

Added Information



By Ed Burgart

WHILE THE RACETRACK'S OFFICIAL PROGRAM carries such notations as blinkers on or off and first-time lasix for a particular horse, the diligent Quarter Horse handicapper usually finds success at the pari-mutuel windows when deciphering hidden changes not often seen in a track's daily racing publication.

While all American Quarter Horse tracks use the sophisticated Incompass database for displaying a horse's past performances in the official program, fans still need to keep diligent notes while trying to find hidden changes in a horse's recent racing record. Handicappers often find betting overlays on horses by discovering changes in past performance information that the casual racegoer won't notice.

So what are the most important hidden changes in a horse's past performance lines?

First, we need to discover owner and/or trainer changes. While Los Alamitos Race Course has requested Incompass to include former trainer lines in the past performances – whether or not the horse was claimed in its last outing – not every American Quarter Horse track has done the same. If a horse has been privately purchased since its last start and has a new trainer, the racing fan usually won't see the former trainer line in the horse's past performances. When a horse moves from a low-to-high percentage trainer, we can usually expect marked improvement. And vice versa when a horse goes from a high-to-low percentage conditioner. Also, it is helpful to know if a horse has changed trainers when moving from Lone Star Park to Los Alamitos, for example.

Second, a successful handicapper will

always make a notation when a horse has been gelded. The official program will always note the first time a horse has been gelded by listing FTG next to its name. But the first-time gelding aspect is never carried in a horse's past performance line that will include blinkers, lasix and a flipping halter. Knowing when a horse has been gelded is an integral handicapping ingredient. If a horse with dismal past performance lines suddenly has blossomed since getting gelded, it is important for the handicapper to know when the animal became a first-time gelding.

Third, the successful handicapper will understand why a jockey often switches mounts by understanding the hidden changes in the past performance lines. A jockey such as Ramon Sanchez, who rides first call for six-time AQHA champion trainer Paul Jones, might flee a horse he has piloted regularly with success if Jones has suddenly become a new trainer for another entrant. The same applies

at other tracks where jockeys usually have first-call commitments for particular trainers.

Finally, handicappers should never overlook the unhidden changes in a horse's past performance lines. But many do. Do we always pay attention to the time a horse added lasix or a flipping halter? And what about whether a horse added or removed front wraps? Simply, we should always

look at symbols in a horse's past performance lines listed to the right of the jockey's weight. If we see a b,f,l, it means the horse wore blinkers, front wraps and had lasix in its last start. If a k is listed, it means the horse wore a flipping halter. Whenever we see a discrepancy from one past performance line to another, we should pay close attention. If a horse suddenly adds or removes blinkers, we should notice whether the result was positive or negative. The same applies for a horse which adds or removes front wraps along with the flipping halter.

So we must always try to find hidden content in a horse's past performance data while also paying close attention to the unhidden, detailed Incompass information if we want to gain a betting edge on the casual racing fan. □



Paying attention to equipment or medication changes might help your handicapping.