

FINDING THE HORSES THAT MAKE PROFITS



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Introduction

Welcome to this guide that is going to show you how you should be keeping notes on horses performances and how they can help make your betting more profitable.

I have broken the guide into three sections:

The first section will look at the fundamentals of finding EyeCatchers (what we call the horses that we follow) and how to spot the horses that will make you profits.

In the second section I'm going to give you examples of my recent EyeCatchers and why I chose them.

The third section gives you the rules that I use when I bet on my EyeCatchers.

By the time you've finished going through this guide you will be know how to find horses to follow that are likely to put in strong performances in the future, how long to follow them for and how to bet on them.

Of course, if you'd like to have all that work done for you then you can take advantage of following my EyeCatchers using [the EyeCatchers Pro software](#) provided by the Race Advisor. Not only will this allow you follow my EyeCatchers, but it will also give you the facility to add your own as well so that you can see if any are running with the click of a button.

SECTION 1 - EYECATCHER FUNDAMENTALS

When I started betting the use of home computers were in their infancy. There was no such thing as online databases of horses form or profiles, and where was no Racing Post Online or other such racing websites.

In fact, there was no real opportunity to analysis races and keep notes on how horses performed unless you were watching the race live at the racecourse.

Yes, you had publications like Timeform and the Raceform Handicap Book. But you had to wait for a week for them to arrive by post and they were costly to purchase.

Even then if you were making notes on horses performances they had be to written down by pen on paper. There was certainly no opportunity to collate them electronically and be able to bring a horse up with a touch of the keyboard.

I remember meeting one successful professional punter who was forever clutching notebooks. Not just one notebook but several, one for trainers, another for jockeys and one about the horses.

He wrote down everything he saw in a race from market movements to which connections were in the paddock pre race through to how the race was run.

His success came from what he wrote down about a horse.

It gave him that vital edge over other punters.

Looking back, he was acting like a human computer by storing information the old fashioned way.

Today, thanks to the Internet, video replays and dedicated racing TV channels, punters have never had it so good.

We can record the days racing, watch the races at our leisure and pause and rewind a race as many times as we want.

Of course, this doesn't mean there isn't a role for the notebook approach.

It helps us to remember things and...

By remembering things we can get that vital edge over other punters.

How many times have you watched a race and seen a horse run with promise but didn't make a note of it, only to recall it when it goes in at a nice price next time your watching it?

I know it's happened to me. A lot.

That's why two years ago I decided to watch as much racing as possible and take notes on horses that I thought could be worth following in the future.

It takes some work and some days can be tiresome. But **it pays off in a big way** in the end.

You'll see that your notebook will regularly unearth that big priced winner that everyone else ignores.

Alan Potts in his book "Against The Crowd" says he's a great believer in preparing and maintaining a list of horses to follow because it involves a 'clear understanding' of the merit, preferences and foibles of an individual horse which enables him to spot when a horse has been handed a good opportunity to win.

The size of the list, he explains, is a matter of personal preference. It depends on how much time you have available. But he does point out that such a list should be constantly scrutinised and reassessed.

Now let's move on to...

Learn About Race Reading

Race reading is a topic that's not well covered in the racing media. It can be a hard skill to master but it's one that gives you advantage over the majority of punters.

In this part I'm going to show you how to read races quickly and effectively even if you've never done it before.

You'll discover what horses you should be looking for and how *following these simple steps can help you find more winners and make your betting more profitable.*

If a horse meets any of the criteria in the following steps, then you should add them to your EyeCatcher list. The more of the criteria a horse meets, the stronger potential they have!

1. **Watch As Many Races As You Can**

Watch race replays, and the first time you watch them turn off the commentary. Commenter's put their own interpretation on a race and you don't want to be influenced by them in this first instance.

You should watch the race replays two or three times while taking your notes but always watch the first time without the commentary and take notes using the following steps.

2. **Keep A Note Of What Happens At The Start**

While horses don't win a race at the start, *they can lose it!*

Some trainers are adept at getting their horses to break smartly. One such trainer is Mark Johnston. Other trainers are poor at this and by taking a note of those that can get their horses to break smartly you'll immediately have an edge.

So... watch for horses who missed the start particularly in sprint races and begin making a list of trainers who's horses regularly miss the start. Except in exceptional circumstances these become trainers whose horses you should avoid.

3. **Watch For Jockey's With Good Hands**

In the early stages of a race watch the jockey's hands. During a race a jockey will try and get his or her horse into a nice rhythm; to achieve this, the rider will want to settle the horse down in the early stages so the horse doesn't use up more energy than necessary and compromise their chance at the end of the race.

Riders with "good hands" persuade their horses to stop pulling. The skill is not in winning the battle with the horse but avoiding it!

The jockey should ideally have his or her horse in a nice rhythm with their hands resting against the horse's neck. This is the usually a good indication that the jockey has their horse relaxed and settled.

The jockey should have his hands positioned like this ideally until the two furlong mark. Note the jockey closest to the front who has their hands still

resting against the horse's neck and you will usually see the horse that wins the race.

