

# TODAY'S RACING DIGEST HANDICAPPING TIPS

## THE TWELVE STEP PLAN

A new year is days away. A new Santa Anita meeting has started. The California horseplayer is back from an eight-day sabbatical, fresh and ready to grow and prosper both mentally and financially. But will they? A few may but, despite the best of intentions, most will fall into the same black holes they fall into every year.

Why? Because handicapping is a mental game and the vast majority who partake are not mentally prepared or equipped to succeed. They haven't mastered "The Twelve Steps" of handicapping success. It's not that they can't do it but most don't even try. They gamble, they do not invest. They believe they have no chance because they've never given themselves a chance. They are not willing to fail, so they can't possibly succeed. Note the following steps carefully and if you do not believe they can be mastered, then stick to \$2 bets and expect to loooooooooooooo.

STEP ONE--The winning horseplayer does the work. If you haven't thoroughly analyzed the races you expect to play, your chances of winning are small. Each horse in the field needs to be scrutinized, accepted/rejected as a dynamic in the contest on an individual basis and then reanalyzed as a group.

STEP TWO--The winning horseplayer is a free thinker. They are not influenced by what they read, by what they hear or by that little voice in the back of the head that says they should not be at the track to begin with. They think about the future and not the past. History may help them form their opinions but they understand that every race is different and that thousands of variables come into play to guarantee that the same race is never run twice.

STEP THREE--The winning horseplayer has a plan. They have looked into a given race and have established a strategy of attack. Sometimes they have established three, four or five plans of attack so that they may be flexible enough to adjust quickly in the heat of battle. Winning horseplayers think on their feet.

STEP FOUR--The winning horseplayer knows when to play. They have isolated the contenders, eliminated the pretenders and established their own set of probabilities for the results that seem both likely and possible. When the wagering opposition gives them the edge they need, they play.

STEP FIVE--The winning horseplayer knows when to pass. If they have said "no" to Step Four, then they MUST say "yes" to Step Five. No advantage, no bet. It's as simple as that. In this era of year-round racing when eight days off seems an eternity, they understand that there is always another race.

STEP SIX--The winning horseplayer knows how to win. They never get too high when they succeed. They never become so flushed with victory that they can no longer think about what will be happening a few minutes down the road. They may congratulate themselves with a quick mental pat on the back but they never go to sleep at their post. They understand that they can be ambushed at any moment and are ever vigilant.

STEP SEVEN--The winning horseplayer knows how to lose. When they are proven wrong, they are fully aware that they will fail in 60% or 70% or 80% of their ventures, depending on their style of play. Defeat does not shake them or the strength of their convictions about what lies ahead. They have done their work, they have a plan, they are confident of ultimate success.

STEP EIGHT--The winning horseplayer knows how to handle money. Their wagering capital is their livelihood and not to be wasted. When things go badly, they do not chase for a short-term profit by betting races where they have no opinion. They are interested in long-term results and understand that capital which is lost on any given day can be quickly recouped the next day, the next week, the next month.

STEP NINE--The winning horseplayer understands that luck, whether it be good or bad, is part of the equation. When they lose due to poor decision making by a jockey, the whims of the stewards, lose a photo by an inch or are beaten by a horse that simply runs better than expected, they do not curse, they do not swear, they do not feel that God is against them. They merely go on with the game without even thinking about the fact that good fortune and bad fortune tends to even out in the long run.

STEP TEN--The winning horseplayer recognizes "burnout" and knows when to back off, regroup and allow the psyche to recover. Nobody can play the horses seriously every day of the long, long year. Just as a car needs to be taken in for a tune-up and oil change every 10,000 miles, the horseplayer's brain needs to be rested and given time to cleanse itself at varying times of the year. Fresh is best and winning horseplayers write their own vacations into the scheme of things.

STEP ELEVEN--The winning horseplayer believes totally in ultimate success. Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, maybe not next week but eventually they will win. Confidence is gold, a defeatist attitude is death.

STEP TWELVE--The winning horseplayer cares about the game, the people and the horses. They express themselves to management, offer constructive criticism and help to build rather than destroy. The racetrack is their home, their office, their community and their church. They get involved, they love what they're doing and they know that what is good for the game is good for them.