How to use the HorseSheets

Step One: Predictable Patterns of Performance

I've been asked for this by many visitors to the site, and I understand the question. The Sheets look pretty formidable at first glance. Just remember, it's only information; take what you want and use it, depending on your own handicapping proclivities.

So let's start with the ubiquitous question: "How do I pick a winner?"

The answer is, **you don't**. **When you handicap a race,** *do not try to predict which horse will win it. Instead, try to find the horse that will benefit most from the way the race is run.*

Every event, including - no, especially - a horse race, can have an infinite number of outcomes based on different interpretations of thousands of bits of data. Your job is not to find "the winner." Your job is to find the simplest outcome and use that as the basis for your analysis of the race.

In a ten-horse race, for example, there is a minimum of five thousand items to consider. The average mind is simply incapable of examining all the data, weighing it, and coming up with a winner. Instead, you must change the way you look at the past performances. The best way to do that is to find a new way of looking at each race – one you have an affinity for, one that will provide focus. I favor early speed, and that's one reason I developed the HorseSheets.

My personal experience has taught me that early speed is the key to deciphering the race. If there is no dedicated early speed, the race often becomes chaos, surrendering to "surprise" speed, for example, or to a quick witted jockey who jumps to the lead and hangs on to win. To me, finding the closer that will win the race is often like trying to find the raindrop that will hit the bottom of the window first: far too many possibilities.

I propose that finding the early speed – if there is any – is the first step. It's certainly the first thing I look for in any race. After I find it I can make a determination about whether it will stay, tire, or quit altogether, and judge the rest of the race and runners accordingly.

Where do you find early speed in the Sheets?

First, in the columns labeled SYS1 and TDS1. These assign each horse a 2nd call position based on all its last races on the form. In other words, considering all its races on the form, a horse with the figure 3.3 in SYS1 has a tendency to be running third at 2nd call. A horse with 3.3 in the TDS1 column tends to be running third at second call considering only races at this distance (route or sprint) and surface.

The CLOSE column in each case tells us whether the horse is an Early runner, a Presser, a Closer, or a Deep Closer. You will be amazed at how accurate these figures are. It's almost like having a video of the race before it's run. I call the process Predictable Patterns of Performance. PPoT for short.

Let's look at an example.

Sunday, October 10th, a few months ago as I write this. Check out race six at Santa Anita. (#9, RUTHIES RACER, was scratched). Find the early speed. How? Check the SYS1 and TDS1 columns. You'll find one horse sticks out above all the others. Got it? #10: SWEET SONNY. Historically she is in the lead in just about every race. You may assume she will be there again today, barring any powerful negative. She's also 3rd off a layoff, and switches to an aggressive rider in Tyler Baze.

She is the definition of Lone Speed, and I can tell that from just a quick scan of those two columns. No other horse is historically within four lengths of her at second call.

When I looked at the odds a few minutes before post time, she was 15-1. No, I can't explain it, either. But that's the beauty of lone speed – especially when it's outside, because that outside post kills the bet for many handicappers.

The only question, as I've mentioned, is what negatives would bar her from winning today's race. Can she get to the front and stay there from her outside position? Actually, a good place for early speed is often outside the early speed; gives the rider more options. I thought the outside post might have made her odds more like 7-2.

RESULT: when the gates opened, #1 went immediately to the front, heading #10 by two lengths. By the half, Tyler had cruised by her; SWEET SONNY went on to win and pay a staggering $30.00 to win, $13.80 to place, and $6.80 to show.

Did I have that horse? You bet your bippy I did. And something else we'll get into later: I didn't let the crowd's dismissal of SWEET SONNY at 15-1 influence me. I didn't say "The crowd hates her; something must be wrong." I trusted my figures and past experience, and profited heavily. You can do the same.

Next: Projected speed, what affects it, how to profit from it.