, to which he imperiously pointed a long, thin finger.

"You're kidding, of course," I said.  But I knew he wasn't, so I dumped them in and we trooped back to our table.  I hadn't hit anything all day with them, anyway.

"Now what?" I asked, folding my arms petulantly across my chest.

"Now, God help you, you have to think  Right now.  This minute."

"Think.  Would you spell that for me?"

"What did you come here for today?"

"Specifically?"

"Specifically."

"Well, there's a seven hundred thousand dollar carryover at Hollywood.  I wanted to play the pick six."

"So why in God's name are you playing Belmont, and Arlington, and Churchill, and Louisiana Downs, and Thistledown, and Lone Star, and Calder, and..."

"What do you want me to do, just sit here and watch till the fifth race at Hollywood?"

"That's exactly what I want you to do.  That, and think.  And analyze anything that might have an effect on your goal - to hit the pick six."

He pulled a rumpled slip of paper out of his vest pocket and put it in front of me.

"Another thing they taught your Da' in school," he said.  "Do your homework.

The paper appeared to be a graph.  On the left hand side were numbers from zero to 20.  Across the bottom it was numbered from one to twelve.

"That's fascinating," I admitted.  "What is it?"

"It's an Excel chart of the winning post positions at Hollywood for the past ten days."

"An Excel chart?  From the great computer hater?"

"Look at it."

I did.  It said the one, two, and three holes had each won eleven times, the five, six, seven and eight had each won about seven or eight times, and the outside had hardly won at all.  The four had won eighteen times.

"Wow," I said, finally getting interested.  "Look at the four-hole."

"Look at the four-hole, indeed."

"That's more than a twenty percent win average.  For just one hole.  Which is statistically impossible."

"Is it, now?  But, then, there it is."

"Maybe we ought to just play a ticket with the four all the way across."

"That would be a start," he agreed.

I grabbed his Form and turned to Hollywood.  The program numbers were all written in, along with some other marks I didn't understand.  I filled out a ticket.  All fours.  "There," I said proudly.  "A two-dollar ticket, and if it comes in we'll win a million."

Uncle Will's eyes were closed.  So was his mouth.

"There's more?" I asked.

"Billy - do you actually think the pick six will come in all fours?"

"Of course not.  But what the hell, it's only a two-dollar ticket."

"First off, you haven't even filled out the ticket properly."

I looked at the ticket again.  All fours.  "It's all fours," I said, starting to whine.

"No, it's not.  In the ninth race you have a coupled entry.  The one-horse is in the four-hole.  The four-horse is in the three-hole.  So you have to also use the entry."

"Okay."  I added the one-hole in the ninth.  "There.  Done."

He was off in the Scottish Highlands again.  Or somewhere.  "If you think so, Billy," he whispered.

Obviously no more help was forthcoming from that direction.  Quietly, I snuck back out to the dumpster, found a table across the room from my non compos mentis relative, wiped the marinara sauce off my Hollywood printout, and sat down to figure out my real pick six.

The first four races at Hollywood came in three, four, three, three.  CALIFORNIA SAGE (the four) paid me $26.60 in the second, and the exacta with the favorite paid a handsome $49.40.  So I felt good going into the fifth.  The four won the fifth and the sixth, but also the seventh, totally obliterating all my tickets except for the "all fours," since I'd singled McCarron on the ten in the seventh: a lock, my printouts had said.

I checked the morning line on my single remaining live ticket for the last three races.  8 to 1 in the eighth.  8 to 1 and 10 to 1 in the ninth.  30 to 1 in the tenth.  Uh-oh.  I wandered back to Uncle Will's table.  He was deep in the form.

"Billy," he said, looking up.  "Still here?"

"And still alive," I said.  "But just barely.  I've got the four in this race, the one-four in the next, and the four in the last."

He looked at me like I was standing on his foot.

"That's all?"

"Well, I had a whole bunch of other tickets, but when the four beat McCarron in the seventh, I..."

"Och," he said, as if he had a piece of mutton lodged in his throat.  "Och.  You used no other horses?  For the love of Crom, son.  What were you thinking?"

"But didn't we..."

He held up a hand.  The eighth was just under way.

McCarron got off in the back of the pack, trailed most of the way around, tried to make a little move coming out of the turn, and in spite of my urging settled for last, as the overwhelming favorite inched just ahead of the overwhelming second favorite to win.

"Boom," I said.  "Son of a bitch.  I'm outta here."

"Billy, Billy, Billy," he moaned.  "You know I don't like that kind of language.  Especially since - as the horses were all fillies - you must be referring to Chris himself - a hall of fame jockey and reasonably good friend of mine."

Then he sighed and stuck out his hand.  "For my brother's son's only child," he groaned to the ceiling, or whatever might lie above it.

"Give me eighty-one dollars," he said.

"How about eight-one cents," I countered, turning my pockets inside out.  "And what for, anyway?  I thought the lessons were free."

"All right.  Eighty-one cents.  Which would entitle you to... uh... one half of

one percent of this ticket." He laid it in front of me. It read four, four, four/three/ten, four/two/eight, four/one/five, four/eleven/six. The ticket had cost $162. He'd used the four all the way across, and obviously backed it up in the last four races.

"I would have singled the four in the first and second legs even if it hadn't been a hot hole," he explained. "The four looked like a good possibility in the seventh, but I couldn't ignore McCarron on the ten, even though he was coming from the eleven hole, or Gomez on a horse with decent early speed - especially since he was in the three-hole. And I hated the fours in the last three races, so I backed them up with the horses I thought had the best chance to win the race, regardless of position."

I handed over a two quarters, a dime, four nickels and a penny. Leaving me with eleven cents and a ten-dollar bill I hadn't mentioned, which I was saving to bet TOUCH OF THE BLUES in the next race, a drop dead, mortgage the house, sure-fire winner.

"The lesson for today," my Uncle Will said, "is to live in the moment."

He leaned forward and ruffled my thinning hair. "Don't be so disconsolate, Billy boy," he said. "You did something right. You set an objective - to hit the pick six. But then you stopped, when you should have been totally alive to doing whatever was needed to accomplish that objective, and staying focused on it. Not letting yourself get scattered over ten other tracks and a thousand other horses. That means being aware - of yesterday and of the present moment - hanging on to it, slowing it down, analyzing it as it swishes by."

Now I could swear I saw the beginning of a twinkle in his pale blue eyes.

"And not relying on the wee fairies to do your work for you," he said.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah," I muttered.

"You did well to do your "fours" ticket," he droned on. "But then your frontal lobes stopped working, and you started relying on divine intervention."

"Okay, okay," I said, heading to the window to bet the five horse. "I've got it."

The rest, of course, is history.

TOUCH OF THE BLUES ran fifth at eight to five, as TAKARIAN, the one-horse, took over in the stretch to win by daylight and pay $30. Of course he had the advantage of not being weighted down with any of my money. Duh.

The six was scratched in the tenth, giving Uncle Will the favorite (the eleven) twice. Being an accountant by trade, I couldn't help thinking - as the eleven (from out of the eight-hole) destroyed the field in the tenth - that $10.92 would have given me six and a half percent of Uncle Will's ticket instead of my measly one/half of one percent. And six and a half percent - including consolations - of $100,000 or so is... well, you do the math; I'd rather not.

But what the hell.  Going home with $500 and change is better than going home broke. And at least I didn't have to go to the IRS window like my Uncle Will. That son of a bitch.

## You can't do that and make money.

Friday, December 13th, 2002.  After a stressful week at the office, I hurry to the OutRider for a little relaxation.  I walk in and nod to Irish, who smiles back and jerks his head in toward the Paddock, which is really just the back half of the one big room that makes up the Sports Bar/simulcast facility.  I can see my Uncle Will sitting at his usual table, frowning at the Form.  As usual.

Most of the "important" tracks are finished for the day; the others - Hollywood among them -- are winding down.  The program lists tonight's buffet: Sam Houston, Delta Downs, Penn National, Turfway Park (already in the fourth race, the monitor tells me), Australia, and a few others, including some trotters.

I plop down beside Uncle Will, who looks up and gives me a smile that could also be a frown if you didn't know him well enough.

"Billy, my boy," he says, his eyebrows popping up as I lay my program on the table.  "What's this?  The naked handicapper?  Or will your minions be struggling in under the incalculable weight of tonight's computerized winners?"

"Ha, ha," I laugh mirthlessly.  "I didn't have a chance to run anything.  Too busy at the office."

"Well!  What are you going to do all night, without reams of numbers to pore over?"

"Test my handicapping skills," I sniffed.

"God bless America!" my Uncle Will sighed.  "Why, you might even make a little money tonight for a change."

"I think Jay Leno's auditioning for a new standup," I said, opening the program to Sam Houston.

The first at Sammy was a mile and a sixteenth for $7500 claimers. The most cursory scan showed the six-horse to be an obvious standout from any angle - best speed figures, dropping in class, had gained in the stretch in his last to be a close second, was coming from Hawthorne and Arlington, and had excellent connections in Gondron and Calhoun. The only problem - he was 4-5 on the board.

So I started looking for value in the exotics. The 8-horse looked like he might be second best, but he was sitting at 6-1, with the 6-8 exacta paying about $12. So I went to the well.

"Did you see anything in the first at Sammy besides the six?" I asked Uncle Will.

"I didn't see anything at Sammy including the six," he said.

"Did you not look at the race?"

He gave me a look that would have popped corn. "Did you not look at the race," he repeated with significantly different emphasis. "The six has never run at Sam Houston, not even a published work, and was still running at Hawthorne less than a month ago. He won a 10,000 race two back, almost won another in his last, and now is for sale for $7500. Love him if you must, but if he's worth a bet at four to five, I'm Adolphe Menjou."

"Adolphe who?"

Disregarding my ignorance, he continued. "Someone will cross the finish line first, I have no doubt. Predicting who that will be is beyond my simple skills. I suggest you play colors, names, or whatever else strikes your fancy." He stood, reaching into his vest pocket, and headed toward the window. "I have a small ticket to cash," he explained, and then I'm off to a quiet evening translating quadnomial equations." He stopped for a moment and looked back. "I think the seven in the second is a gift, if you're interested."

I jumped up and followed him to the window. "Okay," I said, "I'm playing a seven-seven double."

"Ah, the numbers game." He looked at the board. The seven in the first was fifty-five to one. "Who knows? It might be tonight's angle."

Actually, the gift was the seven in the first. He went for the lead, battled three wide, then drew away like he'd gained an extra leg in the stretch and won easily, which made my stomach churn like a Cuisinart because he paid $86.20 and I hadn't put a nickel on him.

My Uncle Will, who'd stayed to watch the race, undid his muffler, shrugged out of his Burberry, and sat back down. "Great Crom," he breathed, "an eighty-six dollar horse."

"I hope you're right about the seven in the second," I prayed.

"Hmmm," he mused, mumbling something about reductio ad absurdum.

I turned to Penn National.  "What are you always saying are the winning holes at Penn?"

"That Devil's track?  Where practically the entire jockey colony was up on charges?"

"That's the one."

"The one, three, and six holes come in with astounding regularity.  But not predictability."

I went up to Fingers' window and got the results of the first two at Penn. 6-1-3-4 in the first, and 1-4-6-3 in the second.

I immediately ran to the window and bought a 6-1-3-4 exacta and Trifecta.

Then I said "what the hell," and also put $2 to win and place on each of the 6-1-3 post positions.

The races went off almost simultaneously.  As they were going in the gate my Uncle Will said something about a Xanax and four cigarettes going all at the same time.

At Houston, the seven went to the front early, with four other horses, drew back a little on the backstretch, then picked it up and won by a neck.  He paid a measly $7.60, but the double paid a most satisfying $462.80.

The three at Penn National was in front pretty much all the way, basically fighting the one and the six for the lead.  She paid $48 to win and $16 to place. The exacta paid $180, the Trifecta came in at $440.

Which made my (by now) sweaty tickets worth well over a thousand dollars.

Uncle Will looked at the damp red and white slips in my hand and suggested I take them to the window before they dissolved completely, which I did.

Falling In Love Again

Personally, I like the shorter days of winter.

My Uncle Will doesn't like winter at all.  Says it takes him too long to warm up, and that's why he walks kind of crooked for the first few hours of the day.  All of which translates into crankiness from about the first of November till the end of March.  Today, November 25th, was no exception.

We were in the OutRider, as usual, watching the sun fade away over the Fosters sign in the West window.  It was about 5:30.  A few tracks were finishing up, a few more were preparing to start their evening programs.

For the past ten minutes or so I'd been telling my Uncle Will about the three horse in the first at Mountaineer.  He'd almost won his last with a late surge, and today was running under the same conditions: for 3-year-olds and up who'd never won two races, a 4k claiming event.  Five of his last six races would probably have destroyed the field he faced today.  In fact, he'd almost won for 7500 four races back.

Let's face it; I'd fallen in love with him, and was planning on keying him in some reasonably serious exotics, starting with a double using the ten in race two.

It's a pleasure to see my Uncle Will smile.  His weatherbeaten Scot's face transforms into something a bit magical, with his bright blue eyes twinkling like lights on a Christmas tree.

He wasn't smiling now.  In fact he was dour as a lemon, and getting dourer with every word I spoke.

Finally he shook his head sadly, turned a page in his Form, and began to ignore me.  I looked at the monitor.  Ten minutes to post.  The three was parked

at 9-5 on the board.

"Nine to five," I began cautiously. "That would seem a decent price for a shoo-in, don't you think?" I then began my Golden Moment of Silence, hoping something would erupt from the crusty old character before the bell went off. But patience has never been my strong suit.

"Uncle Will?" I pleaded, having been able to let only a few heartbeats go by.

After what seemed like hours the blue eyes peered at me over the top of the Form. "For a shoo-in, perhaps. If there ever was such a thing."

My look of consternation must have softened his heart. He leaned toward me, tapping the form with one gnarled finger. "Billy, Billy, Billy," he said, "can't you see what you've done?"

"I thought I was handicapping," I shot back.

"Handicapping," he repeated, as if the word was a bug he wanted to get out of his mouth.

"Handicapping's bad?"

"Handicapping is a method of choosing horses. Which is totally the wrong way to go about it."

"And the right way is....?"

"To let the horse choose you."

"I see. Does he wink at you in the paddock, or nod his head? Or talk to you? Maybe you speak horse better than I do."

"Just like you," my Uncle Will said, "to bring levity into such a serious matter."

"What's serious? "I'm just picking horses, here."

"And what you're supposed to be doing is investing your money in a method that will eventually result in a decent profit. That means letting the horse pick you."

"Show me," I said, hoping it would be a short enough lesson for me to still bet my three.

"It's your mindset, Billy. What is on your mind when you open the form, or look at your computer programs?"

"Finding a winner. Hopefully one going off at decent odds."

"Exactly one hundred and eighty degrees off course. What you should be doing is looking for losers."

"I'm already finding plenty of those."

"Let's take the horses in your race - the first at Mountaineer."

He spread the Form out on the table and began, pointing at each horse as he examined them.

"The one-horse finally broke his maiden two races ago. He's slow, has a

one-for-26 trainer, and the only race he's ever won was run in the mud."

"The two-horse took 15 tries to break his maiden and has run like a three-legged pig in his only two against winners."

"The three-horse had the race won in his last and gave up in the stretch.  I hate horses who do that for no reason.  I agree his connections are decent, but the horse has zero early speed and has been the beaten favorite in his last two races."

"We don't know how many races it took the four-horse to break his maiden; he's one for twenty-five.  His last race is interesting because he flashed speed in a sprint, fell back, than gained a bit in the stretch.  A modified Z, and a good pattern for sprint to route."

Uncle Will adjusted his glasses and examined his notebook more closely.

"Interesting.  The trainer used this same pattern nine races ago, and the horse ran 2nd."  He made a little checkmark beside the four with his ancient gold Waterman.

"The five-horse flashed a little speed in the same race as the four, but kept fading, and has never won on dirt."

"The six-horse flashed some speed in his last, but that was in a route, from the one-hole.  Stokes tried to steal the race and failed miserably.  His only two races at Mountaineer have been awful.  He may get the lead, but I have no faith in him to last.  He's a one for seventeen five-year-old plummeting to the class basement, and this looks like desperation on his trainer's part."

"The seven-horse looks okay at first glance, but he's hopelessly slow.  He'll never get a pace to run against in this miserable collection of horses."

"The eight and nine have much the same problem as the seven; they simply will be too far back heading into the turn.  They'll never catch up."

"The ten-horse showed a tiny bit of speed in his last, then faded like a Hawaiian shirt.  He is, believe it or not, one for thirty-four, which is why I'm compelled to scratch my head and wonder why one of the leading jockeys decides to get up on him.  Note, however, he is third off a layoff, and you know I favor that angle."

My Uncle Will then sat back in his chair and smiled a self-satisfied smile.

I wiggled around for a minute, trying to assimilate all the information I'd just been handed, until I couldn't stand it any more.

"And your point is?" I blurted out.

"They're all losers.  But more important than that unassailable fact, none of them chose me.  None of them presented himself in such a way that I could not avoid betting him."

"But the three..."

"...lost his last two as the favorite, the last at this price, on this track, when

he gave up the ghost in the stretch," my Uncle Will finished for me.

"But..."

"Go back to your programs, or your Form, or whatever, Billy Boy.  There's always another race."

"But how will I know when a horse chooses me?"

"I can't tell you that.  I can only tell you that you will know.  It will be an 'Aha!' moment, and you will rush to the window to bet him - not because you think he might win the race... not because you've fallen in love with a horse - but because you simply have an irresistible impulse to bet him.  Not an irresistible impulse just to bet, you understand, but to bet that particular horse."

"Like when God talks to you,"  I said sarcastically.  This conversation was getting 'way too metaphysical for me.

"Like when the four talks to you," Uncle Will said, pushing back his chair and hurrying to the window.

I hurried with him.  "You've fallen in love with the four?"

"Love, what is love?"  My Uncle Will asked philosophically, laying a twenty on the four's nose.  Then he peered up at the tote board, shrugged and to Fingers' and my utter astonishment said "Let's put the four over the field for two dollars, too."

"Did you say you wanted the four over the field?"  Fingers' voice was shaking with incredulity.  "Over the field?"  he repeated.

"Four over the field," my Uncle Will said, punctuating each word with his own brand of sign language.  Fingers plugged in the bet and handed him the ticket.

No one ever called me the sharpest tack in the box, but no one ever called me crazy, either.  "Five across on the four at Mountaineer," I said to Fingers as Uncle Will stepped aside.  The ticket popped out of the slot just as the bell rang.

The race was a nightmare.  The six and the ten went straight to the front, just as Uncle Will had figured.  The four, about fifth or sixth in the pack, moved over to the rail behind the three.  After a slow start, the one-horse rushed into the pack, then crossed over in front of the three going into the first turn, making the three clip heels and fall.  The four managed to sidestep the trouble and keep running.

At the half, it was obvious the winner was going to be one of four horses: the one, four, six, or ten.  At the top of the stretch the six gave out, as predicted, as did the one, and the eight started to make a decent little run.  The four and ten battled down the lane, with the four squeaking by at the last jump.  The eight finished third but was never any kind of threat, also as predicted.

I clung to my ticket as if it was the last life preserver on the Titanic and scanned the monitor.  The "Stewards Inquiry" sign popped up immediately.

"Oh, boy," I moaned.  "Stewards' Inquiry.  That bothers me."

"Me, too," my Uncle Will said.  "It's so ungrammatical.  I've yet to find a track with enough class to put an apostrophe in..."

"What are you talking about!"  I yelled, causing Irish - all the way over at the bar - to cock his head and hold up a finger.

"Calm down, Billy.  You know there's a stewards' inquiry any time a horse goes down.  The one tripped the three.  That's all."

The inquiry lasted a year and a half by my computation.

"Forty-four seconds," Uncle Will said, checking his gold Waltham as the inquiry sign came down, with no change in the top three.  The one was disqualified and moved from sixth to last.

When I got back with my $180.50, Uncle Will was looking at his tickets and frowning.  By my calculations he was holding $1,454.20 in his hand, the result of a thirty-eight-dollar investment in a race he wasn't even going to bet until the four jumped out at him, but he hadn't made a move toward the window.  A terrible thought struck me.  Had Fingers put in the wrong numbers?  The wrong race?  The wrong track?

"Uncle Will?"  I said gently.  "Is there a problem?"

He looked up at me and I thought I saw the beginning of a tear in his eye.  He handed me one of the little red and white tickets.  I looked at it carefully.  First race, Mountaineer, nine $2 bets, four horse over the field, for a total of eighteen dollars.

"The four over the field," I said.  "What's wrong?"

"It's a terrible waste of sixteen dollars," my Uncle Will sighed.  "When I could just have put the four over the ten and been done with it."

"Well, I guess that's what happens when you fall in love," I said.  "Got anything in the second?"

"Oh ye of fickle heart," my Uncle Will said on his way to the window.

## To Beat the Unbeatable Race.

I was yelling a little as they came around the turn.

Okay, I was yelling a lot.  But it had been a very, very bad day so far.  But now my horse -- Climate, was in the lead at 6-1, speed had been good all day, and I had him with the three horses who looked like they might come running in the stretch to complete the exacta.

Then I stopped yelling, as Climate died like a dog, and the favorite swept by him - along with several others.

I looked at my Uncle Will.  He was serenely looking at the Form, completely oblivious to my distress.

"Look at that," I muttered, hoping for a little pity.  "Speed's holding all day and then..."

Uncle Will didn't move.  Pity was not forthcoming.

"Whoopee," I said, "another five-dollar favorite."

The Form rustled.  "You're lucky to get that," my Uncle Will said.  "He should have been even money.  But on Derby day - he waved his hand as if one hundred thousand people were actually present in the Outrider - you can get decent odds on just about anything."

"So you had him."

"Heavens no.  Why would I play a race like that?"

"My mistake.  I thought that's why we were here."

"Which is why - when we both started the day with a $200 bankroll - you now have $25 in your pocket, and I have... um... considerably more.  We're not here to play the races, Billy.  We're here to make money and enjoy ourselves.  In

that order.  Both required."

"But..."

"Note I'm not saying you made a bad bet.  You just chose the wrong race."

My answering gawk made him shake his head sadly.

"Billy, Billy."  With a wave of his hand he told Irish he was ready for his first Glenlivet of the day.  Then he leaned toward me and peered over his glasses.

"Tell me what you look for when you handicap a card," he said.

"Well, I... I mean I look for horses I figure are going to win."

"Based on...?"

"Oh, speed figures, pace ratings, class, stuff like that."

"And when you find a horse you think will win?"

My hands were starting to sweat.  I'm a fairly decent handicapper, but I have a tendency to slip into Momentary Acute Dementia when I step up to the window.  MADness, my Uncle Will christened it.

He was getting impatient.  "Let me answer for you.  If the odds are high enough, you bet it; if they're not, you try to beat it.  Then you back it up with exacta boxes and little-bitty trifecta bets and that sort of thing."

"Well, yeah.  That's about it."