4. Watch For Horses Who Finish Full of Running

At the end of the race look for horses that are finishing with plenty in the tank.

Pay particular attention to what happens after the finish line. If a horse finishes by overtaking horses *after the finishing line* then the jockey has mistimed his run.

Also look for winners that are hard to pull up and are clear of their rivals past the line.

5. Look For Horses That Just Get Up To Win

Horses that just get up to win in the shadow of the post are doing just enough to win their races. This makes it difficult for the handicapper to get a handle on their form and they often get it wrong.

I particularly like lightly raced three year olds in this regard.

6. Always Be Self Critical

Always analyze yourself as to whether you have drawn the right conclusions from a race. The horse that you thought was a definite stayer and needed a step up in trip fails to stay on its subsequent few runs. Maybe you interpreted the race wrongly and should take another look. There is nothing wrong with that, it's normal to the process. The more you practice the less this will happen.

When it comes "race reading" or analyzing the outcome of a race, practice makes perfect.

What you are trying to do is to train your brain to process complex information and to draw useful conclusions from it.

It's a skill that can be learned but don't expect it to happen overnight. Quality race reading is in remarkably short supply that means it's a huge opportunity for those who are prepared to learn.

Now that you've watched the race replays and made some notes, it's time to take a look at some other places on the horses you've marked as EyeCatchers where we can get information missed by a lot of bettors.

Sometimes this information will strengthen the case and in others it will cause you to remove the runner from your list.

Look at Stewards Reports

The British Horse Racing Authority website www.britishhorseracing.com is a great resource.

Here you can read what the stewards are reporting about a horse's performance from every race meeting in the UK.

Most punters don't look, and that means they're missing some potentially vital information.

Many times the stewards will point out some aspect of a horse's performance that can have enormous bearing on its subsequent outing.

Trainer Comments

There's lots of racing information out there and while I don't take much notice of what jockeys say, what the trainers say is different.

Their comments you should pay great attention to.

Often they'll advise the public, via the media, how a certain horse is going and what races its being aimed at.

It's the last piece of information, what races it's being aimed at, that can often prove to be of very high value from a betting perspective. If a trainer has said one of your EyeCatchers is being aimed at a specific race then take note of that and follow the horse up to that race, holding your betting until it comes.

Different Types Of EyeCatcher

EyeCatchers could be horses that ran 2nd to 5th last start but not more than two and a half lengths behind the winner; horses that ran well but were drawn on the wrong side of the track in a sprint handicap, horses

that might appreciate a step up in trip or a step down, horses that met trouble in running or had not run to their potential for another reason.

There are many things that happen in a horserace that are not reflected in the actual final result. Ultimately this is what you need to be looking for.

What Races Do I Like To Analyse?

You can't watch and analyse every race, it's pretty much impossible.

During the week I tend to look at the days principal meeting, which is usually the one that has the most prize money on offer.

On a Saturday I will look at the two biggest meetings.

Handicaps are the type of races I like to specialise in both on the flat and over jumps and the bigger the field the more likely you are to find EyeCatchers.

Sprint handicaps are great races to look at as its here that you can find draw bias in action and horses that might have met some sort of trouble in their races.

SECTION TWO – WORKING EXAMPLES

In this section I'm going to show you what I look for when putting horses into my notebook.

The following nine examples are from my EyeCatcher column on the Racing Advisor website and I use the same process for all my EyeCatchers in [the EyeCatcher Pro software](#).

They are varied and will give you an insight into how my thought process works.

Eccleston – David O'Meara

"Well fancied for the Great St Wilfred's Handicap. He wouldn't have beaten the well handicapped winner on the day but he did best of those drawn on the far side and would have finished closer than 4^h if there had been more pace on his side. Suited by rain softened ground, he is in good hands and is capable of landing a valuable 6f sprint when he is better drawn. There are plenty of big sprint handicaps for the four year old in the coming weeks".

This is an example of the badly drawn horse.

Drawn on the far side at Ripon, he won the race on that side of the track and would have gone close to winning the race if he had been drawn nearer to the action.

I knew he liked ease in the ground.

He then went to Thirsk for his next run and won on good to soft going.

Sadly he wasn't able to back that up in the Ayr Silver Cup but the quickening ground wouldn't have been his favour that day.

Can't Change It – David Simcock

"A winner last year over 7f, on soft going, the four year old was very unlucky here. Held up, he was making good headway when he didn't get a clear run on the inside a furlong out. He had to be switched to get a clear run and was finishing with plenty in the tank to be beaten just 1 ½ lengths into 5th. His trainer has had a quite summer so could be due a good autumn. The easier the ground the better for this son of Verglas and

if he gets it at York or Doncaster at their upcoming Festivals he can win a handicap I am sure”.

Here is an example of an unlucky horse but I had to wait for the third run for him to win a race.

I'd put him in my tracker after he failed to get a clear run in a valuable handicap at Goodwood. He then was dropped down in trip to 6f at Newmarket but on quick going it was happening all too quick for him. His next run was back again at Goodwood where once again he met trouble in running.

