



TOP 10 MISTAKES HORSEPLAYERS MAKE

How to avoid them
to Cash Big at the Races!



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And How to Avoid Them to Cash Big at the Races!



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Are you tired of losing at the track? Are you tired of picking the right horses, but having longshots that you didn't see coming mess up your Trifecta, Pick 4 or other tickets?

If you want to not only hang on to your wallet, but make money at the track, these are 10 mistakes that you'll want to avoid...



1. Not understanding the pace

One of the most common sayings at the track is “Pace Makes The Race”. If you want to make money playing the races, this is the #1 rule.

Understanding the pace of a race allows you to understand which horses are advantaged and may run better than usual, and which horses are disadvantaged and may run poorly today. A fast pace, with several horses fighting for the lead, often leads to a situation where they may “win the battle, but lose the war.”



Even if one horse triumphs in the early battle for the lead, it will often not have enough left to hold off the closers. If you can identify a hot-pace race where three or four horses will fight for the lead and can be eliminated from your tickets, now you are on your way to making money.

Conversely, a slow-paced race can severely hinder the closers and create situations where the best horses (if they are deep closers) may not win or even hit the board.

If you are still learning about pace, the best thing you can do is read analysis about pace, get help from friends or read further about pace handicapping.

HRN Pro Pace Report is your key to unlock pace scenarios for every track, every race, every day! [Learn more >>](#)

2. Overlooking hidden big moves in previous races

Speaking of pace, not all races are run evenly. Some may be run fast early, but slow late. Or moderate early, very fast in the middle, and moderate late.

The reason this is important is that these moves are often hidden. If a horse makes a big move at the end -- everyone can see it. Everyone notices the finish and can see which horses made big moves at the end.

But what about big moves in the beginning or middle? Or what about big moves into a fast pace, or obscured by a wide trip? These are all examples of how a horse can run a vastly improved race, but the improvement can be hidden without deeper analysis. Once you master this technique of finding hidden improvement, you can be on your way to unlocking big profits at the track.

3. Missing troubled trips or replays

One of the easiest ways to find good horses that others have missed is to just read the comments at the end of the running lines. If you see comments like, “5-6w 1st turn, settled outside” you can picture a horse that was very wide and lost considerable ground vs. his/her opponents. Going 5-6 wide on a turn might equal losing 5-6 lengths or more.

If you’re unsure about trouble a horse may have encountered in a previous race, go to the video! If you have an online betting account like TVG or NYRA Bets, it’s free and easy to look up replays by horse name. Or if it was a stakes race last time, you can just search it on Youtube! You don’t need to watch every replay - but it pays to be curious!

4. Dismissing Long Shots Too Quickly

In any race, there are favorites and long shots. And often the feeling is the favorites are “supposed to win”. But this is a superficial analysis that can lead to following the crowd right to the favorite each time.

A wise old handicapper once said, “Don’t look for reasons why a long shot won’t win! Of course there are plenty of reasons, that’s why it is a longshot!”

The goal is to look for reasons why a long shot MIGHT win (or run well). Find one or two good reasons why a long shot might win and you can find some nice long shots!

A great way to start considering long shots better is to be sure to take the time to look at each horse in the race, and consider....

Why is this horse in the race?

Does he/she just need another race for exercise and conditioning for future races down the road? Or do the owner and trainer have reasons to expect improvement?

Is anything changing that would give hope for improvement? Longer distance? Shorter distance? A change in surface - between dirt, turf, a sloppy track, a soft turf course or a synthetic polytrack? Or maybe just a different track?

Are there any excuses for the last race(s)? Look at the comments. Maybe the horse had a wide trip or encountered trouble. Also look at the post position. Even without watching the replay, a horse breaking from post position 12 is much more likely to have encountered a wide trip last time than a horse breaking from post position 3.

Finally, has this long shot really proven to be unsuccessful at what it is doing today? In younger races, like maiden-claiming races, often it is the horse that has lost the least that improves and wins. Horses that are 0-for-7 and 0-for-13 have proven over and over that they either do not want to win or don’t know how to win, but a horse that is 0-for-2 hasn’t proven that as definitively. Sometimes these horses “wake up” early in their career after figuring out what racing is all about. Look for signs that perhaps they “woke up” for a portion of their previous race.



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5. Picking horses based on what they did last time, instead of what they will do today

In putting your handicapping together, it is important to remember that you are not trying to rank horses based on their last performance. The goal is actually to project how they will do today.

For example, the favorite won last time by three lengths. But how did he do it? Maybe he broke from post position 1 on the rail, got to the lead, and beat a field of six. But what if today's field includes 10 horses, he has to break from post position 9, and there are other horses that got the lead last time? Those are serious disadvantages he may run into this time. A bigger field, a tougher post position, and other horses that may fight for the lead or cause him to not get the lead. Those are all good reasons why he may not duplicate his previous performance.

If you determine that he may not get the lead, then what type of race will he run? In that case you would want to find one of his races where he did not get the lead and see how he finished. He might not be so tough without the lead to himself.