"You start with a $200 bankroll and by the time fifty or sixty races have gone by, your wallet is empty."

"Pretty much."

"And that tells you...?

Irish slid a glass in front of Uncle Will, which he picked up, breathed, and then sipped carefully, giving me time to come up with some kind of reasonable answer, which I didn't.

"I give.  I stink?"

"We're talking about handicapping, not hygiene."

"So tell me."

Uncle Will opened the special Derby section of the form to the ninth race past performances.

"Fortunately," he said, "we have a perfect example coming up."

"Are you kidding?  No one knows who's going to win the Derby."

"Exactly," he said, taking another baby sip of his scotch.  "But we can probably narrow the number of horses who have a real honest-to-God chance of winning down to five or six.  Out of twenty."  Then he leaned back and smiled smugly, as if he'd just passed the meaning of life on to me.

"Oh, goody," I said.

"Obviously you don't see the ramifications."

"Tell me."

He glanced at the television screen across the room.  It was 44 minutes to

the Big Race.

"Let's start with concept.  First you have to acclimate yourself to the possibility that you might only bet one race in an entire day.  Certainly with a $200 bankroll you won't bet more than three or four."

He picked up his ancient Waterman and looked at the Form.  "For example.  Who has a real chance to win the Derby?  I mean a real chance?"

"I think Medaglia d'Oro does.  And Saarland.  And maybe Essence of Dubai.  Castle Gondolfo looks like a good horse, and now he's got Bailey.  And who knows what Johannesburg might do?  And Came Home?"

Uncle Will nodded.  "That's six.  And I agree, they're all good horses.  Of course, they all have flaws.  Medaglia d'Oro is too lightly raced.  Castle Gondolfo and Johannesburg have the European Curse - too much traveling, not enough time to accustom themselves to the surroundings.  And Essence of Dubai has the Dubai curse - what horse has ever run a good race at Dubai, then come to America and put in a penultimate performance?  Note I'm not saying they can't or won't win; I'm saying they all have flaws I'm not willing to overlook.  Saarland, of course, even with his palate surgery is probably just too slow."

"Okay, so what are you saying?"

"Look for a race where you can't find a winner.  Then use your formidable handicapping skills to isolate the only horses you feel could win the race on their best day.  Use your win horses as keys in the exotics.  If there are more than four, pass the race."

"Use four horses as keys?"  My sweaty fingers were fumbling with the $22 I had left in my pocket.

"That's why you don't piss your money away on predictable races."

Uncle Will picked up the thick stack of red and white tickets sitting in front of me.

"Here's what I'm talking about," he said.  "You came to bet the Derby, and you're already almost broke.  Suppose instead you'd saved your $200 to spread around on this year's least predictable race?  As I did?"

Two hundred dollars on one race?  He might have been talking ancient Mayan.

"So who are your horses?"

Uncle Will winced and rubbed his forehead in dismay.  "Who are my horses," he repeated mournfully.  "Billy, Billy.  You know how I break down a race.  Find the speed, then see if anyone can catch it."

"Someone always catches it in the Derby.  Speed hasn't won since the Norman invasion."

"That's why it's... uh... twenty to one," Uncle Will said, peering over his glasses at the monitor.  "And who will run with it?"  He looked at the red line

drawn through Danthebluegrassman. "And why, do you suppose, Baffert scratched this horse? The only other committed speed horse?"

"How about Medaglio d'Oro?"

"Up till now, he's only shown early speed in his sprints. Potentially a great horse, but this is not his Derby, I think."

"Harlan's Holiday?"

"A possibility. But too slow, I think."

"Saarland?"

"A plodder. However, the palate surgery just may have helped him enough, so he's also a win contender for me."

He shifted in his chair and peered at me. "I don't think you're getting the point," he said. "I only see two possible scenarios in this race. War Emblem goes all the way, or someone catches him. Not because he gets worn down by another speed horse, because there aren't any. But because he's just not enough horse to win the Derby on the front end."

"So?"

He pulled a thin stack of tickets out of his vest pocket.

"So I structured my bets accordingly. Keyed War Emblem in the exotics over everything and anything I thought had a possibility of coming in with him. That's bet 'A'. Then keyed him in the place spot with anything I thought had a chance of catching him. That's bet 'B'. Then I threw him out altogether and used my three other win contenders in the same way. That's bet 'C'."

"So who are your other contenders?"

The strains of "My Old Kentucky Home" drifted to us from the monitors.

"Enough, Billy," my uncle said.

He leaned back, and a faraway look came in his eyes. His voice was soft when he spoke again.

"Think of Jim Bond," he said, "and Buddha." "Standing and watching. A tender left foot away from the world's greatest prize. Och, the devastation he's feeling now."

Now his eyes were moist, as he peered into some half-forgotten memory. A thought came to me.

"Were you ever scratched out of the Derby, Uncle Will?"

He didn't speak for a moment, then pulled out his handkerchief and blew his nose loudly. "Whatever put that idea in your head?" he asked brusquely, then gave me a wave of dismissal.

"Go make your bets," he said.

## A little tip from William Shakespeare

Night came early to the OutRider that chilly October afternoon.  Standing in the gate for the 8th at Aqueduct, the breath of the horses rose into the gathering darkness as if ten tiny steam engines were waiting for their engineers to push the throttle.

As usual, I had $1.74 in my pants.  I say as usual.  Sometimes by 5:15 I had as much as ten dollars left.  Those were the good days.

My Uncle Will, oblivious to the race and owl-solemn as usual, was studying the Form through his tiny wire-rimmed glasses.  He'd owned them so long they were back in style.

"Annndd they're off."  Tom Durkin's voice reverberated through the half-empty club.

The 4-5 four left the gate like the devil was after him and immediately left the rest of the field ten lengths behind.  I began to relax.  Even though he was coming off a long layoff, he was taking a huge drop, into a claiming race for the first time in his career, and a low-level one at that.  And the only speed.  On paper he could win going backwards.  I'd put him over the field.

Going into the turn he was in front by a well-struck five-iron.  At the top of the stretch his lead had dwindled to five or six lengths.  My palms were starting to get sweaty.

The six and the two had broken away from the rest of the field and were now in smelling distance of the four.  In the last hundred yards they both went around him like he was running on a treadmill.

The six-two finish completed my day.  My glass, wallet, and soul were now

all empty.  I looked toward my Uncle will for solace, expecting none, and was not disappointed.  He was still examining the Form as if it was a naked photo of May West.

Finally he raised his eyes and looked at me over the second race at Mountaineer, his head cocked to the side like a collie.

"If you could read, I would suggest Shakespeare," he mused.

"Funny," I responded, with my usual rapier-like wit.

"A coward dies a thousand deaths," he mused some more, "the brave man tastes of death but once."

"That Shakespeare was a caution," I said.

"It confounds me that you make your living manipulating numbers, but haven't a clue when it comes to money management."

He pulled a thin sheaf of tickets from his vest pocket, rose slowly and made his way to Fingers' window, where there was an exchange of considerable length.  When he returned, he had a self-satisfied smile on his weather-beaten face and four fingers of The Glenlivet in each hand.

Sliding one across the table to me, he spoke of Shakespeare again.

"You have no clue how that quote applies to you, do you?"  Taking my petulant glare for a "no," he proceeded to explain.

"A coward dies a thousand deaths.  That's you, and 97% of all the horseplayers out there," he said, waving his hand in the general direction of the universe.

"The brave man tastes of death but once.  That's me."

He pointed at my thick stack of losing tickets.

"You bet every race because you're afraid you'll miss a winner if you don't.  I've seen you bet two horses to win, a different horse to place, and two altogether different horses to show in the same race.  You box horses or put them over or under the field because you don't have enough confidence in your top selection."

He leafed back through the form.  "Do you recall what happened in the third at Calder today?"

"Oh, fine," I said.  "Remind me."  I'd bet the two and five to win, the eight and ten to place, and the seven to show.  The race had come in five-eight-ten-seven.  The exacta paid $327; the trifecta a healthy $4,516.  I'd closed my eyes when they showed the payoff for the super; I didn't want to know.

"I remember you thought the five would be a shoo-in."

I nodded, the pain coming back to me.  "My bet of the day," I whined.

"And you only bet the two because he was the crowd favorite."

"Yeah.  I really didn't think he had a chance."

"So why in Crom's name didn't you play an exacta with the five over the eight-ten?  And a trifecta?  And maybe even a super?"

"Didn't want to spend the money," I blurted out, and immediately wished I hadn't.

"See," he nodded wisely.  "A coward.  Afraid to take a stand.  So instead of choosing one race and betting it wisely, you choose fifty races and eventually piss away all your money."

"I think I'm getting it now," I said.  "Pick a race, cover it up, win or lose with it."

"Doesn't even have to be just one race.  Pick two, three, even four or five.  Not fifty."

"And what do I do all the rest of the time?  While I'm waiting for my one, or two, or whatever races?"

"Improve your mind," my Uncle Will said, studying his form again.

"Read a little Shakespeare."

Thanks. I already shaved this morning.

In case you haven't guessed, I'm a computer handicapping freak.  Starting with a simple, unassuming database for the Apple II, progressing through programs that would have stunned the boys and girls at NASA.

When I go to the track, I go armed and ready, lugging a briefcase full of three-ring binders containing my printouts.  Ask me a question about any horse in any race during the past 18 moths or so and I can find the answer.

Unless, of course, you ask who's going to win.

This is a source of great disdain for my Uncle Will, who restricts his information gathering to the PP's, the program (for correct program numbers only), the post parade, and the running of the race itself.

At the moment in question, yesterday in the OutRider, he had that "I might as well be talking to a raccoon" look on his face.  I'd just given him my analysis of the fifth race at Aqueduct, which took a good six or seven minutes, because although I thought the three might get out on the front end and wire it, the seven was third off a layoff, and the one might try to run with the three and burn him out, and if the ten got a hot enough pace then... well, you get the idea.

His eyes closed, and after a pregnant pause he spoke - reverently, as if praying.

"Pluralitas non est ponenda sine necessitate," he whispered.

"That sounds dirty," I responded absently, still trying to decide whether the five could repeat that race he ran six back.

"Occam's Razor," he said, his bright blue eyes pinning me to my chair.

"Uh, I already shaved this morning," I mumbled.

"Billy, Billy, Billy," my Uncle Will said sadly, removing his little wire spectacles and rubbing the bridge of his nose.  Then he leaned toward me and tapped my printouts.

"I think you just told me every horse in this race has an equal chance to win."

"Well, I don't know that I'd put it exactly that way, but..."

"Occam's Razor," he repeated.  "Do not postulate beyond the necessary."

"Right.  I was thinking that myself."

My Uncle Will took out his Waterman and put two dots on his legal pad.

"Connect them," he commanded, handing me the pen.

I drew a straight line from point A to point B.

"Excellent.  Now apply that principle to your handicapping."

"Oh, I see now," I said, not having the slightest idea what the old fool was talking about.

"No, you don't.  Look here."  He took his pen and drew a line from point A that swirled around the edges of the legal pad, jogged up and down, then finally made its way to point B.

In the background I heard Tom Durkin's voice say "Five minutes to post."

"That's very pretty, but what in God's name does it have to do with the fifth at Aqueduct?"

"Very simple.  Every event, including - no, especially - a horse race, can have an infinite number of outcomes based on different interpretations of the existing data."

"Okay, I think I follow that.  So?"

"So find the simplest outcome and use that as the basis for your prediction."

"Uhhh..."

"Look.  You said the three might wire the field.  That was your first conclusion based on the data at hand, correct?"  He accepted my confirming nod and continued.

"Very simple.  He gets out in front, and if he stays there, he wins."

"Unless the one or the seven..." I started, but was quickly quelled by an imperious finger.

"Occam's Razor," he interrupted.  "Use it to shave away all hypotheses but the simplest one."

"Huh?"

"Let's put it this way.  When you have more than one theory which explains the data at hand, take the simpler one."

Uncle Will looked at the monitor, then back at me.  I don't know how he knew I didn't have the faintest idea of what he was talking about, unless it was

my open mouth and blank stare.  He leaned toward me and tapped my sheets.

"Billy Boy, why do you like the three?"

"'Cause he could wire the field."

"Which means he gets out in front and stays there all the way around."

"Oh, so that's what 'wire' means," I mused.

A very bored shake of the head was my only applause.

"I think there was an idiot gene in your mother's family," he said, "and it has obviously been passed on to you."

"I'm sorry," I pleaded.  "Keep going.  Omelet's Razor."

"Occam.  You would accept the three because there are so few "if's" to deal with."

"If's?"

"If's.  If the three-horse gets in front, and if he stays there, he wins.  As opposed to "If the three-horse and the one-horse get into a speed duel, and if they tire, and if the ten-horse can get through traffic on the inside, or if he gets caught four wide will he have enough left to catch the three, and if the seven is ready to run, because horses sometimes run their best third off a layoff, and..."

His voice trailed off and he looked at the monitor again.  The horses were milling around the starting gate.

"What do you think the chances are of the three horse wiring the field?"

I studied my printout.  The three had pressed the pace in its last, a tougher race, from the eleven-hole, got hung wide, and had finished a tiring fifth.

"Pretty good," I said, mentally ducking as soon as I heard the words come out of my mouth.

The raccoon look was back.  "Think," my Uncle Will said sternly.  "If this race were run ten times, how many do you believe the three would win?"

"I guess maybe four."

"So you give the three a forty percent chance of winning, which would make his odds three-to-two, and he's currently going off at, um, six to one."

I looked at the monitor.  The ten was just going in.

I looked at the teller lane. Fogarty's window was open.  "Fingers!" I yelled. "Twenty to win on the three at Aqueduct!"  The bell rang and the horses were off, just as Fogarty smiled and held the red and white ticket up so I could see he got the bet in.  He wasn't called "Fingers" for nothing.

The issue was never really in doubt.  The one-horse broke behind the three and never made up any ground.  The seven didn't run at all.  The ten-horse picked off horses like a machine gunner on the turn, but died in the stretch.  The three won by four lengths and paid $15.80, making my twenty-dollar win ticket worth $158.  I pushed back my chair and started toward Fogarty's window, automatically putting my hand in my pocket for any stray twenty that happened to

be lingering there, and drawing out three dollars and eighty-seven cents.

"Uh, oh," I said.  My mouth had overloaded my wallet.  Again.  Making bets without the money to cover them was frowned on at the OutRider.  Especially mine, due to my less-than-spectacular success ratio.

I looked pleadingly toward my Uncle Will, who was already moistening a thumb, preparatory to leafing through a roll that would have choked George Foreman, much less a horse.  He peeled off two tens and handed them to me one at a time.

"One for you," he said graciously, "and one for me."

"You're trying to tell me something."

"I'm trying to tell you I'm in for half that ticket, or it goes into the MacBeth Jockey Fund, which - as you well know - is what Irish does with the unclaimed."

He waved the two tens in front of me.

"Occam's Razor again," I sighed, my extensive accounting background making the choice simple.  "Seventy-nine dollars or nothing."

"Exactly," my Uncle Will said. "And a cheap enough lesson at that."

I grabbed the bills and hurried to the window.

## Are you nuts? That horse can't win the Derby!

About the last week or so of every April, I pretty much disappear.  This is pretty good timing, since about 75% of my work for the year is finished by April 15th - me being a tax accountant.

So as the first Saturday comes closer, I start diving into the Derby.  The Form, and Bloodstock Research, and kentuckyderby.com, and chef-de-race.com, and triplecrown.com, and thorograph.com, and about a hundred other websites.

The wealth of information is astounding - dosage, past performances, tendencies, opinions, trends, and everything else you can imagine.  So by the time Derby day rolls around I'm always totally confused.  This year was no different, only worse.

This year it actually took me two trips to get all my vital information into the OutRider to where my Uncle Will was sitting at his usual spot, accompanied only by a slim notebook which lay closed on the table in front of him.  I knew what was in it: the PP's for the day's card at Churchill Downs.

He watched, expressionless, as I toted in my armfuls of information and sat down.

"Well," he finally mused, "I see we've been doing our homework."

Beaming at what I assumed to be praise, I pointed at the twenty notebooks piled on the table in front of me.

"The facts and figures on every runner," I proudly proclaimed, plus all the facts on past derbies, trainers, jockeys, and owners, the results of six highly acclaimed computer programs, and twelve separate expert analyses of each horse."

"An astounding piece of research," he said.  "And the winner is...?"

"Everything points to Empire Maker," I answered uncertainly.

"The favorite with the bruised foot," he responded.

"Well, yeah.  But Frankel says he's okay."

"Except for the bruised foot.  And your other contenders?"

"Peace Rules.  And my personal favorite, Ten Most Wanted.  They've really been talking him up on TVG."

"Ah.  The 'now' horse."

"Of course there's Indian Express; no one knows yet how good he really is.  He might be able to pull a War Emblem.  Except that would really be a shocker - two derbies in a row won on the front end.  And his dosage figures make me a little wary."

"His dosage figures.  A very important consideration."

Oblivious to the irony, I continued eagerly.  "Of course we can absolutely rule out a bunch of horses.  AtswhatImtalkingabout, because he didn't even run as a two year old.  Funny Cide, because a gelding hasn't ever won the Derby in 74 tries, plus he's a New York bred.  And Brancusi has a first-time jockey and first-time..."  My voice slowly trailed off at my Uncle Will's shuttered eyes and pursed lips.

After a few moments of silence he spoke.

"Billy, Billy, Billy," he breathed.  "How quickly we forget."

"Forget?"

"I don't suppose you remember our Occam's Razor discussion?  Or a horse named Bayou Bird?"

"Occam's Razor.  Bayou Bird.  Bayou Bird."  A vision slowly came back to me.  Of a huge winner who had beaten the odds-on favorite in a big race at Remington Park.  But I couldn't remember why.

"Um," I mumbled helplessly.

My Uncle Will sighed and shook his head.  "Let me refresh your memory.  One: Occam's Razor.  Basically, in a situation with many options, choose the simplest solution."  Scowling at the vapid look on my face, he continued.  "Bayou Bird.  Beaten by a horse who had a bad trip and still ran second to her in the preceding race."

"Oh yeah.  I remember now."

"Do you?  Excellent.  Then you've narrowed the list of Derby contenders considerably."

"Right," I responded, with considerably more enthusiasm than I felt.

Uncle Will opened the notebook in front of him and began studying it intently.  I grabbed one from my stack and started flipping pages, having no idea what I was looking for.  After fifteen or twenty minutes, I couldn't stand it any

longer.

"So how have I done that?"

The still bright blue eyes peered at me over the little half glasses he wore for reading.

"Done what?"

"Narrowed my list of contenders?"

Uncle Will pulled out his gold Waltham pocket watch and scowled at it, obviously wishing it was late enough for a small Glenlivet.

"I will put it to you plainly," he said with emphasis. "Look at the favorite's last race."

I thumbed through a notebook and came up with it. "Got it," I said expectantly.

"Who finished second to him by less than a length?"

"Well, Funny Cide. But..."

"And who had the best trip?"

"Well, it looks like Empire Maker was three wide. Hmm. And Funny Cide was bumped after the start."

"Funny Cide's speed figure?"

"One eleven. Same as Empire Maker's. But that was in the mud at Aqueduct. He's sure to bounce. And Funny Cide's a gelding. And a New York bred. With a first-time Derby trainer. And look at his sire and dam's average win distances - a little over six furlongs. He'll never get the distance. And Santos is certainly a good jockey, but he's going up against instant hall of famers here."

"Doesn't have a chance," Uncle Will mused. "In spite of the fact that he had a bad trip and still almost beat the favorite in his last race, has the highest last-race speed figure in the race, is coming third off a layup, had a brilliant workout just four days ago, and is fifteen to one in the morning line."

"Well, he hasn't ever done much, either. I mean, look at his pp's."

"Ah yes, his pp's," Uncle Will said, pointing his figure at his notebook. "Let's see. Broke his maiden by fifteen lengths at Belmont, won a seventy-five thousand dollar race by nine in his next, won the hundred thousand dollar Sleepy Hollow in his next. Hit the gate in his next, a Grade Three, was interfered with in his next, a Grade Two, and still ran creditably in both, then was bumped at the start in his last and still almost beat Empire Maker. You're right. His pp's are dismal."

"Well, I didn't say dismal. But he's never won a graded stakes, he's a New York bred gelding with a first-time trainer, he's..."

"That is exactly why he's fifteen to one," my Uncle Will interrupted. "He goes against all those silly statistics."

"But 74 geldings..." I stammered. "And all those New York breds. Non-

winner of a graded stakes.  He can't possibly..."

Uncle Will jabbed his finger at the pp's.

"Look at the horse.  Not at history.  Empire Maker?  Or Funny Cide? Who's the better value?"

"But how about trainers?  Don't you have to consider trainers?"

"I'd call the trainers just about even."

"Bobby Frankel - the world's best trainer - against Barclay Tagg?  How can you call them even?"

My Uncle Will finally gave in, motioning for Irish to bring his first Glenlivet of the day.

"Just like their horses," he sighed.

"Neither has ever won a Derby."

## Mutual vs Pari-mutuel: The Business of Betting

In the ether above us we hear the voice of Trevor Denman describing the scene at the gate.  The odds tick again, and there's a mad flurry at the betting windows.  Then the bell sounds, quickly followed by Denman's low growl: "Away they go."  Ten exquisitely bred horses spring from their starting points, urged forward by ten of the finest athletes in the world.  For an edge-of-your-seat minute and a half the scene becomes a blur of shifting color as they race toward the finish.

To many, it is the most spectacular kind of racing in the world, and the most exciting form of gambling.  Match it up with investing in the stock market, or putting your money in a CD, and (to me at least) there is absolutely no contest.  Which is one important reason why so few bettors are able to see horseracing as a business.

But in order to show a profit -- barring exceptional good luck -- you must weigh every bet you make in terms of risk/reward, just as you would a stock or any other form of investment.  In other words, you do not make bets for "fun" unless you have a fund set aside for just that purpose, and it is made up of money you expect to lose.

Corporate stocks or racing stock?  The truth is, putting your money on a horse is exactly like putting your money into a stock or mutual fund.  You must ask the same identical questions, such as: How familiar am I with this venue?  How adept am I at analyzing stock performance?  What has happened in the past few days, weeks, months, and years?  Are there any significant trends?  What is happening right now and/or in the future that would lead me to believe

this is a good investment?  If I choose to invest, will the money be in good hands?  Who manages the fund/stock?  What kind of history do they show?  How does this investment compare to others available to me?  What is the potential return on investment?  Does this investment suit my investment patterns?  Am I comfortable with it?  What is the potential risk?

Certainly you wouldn't think of making an investment in mutual funds or any other stock, commodity, or vehicle without considering these and other questions.  Neither should you make a bet without doing the same.

"**How well do I know this venue?**"  In order to make money by investing in the stock market or anywhere else, the more you know about the potential investment the more likely you are to succeed.  Your success in pari-mutuel investing depends in great part on your knowledge of horseracing, handicapping, and the various factors that can affect that kind of investment, including such things as track and class pars, biases, and other factors.

