

# TODAY'S RACING DIGEST HANDICAPPING TIPS

## TO SAVE OR NOT TO SAVE

With old Bill Shakespeare coming off a big Oscar win over Mr. E.T., this is a good time to remember that melancholy Dane standing in the fog aloft the ramparts of some European castle while pondering, "To save, or not to save, that is the question".

Hamlet, you see, was 'live' to three longshots after two legs of the Pick Three and couldn't for the life of himself decide whether he should 'save'. He had \$48 invested with payoffs between \$740 and \$1,168 if one of his contenders scored. Should he invest more dinero trying to lock up a profit or should he just let nature takes its course????

There is no easy answer when it comes to the concept of 'saving'. Money-management experts will tell you it's not a good idea. They believe that a bet is a bet, even if it takes two, three or more races for the outcome to be known. If the wager was made with confidence, it should be allowed to play itself out without increasing the investment. However, many handicappers can't resist the temptation to protect what could be a major score by purchasing pari-mutuel insurance.

All situations are different and all horseplayers are different. Still, here are some questions you may want to ask yourself before making the final decision about a 'saving' wager.

1. How strong do you feel about the strength of your position going in? Look at your contender(s) and attempt to honestly estimate your chances of winning. If it's better than 67%, saving is not a good idea. Your position is strong. If it's between 33% and 66%, it's moderate and you may wish to consider further investment. If it's less than 33%, saving is not a good idea because your position is weak to begin with and putting up more cash will only increase your exposure on the down side.
2. How large is your initial investment? If it's a small one, there is no reason to save. If it's a moderate one, you may wish to consider it. If it's a large one, saving becomes a definite option.
3. Can you pretty much 'lock up' an acceptable profit by further investment? Remember, you should not save in order to break even, even on a big play. What's the point? Also, you should never put up more than you invested originally in this sort of situation.
4. How strong are the betting favorites? If they are solid and you have them on your ticket, forget saving. If they are false or vulnerable and you consciously bet against them to begin with, stand by your guns. However, if you played against them just hoping to get lucky on a big hit, saving is not a bad idea. You may want to hook the favorites up with your pricey contenders in an Exacta or Quinella play in case one of your horses runs well but ends up 2nd behind a short price.
5. Are there any logical longshots in the field that you liked but had to leave off your ticket? If not, saving makes no sense. However, if the favorites look weak and you simply couldn't use all the good price possibilities, you may wish to consider saving with a win bet(s) on other live longshots depending on their value potential.

Do not even consider saving on a multiple-race play until you reach the final leg of the bet. The second leg of a Pick Three, for example, should be approached and played/passed as a normal contest, regardless of your position after the first event. The same thing goes for the Pick Six where you should have all five of the first winners before thinking about saving. Many a good winner has been passed in the middle by handicappers 'live' after the first race of a Pick Three simply because they MAY cash after the final race. You need to know that you are, indeed, in line for a good payoff and are just not hoping you will be.

Strong-minded players may frown on saving because it shows weakness of mind and spirit, a lack of confidence. However, all of us are not built of granite and failure to cash once in scoring position can initiate the kind of negative vibes that may start a killer losing streak. As in real life, insurance can lead to the sort of peace of mind that make future decisions easier to make on an intelligent level. On the other hand, you don't want to spend good money insuring junk. The worst case scenario where you lose both the original play AND the 'saver' qualifies as a disaster, so this is not territory to enter into without significant thought.

If, like Hamlet, you can't decide, then just say 'no'. If, however, you have asked/answered the five above questions to your satisfaction and confidently believe a 'saver' is the right way to go, then don't be shy. Handicapping is a game of decisions and as long as you can say afterwards that you made a good bet, then you did. Win or lose.