

## Pattern Recognition

It's been said, "To see what has not been seen before - look where no one has looked before."

I don't think there are very many handicapping factors/variables that haven't been investigated during the multi-thousand year history of racing horses. But - what about the combinations of those variables? They are far too numerous to ever fully research and test them all.

How many things do handicappers look at? From what extent does a horse racing system have to draw? That is . . . how many factors, and variables are possible to be used - in the whole world of handicapping? 50? 75? More?

Let's be ultra-conservative and say 35.

**Now, consider this - it may astound you:** Say that we might only use at least 2, but no more than 4, of those factors in our approach to handicapping a race. Let's further say that we use different factors from among the 35 for different types of races and that different "weighting" of those factors is often required (that is - making one or more of the variables more or less important than another in a particular race situation).

**There are 519,600 possible combinations of those factors!!**

The natural response is, "Holy Cow!"

I mean - how could a horse handicapper ever even hope to touch the complexity of a handicapping puzzle that has that many (at least) possible variables?

**Well, we have one great thing going for us . . .**

**The brain is master of pattern recognition** - and much more adept at it than even the most powerful of computers.

A two year-old child can far out-perform the fastest computer when it comes to recognizing and identifying a person's face. Our greatest forte - the skill that has evolved through thousands of generations of the human family, and the human brain - is the ability to process visual images.

So then, how can we make best use of this skill in handicapping and betting horse racing?

First, no matter how amazing our capabilities in this area - I think that

everyone would agree that trying to identify profitable pattern combinations from among 519,600 is asking too much!

We need to get the number of variables down to  
a manageable few - this is key.

I think it was Doc Sartin who once turned me onto a study done by a stock investment company for an article in Forbes magazine. This study showed that the more information (numbers of handicapping factors) an investor (or race bettor) had - the more confidence he had in his decision-making.

**Unfortunately, the accuracy of his decision-making decreased with the excess of information!** It was concluded that 5 is the maximum number of factors with which an investor or race player can deal before diminishing returns sets in.

Serious handicappers should begin immediately to whittle down the number of handicapping factors they use in making wagering decisions. A valid horse racing system requires it!

It shouldn't be done arbitrarily of course - testing, research, and accurate record-keeping are a must ( I know you didn't want to hear that!). Draw your factors from the major groups; Class, Speed, Pace, Connections, Odds. Develop your own "looks" and then begin to let the brain's natural abilities at pattern recognition work its magic.

Always remember too that our own observations affect the results of what we are tracking - and - our preconceptions (of which we are often completely unaware) affect our judgments, and the decisions we ultimately make.

Because of that - whatever data you are studying - your results will be unique.

This is a good thing in a game where having a different reason to bet on certain horses than the "crowd" is using will tend to keep you on the under-bet horses and off the over-bet, low-value types.

Doing your own research on a restricted number of variable combinations will reveal to you what I believe is becoming crucial to overall betting success: **High ROI spot plays.**

The huge majority of race bettors wager in more races than they should - that's a given.

It just seems to be a natural response. They do the handicapping work the night before - they're at the track (or in front of the computer screen) - they've got money to bet - and they don't want to miss out on a good winner. All this creates a subtle, yet powerful motivation to place

several more wagers each day than is optimal.

Those extra wagers are long-term money eaters.

**The identification and introduction of high ROI spot-plays into ones betting will be a very powerful addition.**

Use your brain's natural gift of pattern recognition - do some serious research into your own handicapping - see what you've been missing.