"**How adept am I at analyzing stock performance?**"  The better a performance record you have, the better your chances of making an intelligent investment.  Before making a pari-mutuel investment, you should know as precisely as possible just how good a handicapper you are.  What's your win percentage?  What's your long-term ROI?  Are you best in maidens, stakes races, claimers, sprints, routes...?

"**What has happened in the past few days, weeks, months, and years?**"  How has this horse run in the past?  Does he have any significant works?  Is there an angle in his PP that tells me something?  How has he run against this kind of company?  At this distance?  On this surface?

"**Trends**.  What is happening right now and/or in the future that would lead me to believe this is a good investment?"  Is he in the right race according to the conditions?  Does he show some kind of superiority against today's competition?  Is he getting ready for a more important race in the future?  Is he dropping in class?  Is he dropping too far in class?  What about the track surface?  Any pronounced bias?

"**If I choose to invest, will the money be in good hands?**"  Does the horse's breeding suggest he can win at this distance, surface, and/or stage in his career?  What are the jockey's and trainer's record at this price, surface, distance, and with the horse?  Is the owner a positive or negative factor?

"**How does this investment compare to others available to me?**"  What is my analysis of the situation?  What are this horse's chances of winning, compared to the others in the race?

"**Does this investment suit my investment patterns?**  Am I comfortable with it?"  Is this horse in my comfort range?  Am I a chalk bettor, longshot player?  Am I good enough to go against the crowd and feel good about it -- even if the

horse doesn't win?

"**What is the potential return on my investment?**"  What are the odds?

"**What is the potential risk?**"  How do the tote-board odds compare with my projected odds?

This is a process you must go through, step by step, before you can make an informed wager.  Many of us attempt to take these steps intuitively, using current knowledge and experience for flash answers.  But you can only be successful in leapfrogging steps if you have consciously adhered to this formula for so long that the steps have become intuitive.  Otherwise you're fresh meat for the shark beside you.

How do the two kinds of betting differ?  Investments such as mutual funds, CD's, commodities, etc., obviously move much more slowly than horseracing.  There is much less overt action.  However, the intelligent, informed mutual investor can appreciate and be excited by "hidden" events that cause market fluctuations, just as the pari-mutuel investor can become excited about finding a quirk in a horse's performance that leads him to believe it will win today.

How do the two kinds of betting compare?  Very favorably for the informed, patient, courageous investor who analyzes inherent risk, weighs it against potential reward, puts up his/her money when the conditions warrant it, and sits back and waits when they don't.

The two major differences are time and potential risk/reward.  When I invest in mutual funds, it ordinarily takes months, even years to find out how good or bad my judgment was.  When I invest at the track, I find out almost instantly.  The maximum I can expect from an investment in mutual funds -- based on my analysis, judgment, and a liberal sprinkling of luck, is to triple or quadruple my money over an extended period of time, say a year or two.  The most I can expect at the track -- based on my analysis, judgment, and a liberal sprinkling of luck -- is to turn a $2 ticket into two hundred thousand over the course of six races.

Corporate stock or racing stock?  I'll take horses anyday.

## You're not going to play that Pick 6 ticket, are you?

Some days just start off better than other days.  On this one - Saturday, the 26th of May, 2003 - I fairly leaped out of bed at the crack of ten.  I knew I was excited, I just didn't know why.  Then I stepped on my computer printouts, beside the bed where I'd finally dropped them four hours ago, and remembered.  Guaranteed One Million Dollar Pick Six Day at Hollywood!  Plus a big carryover at Churchill.  Feet, don't fail me now.

It took a grand total of 47 minutes for me to shower, shave, jump into some clothes, collect my suitcase full of data, drive to the OutRider, and sit down across the table from my Uncle Will, who greeted me with a benevolent smile and a royal nod.

"Done our homework, have we?"

"Gonna kill 'em today," I said.

I let the first four races go by at Churchill - much to Uncle Will's amazement - while I worked on my pick six ticket.  I wound up with the 2-3 in the fifth, the 1-2-7 in the sixth, the 2 in the seventh, the 1-7-11-12 in the eighth, the 6 in the ninth, and the 2-8-11 in the tenth, which made it a $144 ticket.  I'm not that kind of player, so I looked for ways to cut it back.  The board told me the 3 in the fifth had been bet down to 7-2, so I scratched the two.  Down to a $72 ticket.  I thought the 1 in the sixth was my best longshot, so left him in and cut the deuce.  Down to $36.  Finally, I dropped the 11 in the eighth, and when I saw that the 12 had been scratched, I was down to my kind of ticket: $24.

The 3 won the first leg and paid $9.  My 1 wired the second leg and paid $47.20, tripling my pulse rate.  But the 2 didn't run in the third leg, the 11 (which I

had scratched from my ticket) won the fourth leg, the six won the fifth leg, and the 11 took the last.  I looked balefully at my ticket.  Four out of six.  Again.  If I'd just kept the 11 in the eighth I'd have gotten back at least three hundred bucks.  But I'd scratched the wrong horse.  Also again.

My Uncle Will, walking back from the window patting his vest pockets - as he always did after a big win - noticed my distress.  He could hardly miss it, as I was banging my head on the table and muttering exotic obscenities.

I felt something cold against my cheek and stopped babbling for a minute.  Uncle Will had brought a Fosters with his usual demi-glass of Glenlivet.

"Life is short," he said.  "Lighten up."

"Lighten up.  Easy for you to say."

"Easy for me to do, with you handicapping for me."

That thought was so foreign to me it took a few minutes to sink in.  Uncle Will was by far the best handicapper - and better - I'd ever run across.  "Me handicapping?  For you?"

"Didn't you find that fifty-dollar horse at Churchill?"

"Well, yeah..."

"But you didn't bet him."

"I put him in my pick six.  I mean, he was just one of three horses that I...  I mean, you can't bet every horse you think might have a chance of winning."  It made sense in my mind, but somehow it didn't come out that way.

"Billy, Billy, Billy," he whispered, shaking his head as if I'd just slipped off the last rung of the ladder to hell and he was watching me fall.

"Whatty, whatty, whatty," I finally asked with cutting sarcasm that actually came out more like a whimper.

"The time has come, the Walrus said, to speak of many things.  But particularly about betting."

"Oh, thank God," I sobbed.

"I assume by that insolent remark you have such an abundance of disposable income you can continue to throw away money as if it was grocery coupons.  That you have this deep, untapped well of resources that doesn't show up in your clothes, your bearing, your manners, or your décor.  That you enjoy gnashing your teeth and banging your head on blunt objects.  Appropriate as that may be."

"Sorry," I apologized.  "I'm just a bit peevish."

"Peevish is one thing.  Bullheaded is another.  Familiarity with your habits tells me you risked $24 on your pick six ticket.  And in return you received...?"

"Zero.  Zilch.  Nada."

"Yet you found a fifty-dollar horse in the process."

"Rub it in," I moaned.

"How long did you study the pick six races at Churchill?"

"I don't know, maybe three or four hours."

Uncle Will nodded his head and gave me that kind of smirk that lets you know the conversation's over.  Something told me he was trying to make a point, but it was obviously being dulled by my bull head.

"Sooooo...?"  I asked, after what I thought was enough penitence.

"So - you spent four hours studying six races and came up with four winners.  I'd call that a fairly remarkable achievement.  In fact, you found a horse I had completely overlooked until you explained to me why you were interested in him, enabling me to harvest..."

He took an ungodly wad of bills out of his pocket and waved it at me.

"...approximately five thousand, two hundred dollars."

The room began to spin slowly around me.  "Five thousand..." I began reciting.

"Because of your handicapping, I added him to my pick three, which paid $4,128.20.  I also keyed him in a tiny little trifecta, which paid $587.80.  The exacta paid $233.20.  And I had a few dollars on him to win."

He peeled some bills off the roll and spread them on the table in front of me.  Five Ben Franklins.

"Approximately ten percent.  Call it a finder's fee.  For Chosen Chief in the sixth," he pronounced.

"The normal finder's fee is ten percent," I said, grabbing the five hundred before he changed his mind. "You still owe me twenty bucks."

My Uncle Will waved a finger at Irish, who turned and grabbed the dark-green bottle of Glenlivet behind him. When his bright blue eyes turned back to me, they had that familiar twinkle in them.

"Call it tuition," said my Uncle Will.

# Think long, think wrong.
*How to pick a winner and still lose your butt.*

Last Friday I did something so incredibly stupid, so incomprehensibly idiotic, that I really don't want you or anyone else to know about it.

After doing it, I felt like I'd just been dropped from 20,000 feet without a parachute.  I cursed, I smote my forehead, I gnashed my teeth, I almost threw up.

My Uncle Will, who was with me, and who had seen the whole astounding process from start to finish, was aghast at my blind, inexplicable asininity.

It ruined my day.  It destroyed my week.  It blew my month.  It made ever making another bet seem insane.

In the aftermath, however, I learned something.  Something I already knew down deep in my gut.  Something that had the habit of creeping out from time to time, with disastrous results.  I always had managed to push it back or gloss over it.  Friday's act, however, was so blatant it could not be ignored.  I learned.  I will never, ever, ever, ever, ever do it again.  I pass it on to you so you may never, ever, ever experience such a horrific moment.  I know you will think less of me - as I do - after you hear of my grievous act, but I hereby nevertheless sacrifice myself to the truth, and to your education.

It started simply enough.  A little extra time, a visit to the OutRider.  No serious handicapping or betting.  A sandwich, a Fosters, a couple of hours watching the ponies run.  A few recreational bets.

Until a few minutes before the sixth at Hollywood.  We were about to leave, gathering up our things, and I turned the page to race #7.  The winner

jumped out at me immediately - a horse named HALF PAST TEN, being ridden by Joy Scott.  I made the horse even money.  Why?  His overpowering Byers.  He was obviously the fastest horse in the race.  His running style was also right: he was the kind who'd sit on the shoulders of the leaders and go by them coming out of the turn.

Uncle Will stood up, and I waved a hand at him.

"Hold on a second," I said.  "Let's see what the seven in the next race goes off at.  If the odds are decent I'm going to the ATM for some load-up money."

So we waited.  At first odds flash the seven was six to one.  I scrambled out of my chair and headed for the door.  How often do you find a horse you're sure is going to win a race going off at six to one?

Load-up money in hand, I made my big mistake.  Instead of running to the window, I returned to the table and sat down to really analyze the race.

Five minutes before post-time, my seven was an astonishing 8-1.  However, I'd seen some things about some other horses I liked a little bit.  The ten looked terrific - I mean terrific in the post parade.  Everything Joe Takach tells you to look for.  I checked his PP's.  He'd made a huge move in the stretch to finish close in his last.  Hmmmmm.

I made my way to the window and started laying out my bets.  Exactas, trifectas, win bets.  I had it covered.  I went back to watch, sure of a huge hit.

I couldn't have drawn up a better race.  Joy Scott was perfect.  HALF PAST TEN made his move coming out of the turn, wore down the leaders, and won by a couple of lengths.  The five, a 35-1 shot, finished second, completing a huge exacta.

I felt sick.  "You're not going to believe this," I said quietly to Uncle Will.

"I had no money on that horse to win.  I also didn't have the exacta, much less the trifecta."

Uncle Will looked like I'd hit him with a tomahawk.  Unkind words started flowing from his mouth in abundance.  I could only nod, horrified at my own idiocy.

My intention had been to play the seven very large to win, key it with a few other horses in an exacta, also put it over the field in an exacta, and play a longshot trifecta.  Total cost: about $200.  Well, I did spend about $200, but I didn't win a nickel.  The trifecta, incidentally, paid over $800.

What happened?  Simple.  I found the Killer Angle too fast.  So fast I had time to re-analyze the race, look at the other horses, get insecure about my horse going off at 8 to 1, figure out a way to hedge my bet, etc., etc.

If I'd seen that page in the form for the first time at one minute to post, I'd have covered him up.  As it was I came away completely empty - in more ways

than one.

So what does this tell you?  First that you can make more money betting than you can handicapping.  Second that you can be the world's best handicapper (which I'm not claiming to be) and still lose your butt if you make stupid bets.  Third that you can talk yourself out of anything if you don't act on your convictions.

If you haven't ever talked yourself out of a horse, you don't need this information.  But if you have, follow this procedure, as I will, from now on without fail.  When you find a horse you believe demonstrates the Killer Angle - the horse you feel confident is going to win the race - if the odds justify a bet, put the program or form face down on the table, run to the window and make your bet.

Then sit down, grit your teeth, and wait.

Or, if you must, go back and analyze the race some more.  Listen to the guy at the next table.  Check the mud ratings.  When you find a reason your horse might not perform the way you thought he would, or a horse that might beat him - and you probably will - keep your hands in your pockets and your mouth shut.  Go to the bathroom and stay there.  Give all your money to your companion to hold for you.  Practice bird calls.  Balance your checkbook.

Or make another bet if you must.

But never, never, never, never, ever get caught playing all around a horse you picked to win at good odds and wind up without a win bet.

That way you won't ever feel the way I feel at least twice a day, every morning and evening.

At HALF PAST TEN.

## Epilogue.

My Uncle Will has now passed on to that Great Racetrack in the Sky. As Antony asked of Caesar: "When comes such another?" For me the answer is, of course, never. Uncle Will was a one-of-a-kind force in my life and always will be, even though he's gone.

My Uncle Will – though you couldn't always tell it – enjoyed life to the fullest, getting the most out of every second, every minute, every day. And one of his greatest pleasures was the sport of horseracing. He loved everything about it, from the immense, intricate, and arcane puzzle that is handicapping to the very sounds and smells of horses in the paddock, and the drum of their hooves on the course.

In his later years, Uncle Will was saddened by the dwindling number of people who appreciate the sport, the onrushing juggernaut of don't-want-to-have-to-think betting opportunities like slot machines, the trend to skin-deep glitz and glitter.

In his memory, I wrote the following statement. It's more or less a restatement of feelings I heard him express whenever he spoke seriously of the horseracing industry.

## A Dying Breed.

I, Will Davidson, am not a gambler; I am a horseplayer.  Once upon a time there were millions upon millions of us, like the buffalo.  Now, also like the buffalo, we run in small herds, comforted by the closeness of our own kind.

I go to the casinos and push my way through the almost impenetrable crowds of gamblers at the slot machines, the blackjack tables, the roulette wheels, until I find myself in the relaxed, uncrowded atmosphere of the racing sports book.  There I choose my space, sit down, and spread out an encyclopedia of information - thousands and thousands of factors to analyze in the next few hours in order to make a few decent wagers.

Belmont comes up on a dozen television screens, and Tom Durken's voice booms out a welcome.  He is a distant friend, one who shares the same interests I do, and who will do what he can to help me make wise decisions.

The horses are now in the paddock, glistening in the late morning sun, their breath white clouds in the cool air.  Jockeys stand waiting for their mount's arrival, some moving quickly, betraying their tension, others relaxed and confident.

More distant friends.

The bugler blows the call to post, and ten wonderfully trained and tended animals perk up their ears, dancing toward the excitement they know is imminent.  I watch each one, so thrilled by their beauty my initial purpose is lost in the moment.

Soon they are in the gate.  The bell rings, Tom's voice again splits the air, and forty hooves go thundering toward the first turn.  The screen is a cacophony

of flashing color, glistening bodies, pulsing muscle.

I am so caught in the spectacle I haven't even made a bet.  When the winner crosses the finish line he takes me with him, filled with triumph, exhausted from a race well run.

In the casino frantic arms still pump shiny hunks of metal.  Eyes watch anxiously as electronic images spin and stop.  The ball rattles in the trough of the wheel.  Bits of pasteboard are shuffled and dealt.  Money is won and lost in pursuits that shun the truth - that the game, not the money, is important.  That the spectacle, not winning or losing, is the thing.  That "sport of kings" doesn't mean it is a rich man's pastime, but that the sport itself is so full of riches.

Why aren't there more like me, and - perhaps - you?  Is it the fault of the thoroughbred industry?  Yes.  Is it my fault, and - perhaps - yours?  Yes.  Both the industry and we have been derelict in passing on the beauty and excitement of the sport.  But most importantly, it is the fault of the times, and time itself, which none of us feel we have enough of any more.

You and I are a dying breed, my friend.  And nothing, absolutely nothing can be done about it.  We are the dinosaurs, the dodo birds, the appendices of a sport that once was common and at the same time majestic.  A sport that brought kings and touts, presidents and steelworkers, corporate giants and exercise boys together, bound by a common thread of excitement, and appreciation, and love of the game.

Baseball was like that once.

Love of the game.

We - the dying breed - mourn its passing.

## Addendum: A day in the life
*Putting it all together.*


Let's go through a day at a simulcast location and see what the steps are. Because today is the January 15th, 1995, (I told you time was relative in this book) we'll go to the sports book in Bally's Las Vegas on Friday, January 20th. Why?  Because Oaklawn opens on that day, which will give us a brand new track to work with, since they tore the old strip up and completely resurfaced it during the off season.

January 20, 1994: 6:00 a.m.

Okay, here we are in the sports book at Bally's.  First things first.  I caught a roll, coffee, and orange juice at the bar on the other side of the casino.  The second thing I did, of course, was buy the forms.  I got two -- which gives me Oaklawn, The Fairgrounds, Sam Houston, Santa Anita and Gulfstream (plus a couple of other tracks we're not interested in, like Blue Ribbon Downs in Salisaw, Oklahoma).  About fifty races in all.  Considering the length of time we'll spend on each different kind of race -- maidens, claiming, starter allowances, allowances, etc., etc. -- we're probably looking at about three hours of concentration.  The first race will be at nine o'clock our time, so it's time we got started.  First I'll give you kind of a road map of what we're going to do, then we'll walk through the races, step by step.  How it will turn out, I have no idea, but I have confidence in the process, so I'll just let it all hang out and see what happens.

First we'll look at the first call of the last race for each horse, and do two things.  If it was running fewer than three lengths behind at that point of call, we'll

put an "F" in the margin next to that race, for "Flashed early speed," and check the horse's next point of call. If it was also running less than three lengths off the lead at 2nd call, we'll put a "P" beside the "F," for "Pressed pace," and beside the "P" put their post position in that race. "P5," for example. As we do this, we'll check the first and second calls to see if the horse gained at least five lengths on the lead horse between the first and second calls. If it did, we'll put a "BM" in the margin, for "Big Move." This angle sometimes means the horse is ready to run today. Now we'll look at their entire past performance for ratable races (races that give you an indication of the horse's performance today) and see if this early speed or this big move is characteristic of the horse, if it's a surprise, or if the horse is a dominant early speed horse. Then we'll give it a "C" (for "Characteristic"), an "S" (for "Surprise early speed/big move"), or a "D" (for Dominant speed".) We'll do this for all races. You'll probably find about 30% of the horses rate at least an "F," and less than 10% rate a "BM."

Now we'll study each of the horses we've marked for early speed to see if they qualify for a bet as a "lone" speed horse, "flashed" speed horse, "surprise" speed horse, or "pressed pace from outside" horse. Sometimes on a ten-race card you'll find as many as four bets; sometimes you'll find none. I'll expect we might find a total of perhaps ten today, out of the fifty races we're handicapping.

We'll mark these horses as possibles for betting consideration, and decide what our betting strategy will be. Are they in daily doubles, trifectas, pick threes, etc.? Do they look good enough to make our only plays of the day? Of course we won't know exactly how we're going to bet until we see the odds, but we'll make our lines and decide what we'll do if the odds are in our favor.

Then we'll run the simplified version of The System for every ratable race -- that is, races where entrants all have at least three past performances to their credit. This will take us about 20 seconds a horse -- less than two minutes for a ten-horse race. We'll mark the horses that look like they have an edge in the numbers. Then we'll make a line and figure out a betting strategy for those horses. We should find a couple of good bets on each race card using The System. More if we're lucky.

Next we'll check the Beyer numbers, which are now included in the Daily Racing Form for just about every thoroughbred track in the country. Scan each race for the four horses with the best last Beyer, and circle the Beyer. Then scan all the horses for any Beyers in the past performances that equal or beat the ones you've already circled, and circle those. Since we haven't talked about Beyer numbers yet, let's take this opportunity to do so.

Without going into elaborate detail, the Beyer number is a measure of the horse's speed, taking a number of important factors into consideration, such as the track condition, class, etc. It does not take pace into consideration. Still, if

Guantanamo Bay ran faster than anyone else in the race last time out, we must form an opinion as to whether or not he can do it again today, factoring in such things as the pace of the race, post position, angles, etc.

After all that's done, we will have defined our basic betting opportunities. We'll mark them somehow so we don't forget to bet them intelligently when the time comes.  I usually just circle the horse's name in the Form.

Now we have time to scan The Form for other angles, and to scrutinize the horses we've already checked to see what negative or positive angles they might exhibit.  I rarely take The System any farther than this any more -- especially when I'm at a sports book.  But I do mentally factor in tracks and class. A horse moving from Trinity Meadows to Santa Anita, for instance, is operating at a distinct disadvantage.  A maiden running against winners has to show me a lot. And so on.

Beside the horse's name in The Form we write down the number of times we think the horses we've singled out as contenders would win the race they're in if it was run one hundred times.  Usually we will have no more than 4 contenders, so it's easier than it sounds.  Remember, do this with horses who have a chance to win.  All others are non-contenders for winning, but may have a shot at place or show.  If you have a horse who you don't feel can win the race, but who has a shot at coming in second, put a "P" beside his or her name.  These will be used in exactas, but will  be used in the win spot.

Now we'll loosely assign odds to our contenders based on their probability of winning -- the number we assigned in step 7, above.  For instance, if we think a horse would win the race 50 times out of a hundred, he/she deserves to be 1 to 1 (even money.)  In other words, he/she would win the race as many times as he/she would lose it.  (The formula for turning probabilities into odds is divide 100 (total number of races) by the number of times you think the horse would win if this race were run a hundred times.  Then subtract 1 (one) from your answer. For instance -- 100 (total number of races) divided by 50 (number of times I think he'd win) is 2 (two).  Subtract 1 (one) and you have the odds: 2-1 = 1.  You make the horse 1 to 1, or even money.  If you think your horse would win the race 25 times out of a hundred, he/she deserves to be a 3 to 1 choice.  (100/25 = 4.  4-1 = 3.  You make the horse 3-1.)  He/she would win once out of every four times the race was run.  (See the accompanying table for a list of probabilities and their corresponding odds.)  Write the odds you've assigned to the horse in big letters on the form, your program, a yellow scratch pad -- whatever you use to bet from. I use The Form for everything, so I won't have to look in more than one place to see if I have a bet.  (Another way I've missed bets in the past -- writing something down in a notebook, on a napkin, whatever, and then forgetting to look at it before post time, watching the 30-1 shot gallop in and screaming "I had that

horse!")

When post-time nears, check the crowd's oddsline against yours. If the crowd's odds are higher than your odds, you have the makings of a bet. Whether you bet or not, how much you bet, and how you bet, all depend on what kind of a bettor you are, and how accurate your oddsline is, which can only be found out with practice and good recordkeeping.

