

TODAY'S RACING DIGEST HANDICAPPING TIPS

THE QUINELLA HAS ITS "PLACE"

Whether it's home, life, fire, auto or whatever, Americans spend a gazillion dollars every year on insurance and then hope they never need to use any of it. They get a piece of the rock, or put up an umbrella or place themselves in "good hands" seeking peace of mind.

The most traditional form of 'insurance' for the horseplayer has always been 'place' betting. Backing up a strong 'Win' bet with a 'Place' wager makes the player feel more secure before the race since they have covered themselves in case something else happens to run better than expected and beats the top choice.

By betting equal amounts to 'Win and Place' on a horse, handicappers are actually taking out an expensive insurance policy, even though every long-term study in money management has shown that "on the nose" is the best way to win over the long haul. In a Win/Place situation, only three things can happen and all three of them are "bad".

First, your horse wins and pays \$10.20 and \$5.20. By wagering \$20 to Win AND Place, you collect \$154 for a profit of \$114. If you had bet ALL \$40 to Win, you would have collected \$204 for a profit of \$164, so the Place bet cost you \$50. That's bad. Second, your horse runs 3rd or worse and you lose all your money. This obviously is bad, too. Third, your horse runs 2nd and you get a positive return of \$14 on your total \$40 investment. This may seem "good" on the surface but since you actually wanted your horse to win, the overall result must be considered "bad", too. Just not as bad as it could have been. Get the picture?

You are never going to be totally satisfied with a Place bet, no matter what happens unless you bet all your money to Place and the horse runs 2nd. If it wins, you're certainly not happy because you should have bet to win and if it runs 3rd, you can't be happy because you lost.

This is not to say there isn't room for those who wish a bit of insurance to back up a strong win bet. It's just that there are better places to purchase that insurance than the place pool. Looking at the Quinella is one way to go.

The "Q" is the forgotten girl at the dance as most folks pass it by in disdain while preferring the prettier one, Ms. Exacta. People love to box and baseball and, sometimes, slam-dunk one way Exactas while overlooking the merits of the Quinella. However, the Q is the perfect 'saver' wager in certain situations.

SITUATION #1--You like an overlay at 4/1 or more in a race but fear the favorite, and only the favorite. Instead of betting \$20 Win/Place on your selection, bet \$20 to win on the price and a \$20 Q with the chalk. In the 2nd Race last Thursday at Hollywood Park, a firster named Misty Mamoon beat the 9/5 favorite Six Times a Lady by less than a length. A \$20 Win bet returned \$140 and a \$20 Place bet came back \$54 for a total of \$194. However, a \$20 Q with the favorite scored for \$222, a sizable increase over the \$54 place payout. If you fail to hit the quinella but win the race, you have cashed on a nice win mutuel but only forfeited a so-so place wager.

SITUATION #2--The favorite looks strong in a short field, is going to the post at odds-on and is unplayable at the price. However, the second/third choices in the race appear suspect and one of the bigger-priced runners in the field seems set to improve with a good race, though not good enough to erase the chalk. The solution is a Quinella play with the favorite. The Q invariably pays more than the Exacta when the favorite wins a race because the Exacta plungers pound the hot horse 'on top' and when the short-priced runner scores, the payoffs reflect this fact. The Quinella pool, on the other hand, is generally ignored by the

board-bouncing high rollers and left to the little guy creating the potential for overlays on a regular basis.

Basically, in this scenario, you're expecting the favorite to win and are betting on your potential improver to Place. Short fields with winning favorites often return very short prices in the second hole but the Quinella may

return \$8, \$10, \$12, or more, when a price type finishes 2nd, pretty healthy place mutuels when you think about it. Just consider the favorite to be in for non-wagering purposes and analyze the other entrants in the field. You may find it easy to get some overlooked 3/1, 4/1 or 5/1 returns in the Q in this day-and-age of five, six and seven horse fields.

SITUATION #3--Your top choice is a qualified overlay and deserves a win bet in a race where the favorite looks false. The race is pretty contentious otherwise and some of the possible players are juicy odds. In this situation, bet half your capital for the race to Win on the top selection and then take the money you might have bet to Place on this horse and spread it in the Q among the other 'value' types in the lineup. Always remember to get at least half your capital in the win pool, however. In this case, even if your horse runs 2nd you have the potential to make a nice score.

SITUATION #4--The Quinella may simply offer more wagering value than the Exacta in a particular race. If you like two (or three horses) equally, the chances are you will get a better shake boxing in the Quinella rather than the Exacta. It's possible such overlay situations can be sniffed out by looking at the payoff possibilities in both pools but it should be remembered that the Q pool is highly volatile since it is so-much smaller than the Exacta and that posted payoffs will fluctuate from minute to minute. Basically, the only time you get hurt seriously playing the Quinella rather than the Exacta is when the favorite runs 2nd behind a longshot. Those Exactas pay considerably more than the Q because of those high-rollers that have been backing the favorite "on top" only.

The Quinella is simply another tool available to the horseplayer. Another club in the bag and it does have its "place".