

## Betting Odds - follow the value, or follow the money?

Odds really are the crux of the matter in horse race betting. So much of how we look at a horse race has to do with odds; morning line, our own betting line, the patterns of the betting leading up to the race, the near post-time odds, and the final odds.

There is one basic conceptual error that is widespread in horse betting . . .

Players fall into the 'system mode' - that is, they find something that works, and they start to play that situation by rote - in a "rinse and repeat" manner.

The desire for an unfailing method - for consistency - is completely natural and understandable. But - the reality of horse racing betting is always right there on the infield tote board - forever sending flashing reminders to you: **"This is not a static game."**

You've got a newly updated reality coming at you every 30 seconds!

Everything you brought with you; the hours of late-night handicapping, the years of testing - rejecting - and testing again, all the retooling and honing, the preconceptions and "hossy" myths of all types, your horses-to-watch list, and on and on - it all must be modified now by the current reality of those changing odds.

### **So how are we to best look at those betting odds?**

There are two distinct camps; those horse handicappers and horse race bettors who want to see the odds on their horses go up, and those that want to see the odds on their horses go down (?!).

The first group are the "value" bettors - those that require any horse they bet to be an overlay to their own betting line (or less accurately - to the morning line). The basic stance here is:

"I've done my work - I'm quite sure I'm a better horse handicapper than 90% of the others betting in this race, so I'll take advantage of any unrealistic betting on the part of the crowd and when they over-bet one or two horses and let others rise to attractive odds - I'll bet those."

The other group - the "follow the money" race bettors - admit there are other players who are sharper than they are - professionals and insiders who load-up on the really "good things." The basic stance here is:

"Money makes this game go. If I closely watch and follow the money, I'll be getting the best of it in the long run."

Let's say a bettor in the '**value group**' has a list of 3 horses that he believes are contenders in a 10 horse field. He's made fair odds on on his top horse at 3-1 / his second horse at 5-1 / his third at 7-1.

If his second ranked horse goes off at 2-1, this player would not now be interested in wagering on this horse (to win). Let's say his top ranked contender is going off at the 3/1 he gave it, but the third ranked horse is going off at 12-1, there is where he will bet.

He's concerned with betting overlays to his own opinion - this is where he finds value. He is willing to pit his understanding of the horse race - his opinion - against the opinion of the crowd.

A bettor from the '**follow-the-money group**' has probably delved much less in-depth into the handicapping of the race. He has a general feel for what he thinks would be fair odds for his contenders, but is more likely using the track's morning line as a guide.

He is watching for "action" - unexpected betting volume on certain horses. The key here is "**unexpected**."

If a horse that is 9-5 on the morning line is getting bet steadily, and is at 7-5 near post-time - that's likely the poorly informed crowd's money - the "band wagon jumpers" betting on a public handicapper's choice.

If however, this type of race bettor sees a horse that was 7-1 on the morning line now at 5-2, he considers that surprise betting action - probably from so-called "smart money" - the stable, or connections, professional handicappers, etc.. Though the value players might see this as an underlay, he sees it as an opportunity to follow the smart money.

This horse race betting approach can be applied to pure tote watching with little handicapping involved. But - as with most things in life - a middle road, a synthesis of the best of both the "value" and the "tote" betting approach would be better than either alone.

Making a personal betting line - whether unique to each individual race, or an "averaged" line (as discussed in another article) would set the race player up to notice unusual betting action and not to be confused by crowd money flowing in at a perhaps unanticipated high volume.

When good horse handicapping principles have been applied, and a runner has been set at fair odds of 9-1, and then those odds are bet down to say 3-1 (and this particular horse is not picked by the public

handicappers) - well, now that isn't the crowd betting.

It might be insider money, or it might just be a large bettor who is no more well informed - no sharper - than anyone else. Realize that there are lots of bettors to whom a \$1000-\$2000 wager is not serious money - the equivalent of \$10-\$20 for the avg. player.

### **There is a way to check . . . look into the other pools.**

True smart money will also follow the precepts of smart risk management applicable in any field of speculation - **they will spread the risk.**

Smart money prefers to try and insure a profit by participating in more than one pool. The "portfolio" philosophy put forth by **Horse Racing Gold** is also used by these savvy players.

Look and see if an inordinate amount of money (i.e the pools are not in a normal ratio) has been bet into the place pool on a horse that is taking surprising win bet action.

Further verification - the kind that might send you to the windows at a fast canter - can be found in the exacta pools. The exacta projected payoffs are the key: Check the exacta combinations with the horse you are looking at, if they seem overplayed - especially to the low and middle priced horses - it's almost certain to be money spread by the same bettor/s who distorted the win and/or place pool.

This kind of checking should be done a few times during the 20 minute betting period. Some "evening up" may occur in the final minutes. The value players who happen to be watching those same pools may hammer the over-laid situations back into near balance - and the "smart money" effect would be less easily noticed.

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You may consider yourself one, or the other of the above two types of horse race bettors (or neither). You may be a casual "tote watcher," or never have paid it any attention. You may bet strictly for value sometimes and by "feel" at other times - whatever. . .

But - I'll close with this:

**Stay out of the "boxes" that catch so many players - be it in the game of horse racing or the game of life.**

Be reticent to cast your lot with a specific group, method, or way of thinking. Don't carve anything in stone - stay light and ready.

Change happens faster than we would usually care to believe.  
Spontaneity and adaptability will serve well - to whatever kind of  
decision making they are applied.

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portfolio of horse betting approaches - go here:

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