Okay. Time to put our money where our proverbial mouth is. Let's start with Gulfstream, because it will be up first here in Vegas, at 10:00. Then we'll have plenty of time before eleven, when the first races at Oaklawn, The Fairgrounds, and Sam Houston come up. Since we're on California time, Santa Anita will come up at one o'clock -- a luxurious seven hours away. But let me warn you right now. I don't do as well at the West Coast tracks as I do at the others, so I probably won't even handicap Santa Anita.

Before the first race I generally try to find what would appear to be my very best value bet(s) of the day, see how I can stretch my bankroll around them, and then look for other marginal bets if I have surplus money. Some days I might make one bet, some days none, some days I throw caution to the winds and bet every race, even when I don't have an edge, even when I know some of the bets aren't smart bets. Because I'm human.

Today I'm going to try and make a bet every time I see a good reason to, and in most cases I'm going to bet the minimum, just so we can see how much money a $2 bettor might expect to win or lose playing this system of handicapping. If you're a $20 bettor, or a $200 bettor, just multipy the results by ten, or a hundred, to get an idea of how you might have come out. Of course if you're a really big bettor, you're going to affect the odds, lowering your ROI.

I usually bet horses to win only at odds of five to one or better. I bet horses to win and place at 10 to one or better. I bet horses to win, place, and show at odds of 15 to one or better, not necessarily because it's a smart bet, but because I know there's a good chance of me getting my money back on the place and show bets at those odds if the horse doesn't win. It's a personal idiosyncrasy you'd be better off avoiding, because show bets on longshots are usually a very poor value. Why? Because the betting public traditionally overbets longshots and underbets favorites, thus adversely affecting the payout pools.

I only bet a daily double or an exacta when it will pay at least six times the amount of my total bet (5-1). I very rarely bet a daily double, because you can get scalded that way -- the gain rarely jusitifies the expenditure.

I concentrate on pick three's and trifectas, especially at those tracks where they don't have pick three's and trifectas every race -- or even every other race. Even though the temptation for skullduggery among the jockeys and trainers is

greater in those races, I want a greedy crowd involved when I bet my exotics; the payoffs are much better.

I don't bet the pick six or pick nine seriously; it takes too much time and money, and I don't join syndicates because I don't like giving away my long shots and watching the big bettors drive the price down. I bet pick three's and trifectas weighted toward my picks; that is, if my horses win in order I may have the pick three or the trifecta more than once. There's just no way to do that with the pick six.

I trust my odds more than the crowd's or anyone else's. Not necessarily on every race: just on the horses I find that fit my system. The reason the angles work is that very few people know about them. Am I going to ruin all that with this book? Heck, no. Most people are too lazy and too opinionated to change. Maybe you're different.

Gulfstream


**FIRST RACE: THE FIELD**

A fairly high-priced maiden claiming race for older fillies -- the absolute bottom of the conditioning barrel.

NICKNACK (15/22) flashed speed at Calder from the 6-hole last time out and faded, which she does regularly.  Drops from maiden special to maiden claiming -- a significant drop in price, but a hike in track.  Ran a good race from the 2-hole on 11/20 -- but then she was moving inside after a nothing route on the turf.
NARHEN C (9/10) also flashed a little speed in her last and died -- a habit. Not as good as NICKNACK.
PREMIUM SPICE (5/12) flashed speed and died in her last -- from the 4-hole at Belmont.  Been off almost a year, with bum works for return.  I think not.
I'M TOO BALD (5/9) flashed speed in her last and died at Hialeah.  No, I mean maybe she really did die and just doesn't know it yet.  Does appear to like the slop, though.
MS. SILVER WILLOW (14/28) flashed speed and died in her last.  Is this beginning to sound like a broken record?  She runs like a scalded ape in the morning, and drops dead after four furlongs in a real race.  Even against $12,500 maiden claimers.  Probably the quickest of the bunch, but devoid of stick.
CODE OPERATOR (15/13) was fractious at the gate in her last -- the first

time she's acted up, so we'll excuse it.  We'll also throw out the race where she was checked.  She certainly hasn't run in very good races ($12,500).  She hasn't run awfully well.  But she's an honest-to-gosh closer in a race filled with faders.  And 'way back when, at Laurel, she actually ran some pretty good races (for this bunch.)  I know, 18 tries without breaking her maiden so far, but she has been in the money more than half the time.

HON (13/14) flashed speed and died in her last.  Again.  However, she did do it from the 6-hole at Gulfstream, which makes her worthy of more serious consideration than the others in here so far.  Also the speed of the field so far.

THEDA BLUE (8/13) flashed speed in her last and died at Gulfstream, finishing a little ahead of HON, who set the pace.  Also beat HON the only other time they met, at Calder.  Drops and gets a jockey switch.

FIRST RACE: ANALYSIS
How easy can it get?  If you're playing your angles, you have seven horses with a history of flashing early speed and dying.  It's going to get awfully crowded up front.  No one in the race has ever closed a legitimate step in their lives except CODE OPERATOR, who is a confirmed closer.  I'M TOO BALD was scratched.

FIRST RACE: THE BET
You're not going to believe this.  I couldn't when I saw the board.  CODE OPERATOR was sitting at 35 to one when I first looked, and was only down to 25 to one when I finally made my bet on her.  A bet of generous proportions, I might add, but for the sake of the book, we'll just say I bet $2 across.  THEDA BLUE and HON were obviously the only other real contenders.  THEDA BLUE was the crowd favorite at even money, and HON was four to one.  I played a three-horse box just in case, put CODE OPERATOR on top of the field just in case, and put CODE OPERATOR on top of THEDA BLUE and HON.  There was an overwhelming favorite in the second race (mine and the crowd's), so I played a very large daily double with CODE OPERATOR and GEM SEEKER (in the second).

FIRST RACE: RESULTS
Ahem.  CODE OPERATOR blew by THEDA BLUE in the stretch to win, paying $56.20, $10.00, and $3.80.  The exacta paid $116.  I told you.  Sometimes it seems like I'm the only one paying attention.

SECOND RACE: THE FIELD
A maiden special on the turf for 4-year-olds.  Going through it seems

absolutely redundant, knowing what we know about class on grass, etc., but we'll do it, anyway.

RISING OF THE MOON (7/7) likes the dirt and hates the turf.  Even up against fairly serious horses she should have shown at least something, but didn't.

HAZY (38/26) has had a few good races on the turf, but has only come close once, under Samyn (Samyn on the green).  The switch to Donna Barton is negative.  Even though Donna's a decent jockey on the turf, she ain't no Samyn.

GEM SEEKER (8/6) has won far more on the grass than anyone else in the race except THIRTY GOOD ONES, with two second place finishes in two races.  Beat the show horse by 9 lengths in his last, at Aqueduct, and the guy who beat him isn't here today.  Can come out of the clouds, stalk, or wire the field, depending on what's called for.  Samyn chooses to stay on him -- a big plus.

DIXIELAND KING (15/20) hasn't been on the turf yet, and is four years old.  According to our bible of do's and don't's, a non-winner.  However, he flashed speed in his last, has a decent work around the dogs since, and may be ready to run.  But we're asking him to do too many things today he hasn't done before.

SEMINOLE SLEW (36/26) just isn't fast enough.  At least not yet.

PIEGAN -- the only filly in the race -- ran a pretty good race on the turf against her own kind at Churchill, but is overmatched here.

V AND A KID was a beaten favorite when he ran on the turf at Woodbine.  Beaten by 12 lengths.  Ran what appears to be a pretty good race on the dirt two races ago, but was still beaten by four horses and 3.5 lengths.  Doesn't figure against decent grass horses like GEM SEEKER and THIRTY GOOD ONES.

ST. ALYDAR also oinked his way around the turf course at Aqueduct during his only try on the grass.  No thanks.

CLEMSON ran okay against a bit lesser at Calder from the 8-hole in his last.  No reason why he shouldn't repeat that race today.

THIRTY GOOD ONES is the leading turf money winner in the race -- always the first place to look.  Looks like he hated Saratoga.  Gets Lasix for the first time today, which makes him a double threat.  If he runs back to those Belmont races, he'll definitely be in the money.  But he still won't beat GEM SEEKER.  For that he has to improve bigtime.

SECOND RACE: ANALYSIS

GEM SEEKER wins by a bunch.  He'll overhaul THIRTY GOOD ONES and DIXIELAND KING -- the only real speed in the field -- at the head of the stretch and toy with them the rest of the way.  Unless he decides to win it on the

front end.  Which he can also do.  If you're a chalk player, now is the time to unbuckle.  I'm not.

SECOND RACE: THE BET
I couldn't see GEM SEEKER losing this race unless he stepped in a hole.  Neither could the crowd; they sent him off at 3-5.  THIRTY GOOD ONES and DIXIELAND KING were sitting at 8-1 and 15-1 respectively.  Why?  Is this business that difficult?  Is it too hard to put the two best turf horses in the race together -- especially when one is first-time lasix?  Wow.  The exacta promised to pay $20.  I passed, in favor of the trifecta.  I did a three-horse box, then played the system trifecta bet.

SECOND RACE: RESULTS
What a surprise.  GEM SEEKER toyed with the field to pay $3.20.  THIRTY GOOD ONES finished two lengths ahead of DIXIELAND KING, paying $5.20.  The show paid $6.60.  The exacta paid $21.20.  My trifecta paid $205.20.
The daily double paid $131.20.

THIRD RACE: THE FIELD
A $12,500 claiming race for 3-year-olds.

SUDDEN SAM (7/12) is a maiden against winners, trying a route for the first time, off very mediocre races.  Pass.
REAL SWISSY (32/17) ran slowly in the slop last out, against better horses.  He's won in the slop, however, so maybe his class and speed had something to do with it, too.  Let's face it; he's pretty slow.
HEZ SCOTT (20/17) hasn't broken his maiden in 13 tries.  What madman (or madwoman) would predict he'd do it today?
INAHAT (28/26) almost got there against cheaper in a route last out, and was claimed out of that race.  He gets Bailey -- a monstrous plus, but at this time that's about all he has going for him.  May go for the early lead; may even get it.  But I doubt he has the class to hold it.
GATE'S GOLD (31/18) did nothing against cheaper Calder claimers in his last.  Don't see him doing anything today, either.
UNCLE HALEY (8/29) is another maiden running against winners.  He's the obvious speed in the field, even making the lead at six furlongs from the 10-hole in his last.  Of course he's a huge fader; that's why he's still a maiden.  But wait.  In his last two ratable races -- the miles at Calder -- he actually made a couple of big moves (BM's.  Remember?  You have them marked on the margin, don't you?) between the first and second calls.  A very strange pattern indeed --

dawdling along at first, then rushing up to engage the leaders at the four furlong pole.  I've seen lots and lots of past performances, but I don't remember ever seeing that particular pattern before.  UNCLE HALEY's also had a bullet (at Hialeah) since his last race.

SONNER (21/23) broke his maiden against porcupines in his only good race.

NOT SOON ENOUGH (29/20) has had a couple of decent races, but nothing to write home about.  Or to make you believe he'll do something wonderful today.

CHRISTINA PRINCE (18/20) has actually run some pretty good races against reasonably fair competition.  So why is he priced for a quick sale at $3,500 less than the price he was just bought for?  You figure it out.  No, I'll tell you.  There's something wrong with the horse.

MYSTIC MORN (20/20) cuts his claiming price in half, but that's okay.  His last was his first as a winner, and it showed.

THIRD RACE: ANALYSIS

A real ratty bunch.  Every horse in the race has at least one serious flaw.  There is, however, a decent angle.  With the exception of SUDDEN SAM, who we've dismissed, UNCLE HALEY is the only truly dedicated early speed horse in the field, and you know what the rule says -- if there's a single speed horse in the field, play it.  I like this one particularly well because he's also had a bullet workout since his last race, which is very positive in the early speed horse angle.  In fact, he's evidently the only horse in the race that has managed to <u>ever</u> have a bullet workout.  So let's see.  He pressed the pace from the 10-hole in his last and quit, and now moves inside.  Not very far inside, but inside.  He's the only speed horse in the racea and he's had a bullet since his last race.  And don't forget that strange pattern in his last two races we can't figure out.

THIRD RACE: THE BET

A look at the board told me UNCLE HALEY was going off at 80 to one, with five minutes or so till post-time.  Wow.  I bet him across, of course.  Then I put him over and under the four other possibles: REAL SWISSY, INAHAT, GATE'S GOLD, and CHRISTINA PRINCE.  Then I put him over the field, just in case.  In the trifecta, I put him on top of the four others, with the field third, then under the four others, with the field third, then with the four others first, the field second, and UNCLE HALEY third.  Then, in spite of my good intentions to bet the minimum, I bet the peewaddin' out of UNCLE HALEY to win.

I singled UNCLE HALEY in my pick three, so I could spread my bet out in the other races, trying to assure myself of a big payoff if UNCLE HALEY should

win.

THIRD RACE: RESULTS
UNCLE HALEY wins, paying $130.  Much more interesting, however, is the way he won, coming from the back of the pack to catch everyone at the top of the stretch.  Now I understand that strange pattern -- the trainer was trying to see if the horse could close.  Maybe.  Who knows?  Anyway, the exacta paid $864.60.  The trifecta paid $2688.20.

FOURTH RACE: THE FIELD
A mid-priced sprint for older horses.

NASTY NEWT (30/17) has won two in a row against easier.  He moves to the rail -- not the perfect spot for his style of running.
ASPEN FORTUNE pressed the pace against similar last out from the 6-hole in a fairly quick seven-furlong race.  He may get the rail and stay there a while.  Maybe all the way.  The only problem is he's had all his recent success at Calder.
SKINNY BABY switches from turf to dirt and drops in price, but he still looks overmatched.
DR. CINA got it done in fine style at Monmouth and Hialeah last year.  He certainly has been quick at times, and has run three excellent races off layoffs.  His last two were horrible.  Is he ready to run again?  His works don't really say so, but his trainer and jockey do.  I think ASPEN FORTUNE will probably be too much for him.  He may show some early speed, but should tire off the layoff, with mediocre works.
GALLANT STEP was claimed two races ago, got badly beaten in his next, and is for sale at the same price.  Not a real good sign.  However, that "poor" race was against classier animals two weeks after a heartbreaking loss to a very tough foe, and GALLANT STEP didn't totally embarrass himself.  Still have to think, however, he isn't quite up to this crew.
MY BOY CARY pressed the pace against hot fractions and gave up running against the grain from the 9-hole in his last, less than two weeks ago.  If he'd run that same race against these there's a good chance he'd have been in front for a long time, or at least sitting on the leaders' shoulders, biding his time.  Has the best Byer in the bunch and gets a  rider switch.  He's 0 for 6 at Gulfstream, but he's been claimed twice in the past four races.  The trainers certainly think he's worth the price.
GENTLEMAN'S HAT ran an excellent race on the rail against similar at seven furlongs in his last.  I don't think he'll run that race again from the seven-

hole. Has won at this distance, but that was when he broke his maiden. Can't go with him versus multiple winners.

UNUSUAL PERFORMER drops to a new low level today, coming off a layoff. Has run well off a layoff before, and the hard blowout on January 4, followed by the easy breeze on the tenth, may have him ready today. Didn't win in 1994, but spent his days running at twice this claiming price. Has run a couple of good races, has finished in the money in half his races at Gulfstream, and likes the distance. Gets Lopez back, who rode him in his best race -- last July at Monmouth. Can't bet with confidence, but I never totally disregard a horse dropping to a new low level.

SAMMY FROM MIAMI ran two excellent races in a row from the middle of the field, winning one of them and getting bumped at the start in the other -- a seven-furlong sprint. He shortens up here, likes Gulfstream and the distance, and should be a big-time threat. Hasn't worked since his last, and moves to the far outside here, both of which bother me, but he probably still gets the nod, anyway.

FOURTH RACE: ANALYSIS

I see five possible horses in the race: DR CINA, MY BOY CARY, UNUSUAL PERFORMER, ASPEN FORTUNE, and SAMMY FROM MIAMI. I suspect ASPEN FORTUNE will be in the lead, with MY BOY CARY on his shoulder, waiting to make his move on the turn, with SAMMY and UNUSUAL close behind. DR. CINA could be anywhere, depending on how he feels today.

FOURTH RACE: THE BET

UNUSUAL PERFORMER was scratched, leaving us with only four horses. A look at the board tells us GALLANT STEP is going off the favorite for some unknown reason. That's good. MY BOY is 5-1, SAMMY is 3-1, and DR. CINA is 5-1 -- not nearly high enough to be worth a bet. ASPEN FORTUNE is 10-1. I really can't handle DR. CINA's last two races, so I toss him. I think the crowd has really blown this one. The board says my SAMMY/MY BOY exacta will pay about $40 -- an absolute gift. I figure if a favorite comes in third in the trifecta it will be worth maybe $60 or $70 -- also a gift. If a long shot happens to come in -- ASPEN FORTUNE or (please God) SKINNY BABY -- it could pay really well. I box my top two in the exacta, then play a three-horse box with ASPEN FORTUNE and also play my top two over the field in the trifecta. At 3-1 I can't quite bet SAMMY to win, so I bet MY BOY CARY to win at 5-1, though I believe SAMMY will catch him at the wire.

I put all five horses in my pick three.

FOURTH RACE: THE RESULTS

Surprise! MY BOY CARY wins and pays $11.40. SAMMY FROM MIAMI places, paying $4.20, and ASPEN FORTUNE pays $4.60 to show. The exacta

pays $41.40.  The trifecta pays $188.00.

FIFTH RACE: THE FIELD

A high-priced turf race for older horses who have not won three other than.

JOHNNY NORTH (12/24) has run well on the grass in the past.  His last race is excused, since it was taken off the turf.  Still you can't excuse it totally, since he faded so horribly.  Gets first-time Lasix today, which may bring him out of it and let him run back to his glory days at Saratoga and Belmont -- against statebreds.  He gets Bailey, who has shown himself to be not just a hall of fame rider and one of the best in the country on the turf, but a pretty darn good judge of horseflesh as well.  Just don't think he can do it from the one-hole with the other speed breathing down his neck.

FANCHEE (24/9) destroyed the field from the one-hole on a slick track last out, but his last grass race was awful.  Not a dedicated turf horse, obviously, and that's what he's up against in some of the others.  I think he'll let others have the lead and try to catch up.

BONBON D'OR (7/12) is one of the two major speed threats -- the other being JOHNNY NORTH.  Has run some good races, but is in over his head here, especially with JOHNNY NORTH on the rail.

RUPERT SPRING FIRE (28/7) has run four excellent races on the grass, with an excuse in his fifth.  Usually comes from out of the clouds, however, and Gulfstream is not ordinarily a turf course for the straggler.  If Bailey and Velez go after it on the front end, though, anything can happen, but I don't think it will.

TREVELYAN (14/11) keeps Samyn and has a good running style for this kind of race, but will have to throw a super race to contend.  Destroyed the field last time out, in a race taken off the grass, but didn't run very fast.  Just don't think his grass races measure up to others in the field.

ALI'LBITO'REALITY (29/12) is a talented horse with the right running style and an affinity for the grass.  Hasn't beaten this kind of horse, however.  Not yet, anyway.

UNDUE INFLUENCE (15/9) has run very well in two races taken off the turf, now is on his third off the layoff, and should like the feel of grass under his feet again.  I like the bullet on New Year's Eve, and I wouldn't be surprised to see him give this group a tussle all the way to the wire.  Maybe even past it.

DOVE HUNT (14/7) is the obvious grass class of the field, and as such rates major attention.  Ran a huge race in a grade 3 taken off the turf last out, beaten by a couple of pretty tough horses.  Strangely has never run a competitive Byer except in his biggest race by far -- his last, with was taken off the grass.  Has two grade 3 wins in his past, which brings up the old caution: never bet a graded winner to win in a non-graded event.  Last was 2nd time

Lasix and the best race of his young life, so he may be due for a slump today.  Is certain to be overbet.

WARM WAYNE (14/14) slipped through at the rail with Mike Smith on top last time to win big.  His turf record, however, is not so wonderful.  Smith stays on: a good sign.  That last race could have been a good tune-up for this one, his second off the layoff; he has a good work since on an off track.  Ran very large his last off a layoff, on the turf, and didn't slump much in his next, a grade 3.  He's done well from deep posts before.  Must give him a decent shot with Smith up.

ROCKET CITY (18/10) really ripped up cheaper on the turf last time out, his third off a layoff.  The other two have been pretty doggone good, too.  Keeps Velez.  Has won in good fashion from the 8-hole, against good horses.  Might have won that big race at Churchill except for the trouble.  Looks like his race to lose.  One big problem -- he's never run at Gulfstream.FIFTH RACE: ANALYSIS

A tough race to handicap.  Bailey looks to get the lead on JOHNNY NORTH, with BONBON D'OR battling him for it all the way.  Behind those are UNDUE INFLUENCE, DOVE HUNT, WARM WAYNE, and ROCKET CITY.  The rest drop back and watch the fight, waiting their turn that will never come.  From there on it's just a matter of which pacestalker will have the most on the turn.  The deep, deep closers just don't seem to be the best horses today.

FIFTH RACE: THE BET

I have four horses who might be able to win: UNDUE INFLUENCE, DOVE HUNT, WARM WAYNE, and ROCKET CITY.  Of those I like UNDUE INFLUENCE and ROCKET CITY, for the reasons mentioned above.  A look at the board tells us the crowd absolutely loves DOVE HUNT, at 3-2.  ROCKET CITY, however, is a lovely 6-1, UNDUE INFLUENCE is 7-1, and WARM WAYNE is 9-1.  RUPERT SPRING FIRE, who I don't see winning because his particular running style doesn't fit the Gulfstream turf course, but who is certainly a very capable horse nevertheless, is an astonishing 15-1, and therefore moves in with the other horses as representing good value.  TREVELYAN, who I don't give any chance at all to, is the second favorite at 4-1.  I bet UNDUE INFLUENCE and ROCKET CITY to win.  I box UNDUE INFLUENCE and ROCKET CITY, and put them both on top of DOVE HUNT, WARM WAYNE, and RUPERT SPRING FIRE.  In the trifecta, I put UNDUE and ROCKET over my other contenders, then over the field.  Then -- just to be on the safe side -- I do a three-horse box with my top two and DOVE HUNT.

I put all four horses in my pick three, making it cost a total of $40 -- an unusually big pick three for me, but worth the chance, with a 60-1 angle horse in the first leg.FIFTH RACE: THE RESULTS

UNDUE INFLUENCE wins, paying $15.80.  ROCKET CITY places, paying $6.60, and RUPERT shows, paying $7.  The exacta pays $111.20.  The trifecta

pays $803.60.

My pick three pays $14,314.40.

I'm not making this up, gentle reader.  Look at the charts.  Then go back and re-read, and you'll wonder how so many intelligent people could have missed it.

SIXTH RACE: THE FIELD

A high-priced seven-furlong race for 3-year-old female maiden claimers.