Did your horse draw a good post, or will he have to overcome a bad one?
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6. Vulnerable Favorites are the Key to Making Money

When it comes to wagering, most of the focus and the money goes to the crowd “favorite”. In horse racing, the betting public determines the favorite, and they are actually pretty good. At most tracks, the favorite wins about 33% of the time.

So if you are only going to the track once a year and you just want to cash some winners, you could do a lot worse than just betting the favorite every race. On average, you'll win 3 of 9 races, and also hit some nice seconds and thirds. But the problem is favorite has the lowest odds, so you'll win the least. So you're almost assuredly going to lose money for the day - just not all of your money!

But if you are going against favorites, this is where you can really make some money. Because so much money is concentrated on the favorite, it is not only the favorite to win, but the most money is on the favorite to finish in the exacta, trifecta and superfecta, for example, no matter which spot. If the favorite loses, or better yet finishes out of the money, this is where the payoffs can really blow up.

This is why it is so important to determine the chances of the favorite. You may have a horse you really like, but if the favorite looks formidable, then that may be a lot to ask for your horse to win. But if you find a race where the favorite has lots of question marks, then perhaps your horse only has to run a good race to win - not overcome a formidable opponent. This greatly increases your chances of winning.

7. Betting the Wrong Races

When we say betting the wrong races, what is really meant is invest more on the races where you think the favorites are vulnerable and you have found a horse (or horses) that you like the chances and odds.

For example, instead of betting \$20 on every race, if there are a couple races with big favorites that you can't see losing, or races where you don't have a clue who will win, bet \$5 on those races for fun, but save so you can invest \$40 on the races you like. There is nothing worse than losing all day and then come to the race that you really like and you're only able to bet a small amount and then be right and have your horse win and only win a little because you bet a little amount.

8. Constructing your tickets wrong

As they say in poker, you have to work with the cards you are dealt. Well in horse racing, just as you shouldn't approach every race with the same dollar investment, you shouldn't bet each race the same.

For example, let's say you are convinced the #4 is a good bet at 5-1 and will likely run first or second, but you have no clue about the other 10 horses. In this case, you would probably want to bet the #4 to Win, Win-Place or Win-Place-Show depending on your risk tolerance. If you are really wanting to hit an exacta and gamble a little bit more, you could do a \$1 exacta bet of 4 with ALL, and ALL with 4 (this is 20 combinations and costs \$20).



This uses your opinion of #4 will run first or second, but you literally play every other combination of the other horses in the race in the exacta if the #4 runs first or second. Rather than just betting Win-Place, this is sort of like using the exacta as a Win-Place bet, but you are gambling more (and hoping) for one of the longer shots to complete the exacta with the #4. This is not a bad strategy if you really believe it is wide-open among the other 10 horses. But if the #4 wins and the favorite runs second, the exacta could pay very low and you would probably have been better off just betting to \$10 to Win-Place (\$20 total).

Conversely, let's say you really like #4, but you are pretty sure his main competitors are #1, #3 and #5. Now, you can get really targeted in hopes that you are really correct. There are a couple ways you might approach this. One, you could just put \$10 to Win on #4, and then back him up in Exactas in case the 1, 3, or 5 win by betting a \$4 exacta 1,3,5 with 4. Now your total bet is only \$22, but you would have a nice \$4 exacta if the #4 happens to run second to the 1,3,5. Another option is to just wheel the #4 in the exacta with the 1,3,5 by betting a \$4 exacta wheel 4 with 1,3,5 and a \$4 exacta wheel 1,3,5 with 4 (\$24 total). The problem with this strategy is you incur additional risk if the #4 wins and the 1,3,5 don't finish second then you get nothing for correctly picking the winner.

2-year-old races are notoriously tough to pick - but with these [HRN Pro First-Time Starter Insights](#), you can play with confidence >>

9. Making the wrong bet

One huge mistake people make in the above example is to exacta box or trifecta box the horses you are looking at:

4, 1, 3, 5.

This is a big mistake! Why?

The reason is if you’ve decided that the 4 is the best horse to bet, then you should put your focus on #4 win or lose. You’ll stand to win much more if you’re right, which in the above examples, we only need the #4 to run first or second. If you’re wrong, that’s okay, you’ll try and get them and win big next time.

If you do an exacta box, the problem is now you’ve bet all the possible outcomes equally.



A \$1 exacta box with 1,3,4,5 is actually betting:

\$1 exacta 1-3

\$1 exacta 1-4

\$1 exacta 1-5

\$1 exacta 3-1

\$1 exacta 3-4

\$1 exacta 3-5

\$1 exacta 4-1

\$1 exacta 4-3

\$1 exacta 4-5

\$1 exacta 5-1

\$1 exacta 5-3

\$1 exacta 5-4

Total investment = \$12

The problem with this is you’ve invested 50% of your money that has nothing to do with #4! Which really takes the focus off #4.

10. Invest in the right information to help you win

When playing the races, it's very possible to win big amounts every day. Because of that, you want to get the right information to help you increase your chances of winning. If you win \$500, that really puts the money spent on information in perspective.

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