

# Hidden Class



By Ed Burgart

WHILE “CLASS” IS A COMMON WORD IN A HORSE-player’s vocabulary, how many of us ever talk about a horse’s “hidden class”?

Sure, it’s easy to see that reigning world champion Blues Girl Too has class based on her lifetime earnings of \$2,032,328, four Grade 1 wins and a track-record performance in the \$1-million Champion of Champions (G1). We can also easily determine that Heartswideopen was a classy 2-year-old after her victories in the All American (G1) and Ruidoso (G1) futurities.

But finding hidden class in a horse’s past performances is trickier. With many races written in the starter allowance and claiming stakes categories, we can’t always look at a horse’s overall earnings and wins to determine its class. The same applies in conditioned allowance and claiming races. And we can’t forget about races restricted to a horse’s gender against “open” company.

Let’s first find out how to discover hidden class in the starter allowance ranks. A perfect example took place in the ninth race at Los Alamitos on January 20. The race conditions were as follows: “Starter allowance, 4-year-olds and upward, which in 2007-08 have started for a claiming price of \$10,000 or less and since have not won a race other than claiming, claiming starter or optional race exceeding \$10,000.”

At first glance, LDS Heza Streaker, who had won his last two starts for \$10,000 claiming and starter allowance \$10,000, appeared to have the advantage. But hidden class handicappers liked the chances of Mimi Cocktail, a Corona Cocktail stallion who’d

run third for \$40,000 at Los Alamitos in early 2007 and qualified for the starter allowance condition when he won by 1 1/2 lengths for an \$8,000 tag on December 30. By qualifying for the starter allowance category, Mimi Cocktail was now protected from getting claimed, and he had shown his hidden class when he was competitive against stronger foes last year.

Hidden class is also evident in restricted and open races among both claimers and allowance horses. A horse who has been competing against open allowance or open high-priced claiming company has generally been facing stronger fields than rivals who last ran in such events as non-winners-of-two lifetime.

Let’s use the performance of Materialist in a non-winners-of-two lifetime allowance race on January 11 as an example. Handicappers who don’t understand hidden class overlooked Materialist based on a prior head setback against \$20,000 claimers – but those who look for hidden class pointed out that the \$20,000 field in which

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Materialist suffered a head defeat had no restrictions on the number of prior wins for each horse. In other words, hidden class handicappers determined that Materialist was not stepping up in class even though his last race came against claimers.

Hidden class can also be discovered in races restricted to one age classification versus all age categories. A horse that won his last three starts of 2007 for \$8,000 against its own age group may be stepping up in class in its 2008 debut when running for a \$5,000 tag against all ages. And don’t forget about hidden class when it comes to mares meeting the opposite sex. A mare that won her last start for \$10,000 against her own age group is probably facing stronger company at the \$8,000 classification vs. the opposite sex.

So the next time you’re at the track, take advantage of a horse’s hidden class. It can help you gain an edge over the majority of regular players who only understand the word “class.”

*Sometimes a horse’s class*

*is obvious, but*

*sometimes it’s not.*