FAPPIALITY has breeding, the rail, and Robbie Davis, but that looks like all.

VERY TRUE has Santos.

CHRISSY B ran a good race in the slop at Arlington.  Today she has Mike Smith up for some reason.  Maybe Janks thinks Smith really is a miracle worker.  Maybe he is.  She gets second time Lasix today.  With Smith up, a chance.

STREET CODE was close in a few races at Calder, and has a bullet there.  She was bumped at the start in her last, so it can be excused.  Boulanger off, Bravo up.  A very positive jockey switch

WOOD PAJAMAS has shown a desire to close -- not a bad tendency in a seven-furlong race.  May be outclassed here, though.  Especially if no speed duel develops.  Or maybe even if one does.

MIDWAY QUEEN has been running well in the morning.  Good breeding.  Can she cut the mustard here?  Maybe.  She appears to be the best of the first-timers.

RUNAWAY BRIDE ran well on a "good" track last time out.  A well-bred young lady who closes well when the pace is slow.  In the one race with an honest pace, she blew up.  Is that characteristic?  May be a moot point; there doesn't appear to be much speed in here.  Switches from Boulanger to Douglas -- a very positive switch.

COMPLETE CHARM tried to steal her last on the front end after breaking dead last on a "good" track at Gulfstream, but she wasn't horse enough to do it.  She and BRIDE have the best races at Gulfstream.  Gets first-time Lasix today, but has nothing to run back to.

CORPORATE FOCUS hasn't been on the dirt yet.  Fair trainer, fair jockey.  Not for me.

DOCS ALLEWET doesn't show me enough.

SIXTH RACE: ANALYSIS

I see three horses with some kind of chance to win: CHRISSY B, STREET CODE, and RUNAWAY BRIDE.  They're pretty much equal in my eyes,

SIXTH RACE: THE BET

The board tells us the crowd sees it much the same way.  STREET and RUNAWAY are 5-2, and CHRISSY B is 4-1.  None of them looks like a

reasonable bet to me.  STREET CODE gets bar shoes, which at Gulfstream is sometimes a good thing.  But not good enough for me.  Pass.

SIXTH RACE: RESULTS

STREET CODE wins by a ton, even after being bumped at the start.  She pays $7.20.  CHRISSY B places at $4.40, with RUNAWAY BRIDE showing for $2.40.  The exacta pays a very surprising $38.40, making me wish I'd been more thorough in checking the board, and the trifecta pays $103.40.

SEVENTH RACE: THE FIELD

A $40,000 sprint allowance for older horses who have not won over $3,900 twice since April 1.  If that doesn't sound like it was written by a trainer I'll kiss your foot.  Find the guy who just barely squeaked in, and you've probably got the winner.

COLORFUL CREW (7/14) hasn't ever run well enough to beat these guys. Forget him, even though he's switching from turf to dirt today, and and moving inside.

GOLDEN PRO (19/14) has run well enough to beat these guys almost every time he's been on the track, but he hasn't won in seven tries.  A sucker horse?  Or bad luck?

DALHART (7/26) ran his heart out at Belmont last July.  Hasn't shown anything since.

MY LUCK RUNS NORTH (32/27) can't come close to GOLDEN PRO in any capacity.

D.J. CAT dropped dead in his last for no apparent reason, but he's run well enough to win this in the past.  He gets Smith today, making him a huge enigma.  Who will show up today?

PONCHE hasn't run a race in a year that would win this one.  No reason to expect he will today.

SEVENTH RACE: ANALYSIS

I hate this race.  Golden Pro should humiliate the field, but he can't seem to win.  Smith gets off, Perret gets up, a bigtime negative jockey switch.  Yuk.  I think COLORFUL CREW and DALHART will burn each other up.  No, I  they will. MY LUCK RUNS NORTH just can't win unless everyone else collapses.  That leaves D.J. CAT and PONCHE, with Smith and Bailey.  Both have the right running style.  D.J. CAT looks much the best on his good days, PONCHE is more consistent.

SEVENTH RACE: THE BET

The crowd, totally overlooking all the negatives, bets GOLDEN PRO down to nothing.  Not smart.  The only horses with bettable odds are the two who haven't a prayer in the world: COLORFUL CREW and MY LUCK RUNS NORTH. The exacta, if D.J. CAT and PONCHE come in, will pay about $30.  Not worth it,

with GOLDEN PRO in the race.  Not that he'll win, but he has, after all, finished second five times in a row, two of them in grade 3 races.  Pass.

SEVENTH RACE: RESULTS

PONCHE wins, paying $8.60.  GOLDEN PRO places and pays $2.40.  COLORFUL CREW finishes third somehow, paying $3.00.  The exacta pays $19.60.  The trifecta pays $103.40.  I told you I hated the race.

EIGHTH RACE: THE FIELD

A $25,000 allowance for 3-year-old fillies, non-winners of other than.

SPARKLE PROOF has some excellent works.

MISS OCEANETTE broke her maiden last time out, from the one-hole at Calder.

NUBBINS was bumped and still won at Aqueduct from the 8-hole.  COFFEE SPRINGS ran a good race to break her maiden at Keenland, then came back and ran an almost identical one at Gulfstream.

SUPER CHARGING is in here for padding.

GARDEN FLOWER is a good horse, but doesn't measure up.

CLASS KRIS broke her maiden by three at Calder, on her second try after being bothered in her first.

ASTRO GLIDE also broke her maiden on the second try, after getting a very slow start in her first.  She and MISS OCEANETTE have the best Beyers in the field -- both on their last races.

MAYBE BABY won't do it today.

ELAPSED TIME couldn't outrun COFFEE SPRINGS in her last, but ran an excellent race.

SOME SWEET ran well last time out, but can't get there today without huge improvement.

EIGHTH RACE: ANALYSIS

If I wasn't doing this for the book, I'd simply pass this race without any more handicapping and watch these excellent young horses run.  Alas, I have to go through the process of picking a few.  MISS OCEANETTE should take the lead  and hold it, maybe forever.  COFFEE SPRINGS should be just outside, battling all the way.  ASTRO GLIDE, helped by the fast pace, should be three wide and ready to make a move.  ELAPSED TIME should be just behind those, but I don't think she'll be able to get around unless the front three commit suicide.

EIGHTH RACE: THE BETThe crowd sees it pretty much the same way.  COFFEE SPRINGS is the favorite, at 3-2.  ASTRO GLIDE is next, at 5-2.  GARDEN FLOWER is the third favorite for some reason, at 5-1.  MISS OCEANETTE, however, is a very surprising 7-1, and with the rail might be worth a play.  I bet MISS OCEANETTE to win, and put her over and under ASTRO GLIDE and COFFEE SPRINGS in an exacta.  Hoping MISS OCEANETTE might

win or place and make it worthwhile, I also did a three-horse trifecta box.

EIGHTH RACE: RESULTS

ASTRO GLIDE wins and pays $7.60.  MISS OCEANETTE places, also paying $7.60.  CLASS KRIS, to everyone's surprise, runs third all the way and pays $13.20.  The exacta pays $39.  The trifecta pays an astonishing $878.20, giving me a hollow place in the pit of my stomach.  I simply didn't think a real long shot would get there in this race.


NINTH RACE: THE FIELD

Another turf race, this an allowance for older fillies and mares, non-winners of four other than.  Some pretty nice horses in here.

AFALADJA (31/35) has run against some extremely tough company, including BIEN BIEN, FANMORE, and TRISHYDE, but didn't run particularly well.  Hasn't a win on the form, but she gets that man Smith, takes an immense class drop -- to her lowest class on the form, and showed some life in her last, a grade 2 event.  Unlikely, but we can't overlook horses dropping to a new low level.

PROMISEVILLE (27/21) ran just behind AFALADJA in her last, in a performance that was close to her best on the form.  Also takes a huge class drop and also showed some life in that grade 2.

NORTHERN EMERALD (31/23) appears to be on the downhill slide.  Couldn't win against easier in her last.  The layoff didn't help, so she took another one.  That doesn't look like it will help much, either.

NOTABLE SWORD (16/24) won't get there, I think.

DO SI DO (22/34) gets blinkers, which could help her early speed, but I think she needs more than that today.

SHADOW MISS (8/12) runs pretty well on the dirt, but not well enough on the grass to win today, even with miracle man Bailey taking the mount and second-time Lasix.  She dropped to a new low level in her last, couldn't do it, and takes a class jump today.  No chance.

BABY MILLIE (2/2) looks to be an also ran also.  Her early speed worked well against cheaper, but she moves up too far today.

SYMPHONY LADY (26/23) hit the gate in her last start, a pretty fair stakes race at Calder, and still ran an excellent race, finishing only 4 lengths behind CARESS.  Ran hot at Saratoga and Belmont last year.  Pretty good works.  Maybe the layoff will bring out the best in her.

NACUMI (23/9) ran wide and won in her last against cheaper.  Don't see her doing it today.

MA GUERRE (30/15) has won both of her last two turf races, and the last time she dropped to this level she won fairly easily.  She still doesn't look like she has the speed to do it here.

GREAT LADY MARY is a speed horse without enough speed on the outside in a turf race. Are you kidding?

NINTH RACE: ANALYSIS

SHADOW MISS was scratched, taking Bailey out of the race. AFALADJA has to be considered, dropping to a new low level with Smith up. SYMPHONY LADY might be ready today. The others don't seem to be competitive.

NINTH RACE: THE BET

The crowd sent SYMPHONY LADY off as the favorite at 2-1. AFALADJA was an enticing 7-1. I threw caution to the winds and bet AFALADJA to win. How often can you find a horse dropping to a new low level with a jockey switch like this? I put her in an exacta with SYMPHONY LADY, and put them over the field in the trifecta.

NINTH RACE: RESULTS

AFALADJA wins, paying $15.80. MA GUERRE, right behind her all the way, finishes second, paying $9.20. SYMPHONY LADY was bumped at the start, trailed the field, and finished a pretty game fourth. The exacta paid $178.40. The trifecta paid $824.80. If SYMPHONY LADY doesn't get bumped, what happens? We'll never know.

TENTH RACE: THE FIELD

A cheap claiming race for older horses.

PESPORTU (27/14) ran 32 times in 1994 and won only three races. Still, he's the big earner in the field, he ran pretty well in some of the races on his form, and his running style fits the race. Gets a jockey switch. Not a winner, but he knows how to run. In the money in half his races last year.

KOLUCTOO'S IMAGE (12/16) figures to be a speed factor, but is probably too cheap to last. No-win jockey and no-win trainer don't speak well of him.

STRIKE ME DOWN (23/18) has run reasonably well against this kind. Put him in roughly the same class with the first two. NEW ENERGY (12/24) drops to a new low level. He has broken 80 in his Byers three times, to the rest of the field's none. His last was not as bad as it looks due to the very fast pace, which these won't get within a mile of; did show some life off the layoff in the one before that. Has a super 5-furlong work around the dogs 6 days ago that shows he may be ready to run again. His third off the layoff -- a magic number for some horses. Has been claimed three times on the form -- for $25,000, $20,000, and $32,000. Today he runs for $12,500 -- a very bad sign. But he gets a huge weight break today, dropping nine pounds. Has wired the field many times, and appears to be the inside speed here, with eight races in which he ran close to a 45 four furlong split. If he does that here everyone else will be squinting to catch a glimpse of him.

FIDO (23/22) will run true to his name.

CANDIDATO (?) lost a maiden, won a maiden, lost an allowance, got creamed in an allowance, and that's all we know about him.   All we care to know, too.

SPICY HI (34/30) drops to a new low level and keeps the apprentice.  Ran in the same race with NEW ENERGY last time, drubbing him soundly.  However, hasn't a great deal of back class or speed.  Recent races just don't show much.

ONE HOT SHANANIE (26/37) will cool off bigtime in here.  Actually, he already has.

ELEVEN SEVEN (24/14) has almost gotten it done a few times in his past ten races, but hasn't quite had what it takes.  His last, also his first at Gulfstream, was not good.  May come in for a piece, but he looks too slow.

SPANISH GALLEON (21/16) ran a decent seven-furlong race last out but couldn't win.  In fact, he only won one race last year -- his maiden.  And he's certainly had his chances.SO STATELY (35/31) just can't get there, even against cheapBOLD AND AMAZING (24/20) ran a very good race last time out, in which he bid and hung, finishing third -- often a sign a horse is ready to run.  Has had a decent little work.  Deserves an in-the-money shot, but probably not a first-place finish from the 12-hole.

TENTH RACE: ANALYSIS

If NEW ENERGY is ready to run he'll humiliate the field; no one will be within six lengths of him at four furlongs.  Maybe you'd like to ignore that 1/14 work and bet he won't wake up.  I won't.  The place and show horses in the race would be the best closers, since NEW ENERGY -- if he wakes up -- will absolutely embarrass any of the other frontrunners.  For place and show: PESPORTU (27/14), STRIKE ME DOWN (23/18), ELEVEN SEVEN (24/14), and SPANISH GALLEON.  Let me say that trying to predict how horses will race against a runaway frontrunner is one of the hardest things in handicapping to do; you just don't know how they'll be affected psychologically.

TENTH RACE: THE BET

Wonder of wonders.  NEW ENERGY is going off at 5-1.  The others, in the order shown above, are at 7-1, 5-2, 5-1, and 20-1.  The bet's simple.  I bet NEW ENERGY to win, and put him over the other four in an exacta.  Then I put him over the other four in the trifecta, then played another trifecta with NEW ENERGY on top, the other four to place, and the field (including those four) to show.  Then I quit.  Of course, if NEW ENERGY isn't ready, I lose my shirt.  But if he is, look out, Mabel.

TENTH RACE: RESULTS

Wow.  Was he ready.  He runs his 45 and change, just as he has so many times before, and the closest competitor (FIDO, if you can believe it) is indeed five lengths back at four furlongs.  Not satisfied, Soodeen (whoever that is) steps

on the gas and he absolutely destroys the field, winning by 16 and paying $12.20.  SPANISH GALLEON finishes second, paying a cool $19.40 and $10.60.  PESPORTU finishes third, paying $4.40.  The exacta pays $263.  The trifecta pays a juicy $1,272.80.

TENTH RACE: REVIEW
NEW ENERGY was dropping to a new low level, running his third off a layoff, with a terrific workout since his last.  He had three times on the form run better races than anyone else in the field.  He historically had run a full second faster to the four furlong pole than anyone else in the race, and found that same speed again today.  He was dropping nine pounds.  He was absolutely the best bet in the race by any method of judging, and was an absolute gift at 5-1.
TOTAL RETURN FOR GULFSTREAM: $25,180.60.

Oaklawn

FIRST RACE: THE FIELD
This is a pretty cheap claiming race for older horses.
SCORE A WIN has dominated his last two on the lead in decent company, and it doesn't look like there's any other speed in this race until we get to the eight-hole.  He's run reasonably well at Oaklawn before, has a very good breezing five-furlong work to come off the layoff with, and keeps Borel.  What more could you ask for?
ROCKY GAP's System figures are 36/36.  Starts far back and stays there.MORA is 38/20.  A fair closer.
DEPOSIT NOTE is 37/28.  A very mild closer.
VICE MINISTER is 26/20, and closed nicely in his last to win at Remington.
ROYAL PLAYER is 26/36.  Yuk.
BLAZING THUNDER is 13/17.  Looks like an early speed horse, but his races are very mixed.
FINALLY COOKIN' is a committed early speed horse who has also won his last two on the front end against decent horses.  Trouble is, today he moves outside, with a dedicated speed horse on the rail.
SMOKEY O. is 33/23, against higher priced horses at Houston, a significantly lower class track.  His only decent race on the form is on the turf.
AVIS RAPIDUS is 12/25 and has had trouble getting the job done from outside the 4-hole.  Of course, the legend's on his back.  But he finished 16 lengths back from the 10-hole with the legend on his back three races ago.
FIRST RACE: ANALYSIS

SCORE A WIN gets the lead, extends it, holds off a couple of horses in the stretch, wins by a length and a half, and pays $5.  Somebody comes in second, and someone else comes in third, with the rest out there somewhere.

FIRST RACE: THE BET

FIRST RACE: RESULTS

SECOND RACE: THE FIELD

A Maiden special weight for three-year-old fillies.

SUBTLE BELLE is too subtle for me.  She's never finished less than ten lengths back, and moves up in class today.

GWENJINSKY has one turgid work to her credit and nothing else except the Romero brothers.

BLONDE ACTRESS has at least one excellent work at Oaklawn, and Garrett Gomez.

SWEET CHOICE shows nothing at all except a good trainer, decent jockey, and a fair Remington-based barn.  (Besides, she was scratched.)

MIGHTBEARUFFIAN has shown pretty clearly she's not.

SECRET LADY has some decent speed figures at Turfway and Churchill Downs, but she's only threatened a couple of times out of 6 races, has no works at Oaklawn, and has never run here.

FABULOUS PERFORMER ran on a "good" track her last out, pressed the pace, and gave way in the stretch in a MSW at Churchill.  She has an excellent and a good work at Oaklawn, plus two bullets elsewhere, and went off as the favorite in her last race.

TOO COLD AT HOME pressed the pace from the 9-hole in a maiden special at Louisiana Downs in her last on a sloppy track and folded.  No decent works.  If she was in the one or two-hole I might take her more seriously.

HALO CIELO might not have liked the slop in her last, but judging from her works she doesn't like the dry, either.WINDY LAKE has four excellent works at Houston and one bummer at Oaklawn.  Does she really hate the track that much?  Combination of Larry Robideaux and the legend make you think that work didn't tell the whole story.  No matter.  With Day up she'll be bet down to nothing, anyway.

LOST ANSWER has a couple of nice works.

LOOSE PARK has some nice works.

SECOND RACE: ANALYSIS

If FABULOUS PERFORMER doesn't win it, probably WINDY LAKE or a first-time starter will.  Who can predict?  Who cares, since the only horses who have a predictable chance are bet down past the point of sanity?

SECOND RACE: THE BET

SECOND RACE: THE RESULTS
FABULOUS PERFORMER wins and pays $5.60.  WINDY LAKE and BLONDE ACTRESS place and show, paying small prices.

THIRD RACE: THE FIELD
A decent maiden claiming race.
CODE VIOLATION has finished a total of 47 lengths back in his four races.  Gah!
SHIRLEY'S BEAU has pressed the pace from the 2, five, and five hole in her last three, and almost lasted in two of them.  She's in the two-hole today.  The next closest speed appears to be in the 11-hole.  She was also the favorite in two of her last three races.
NINNY'S BOY was also the favorite in his last, a mid-priced maiden claimer.  He had Day up, as he does today.  Will he finish ninth again, 11 lengths back?  Why not?
THISTIMEITSMINE has a couple of good races against state-breds at Aksarben, and one decent work at Oaklawn.  Class will tell.
CRIMSON TEMPER -- nothing.
AWESOME M showed basically nothing at Sunland.  Does have some decent works.  You want to bet a horse who can't win at Sunland?  Be my guest.
NOBLE REDDIE shows nothing.
TAYLOR'S DREAM couldn't do it against cheaper claimers.
FINAL TURN shows nothing.
SODDIE shows nothing.
WILL TELL has pressed the pace three times from inside, moves outside.  What do you think?
HITES RUN has never shown he can.  Even a switch to Garret Gomez won't make it happen.
THIRD RACE: ANALYSIS
SHIRLEY'S BEAU will toy with the rest.  She's going off at 2-1.  Nahhh.
THIRD RACE: RESULTS
SHIRLEY'S BEAU wins and pays $6.50.  CODE VIOLATION runs second, paying $5.60, and HITES RUN finishes third, paying $13.

FOURTH RACE: THE FIELD
SPECIAL PETITION (7/16) won by 4 on the lead from the one-hole in his last race -- a 5.5 furlong cheap statebred claimer.  Racing against better horses he did nothing.
EFFIE'S HOLME BOY (16/24) ran pretty well in a futurity, courtesy of a PPOT angle, moving from the seven to the two hole.  Can he win a race of this

caliber from the two-hole, with another speed horse inside him?  I don't think so.

COUNT JACK (19/21) ran well in a $25,000 non winners of two claiming race at RD, a minor track.  In his last, a mile at Turfway, he showed good speed.  But he's a speed horse outside of two other speed horses.

DRAKESTER (16/9) pressed the pace and won by 2 in his last, a MSW route at Houston.  He's closed extremely well in his two other races, both MSW's against Texas stock.

LONE GROVE (8/21) has pressed the pace regularly in MSW's at Houston, and almost won from the 7-hole.  But he's another speed horse outside of a bunch of speed.

ASSURANCE (12/13) is still another early speed horse (12/13) outside of a whole bunch of other speed.  However, he did close well in his last on a hot pace.  He won that one -- a mid-priced maiden claiming race at Turfway -- by five, pressing the pace from the nine-hole.CROWN OF KALEM (6/1) broke behind the field in a high-priced (for Remington) maiden claiming race, circled the field, and won by 3 -- as impressive a victory as ASSURANCE's.  He also went off the favorite.  No published works, but Van Berg wouldn't ship him up and send him out unless he was ready.

BLUE ALERT (20/20) just can't move from Trinity to Oaklawn and win without showing considerably more than we see in her past performances.

CRANE'S PICK (10/6) ran a nice race at Houston, pressing the pace from the 2-hole.  Now he moves outside about five other early speed horses.  Don't think so.

BEAU DUFF (13/14) pressed the pace and won from the 2-hole last out at Louisiana Downs.  Can he get it done at Oaklawn from the eleven-hole?  Nope.

JITTERY CRANE (12/21) pressed the pace for four races, winning a maiden claimer at Louisiana Downs, and then didn't show up on a "good" track at the Fair Grounds.  Many speed horses inside; forget.

FOURTH RACE: ANALYSIS

This is one of those strange races that's completely unpredictable on paper.  I can't find a dominant speed horse.  Normally, I'd take a long look at SPECIAL PETITION, but it looks like he and as many as 7 other horses might be trying desperately for the lead for the first four furlongs.  To me, that means closers win big, and I can only find two dedicated closers: DRAKESTER, and CROWN OF KALEM, although ASSURANCE and BLUE ALERT have shown the ability to close in a race or two.  I've seen many races like this and have bet on the closers, only to have a fit and ready speed horse jump out in front of all the others and set such a dawdling pace the closers couldn't close.  With this many speed horses, though, I don't believe that will happen.  I believe half a dozen or more speed horses will bunch up, fight for the lead, set a hot pace, then fold up

and watch the closers run by.

FOURTH RACE: THE BET

I simply can't totally overlook Special Petition.  If a horse is going to win on the lead, I think it will be him.  But in the end I decide a horse won't win on the lead.  I decide to bet the closers: DRAKESTER and CROWN OF KALEM, and ASSURANCE, because he closed so well in his last from the 9-hole, and he's a Lukas horse with Day up.

