

Resolutions

By Derek Simon

I don't think I'd be going out on a limb if I said that, when it comes to wagering, nearly all horseplayers have had or will experience buyer's remorse at some point. An exacta ticket purchased and subsequently torn up despite one's top choice winning in a canter; a heavy bet on an even heavier favorite that tanks down the lane; a three-horse trifecta box that was supposed to have been a four-horse box. All of these betting maladies can lead to a bad case of the "woulda, coulda, shoulda's" or, in some cases, even surgery — to extract one's foot from... well, a place it doesn't belong.

I suffered from just such a case of buyer's blues last weekend, when I managed to waste some pretty solid handicapping on multi-race exotics, as well as exactas and trifectas — all of which ended up making that "giant sucking sound" former presidential candidate Ross Perot once talked about. Afterward, in the hospital recovery room, I made a vow.

"I'll never do that again," I bellowed, prompting a snort and a muttered "I should hope not" from the nurse bandaging my foot.

But I'm serious. For five years now, I've been a very successful public handicapper with a terrible secret (actually, two terrible secrets if you count my love of scented candles) — I am a bad bettor. And I'm not talking about Shaquille O'Neal-at-the-free-throw-line bad; I'm talking about Shaquille O'Neal-in-the-movie-"Kazaam" or Shaquille O'Neal-trying-to-rap bad. Yes, my money management is that horrible.

In 2011, it is going to change.

I, like a lot of handicappers I'm guessing, have never really adapted to the advent of simulcast wagering and the myriad of betting options now available. Instead of viewing these additional races and bets as money-making *opportunities* (like I should), too often I look at them almost as obligations and wager on each and every race with about as much thoughtfulness as the MTV execs that thought "16 and Pregnant" was a good idea.

So, starting today, I'm implementing some strict wagering guidelines:

1. Absolutely NO multi-race bets of any kind.

It's not that these kinds of wagers are necessarily bad, but, traditionally, I have constructed them around a single pick that I actually liked... and a bunch of others that I didn't.

2. Only my Win Factor Report "Prime Overlays" and "Key Selections" will be considered for automatic play.

Creating a computerized fair odds line (the Win Factor Report) was one of my greatest and worst accomplishments as a horseplayer. It's a fantastic tool that has greatly aided me in my handicapping endeavors over the years — but it is only a tool. Far too often, I treat it as a tip sheet, even while warning others not to.

3. Single race exotic wagers will be played only after careful consideration.

This should go without saying, but I am Kazaam.

Now, to put my new resolve to the test, I've selected a few races on Friday and Saturday:

Friday, Jan. 7, 2011

Charles Town RACE 7 (100%) \$11,000 Purse 8.5 Furlongs Dirt	#	Name	Win	Recent	Class	Track &	Win	Class	Rated	Fair
			Factor	Placing	Par	Days Lapsed	Rate	Rating	Starts	Odds
	3	Gas House (3/1)	1.21	W+		PEN23	29%	0.26	7	7-5?
	8	Aly Raja (10/1)	0.42		↓	CT12	20%	0.26	15	6-1
	12	Screen To Screen (7/2)	0.26	W+	↑	MNR16	9%	0.19	11	11-1
	1	Out To Please (7/2)	0.22		↓	CT23	19%	0.16	16	12-1

COMMENTS: GAS HOUSE is a Prime Overlay possibility on my Win Factor line, so without examining the race any further, I'll bet him... at the right price.

MY WAGER(S): WIN/PLACE on 3 at odds of 3-1 or greater.

Saturday, Jan. 8, 2011

**Gulfstream Park
Race 7 * Purse \$100,000
6.0 Furlongs * Dirt**

Recent Speed
GANGSTERON THERUN (98) GRANDE SHORES (97) WILDCAT FORMATION (92)

Recent Class
WINCHILL (99) DETERMINATO (98) LEAVE OF ABSENCE (97)

Early Speed
WAR FOR GUS (-15) DETERMINATO (-15) DUAL EXHAUZT (-13)

Late Speed
LEAVE OF ABSENCE (-5) CANE GARDEN BAY (-11) DUAL EXHAUZT (-13)

COMMENTS: Although he's been away from the races for over two months, I think LEAVE OF ABSENCE (2-1 fair odds) has a ton of talent and is one of the few in this field that could have a say on the Triple Crown trail. He's bred to go longer and his last race produced a 98 Equibase speed figure (today's par is 101) and an outstanding -2 late speed ration (LSR). Six-furlong races at Gulfstream Park are won in wire-to-wire fashion over a third of the time and that bodes well for DUAL EXHAUZT (6-1), who has yet to be headed at the first call of a dirt sprint. Yes, he looked tired pulling up after his latest, but that effort earned a race-best 102 Equibase number and featured a daunting -13 early speed ration (ESR). GRAND SHORES (7-2) looked impressive breaking his maiden after previously finishing second in a stakes affair.

MY WAGER(S): WIN on 5 at odds of 2-1 or greater.

**Gulfstream Park
Race 9 * Purse \$100,000
8.0 Furlongs * Dirt**

Recent Speed
SOARING EMPIRE (96) RULE (92) MORNING LINE (89)

Recent Class
CAIXA ELETRONICA (98) SOARING EMPIRE (97) MORNING LINE (94)

Early Speed
HEAR YE HEAR YE (-10) RULE (-10) TACKLEBERRY (-8)

Late Speed
MORNING LINE (-6) TACKLEBERRY (-9) SOARING EMPIRE (-10)

COMMENTS: To me, this is strictly a two-horse affair and, possibly for the first time ever, I think a Todd Pletcher-trained horse coming off a layoff may be fitter than its main rival. RULE, who was on his way to the Kentucky Derby before an injury sent him to the sidelines last year, makes his four-year-old debut following a string of excellent five-furlong workouts and possesses speed and pace figures that make him a huge threat in Saturday's one-mile Gulfstream Park feature. Ironically, Pletcher won last year's edition of the Hal's Hope with another late Derby scratch that was coming off an injury — Quality Road). MORNING LINE finished a mere head behind Dakota Phone after contesting a brutal pace (-15 ESR) in the 2010 Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile; he's clearly the one to beat.

MY WAGER(S): WIN on 2 at odds of 9-5 or greater.