TODAY'S RACING DIGEST HANDICAPPING TIPS

FINDING FALSE FAVORITES

The quest for the "false" favorite should be the number one priority for every handicapper whether they be professional, recreational or amateur.

Let's set the parameters for a "favorite" as the program choice or any horse opening at 5/2 or less. For strong handicappers who do a better job at selecting the public choice than the linemaker, follow your own heart and soul at choosing the chalk when applying the following principles. Many of these guidelines are somewhat subjective, but the more you work at it, the more proficient you will become at employing them. Remember to be ultra tough since you are analyzing horses that will be short prices. If in doubt, go ahead and red flag 'em.

ABILITY: Employing whatever rating method you prefer, determine whether the horse is "good enough" to win. Personally, I use my "Fast Figs" (published daily in *Today's Racing Digest* or TRD) to judge the contention in a race. It doesn't matter whether you use them or opt for the *Digest's* "Fractional Charting" or "CPRs" or Columns 5/6 in *Today's Racing Digest* or "FIRE Numbers" or use "Beyer" figs, "Barry Meadows' Master Win Ratings" or "Thoro-Graph" or "Trackmaster Power Ratings" (the list can go on and on). Whatever your choice, it is necessary for you to determine what score is necessary for "contender" status. With "Fast Figs", it's five points. In the "Fractional Charting", it should be three lengths. For "Meadows' Ratings", it's three points. Max points in this category is two.

(A)--If the horse doesn't figure on top (or tied for 1st), assign it one point.

(B)--If the horse doesn't figure as a contender, assign it two points.

PHYSICAL CONDITION: Max here is one point.

(A)--For horses that have raced within 30 days: those that have not started within 14 days and do not have a published workout within 10 days (one point).

(B)--For horses that have not raced within 30 days: those without two works in the last 12 days (one point).

RACE CONDITIONS: Max is two points

(A)--Horse not proven (in-the-money finish) at today's distance (route or sprint), one point.

(B)--Horse not proven on today's surface (dirt, turf, wet), one point.

CONNECTIONS: Max is two points.

(A)--Stable wins at less than 10% overall or is on the "cold" list over the last two months as shown inside the front cover of the Digest, one point.

(B)--Jockey wins at less than 10% overall (use annual records unless the current meeting record has more data, one point. If preferred, use the Jockey/Trainer record shown in the comment section of TRD and give one point if the team has not combined for at least one previous win or have succeeded at less than 10% long-term.

MISCELLANEOUS: Max is five points.

(A)--Suspicious class drop, one point. Any horse dropping two levels off good form for today's race or has taken such a drop within its last three races and is not stepping up again today.

(B)--Horses lacking tactical speed ("R" in TRD's PER Column 7), one point.

(C)--Has no wins in its last 10 starts, one point. For Maidens, any horse that has been beaten twice or more under today's conditions (class/distance), two points.

(D)--Has not had a break of at least 45 days in its current Past Performances, one point.

(E)--Figures to be disadvantaged by an on-going track bias, one point.

Any horse receiving one or two points is a *Vulnerable* favorite. Any horse with three or more points is a *False* favorite. Horses without any points, are legitimately *Solid* favorites.

Solid favorites should not be bet against and are good 'singles' in Pick Three/Pick Six action. *Vulnerable* favorites can be 'used' in exotic wagering by players who like them but should not be bet to win. *False* favorites should be eliminated from consideration and BET AGAINST.

Not everyone will see every potential favorite the same by using this list. It's merely a guideline for determining just how good/bad the potential short prices look in any given race. Feel free to modify the list in any way you see fit. In the handicapping game, nothing is written in stone. NOTHING.