Imagine my surprise when the odds come up and I see my top two picks are longshots.  I bet $5 to win on CROWN OF KALEM and $2 across on DRAKESTER.  I bet a three-horse exacta box.  Then I bet a $2 exacta with CROWN OF KALEM on top of DRAKESTER, ASSURANCE, and COUNT JACK. Then I cover myself by putting SPECIAL PETITION and COUNT JACK over and under CROWN OF KALEM, DRAKESTER, and ASSURANCE.  I wish with all my heart and soul there was a trifecta in this race.

FOURTH RACE: RESULTS

It goes just like it should.  CROWN OF KALEM wins, paying $16, and DRAKESTER places, paying an incredibly wonderful $55.40.  The exacta pays $866.80.  (I'm not making this up; look at the charts.)  I invest $41 and get back $1844.

FIFTH RACE: THE FIELD

A $20,000 claiming race for older fillies and mares.

FLASH A BROADFRONT (14/14) looks like a pretty nice horse, with nine in-the-money finishes on the form.  It's her last that bothers me.  In one of her easier races, she gets lasix for the first time and finishes next to last, pressing the pace from the 3-hole.  Now she hasn't run since September, and has only one mediocre workout to her credit.  I don't often like horses coming off of layoffs to win sprints against other proven horses.

MARY PAT (7/24) is a dedicated speed horse.  You can bet she'll be in front by the two-furlong pole.  She may not hang around till the end, but she'll be there at the start.  This time she's outside of FLASH A BROADFRONT, who promises to give her some trouble on the front end.

RULING PRINCESS was a scratch.

CRIMSON LUCY (18/31) is an inferior speed horse.

EXTRA FREE (4/1) is coming off a layoff with a resounding bullet.  She did run a nice 6.5 furlong race at Remington, but that was in a conditioned allowance.  All the rest of her races are routes.  I don't think she can beat this kind of sprinter.

CHANTING TUDOR (7/18) comes off five horrible races, has laid off since October, and has no published works.  Still, those two wins at Oaklawn are pretty

darned impressive, both at higher prices than today.  In fact, he's one of only three who've ever won at Oaklawn.  Did he just hate Louisiana Downs?  Is he hurt?

ATHENIUM (16/15) was running extremely well until she was claimed three races ago.  Then she went down the toilet, losing two as the favorite.  Will she wake up?

LOST THE CODE (28/14) appears to be the only real closer in the race, and is one of the three who've won at Oaklawn.  Day won on her last time he rode her, closing from the 2-hole.

LIBBY'S DANCER is a turf/router who's never run at OakTRESSA ANN (17/24) is another speed horse who almost won her last on the lead from the 5-hole.  She's up against better today, and moves outside.  You figure it.

TWOSARACIAN is a router.  Her only six-furlong on the form was a disaster against lesser at her favorite track.

KEY TO THE SAUCE would be my horse if I was betting on names.  Fortunately, I'm not.

FIFTH RACE: ANALYSIS

Well, well, well.  One closer in with a bunch of early speed horses.  Unfortunately, it's carrying Pat Day and gets bet down to next to nothing.  I don't want to bet her to win.  I look at exactas, putting her over the other four or five horses who have some kind of chance.  I don't see a value bet.

FIFTH RACE: THE BET

FIFTH RACE: RESULTS

LOST CODE pays $4.40.  MARY PAT and CHANTING TUDOR follow her in, paying $8.60/$5.00 and $3.80.  The exacta pays $48.20.

SIXTH RACE: THE FIELD

Another maiden race.  For 3-year-old fillies.  Oh, well.

TEJANO'S PRIDE has some good workouts, a good trainer and jockey.

CAROLE SUE has nothing.HERE COME CLAIRE (22/14) -- a five-time beaten favorite -- hasn't been able to do it before, and moves up in class today.

ROCKET ELAINE (13/9) has a decent route and a horrible sprint to her credit.  She looks like a closer, but the beaten lengths tell you she's not.

TEAM SUNDANCER -- flashed speed in her last -- a futurity trial on a "good" track, but finished 20 lengths back with Ardoin up.  Still...

LIL'S MEMORY is trained by Robideaux and gets Day, but her workout at Oaklawn was horrible.

ACT PROUD (7/4) has some nice works, but even though it looks like she gained in her only race, she lost steadily.

EXPOSED (13/13) tired in her last, maybe from the change of scenery from Belmont to Aqueduct.  Her second race back she ran a 1:11.50, after a

46.60 half, then came back in two weeks for a bullet on the training track.  No horse in this race has ever been within two seconds of a 1:11.50.  She drops from Aqueduct to Oaklawn, a significant help considering she was the favorite in her last race.

HOUSTON'S DREAM (5/13) will stay just that.  She has pressed the pace from the outside twice, but at Aksarben.  And she didn't even get in the money.

HAZE has some really excellent works, but do you think a first time starter is really going to beat a horse like EXPOSED?

SWING SET (8/24) is another speed horse on the far outside.

ROCKETONAMISSION (2/7) is yet another speed horse on the far outside.  Has a couple of outstanding works at Houston.

SIXTH RACE: ANALYSISEXPOSED will play with them.  The jockey will probably hold her just behind the early leaders, then come around them like a scalded ape on the turn, to win by five.  Who will come in second?  How on earth could anyone tell?

SIXTH RACE: THE BET

EXPOSED goes off at 2-1.  I think that's extremely generous, because I make her about 3-5.  But I still can't bet her at those odds.  Putting her over the field in an exacta would cost $22.  I look at the exacta board.  I'd be lucky to get my money back if she came in with a couple of the horses in the race.  Pass.

This is the beginning of the pick three.  I single EXPOSED.

SIXTH RACE: RESULTS

EXPOSED murders the field, paying $6.60.  SWING SET somehow manages to come in second, paying $24.80, with TEJANO'S PRIDE third, paying $8.60.  The exacta pays a thumping $251.20.  Oh well.

SEVENTH RACE: THE FIELD

A good allowance race for older horses.

GRAHAM'S JOKER (18/24) is outclassed, out of form, and will be outrun.

BUBBA MENKUS (32/19) has run like a Rolex at Oaklawn.  Is a class horse, has an excellent work in the slop, but he's been off since May.  Do his last few races show he's lost a step?  I make him four to one.

LUKEN BOCK (7/10) is a dedicated speed horse who pressed the pace from the six-hole and faded in his last, off a torrid 44.3 pace.  TROUBLEONTHELINE, a horse I respect very highly, ran third in that same race, so I know it was about as tough as it gets.  He's the inside speed today, and he's quick.  He has a bigtime workout and has won off a layoff before.  I love his chances, making him three to one.

COVERED WAGON (33/20) seems to do just about everything right except win.  He has some super workouts.  Will he run up to them?

CANADAIR (11/16) is certainly a nice horse, but his past performances

show he's an early speed horse who'll be outclassed and outrun today, too.

PARENTHESES (8/21) woke up in a sprint at Oaklawn four races ago, and he's run well off a layoff before.  He has a couple of respectable works, but he's a speed horse outside the speed.

BURR RIDGE (22/18) has run two 1:10.60's in a row at Turfway, winning one by five and losing the other (in the mud) by 6 and a half lengths.  His workouts don't show me he's really taken hold of the Oaklawn surface, however.

HARRY N JERRY (7/11) -- one of Zoe's favorite horses -- is a very quick speed horse who simply needs to be in front all the way to win.  He just can't get it done from the outside post, especially today.

FLURRY'S COMMENT (16/15) is something of a mystery, but he seems to need the lead or be very close to it, and he's had trouble winning from the outside.

HOT JAWS (10/16) is another very serious speed horse.  He's just not quite good enough, or in a good enough position to win this race today.

SEVENTH RACE: ANALYSISI think there are five horses who could possibly win this race: BUBBA MENKUS, LUKEN BOCK, PARENTHESES, HARRY N JERRY, FLURRY'S COMMENT.  I only see one real angle horse -- the PPO6 LUKEN BOCK.

SEVENTH RACE: THE BET

I look at the board and am positively thunderstruck to see LUKEN BOCK at 35 to one.  Then I almost have the big one when I see PARENTHESES is 40 to one.  There is a distinct negative -- something I really don't like about every horse in the race except one -- LUKEN BOCK.  I'd worry about him coming off a layoff except for his workouts and the fact that there are only two horses in this race  coming off a layoff, and I don't believe either one is good enough to get there today.

I bet LUKEN BOCK  and PARENTHESES across, and put LUKEN BOCK over and under BUBBA MENKUS, PARENTHESES, HARRY N JERRY, FLURRY'S COMMENT, and HOT JAWS.

I put all five horses in the pick three.

SEVENTH RACE: RESULTS

How many times have I told you if you consistently look for, evaluate, and bet the horse who pressed the pace last time out and who moves inside today you will be rewarded?  Remember DUSKIE'S DANDY?  LUKEN BOCK wins and pays $70.20, $25.80, and $12.20.  PARENTHESES wakes up again, places, and pays $29.20 and $12.20.  The exacta pays $961.80.

I invest $24, and get back well over a thousand dollars.

EIGHTH RACE: THE FIELDThe 7th running of The Dixie Belle Handicap.

TACKY (12/14) got in over her head big time in her last race.  She has

some nice works and is, after all, a speed horse moving to the inside.

MISS C'VILLE (6/11) made me a monstrous pile of money in her third race back, when she displayed a perfect PPOT angle and beat the overwhelming favorite, TAKE THE LIMO.  The angle's gone today.

SARASOTA (15/21) has been in some big old races, and shown some life. But she's a speed horse outside... (you know the rest.)

CAPT GOLDEN GIRL (3/3) popped them in a Houston $6,000 allowance for non-winners of two, losing much ground in the stretch as she did so.  She moves up about a mile in class today.

LAWANA GO FAST (13/17) beat what look like $45,000 Aqueduct open claimers in her last by 2 lengths.  Not an easy thing to do, especially when it's your third in a row.  But she's a speed etc.

SUMMKINDARAVEN (16/16) will be so intimidated by a few of these monster horses they may have to drag her out of the starting gate.

CHEYENNE ANNE has the same problem as SUMMKINDARAVEN.

ENOUGH SAL (3/4) is a great little horse at Remington.  She's won a maiden special, a statebred allowance, and a statebred stakes.  She hasn't got a prayer in this.

CHARGEDUPSYCAMORE (10/9) had two races that might compete in this field -- the wins in the Debutante and the WHAS at Churchill Downs.  But where did she go after that?

PINK SHOES (6/3) has run three races that would put her in the thick of this one, two with the legend on her back, one with Robert Lester, an underestimated jockey.  She's got some decent works, and she's shown an ability to close in all her dirt races.  Looking at the works, though, the question arises: are they good enough for a young horse of this caliber?  Is she really ready to run?

POISON PRINCESS (10/19) ran well at the Fair Grounds against decent horses, but not against anything like some of these.  Still, Borel stays on.

OUR GEM (21/13) ran a big race off a layoff two races ago.  She's coming off a layoff today, but her works are downright boring.  Trosclair gets on for the first time, while Day gets off.

FRANKS ROCKET GIRL (17/14) has run a couple of nice races, but can't compete with these.

CAT APPEAL (10/10) is the overwhelming class of the field.  No one else has ever even been in a Graded race, much less been competitive - with a second and two thirds.  LILLY CAPOTE?  FLANDERS?  SERENA'S SONG?  D. Wayne Lukas?  Are you kidding?  This horse is dropping like a stone.  She'll feel so good running against the others in here she'll win laughing.

EIGHTH RACE: ANALYSIS

I guess I just did that.  Analysis, I mean.  Anyway, you've got 8 young early speed horses, two dedicated closers, one sometime closer, and a monster. I can't imagine in my wildest dreams anyone but CAT APPEAL, PINK SHOES, or OUR GEM winning this race, with CAT APPEAL my overwhelming favorite.  I figure there'll be a terrible battle for the lead, and CAT APPEAL and PINK SHOES are going to blow by everyone in the stretch.EIGHTH RACE: THE BET

OUR GEM was scratched, as was LAWANA GO FAST, leaving me with just two horses.  I can't believe the crowd lets CAT APPEAL go off at 5-1.  I play CAT APPEAL to win, and because a check of the exacta payoffs shows even a two-horse box to be a good bet, I do one, plus a straight 11-7.

I put both horses in my pick 3.  Total cost for the pick three: $20.

EIGHTH RACE: RESULTS

CAT APPEAL pays $12 for the win.  The exacta, to PINK SHOES, pays $23.20.  WOW!

The pick 3 pays $3,488.  If I'd bet a pick six, I would have had another $27,000 or so.  But I didn't.

NINTH RACE: THE FIELD

A cheap claiming race for older fillies and mares.

YUKON BABE (11/10) won her last route, and placed in the one before. Both cheap claimers for non-winners of two.  This is open claiming -- a lot tougher category.

TOUCH OF TUX (9/10) ran second and first in her last two routes, too. Also for cheap claimers, but an open race.  A comparison of times in those races puts TOUCH OF TUX a full four seconds ahead of YUKON BABE.

LADY TAKE THE GOLD (23/19) won a very slow race in her last -- three seconds behind TUX at the six-furlong pole.

SNOW STARLET (21/33) was five seconds slower than TUX in her last.SIGNIFICANT OTHER (7/10) ran a pretty good race in her last out -- only a couple of seconds slower than TUX.  Love her name, though.

SPICY LADY just isn't very fast or very classy.

J.G.'S HALO (8/5) ran a pretty good route at Woodbine, also a couple of seconds slower than TUX.

HURRY KISS ME (4/12) ran a couple of pretty good races a long time ago, after 8 failures as a maiden. She's been asleep for so long she may be dead.

PRAIRIE PETALS has won one race -- a $7500 maiden claimer in the slop.  She couldn't figure in this if they shot her out of a cannon.

NINTH RACE: ANALYSIS

If TOUCH OF TUX doesn't humiliate this field then all handicapping is folly, and the moon is really a Duncan Hines pudding cake.  SIGNIFICANT

OTHER looks like the only other thing close to a horse in the race.

NINTH RACE: THE BET

TOUCH OF TUX is even money.  SIGNIFICANT OTHER is about 4-1. That exacta pays $7.  Even though I think I might grow a new set of teeth before TOUCH OF TUX loses the race to these oinkers, I refuse to bet on a $7500 claimer going off at even money.  No bet.

NINTH RACE: RESULTS

TOUCH OF TUX wins and pays $4.20.  HURRY KISS ME places, paying $26.60, and SIGNIFICANT OTHER shows for $4.  The exacta, which obviously surprised most everyone else as much as it did me, pays $173.

TOTAL RETURN FOR OAKLAWN: $6,479.20.paFair GroundsFIRST RACE: THE FIELD

A mid-priced claiming race for 3-year-old statebred filies, non-winners of two.  My first inclination in these non-winners of two lifetime races is to find the horse who's run best against tough competition.

GREAT GRAY HOPE pressed the pace from the seven-hole in his last, now moves to the rail.  He wired a bunch of $20,000 maiden claimers five races ago at Louisiana Downs.

MISS HAZLEHURST gets lasix for the first time, but it doesn't look like it will make any difference -- she doesn't show the kind of decline from good races lasix sometimes fixes.  She'll probably run another 1:07.10.

UBAR OF THE SKY took on some tough horses in a statebred futurity last time out -- much, much tougher than these, and in the race before that beat both GREAT GRAY HOPE and MISS HAZELHURST.  Ran a 1:06.80 in that one, will probably run better in this one with that tough race under her belt.

FOXWOOD FANTASY moved inside from the six-hole and won, then moved inside to the rail and placed second by 2 lengths.  She moves out today. Shouldn't really hurt her, because she's more of a closer than an early speed horse.  Trouble is, she's coming off a layoff, and I really don't like cheap claimers coming off layoffs in sprints unless they have a super trainer, good works, and a definite edge on the field.  She threw one good work back in December, then slowed down to nothing.

HULA COUPE just plain can't run at the Fair Grounds.  Or this year.  Or something.

CHER MENOU just keeps getting the pants beaten off of her, even though she's running reasonably well.  She was the favorite (if you can believe it) in the Louisiana Futurity and didn't live up to it (certainly no surprise, looking at her record before that race.)  She's only ever been competitive in two sprints, and both of those were slow, slow, slow.

LESTER'S LEGEND beat UBAR OF THE SKY, which puts her at the top

of the pecking order in this race, along with FOXWOOD FANTASY.  Ran reasonably well in her last -- against much tougher.  Works are pitiful.  A speed horse who's shown she can also come from off the pace.

FIRST RACE: ANALYSIS

I have at least four horses who could win this race: GREAT GRAY HOPE, UBAR OF THE SKY, FOXWOOD FANTASY, and LESTER'S LEGEND.  My only angle is my favorite angle, the PPOT showed by GREAT GRAY HOPE.

FIRST RACE: THE BET

I look at the board.  FOXWOOD is even money.  LESTER'S LEGEND is 2-1.  UBAR OF THE SKY is 5-1.  GREAT GRAY HOPE is 15-1.  I bet UBAR to win and GREAT GRAY HOPE across.  Because she is my angle horse, I put GREAT GRAY HOPE over and under the other three horses.

Because I have a longshot angle, I bet the daily double, with GREAT GRAY HOPE on top of STARESSENTIALS in the second.

FIRST RACE: RESULTS

UBAR OF THE SKY wins, paying $12.20.  GREAT GRAY HOPE places, paying $12.40 and $7.80.  The exacta pays $149.80.  I invest $20 and get back $182.20.

SECOND RACE: THE FIELD

A mid-priced maiden claiming race for 4-year-old fillies.  Ugh.

MISS ARCHMONARCH hasn't run yet; why should she today?

OCTOBER BLAZE set/pressed the pace in her last out, but lost by 11 from the one-hole, and moves one place further out today in a tougher race.  I think not.

STARESSENTIALS has a seven-furlong bullet after trotting around the track in her first race in nine months.  She's been the favorite every time she's run so far, and hasn't come through.  Makes me leery.  Still, the trainer/jockey combination is head and shoulders above the rest of the field.

HOLLY RIDGE PASTY is a non-contender.

DYNATREK is 0 for 14, and has been going steadily downhill for some time.  So why the jockey change?  Where did Stanley go, and why does Chopper Bourque get on her?  For what it's worth, look at the patterns.  In the two races before she ran the best race of her life, in December of 1993, she showed early speed at the first and second call, then ran totally out of contention in the next, finishing fourth.  In her last two races prior to today, she showed early speed at the first and second call, then ran totally out of contention in the next, finishing fourth.  Interesting.STICKITTOEM showed a little speed in her last, then lost by a football field.  An early speed horse without enough early speed.  No thanks.

NOBEL STARDUST would have a perfect career if she hadn't had that one good workout last November.  Yuk.

PLENTY can't do it with a jockey change or installation of a V6.

INVISIBLE CHEVAL will be just that in this race: invisible.

MITEY PRIVATE was bothered at the break, so might be able to run better than her last race shows. I wouldn't bet on it, though.

INSTANT ASSET moved from the nine-hole to the 4-hole in her last and didn't run a step. Now she moves outside again. I think not.

WEEP NO MORE has run some fairly good times, and showed willingness in her last route, but could't keep the lead even with the tepid pace (1:15.40 at six furlongs). She always seems to find a way to lose. One show in nine races. Scary.

SECOND RACE: ANALYSIS

STARESSENTIALS looks like the horse to me, moving inside from the nine-hole. As for the others -- who cares? Maybe Dynatrek will wake up under Chopper. Probably not. Maybe WEEP NO MORE will stop crying today. Nahhhhh.

SECOND RACE: THE BET

A look at the board scares me to death. STARESSENTIALS is two to one, as I think she should be. But so is MISS ARCHMONARCH, who I make about 15 to one. The exacta payoff will be about $20. I figure the wise guys are betting MISS ARCHMONARCH down, so they probably know something. I don't like betting other people's horses, but I can't ignore a legitimate 15-1 shot going off as the second favorite. Pass.

SECOND RACE: RESULTS

The wise guys knew what they were doing. For some reason, MISS ARCHMONARCH wins, paying $6.60. STARESSENTIALS places and WEEP NO MORE shows, $3.40 and $2.80. The exacta paid $22, the trifecta paid $69. A good race to stay away from.

My daily double bet loses.

THIRD RACE: THE FIELD

A rather expensive claiming race for 3-year-old males.

TERRY'S I.D. pressed the pace in a sprint from the 2-hole last out, moves to the one-hole. He looks as if he might be better on the grass, but looks can be deceiving. He ran the quarter in 21 and 4 last time, and the half in 46 and 1. The other horses in this race who have even seen fractions like those (SEND ME HOME and UNCLE BART) folded their tents and gave up early.

LITTLE LAWYER shows me nothing.

WINALOT SCOTT has a bullet and other good works, and has the best jockey/trainer combination.

FJORD set the pace last out from the nine-hole, and moves to the four. He also moves up in price, and is still outside another speed horse.

STORMY WILLIAM shows nothing.  No jockey, no trainer, no good works, nothing.

STAR OF DE LAND shows a couple of good works and Ardoin stays up. He rode the rail last out and still couldn't finish.  He moves inside a little today, but it's probably not far enough inside.

SEND ME HOME clearly ran the best last race of anyone but Uncle Bart, who we'll look at next.  He got off like he was tied to a stake, trotted along in the back of the pack for five furlongs, then cut in the afterburners and almost won the race.  Martin must have liked the feel of it, because he stays on today, when he could have ridden UNCLE BART, who appears to be the better horse.  Trouble is, SEND ME HOME moves out to the seven-hole today.  He also hasn't had a workout since that last race, which may have taken a good deal out of him.

UNCLE BART was claimed two races ago, a good sign.  He's run three races, any one of which would appear good enough to win this one.  Very negative jockey switch, however, and a less than wonderful trainer.  Bullet work, but that was before he was claimed.

THIRD RACE: ANALYSIS

TERRY'S I.D. is certainly going to take the early lead.  He's the quickest of all who've had a race.  Trouble is, he's a bigtime fader on dirt.  Who will catch him?  Not FJORD.  Not STAR.  Not SEND ME HOME.  Not UNCLE BART. Especially not if TERRY'S I.D. runs the kind of fractions he ran in the last race, and why shouldn't he?  If anyone's going to catch him, it will be a first-time starter, unless one of the other horses runs contrary to his past performances. The only first-time starter in the race as far as I'm concerned is WINALOT SCOTT, trained by Thomas Amoss (.27), ridden by Albarado (.14), with four excellent workouts, including a bullet.

THIRD RACE: THE BET

WINALOT SCOTT and TERRY'S I.D. appear to be the horses in the race. I really can't pick between them, because WINALOT SCOTT is a first-time starter.  I look at the board.  TERRY'S I.D. is 3-2.  WINALOT SCOTT is 7-2.  The exacta will pay $22 one way, $30 the other.  That's close enough to 5-1 for me, so I do a two-horse box.

THIRD RACE: THE RESULTS

WINALOT SCOTT wins and pays $9.20.  TERRY'S I.D. places, paying $3.40.  The exacta, as predicted, pays $30.40.

FOURTH RACE: THE FIELD

A cheap claiming race for older horses.

