

# Handicapping Factors (HF)

**HF 2 - Live Horse**  
The strongest of Digest picks.  
Should win!

**HF 15 - Strong pick**  
Most everything looks optimal  
for a winning run.

**HF 15a - Mild pick**  
The horse should run well.  
At the very least an in-the-money  
performance is expected.

**HF 20 - Longshot**  
This horse may run well at  
nice odds.

*The Digest uses Handicapping Factors (HF, for short) to convey numerous handicapping angles, variables, and factors to the reader in a limited amount of space. The following is a list of HFs and their definitions that can be found in Column 8 of the race header.*

*(See below for an illustration of where to find the HFs on the race page.)*

## 1. First Time Starter –

Horses with some racing experience, even when limited, statistically perform better than first-time starters.

**3. Distance Capability:** Today's distance may present a problem for this horse.

**4. Equipment Change:** The horse is scheduled to receive an equipment change, which can often affect a horse's performance.

**5. Trouble Prone:** This horse frequently gets into trouble, such as breaking slowly, lugging-in or out, etc.

**6a. Weight:** This horse is carrying enough weight to cause a problem.

**6b. Weight:** This horse is carrying little or less weight. Some handicappers believe this can lead to a better performance.

**7. Inside Post Position:** The inside post position may cause a problem for this horse at this track or distance.

**8. Outside Post Position:** This outside post position may cause a problem for this horse at this track or distance.

**9. Pace:** The probable pace (early speed) in this race may not be suitable to the racing style of this horse.

**10c. Higher Class:** The horse is up in class (facing tougher foes).

**10d. Lower Class:** The horse is down in class (facing easier competition).

**11. Female vs. Male:** A filly or mare is in against the boys. It is usually a tough assignment, but the girls have been known to beat the guys.

**12. Foreign races:** Previous races for this horse were outside North America.

**13. Released from claiming jail:** The horse has been held out his "jail term" (the period of time after being claimed that he cannot return for the same or lesser claiming price). Sometimes this can be construed as a negative move, though some trainers do very well utilizing the maneuver.

**14. Workouts:** The horse tends to run fast during morning workouts, but has not run as well in the afternoon when racing takes place. These kind of horses are often called "morning glories."

**16. Long layoff or Recency:** Horse is coming off a layup of 90 or more days and previously was not proven at today's class level or distance. The horse may "need" the race.

**17. Leg wraps:** The horse wears leg wraps or "bandages." This can be an indication of soreness, though there are trainers who put leg wraps on their horses regardless of physical condition.

**18. Age:** The age of this horse is not consistent with that of his competition or class level (e.g., a 3-year-old vs. older horses during the spring).

**19. Improving:** This horse seems to be improving or should improve today – a positive handicapping factor.

**21. Fits race:** The horse fits the race on class, distance, and recency.

**21c. Fits race:** The horse fits the race except for class.

**21d. Fits race:** The horse fits the race except for distance.

**21r. Fits race:** The horse fits the race except for recency (i.e., he's been off for more than 90 days).

**22. Conditions horse:** The conditions for eligibility are ideal for this horse.

**23. Work Ready:** Recent workouts have been fast and/or impressive.

**24. Surface:** Today's surface (grass, dirt, synthetic, etc.) may not suit the horse.

**25. Betting:** If the betting on this horse is heavier than expected, it could be a sign that the horse will run well.

**86. Veto:** A most unlikely winner under the race conditions. Throw him out!