AZURE BROOK (43/25) is an older horse with a good record at this track and distance -- in the money well over half the time, with a 25% win percentage, is the third leading moneywinner overall and the 2nd leading at this distance.  He

hasn't done much running lately, though. Couldn't win at Delta Downs, couldn't win at Evangeline, couldn't win at Birmingham. Why in God's name should he win here? Except for the fact that he loves this track and distance.

HETTENBACK PETE (6/14) loves the distance, but isn't too sure about the track. He missed by 8 from the one-hole in his last in a great PPOT angle, and moves one hole further outside. Why won't he fade out of sight again? Because he's dropping to half the class he ran in last time? Maybe. But why would an intelligent trainer, who claimed him for $11,500 last November, put him up for sale for $6500 today unless he thought he'd made a real poor buy?

SMART BUCK (32/17) mashed up $5000 claimers from the 6-hole last time out, when he dropped to a third of his last claiming price. Does show an excellent workout since then, and has won two in a row off a layoff before, but he's still nine years old.

GO KAMIKAZE GO (9/9) is a Delta Downs horse who dies every time he gets into decent company (see his LAD and EvD races.) Not that he's up against SECRETARIAT today, but I still don't think he's up to these.

FROST POINT (20/18) was claimed in his last out, which he won from the 9-hole by coming from behind. He moves a little farther in today, which should help him. Good record at this track and distance, and one of top moneywinners. The question: can he stand the small jump in class?

UNUSUAL JOE (33/29) drops a bit in class after a pretty poor race for which there seems to be no excuse. Albarado gets back on him, which is good. But his record at this track and distance are pretty miserable, and I can't find an angle to make him a worthwhile play.

BID PROSPECT (35/14) ran well in the slop last out. A dedicated closer, which may be just what this race needs.

LITTLE PERCY (26/31) is outclassed and outrun at this track and distance, I'm afraid.

MINSTREL ALLEY hasn't run a step in his last four races -- all at the Fair Grounds. He's yearning for Birmingham.

FOURTH RACE: ANALYSIS

GO KAMIKAZE GO was a scratch. That left one serious speed horse: HETTENBACK PETE. But I'm noticing the early speed horses are not winning today at the Fair Grounds. GREAT GRAY HOPE, STARESSENTIALS, and TERRY'S I.D. all led convincingly, setting just average fractions, and still got passed in the stretch. This, plus PETE's recent habit of fading, plus the fact that he's dropping to four thousand dollars less than he was claimed for three months ago, makes me nervous. If PETE showed a really good PPOT angle I might give him a shot, but not without it, and certainly not at 5-2, which is where the crowd bets him to. If he's not going to win it, a closer certainly is. We have five of

those: AZURE BROOK, SMART BUCK, FROST POINT, UNUSUAL JOE, and BID PROSPECT.  I throw out UNUSUAL JOE as impossible, even if he is a closer of sorts.  The crowd has it figured about the same way, with the exception of AZURE BROOK, who is 15 to one.  I remember a horse named LUCKY CHARMER who won on the rail at 15-1 and paid for a trip to Laughlin, among other things.  I look at the horse again.  The last time he was in the one-hole he finished third, only losing by one length.  I really don't like closers in the one-hole, usually figuring they'll finish second if anywhere.  But SMART BUCK's two to one.  There'll be some money made in this race, I think, because HETTENBACK PETE is not going to finish in the money.  The only horses I can bet on to win, though, are AZURE BROOK, FROST POINT, and BID PROSPECT.  So I bet AZURE BROOK across, and the other two to win.  Then I box those three in an exacta, and put SMART BUCK over and under them.  It's a trifecta race, so I do a four-horse box.

I put AZURE BROOK, SMART BUCK, FROST POINT, and BID PROSPECT in my pick 3.

FOURTH RACE: RESULTS

AZURE BROOK wins, paying $32.60, $12.60, and $4.60.  SMART BUCK comes in second, but is disqualified to third for bothering FROST POINT, who is moved to second, much to my great joy.  The exacta pays $185.  The trifecta pays $421.60.

FIFTH RACE: THE FIELD

An inexpensive claiming race for four-year-old statebred fillies.

GOIN JESEY (17/20) "got out" and "faltered" her last two trips at the Fair Grounds.  However, she is an early speed horse on the rail.  Trouble is, the rail looks like it may not the best place to be today.POWER CRANE (29/21) can't really make up her mind.  Will she try to steal it on the front end?  Will she try to close?  Who cares?

SALUT'S BABY (31/13) has the two best Beyers in the race, in her last two races.  We haven't talked about Byer figures much, because I haven't found them to be a consistently valuable way of handicapping and betting; they're not reliable enough, and when they're truly predictive they're usually too obvious.  The horse gets dramatically overbet.  As in this case.

I'MA NATIVE LADY (11/19) couldn't do it from the two-hole in her last, or the one before that against statebreds, or the one...  Oh, never mind.

ZUPPARDO'S DREAMER (26/8) is a good closer who's had some pretty decent races against similar horses.  She's also a Thomas Amoss horse, which would almost make her a contender even without any decent races.

SISSI (25/21) appears to be in here to fill out the card.

MY LADY JUDGE (10/21) is a speed horse outside of whatever other

speed there might be in here, which is precious little.

FIFTH RACE: ANALYSIS

GOIN JESY will run as fast as she possibly can for half the race, as usual, then keel over dead. Even so, she'll make some of the horses in here run faster than they want to. Of course it's a moot point. SALUT'S BABY will dominate the second half of the race. If GOIN JESY was a true speed horse, SALUT'S BABY probably couldn't catch her, because she usually gives everyone too much of a start. But in this case she appears to be invincible.

FIFTH RACE: THE BETSALUT'S BABY is 3-2. Probably a heck of a good bet at that price, but not for me. ZUPPARDO'S DREAMER, POWER CRANE, and MY LADY JUDGE look like the only possible place/show horses in the race, but the exactas with SALUT'S BABY on top just aren't worth it. Pass.

I put SALUT'S BABY and -- just to be on the safe side -- GOIN JESY in my pick three.

FIFTH RACE: RESULTS

SALUT'S BABY languishes in the background, then blows by everyone in the turn. What a shock. The exacta, to ZUPPARDO'S DREAMER, pays ten bucks. I say a quick prayer of thanks for the will -- developed over many years of losing seasons -- to resist such races.

SIXTH RACE: THE FIELD

A mid-price claiming race for older horses.

JALDI (36/17) is a decent closer in the one-hole. I find closers who might win the race from almost anywhere else on the track tend to finish second when they're in the one-hole. Sometimes they find a hole and slip through, or sometimes the jockey gives them an outstanding ride, or sometimes they're just so doggone good they really can beat anyone else from anywhere. Not that this guy could necessarily win the race from anywhere. But I mark him down for a possible second place finish "angle".

SLAINTE NA (34/20) has really been running some good races. He just hasn't been able to win. As a local railbird might ask: "If he run so goddam fas' why he no win?" I can't answer that. His Beyers are also going downhill, and he's 0/8 at the track.

RECORD DANCER (36/16) had two thumping good races against $17500 claimers at the Fair Grounds. Had an excuse in his last race and ran well in spite of it. Why is he now offered for less than the amount of his last win? Why, daddy, why? And does this horse never work?

GHETTO DANCER (23/19) didn't run a step in his last, on a "good" track. The last time he came off a layoff he won, then was "outrun," as in his last one, then threw a clunker in a route try. Will he clunk today? Which horse will show up?

TWICE THE RUMOR (35/28) ran like a potbellied pig in his last sprint, and showed absolutely nothing in his last race, a route, even though he was in the two-hole.  He is dropping to a new low level, but I don't think I care.  He only won one race last year, a route, and is 2/14 and 2/13 at the distance and track.

J.K.'S PRINCE (14/14) is an early speed horse who appears to absolutely hate the Fair Grounds.  Wait a minute, you say.  Maybe he just doesn't like "good" or "sloppy" tracks.  Except he won by six on a sloppy track at Louisiana Downs last year.  You figure it.

GEORGESLUCKYSTRIKE (23/13) can't run fast enough to beat the best of these.  Besides, he's 0/0 and 0/11 at the track and distance.  I think not.

AIR COUNTRY (25/17) looks like a player at first glance.  Then you notice he has never won at this level, and is 0/3 and 0/6 at this track and distance.  Why in the world would all that change today?  Will Albarado make that much difference?

BID OR PASS (25/39) is a speed horse who's never shown enough speed to win except on a sloppy track at Woodbine.  His Beyers are going south, and I can't find any excuse for his last race.  Pass.  (Ha-ha)

FIGHTING FAST (19/23) has three pretty good races in a row, but he can't win, either.  He does drop to a new low level, and that's an excuse for a better effort.FOREST SHADOWS (18/20) shows three good races -- one very good -- in his last four (we'll excuse the race taken off the turf).  Progressively better works -- three in one week.  Claimed for $18000, now running for $15000.  A bad sign.  With J.K.'S PRINCE, one of two dedicated and capable early speed horses in the race.

SIXTH RACE: ANALYSIS

FIGHTING FAST is scratched.  That leaves seven closers and three early speed horses.  The question now becomes is there a dominant speed horse?  And that's a problem, because while J.K.'S KID appears to be the quickest horse of the three, FOREST SHADOWS appears to the be fastest overall -- by quite a bit.  I believe J.K.'S KID, FOREST SHADOWS, and BID OR PASS will set the early pace together.  FOREST SHADOWS will survive the duel, and then be run down by RECORD DANCER.

SIXTH RACE: THE BET

The crowd likes RECORD DANCER, as well they should.  A look at the board tells me the RECORD DANCER/FOREST SHADOWS exacta will pay $14, and the other way it will pay $24.  Not really worth it unless it comes in the long way.  J.K.'S PRINCE, on the other hand, is going off at 25 to one.  Can he win the race?  Probably not, but he is the inside speed.  Notwithstanding the appearance of a dead rail, he appears to be the only value bet.  But the great thing about being in a sports book is there's always another race going on

somewhere.  RECORD DANCER's my horse, but not at 3-1.  Still, I can't bet against him.  Or can I?  Finally I wind up betting J.K.'S PRINCE across, and putting him over and under FOREST SHADOWS and RECORD DANCER.

I put RECORD DANCER and FOREST SHADOWS in my pick three.SIXTH RACE: RESULTS

FOREST SHADOWS wins, paying $11.60.  BID OR PASS somehow wakes up and runs second, paying $12.60.  The exacta pays $122.80.  Drat!  One thing this race does, however, is convince me once and for all the rail is dead today.

The pick three pays $2,486.40.

SEVENTH RACE: THE FIELD

A mid-priced claiming event on the turf for older fillies and mares.

SHUTTERS (36/19) has won $85000 in her 41 races on the turf.  She's 8 years old, in her second off a short layoff.  Her only win last year was on a "good" turf track, when she beat $20,000 claimers from the three-hole, racing wide to do so.  However, she's 8/15 and 9/24 on the track and in the money at this distance.

REGAL N READY (16/15) has only one turf race to her credit, and failed miserably in that one.

ROYAL VICE (50/28) is 1/12 and 0/12 in wins at the track and at the distance.  Lays way, way off the pace and makes a late run, which is usually a good strategy for a turf race.  She's 3 for 53 overall in the win category, and even though she'll probably run better in her second off the layoff, I don't believe she can do it.

SHOT GUN GINA (29/30) just doesn't look like she's at the right racetrack.  Maybe she should try greyhounds.  A five-year-old trying turf for the first time?  Are you kidding?

TUNE IN AND FLY (7/16) should be in front for a considerable length of time.  If no one gives her any pressure, she could run a huge race and win by clear daylight.  She's done it before.  By now you know -- as the speed horse closest to the rail -- I'm going to look at her very carefully.  She gets a good jockey switch, too.

QUICK VENTURE (12/26) is hopelessly outclassed.

DE CUHNA (19/22) was in a Grade 1 race in Canada for some reason.  Showed nothing.  I don't see anything that stands out here.

BREITENSTEIN (30/25) has won 3 out of seven turf races in her career, so should be considered.  Others look capable of outrunning her, however.

COUNTESS COP (30/12) definitely appears to have the best running style for a one-mile turf race.  She's also won the most money on the turf.  Forget her last race, pulled off the turf because of the wet.  Just one niggling problem.  Why run a race, then sit down, then run three and sit down, run three, sit, run one, sit?

She's eight years old, but is she infirm or what?  And no workouts?  Of course all she's done is win or place second all four times she's come off a layoff. Hmmmm.  Let me think about that.

PRETTY PACES (35/19) also has a good running style for the turf.  Not as fast as COUNTESS COP, not as good a trainer or jockey.  Has never won on the turf at this distance.  A few problems like that.

PERDIDO SUNSHINE (23/18) has some tall breeding in her background, but it didn't rise to the surface in her only grass out.

KEYICE (13/18) is another speed horse in a dreadful place.  She is dropping to a new low level, but that won't help enough.

SEVENTH RACE: ANALYSIS

Boy, is this one easy.  QUICK VENTURE and TUNE IN AND FLY vie for the lead for a half mile, when COUNTESS COP and SHUTTERS get in gear. COUNTESS COP should win decisively, depending on the kind of trips both get.SEVENTH RACE: THE BET

I look at the board.  COUNTESS COP is 3-2.  SHUTTERS is 3-1.  The exacta will pay $15.  Pass.

I put COUNTESS COP in my pick three.

SEVENTH RACE: THE RESULTS

COUNTESS COP wins and pays $5.  SHUTTERS pays $3.40 to place, and DE CUNHA pays $3 to show.  The exacta pays $15.20.

My pick three pays $135.40.

EIGHTH RACE: THE FIELD

An allowance route for older non-winners of two.  Not the bottom of the barrel in allowance conditions, but close.

CHANGING BREEZE (21/25) last won at Belmont, where he broke his maiden on the second try.  He then ran in two graded races in a row in the slop at Aqueduct, then came close in a good-sized allowance.  Did well in a Gulfstream allowance, then stopped in his next and they gave him a rest.  Gave him a sprint to tune him up, he wasn't ready to run in the next, and now is in his third off a layoff -- often a horse's best race.  If he's ready, he's gone, especially since he's a good longer sprint horse on the rail.

VDAYPISTOLWHIPER (4/4) pressed the pace from the 7-hole last out against much easier, and faded badly.  No works to speak of.  He's got a good PPOT angle, but he's up against it here, fighting other speed and a dead rail.

SPIRITOFTHEGRIZZLY (14/17) just broke his maiden on the tenth try. He's overmatched and overweighted.JOHNNY KONGAPOD (26/20) ran pretty well against easier from the 4-hole in his last -- his third off the layoff.  Never been able to do much against real horses, however.

CONTINENTAL FLIGHT (20/15) broke his maiden on the twelfth try, then

ran okay against similar from the one-hole in his last in a race taken off the turf. He'd have to improve dramatically to win today.

TOKENS GOLD (14/7) ran well in his last -- in the same race CONTINENTAL FLIGHT was in -- his third off the layoff. Before that, under Day, he ran a decent race against tougher but still finished sixth. He's 0 for one here and 0 for three at the distance. I don't see a reason for him to get better.

SUMP'M RED (24/16) hasn't ever run fast enough to get the job done here; why would he improve today?

KAHLUA JIMMY (31/15) ran a nice race at Laurel in a statebred stakes, then tried the turf twice -- a mistake. Ardoin stays on -- a very good sign. Has had adequate works, with a good breeze six days ago. May be sitting on a big race.

LONG LANE (18/21) ran a great big race from the 10-hole at Churchill against much tougher, switched to the turf at the Fair Grounds, then finished a very game second from the 8-hole against similar competition in a race common to two others in here. If he runs that same race here he should dominate this group from the top of the stretch on.

EIGHTH RACE: ANALYSIS

I see three horses: LONG LANE, KAHLUA JIMMY, and CHANGING BREEZE. Of those, LONG LANE looks the best.

EIGHTH RACE: THE BETLONG LANE is going off at 3-5. Boo. The others are going off at 8-1 or so, with JOHNNY KONGAPOD and TOKENS GOLD the second and third favorites, for some reason. A look at the board tells us the exacta will pay about $40 with LONG LANE on top of the other two, a reasonable return. I put him on top, bet a three-horse trifecta box, and bet a few other trifectas.

I put LONG LANE in my pick three.

EIGHTH RACE: THE RESULTS

LONG LANE wins and pays a measly $4.80. The exacta to CHANGING BREEZE, however, pays $37.80, and the trifecta pays a thumping $245.40.

My pick three pays $155.20.

NINTH RACE: THE FIELD

A decent turf race for older girls. Three things I know about turf races. 1) Breeding counts, 2) Front runners usually lose, and 3) Class on the grass is often the way to bet.

PRACTICAL STAR (41/20) won a couple of turf races at Arlington last year against much easier. Has blown a gasket against multiple winners. Right running style and good connections, but no chance unless she somehow manages to get a perfect trip and slip by the frontrunner on the rail. A long shot.

VIVALING (23/20) won a turf race in December, then came back and ran

well in an allowance on the grass.  Ran okay against tougher at Aqueduct.  Bid and hung in her last two, and a work since.  Could be ready for her biggest, and should be in the hunt.

UP AN EIGHTH (4/12) has run two huge races on the dirt, and a decent turf race against some tough horses at Laurel.  If she ran as well on the grass as she does on the dirt, she's be worthy of serious consideration, but...

TOBIN'S JEWEL (18/17) just hasn't ever shown much on the grass, and that last race was pitiful, even after a series of excellent works.  Pass.

WATERFORD WENCH (27/11) is a turf horse with the right running style who ran an excellent race on a "good" track in her last out.  Third-time Lasix, which after two good races sometimes signifies a slump, but could be on the improve.  Still, she's really never faced this kind of company.  Can she make the class jump?  Not on the turf, I think, where class on the grass is often king (or queen).

POLLY'S DIAMOND (33/13) is an excellent turf horse who almost got the job done from the 4-hole in her last, coming from the clouds against slightly easier, losing to OLDE ELEGANCE, who -- much to POLLY'S dismay, is also in this race.  Moves out a bit, maybe a one-two finish again to OLDE ELEGANCE -- the probable winner of her third in a row?

SMILE N MOLLY is totally untried and untested.  Her connections waited until she was four to try the turf (a "don't bet" negative, you'll remember.)  No telling how she'll run, but she won't win, and that's a double-dog guarantee from yours truly.

OLDE ELEGANCE (14/7) has run four super races in a row (excusing the race that was taken off the turf).  What in the world would cause you to believe she won't dominate this group, too?  The only negatives are 1) she lost ground in the stretch her last out, but according to the comments line was "unhurried," and apparently unworried, too, and 2) she's won two in a row.  But she's obviusly a very fine horse, the class of the field by far, Ardoin is a very fine rider, and Sebastien an excellent trainer.  She's shown she can win it on a fast or slow pace.  My advice: start looking for whoever's going to come in second.KNIGHT MAN just hasn't shown the form on turf that she's displayed on the main track.  Probably her breeding.   Catch her on the dirt next time out, when she makes a turf to dirt switch.

NINTH RACE: ANALYSIS

OLDE ELEGANCE wins it in a walk.  Why not POLLY'S DIAMOND for second again, and maybe WATERFORD WENCH to show?  Let's figure UP AN EIGHTH to set the early pace, with VIVALING on her shoulder.  VIVALING will run her down at the six-furlong pole, then she'll be run down in the stretch by OLDE ELEGANCE, with POLLY'S DIAMOND barely getting up for the place and

WATERFORD WENCH up for the show.

NINTH RACE: THE BET

OLDE ELEGANCE is going off at 3-5, and why not?  POLLY'S DIAMOND is 6-1, VIVALING is 10-1, WATERFORD WENCH is 8-1.  The exacta with any of those under OLDE ELEGANCE will pay about $20, and I'm not real sure which one it will be.  I could throw caution to the winds and bet $4 million on OLDE ELEGANCE, but I really don't bet horses at less than even money unless I have to (when the devil makes me do it.)  Besides, this horse does have two negatives going against her.  Carrying all that money around might slow her down too much, anyway.  Pass.

I put OLDE ELEGANCE in my pick three.

NINTH RACE: RESULTS

OLDE ELEGANCE wins and pays $3.60, in a much tougher race than you might have thought she'd have.  (Remember, she did lose ground in the stretch last out.)  VIVALING places, paying $5.80, and WATERFORD WENCH runs a fairly distant third, paying $3.80.  The exacta pays $24.00.

My pick three pays $17.80.TENTH RACE: THE FIELD

A cheap sprint for older fillies and mares.  Ugh.

OH LAUDY (20/25) is an early speed horse without much lick, and with no apparent stick.  She couldn't do it from the one-hole against similar in her last.  True, it was in the slop, but she seems to like the wet.  1 for 15 last year.  Pass.

BERNIE ROSE (19/12) won her last by two.  It was against state-breds, but she's run just as well against open filly claimers.  She was disqualified for interfering with another horse, but she still started from the 6-hole and beat everyone else by two.  A nice work since.  Why should she not run even better this time?  But she was only 2 for 21 last year.  Of course that's why she's for sale for $5,000.  Is there someone who can beat her?  We shall see.

KATIE'S BIRTHDAY (18/18) usually ends the race about where she starts it.  If she's fourth at two furlongs, she's fourth at the finish.  Did run a couple of good races last February, and did press the pace from the 11-hole last time out.  Don't think she can handle BERNIE ROSE, but who knows?  If she should somehow manage to get out first this time, maybe she'd finish that way, too.  Nah.

HOLY CRISIS (24/13) has run well enough to win in the past, but appears to be going downhill.  Ran a pitiful race in her last, in the slop against easier.  Maybe she just doesn't like the wet.  If she gets her form back, she may be the major competition.

GREY GINGHAM (38/26) hasn't ever run at the Fair Grounds -- usually a resounding "no-no" unless you're talking about a dominant horse.  She's also a router, and not a very fast one at that.  How will she run in a sprint?  I think I'll

wait and see, especially since I don't anticipate a blistering early pace in this race, which she appears to need.ZENSATIONAL (8/23) is a dismal flop.  So why do Ray Sibille and Ronald Ardoin ride her?  It's a mystery to me, too.  Maybe because of the breeding which has never risen to the top.

STELLARLY (30/29) is another piggy.  If she comes in, all those who win money on her deserve it for their bravery in the face of certain disaster.

GOLD APPLE (24/24) is almost a horse, but not quite.  She did run a  (for this crowd) race at Evangeline last August.  Why?  Perhaps demonic possession.

GUILTY BUT GLAD (22/18) has some decent races and one very good one (again, for this crowd.)  But that race was at Houston, from the 3-hole. Martinez gets off, Martin gets on -- a positive jockey switch.  I think she'll be trying, but I don't think she'll get the job done.  At least she's a horse.

ECONOMY MISS shows us nothing by which to recommend her except slow races at Delta and Evangeline Downs.

TENTH RACE: ANALYSIS

I still don't see anyone who's a good bet to beat BERNIE ROSE.  Do you? Of course at this level anyone could wake up and win -- or go to sleep and lose. There are about five horses who have a shot to earn some money: OH LAUDY, KATIE'S BIRTHDAY, HOLY CRISIS, GOLD APPLE, and GUILTY BUT GLAD.

TENTH RACE: THE BET

BERNIE ROSE is 7-2 -- a pretty good price for a horse who beat a field like this by two lengths last time out, and who figures to improve today.  The only one of the five others going off at a price is OH LAUDY, who could conceivably repeat her last race.  She's 6-1.  The others -- if you can believe it, are 5-2, 3-1, 45-1, and 5-1.  Something in me can't pass up a 45-1 shot who may get possessed again, so I immediately put her under BERNIE ROSE in the exacta.  I also bend a rule and bet BERNIE ROSE to win.  The only other play that makes any sense is an exacta with OH LAUDY, which would pay $50.  I do it.  Then I box BERNIE ROSE, OH LAUDY, and HOLY CRISIS in a trifecta, and also play the system trifectas using the other possibles.

I put BERNIE ROSE in my pick three.

TENTH RACE: RESULTS

BERNIE ROSE wins by a nose, and has to work her tail off to do it.  Still, she wins and pays $9.  OH LAUDY comes second and pays $6.60, with HOLY CRISIS finishing third at $3.40.  The exacta pays $43.80; the trifecta pays $194.40.

My pick three pays $39.60.

TOTAL RETURN FOR THE FAIR GROUNDS: $2,280.40.pa

Sam Houston.

FIRST RACE: THE FIELD.

KUTA BEACH pressed the pace from the five-hole in his last race, and finished second to what looks like a pretty good horse -- DUAL CONTROL -- seven lengths back.  Trouble is it took him three tries as the favorite to to break his maiden at Bandera Downs, a nice but minor track in Texas.

NATIVE WORD pressed the pace from the six-hole in his last, and ran an excellent race, considering he was brushed and steadied and still finished less than two lengths behind the winner -- about where he was at first call.

BOBBIE TWOFEATHERS pressed from the three-hole at Trinity Meadows, another minor Texas track.

CHASE 'EM DAKOTA pressed from the ten-hole, got the lead, and almost won his last, at Remington.FLINTSPARK closed in his last race, a $7,500 maiden claiming race, to win.

ZUPPARDO'S MAN pressed pace from the two-hole in his last, gave up ground, got it back, then relinquished the lead in the stretch.  He certainly looks to be the class of the field.

CHOCOLATE PRINCE pressed from the six-hole in his last at Delta Downs, a minor Louisiana track.

FIRST RACE: ANALYSIS.

Oh, for a good closer.  This field is packed with front-runners.  NATIVE WORD closed a bit five races back.  BOBBIE closed a step or two at Trinity.  FLINTSPARK closed in his last at Houston -- against the cheapest imaginable competition.  ZUPPARDO'S MAN also closed once -- at Evangeline.  CHOCOLATE PRINCE closed a couple of times at EVD a long time ago.  The truth is, the horse that can survive the speed duel is going to win this race, and the only horse that's ever survived any kind of speed duel is CHASE 'EM DAKOTA, who got the lead from the ten-hole and darn near kept it for the trip.

As a matter of fact, I happened to have seen CHASE 'EM DAKOTA's last race -- against SOONER FLAGSHIP, the runaway favorite with Remington's top jockey aboard.  He gave Bobby Speck, SOONER FLAGSHIP's owner and a bettor, several extremely anxious moments before finally, stubbornly, giving way to what everyone at the track had thought was a much superior horse.  He impressed me that day, and today he's showing a huge PPOT angle -- much more pronounced than any of the other horses in the race.  I give him a 35% chance of winning the race, making him about 4-1.  I throw out BOBBIE TWO FEATHERS, KUTA BEACH, and CHOCOLATE PRINCE; the track class jump is just too much for them.  Even though KUTA BEACH  is a PPO5 horse, I think CHASE 'EM DAKOTA -- a PPO10 horse -- will be too much for him.  I also throw out FLINTSPARK because it took him six races to break his maiden, and he did it at the bottom basement level in a slow race.  That leaves NATIVE WORD, CHASE 'EM DAKOTA, and ZUPPARDO'S MAN.

FIRST RACE: THE BET.

Imagine my surprise when the early odds show my favorite horse -- CHASE 'EM DAKOTA -- a 25 to one shot.  Stay there, I pray to the Great Oddsmaker in the sky, but he drops steadily.  Two minutes before post time he's down to 15 to one.  Zoe tells me I'm actually drooling.  I wipe my chin and run to the window.  My other two horses have received much more attention than CHASE 'EM.  I bet CHASE 'EM across the board, because even if he only shows I'm going to make money.  Okay, so the very first race I break my vow.  I can't just bet $2 on an opportunity like this, so I bet $20 across.  I put CHASE 'EM on top of the other two for $10, and bet a $2 three-horse exacta box.  I put CHASE 'EM on top of the others for $5 in the trifecta, and did a $2 three-horse box.  But for the sake of the book, let's say I just made $2 bets, okay?Ì  I put CHASE 'EM on top of the other two in an exacta and box the 2-4-6.  I buy a three-horse trifecta box, and wait.  I'm at a total loss for the daily double (see the next race), so I pass.

FIRST RACE: THE RESULTS.

CHASE 'EM DAKOTA wins and pays $33.  The exacta, with ZUPPARDO'S MAN, pays $94.  The trifecta, with NATIVE WORD, pays $504.20.

FIRST RACE: REVIEW

Now don't say I had an "inside track" because I'd seen CHASE 'EM DAKOTA run in person.  He was the best horse in the race from The Form.  He was a sound PPOT bet, and the best speed in the race -- perhaps the only real speed.  Besides, there's nothing unusual about leaning toward a horse because you liked the way he/she ran last time out.  That's what this game is all about.  Betting the minimum, I invest a total of $28 and get $743.20 back.

SECOND RACE: THE FIELD.

Well, we won't spend more than a couple of seconds with this race.  Only one horse flashed speed last time and moves inside today: TIKI BELLE STAR.  So if I was going to bet, I'd bet this one.  Trouble is, I don't know anything about Arabians, so I pass.  Incidentally, TIKI BELLE STAR comes in and pays $11.60.

THIRD RACE: THE FIELD.

There's only horse that comes close to being a PP angle horse: the three, RAGTIME MUSIC.  But she's really more of a closer than an early speed horse, so the move inside may hurt more than help.  She also won her last two, which makes her an almost automatic no-no in my system.

With no early speed angle horse, we have to look elsewhere, so we pass until we have time to run The System.  When we do so, we find that there is indeed a speed horse we might have otherwise overlooked.  Getting rid of MISHE'S ROCKET's unratable races (the sprints) we get a system rating of 5/7 for four races.  She's moving in -- only one hole, to be sure -- but in neverthless.

In her routes at Houston she appears to be a full second faster than anyone else in the field.

THIRD RACE: ANALYSIS.

It's a short route -- 1 mile 70 yards.  MISHE'S ROCKET is the only speed in the field.  If she's ready, she wins.  It's as simple as that.  The best closer in the field is RUE DESIRE (22/9).  Because we're not 100% sure how ready she is, in spite of the excellent workout on the 15th and the fact that Dupuy stays on her, we give MISHE'S ROCKET only a 3-1 chance of winning.  RUE DESIRE and RAGTIME MUSIC we make 5-1. THIRD RACE: THE BET.

We're not the only ones who notice.  MISHE'S ROCKET goes off at 9-5. RUE DESIRE gets bet down to almost nothing.  We don't bet.

THIRD RACE: THE RESULTS.

MISHE'S ROCKET wins and pays $5.20.  RUE DESIRE and RAGTIME MUSIC come in second and third.  The exacta pays $11, the trifecta pays $38. Boring.

FOURTH RACE: THE FIELD.

A bunch of extremely boring horses.  No one stands out.

FOURTH RACE:  ANALYSIS.

No angle horses.  No system horses.  No horses, really.  So I revert to a quick, reasonably reliable method of rating horses in a case like this -- how the crowd liked it in a similar race.  AGGRESSIVE BIDNESS was bet down to $2.40 in a similar race 6 days ago, and lost to a Remington horse named TASCA, with which I was very familiar.  A quick check of the past performances showed AGGRESSIVE BIDNESS had also beaten many of the other horses in the field. The only other horse to get decent odds lately: MY PERFECT PRINCE, bet down to $2.50 in a $2500 claiming race at Delta Downs.

FOURTH RACE: THE BET.

Pass.  AGGRESSIVE BIDNESS and MY PERFECT PRINCE get bet down past the point of caution.

FOURTH RACE: THE RESULTS.AGGRESSIVE BIDNESS wins and pays $4.40.  Who cares?  OPIO somehow gets in ahead of MY PERFECT PRINCE, paying $12.40 -- a nice price if you could have picked it.  I couldn't.

FIFTH RACE: THE FIELD.

Another bunch of wongoes.  Only two pace pressers. ALFREDSFIRSTCHOICE couldn't get it done from the one-hole in a similar race last out -- a very bad sign.  BRIANDEYEV couldn't do it from the 2-hole at Delta Downs.  Forget him.  There appears to be only one horse in the field -- RIVER TORCH, who's been close in his last four, and who appears to be an excellent closer (almost won from 10-hole in last) and who is moving into a good spot.  I figured he'd be bet down to even money, and he was.

FIFTH RACE: ANALYSIS.

A funny thing happened while I was looking at this race. I noticed there had been a couple of jockey changes. Pedro Benitez, who used to ride at Remington, had been taken off the one and put on the eight. Frazier had been put on the one in his place.

FIFTH RACE: THE BET

I remembered the 2-jockey-switch $10,000 trifecta I had forgotten to bet, and put the five on top of the one-eight in an exacta. I would have bet a trifecta, too, with the five on top of the 8-1, but it wasn't a trifecta race. The teller asked if I wanted to bet a superfecta, but I declined. Too expensive to cover all the bases.

FIFTH RACE: RESULTS.

RIVER TORCH wins, paying a measly $3.20, but the 5-1 exacta pays a resounding $88.60. The superfecta (which, remember, I do not have) pays an astonishing $3062.80. That's okay. I still don't think it was worth the risk. I invest $4, I get $88.60 back.SIXTH RACE: THE FIELD

A maiden special full of horses running an unfamiliar distance. The only reason it interested me was because there were only two horses that had ever flashed speed or pressed the pace in a route, and only three horses who'd ever run a decent one: BEAT THE DRUM HARD, GAELIC MATCH SON, and TRACK ACCOUNT. I thought it likely for the winner to come from one of those three.

PARIAH ran like a pig in his only route. Pass.

BELTAWAYEIGHT closed a little, but only went from way back to not so far back. Pass.

BALAHURA had never been farther than four furlongs even in a workout. Pass.

TRACK ACCOUNT had run a decent mile on a good track in his last, and a pretty good one before that, in which he had beaten BEAT THE DRUM HARD, but his works were pretty unspectacular. I made him a player at five to one.

MECHIN MECHIN was scratched.

BEAT THE DRUM HARD had run two routes, both pretty unexciting, but he'd shown early speed in both of them. There appeared to be absolutely no early speed inside of him today. His works were the best in the field. Ordinarily I don't pay a tremendous amount of attention to works. Too many things can happen to cloud them. But maidens have a tendency to "give it away" in the morning. If they're ready to run, they often show it., I made him a player, also at five to one.

QUARTERS WORTH was by far the best closer in the field. Trouble is, he'd never run a route. He had a new rider today in Pedro Benitez, who I'd seen bring a lot of longshots into the money at Remington. He also showed a very

good work (for this crowd) prior to his last race. He evidently had some speed, and his trainer had a 40% win and 100% in the money percentage. I made him five to one also. I thought this horse or TRACK ACCOUNT might be the crowd favorite.

RIDGE RUNNER had shown a little early speed in a sprint on a good track. Whetstone had evidently chosen to stay on BEAT THE DRUM HARD, a good sign. The horse had two big problems: he'd never been the distance and he hadn't run or had a work in three weeks. Maybe the run on the "good" track had taken too much out of him.

HI CUZ had shown nothing. Ever. Pass.

GAELIC MATCH SON had run a decent race in his last on a good track, finishing just ahead of TRACK ACCOUNT. It had been a huge surprise, since he went off at better than 50 to one. He was also getting a very positive rider switch -- to Lanerie (.13) from Strickland (.03). But he had run that race from the 3-hole, and he was moving out. I made him five to one.

ANJO'S TOMMY was the square peg in this race. He'd pressed the pace and almost won a six-furlong race in his last -- a maiden special at Houston. But his trainer was 0 for 31 and his rider was winning at a dismal 3% rate. Could he do it from the 10-hole? I just didn't think so. I made him 10 to one.

TRICKSNSCHEMES was pretty much a walking disaster. Pass.

SIXTH RACE: ANALYSIS

There were only five horses in the race for me: TRACK ACCOUNT, BEAT THE DRUM HARD, QUARTERS WORTH, GAELIC MATCH SON, and RIDGE RUNNER. I thought only four had any real chance to win: TRACK ACCOUNT, BEAT THE DRUM HARD, GAELIC MATCH SON and QUARTERS WORTH. My final analysis put TRACK ACCOUNT first, largely because of his rider and trainer, BEAT THE DRUM HARD second, because of his works and trainer, and GAELIC MATCH SON third, because of his last race and his trainer.

SIXTH RACE: THE BET

I was astounded to see BEAT THE DRUM HARD going off at almost 20 to one. I bet him across. Then I put TRACK ACCOUNT, BEAT THE DRUM HARD, and GAELIC MATCH SON in a three-horse exacta box. I put TRACK ACCOUNT, BEAT THE DRUM HARD, and GAELIC MATCH SON to finish first and second in the trifecta, with QUARTERS WORTH AND RIDGE RUNNER to finish third. I put TRACK ACCOUNT and BEAT THE DRUM HARD to finish first and second in the trifecta, with the other three horses third.

SIXTH RACE: RESULTS

BEAT THE DRUM HARD wins, paying $39.60. GAELIC and QUARTERS come in second and third. The exacta pays $393.80. The trifecta pays $1676.40. I invest $36, I get back $3806.30.

SEVENTH RACE: THE FIELD

A five-furlong race for older horses.

FLYING UNCLE pressed the pace from the six-hole last out, and now moves into the one.  A perfect early speed angle, especially considering he ran sensational (for horses of this class) two-furlong and four-furlong times in both his last two.  Trouble is, he didn't win either one.  At Trinity Meadows.  In fact, he only led at one call in both those races combined.  And he had had no works since Christmas.  Scary.STUART'S ALLURE couldn't get it done at Trinity.  Pass.

POPCORN DAN flashed from the one-hole in his last, and moves out.  He has only one good race since September.  Pass.

MOMMY'S FASTER doesn't appear to have it any more, if indeed he ever did.  Pass.

STRETCH MOVE has had six good races in a row, winning two of them, at slightly less of a price than this one.  Can he move up in class win again?  I don't see why not.

COMING FAST comes from Louisiana Downs and Aqueduct.  His only two races at Houston were real bummers, but they were for twice and three times the price of this one.  He drops back to a level he's won at before -- always a reason to double check a horse.  And he won that five thousand dollar 5 1/2 furlong race at Louisiana Downs from the 11-hole two races ago, a pretty astounding feat.  He hasn't run since August, but his two published works indicate he's found a way to run at Houston.  Lanerie jumps from STRETCH MOVE to take this horse for trainer Schultz (22% win percentage).  I make him a player.  One big problem: he was claimed last May (a good sign) and he's running today for less than half that price (a very bad sign.)  However, this isn't the first time he's run for this price.  Last time he did he won by 3 1/2 against much tougher horses.

SHARKSPEARE shows two decent races out of 10, which he placed third and fifth in.  Pass.

MOONSHINE MUGGS did show a teeny bit of life in his last race, but evidently the only place he's ever really been able to run is Kansas City.  Pass.

RUNANBEND was involved in one of the biggest trifecta payoffs in Remington history a couple of years ago, but it looks like he's since run out of gas.  Pass.

BEAU BRAVO is a mystery.  He had a really good last race -- but it was at Delta Downs.  He hasn't shown up in two races at Houston.  Looks like he runs well at the minor tracks (Delta Downs and Fairmount Park), but buckles when the competition heats up.  Scary.

SEVENTH RACE: ANALYSIS

I really don't like the race.  I don't like FLYING UNCLE'S last two.  If he

couldn't do it at Trinity, why would I think he could do it here?  Even if he is a wonderful angle horse.  Why does Lanerie get off STRETCH MOVE and go to COMING FAST?  Is BEAU BRAVO a real horse?  I think COMING FAST is the horse, but I just don't have the moxie to put money on him.  Too many negatives.

SEVENTH RACE: THE BET
SEVENTH RACE: RESULTS
COMING FAST wins, paying $12.00.  STRETCH MOVE and FLYING UNCLE place and show.  The exacta pays $32, the trifecta pays $123.60.  I don't mind missing it.

EIGHTH RACE: THE FIELD
A turf race for older horses.

TELLEM TONY pressed the pace from the 4-hole in his last -- a six-furlong race on the dirt -- and then apparently fell into a hole.  His only turf race -- a good one -- was a 5-furlong sprint at Houston for statebreds.TAIL OF COZZENE certainly has the breeding for turf, but it didn't seem to take.  He's run twice and hasn't shown up once.

PLUM DOLLAR hasn't ever been on the turf, and I seem to remember a maxim -- don't trust horses over three years old trying the turf for the first time.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY DAD is a sympathetic favorite, since he brought in a huge exacta for me a couple of years ago.  Looks like he's through running, though.

PATIENTS TO SEE is five years old and tries turf for the first time.  If they thought he had any grass ability, why haven't they put him on it before now?

NOBELIUM has run some decent races in some decent places.  You can excuse his last two because they're both sprints.  But can you risk your hard-earned money on a horse that ran the way he did in that last race -- even if it was a sprint?  And what about the fact that he hasn't run in six weeks and has no workouts?

STASHUM has some good races to his credit, including his last one -- a starter allowance, probably for non-winners of two.  He'll find this group ever so much more difficult.

SILVER MEDALLION has dropped from $40,000 claiming races and $100k stakes races to a $12,500 claiming race which, thank goodness, he won.  I didn't see the race at Sam Houston, but I saw the race at Remington in which EDITORIAL POLICY and five other horses beat him like a drum.  Still, he has had a very nice workout.  And he's won $700,000 on the turf in his career, so he knows what to do.

PETTY CASH has had four pretty good races in a row, each one a little better than the last.  The last two were on the Houston turf, and with a bit of luck he'd probably have won at least one of them.  Another interesting fact: Dupuy

(.18) gets back on him today.  Hmmmmm.

PLAY GROOM -- a five-year-old trying turf for the first time. Pass.

IN A BREEZE is three for five in the money on turf, even though none of those races show on the form.  He's the third highest money winner on the grass (with SILVER MEDALLION and NOBELLIUM).  He's obviously in form (look at his last three races), he had a breezing workout on Wednesday, and evidently had taken a liking to the Houston turf (look at that work on 1/11).

COMMANDER'S SWORD.  Forget him.

EIGHTH RACE: ANALYSIS

How many horses do  have? I've got three: IN A BREEZE, SILVER MEDALLION, and PETTY CASH.  Trouble is, the crowd's got 'em, too.  However, if IN A BREEZE should win not only would he pay pretty well, but the exacta and trifecta might pay okay, too.

EIGHTH RACE: THE BET

I bet IN A BREEZE and PETTY CASH to win.  I didn't bet an exacta, because I didn't think it worth the risk.  I did a three horse trifecta box.

EIGHTH RACE: RESULTS

IN A BREEZE wins, paying a modest but happily received $10.60.  SILVER MEDALLION and PETTY CASH place and show.  The exacta pays $37.20 (a bit of a surprise) and the trifecta pays a reasonable $117.80.

NINTH RACE: THE FIELDYou analyze it.  I stopped at ARCTIC CHERE.  The rest look like oinkers except for SHOW'EM KRISTI, who for some reason drops like a stone to $8,000 today after running well in much bigger races.

NINTH RACE: THE BET

The crowd sends ARCTIC CHERE off at about even money.  I'm not that hungry.  Pass.

NINTH RACE: RESULTS

ARCTIC CHERE pays $4.20.  SMOOCHEN ANGEL and TEXAS DAZZLE place and show.  The exacta pays $21.60.  The trifecta pays a handsome and surprising $202.80.  Now I wish I'd looked a little harder.  Oh well.

TENTH RACE: THE FIELD

A maiden claiming race.

ONE EYED COMET, CROWN OF TEXAS, CHICO BANDITO and PRIVATE EARL all showed a bit of speed in their last, but only the first two are moving inside.  The crowd sees it, too, and is also steadily betting RIBA'S RAPTURE lower and lower.  For some reason that horse goes off at 5 to 2.  I can't see it, and I don't often trust what I can't see.  PASS.

TENTH RACE: THE BET

TENTH RACE: RESULTS

RIBA'S RAPTURE wins, paying a meager $7.  CROWN OF TEXAS and

HE'S OUT FRONT follow him in.  The exacta pays $27, the superfecta pays $709.60.  I'm glad I didn't bet.  I'd undoubtedly have lost.
    TOTAL RETURN AT SAM HOUSTON: $2,977.40.

## Afterword: My work here is done.

There are 2,347 more things I'd like to tell you.

But I don't even know how much of the stuff I've already told you you've taken the trouble to learn.

I do know that if you've learned The Pace Point System and the Killer Angles you're 'way ahead of where you were before you bought the book. And if you've taken the time and trouble to learn what's in this book, and have used it, and practiced it for a few weeks, it's now second nature to you, and your win percentage has increased dramatically.

Maybe even more important, your losing percentage has dropped even more dramatically.I know if you've studied the angles, and look for them, and bet them appropriately, you will hit some astounding longshots, because I've done it myself. One of the most astounding in recent memory of course being Duskie's Dandy, who you'll remember was the key horse in a play that was worth $1,316.20 for every $6 combination -- paying $35 to win, $954.60 for the Daily Double, and $326.40 for the exacta. Another was Golden Kite in the sixth at Louisiana Downs on August 6, 1992. The horse paid $58.60 to show. I bet it across and put it over and under the field in an exacta that paid $1,666.50. I had it because I recognized a Killer Angle and bet it. Now you can recognize those angles, too.

So what have I given you?

1. A way to determine how the race will be run, and which horses will figure prominently in which parts of it.

2. A number of powerful angles that require practically no handicapping. Sometimes these angles are so strong they overpower every other factor in the race -- including Pace Point System's picks.

3. A betting system that will accelerate your winnings and slow down your losses.

4. A simple way to keep track of your skill as a handicapper and of your success at the window.

5. At least a tiny bit, I hope, of my love and fascination with horse racing in general, and handicapping in particular. It's a vast playing field on which the rules are continually changing. To stay up you have to keep up. This book is an attempt to help you do both.

I believe my work here is done. Go ye and prosper.