He finally got his head in front at Lingfield when dropping down in class and facing a smaller field than he had on his previous couple of runs.

Bop It – Geoff Oldroyd

*“The six year old gelding is a very well handicapped horse at present and was running of a 12lb lower mark when winning at Newcastle last August. He was always up with the pace as he usually is and this was a welcome return to form after five disappointing runs so far this season. The ground would have been quicker than he would have liked as all his five of his wins have come on good or good to soft so he doesn't want extremes of going. Four of his wins have come in Class 4 races and he is **4/17** when running between **16-30 days** from his last run. There is a handicap in him before the season is out”.*

The perfect example of a horse that had run well to get into the places and was very well handicapped on his best form of last season.

The run was also on quicker ground than he would have liked. He then went to Haydock for his next race, the ground was good, he was dropping into a Class 5 Handicap which he won at 4/1.

Steps – Roger Varian

“A hold up performer he needs all the cards to fall right if he is to get his head in front. Has now finished fourth in the last two renewals of the race and once again was staying on well at the finish despite not getting the best of runs. The harder they go up front the better for the seven year old and he is at his best on slower ground than he faced here”.

This one ran well in the "Dash" at Epsom and is an example as to why I tend to back horses only when they are running in the same type of race as they had been an EyeCatcher in.

His next two starts were in Group 1 company and he then ran in a listed race on ground that would have been a shade to quick for him.

A couple of days later he appeared in the Portland Handicap, the overnight rain was in his favour, he was back in a big field handicap where he got the strong pace he needed and he had the first time visor. He had his optimum conditions and won at 12/1.

Kakatosi – Mike Murphy

"The eight year old was another inconvenienced by his high draw where it paid to be drawn closer to the far rail. His hold up tactics probably didn't suit him either as the pace in the early stages wasn't strong but he was making headway when the race was over. He is 2lb higher than when winning on soft going over 7f at Newmarket last August. It's worth noting six of seven wins have come between June and August so I will be dropping him from my tracker after August. With horses like this there is usually a bit of a profile about them and the strongest for me are; he is 6 from 26 in fields of 11 or less but 1 from 23 in 12+ fields. He is also 5 from 18 when running between 16-30 days since his last run".

Wasn't suited by the pace of the race at Ascot and was drawn on the unfavoured stand side.

This is an interesting one and it's a good example of why you need to be self-critical.

In my above comments I placed too much emphasis on the horses profile in the months that he was winning his races.

Fortunately I didn't delete him from tracker but only because I had forgot too or I would have missed out on a 16/1.

I had to back him on his next run at Leicester, even though it was at the beginning of September, due to the likely pace in the race and the size of field looking both looking ideal for this hold up performer.

The Corsican – David Simcock

"Thrown into the deep end here against the likes of Free Eagle and The Grey Gatsby, the four year old was stepping up from Listed company to Group 1 class here. He was staying on well from off the pace and was only beaten 3 ¼ length at the finish. He is still on the upgrade and could well stay 1m 4f. There is definitely a Group race in this son of Galileo".

Looked a good thing on his next start at Goodwood but at 15/8 I was happy to let him go unbacked, I tend not to back under 5/2.

He wasn't given the best of rides and had to settle for second on this occasion.

He then went Newbury in September in Group 3 company and won at 4/1. He was dropping down in class from his Royal Ascot run and as he showed there he was still on the upgrade.

Latenightrequest – Richard Fahey

"Was only having her third start of the season and was weak in the market in this 1m 2f handicap. Held up at the rear she didn't get the best of runs on the rail three furlongs out and wasn't knocked about when her jockey realised her chance had gone eventually finishing second last. The filly was beaten less than six lengths at the finish which wasn't far given both the distance and ground wouldn't have been her favour. She progressed well last autumn as a three year old and looks like she is being campaigned in similar way. Four from eight in September and October and four from eight when soft appears in the going description suggests that more ease in the ground in the better for her. A step up in trip beckons and she is a winnable mark being only 1lb higher than when winning at Doncaster last October".

I am looking forward to seeing this one run on good to soft or worse going and back over 1m 4f in the autumn. One to be taking an early price on and I am confident she will win when she gets her optimum conditions

The following are two examples of keeping notes of trainer comments about a horse's future target...

Sky Hunter – Saaed bin Suroor

"A good second to The Corsican, the horse is being targeted at the Melbourne Cup and has been put into the tracker as a possible bet for that race."

Bateel – David Simcock

"More of an eyecatcher for next year! The Dubawi filly came into the race looking for the hatrick and duly made it three from three career starts with a performance that marks her down as a future middle distance Group filly. Given a quiet ride at the back by jockey Jamie Spencer she made headway two furlongs out and went to the front at the furlong mark. The three year old soon went clear and won far more easily than the official 2 ¾ length margin suggests. She clearly likes plenty of give in the ground, two of her wins have been on soft going, and the good to soft going was the quickest she had faced so far. Clearly on the upgrade she does have an entry in the valuable three year old handicap on first day of the Future Champion's Festival at Newmarket. She will get a penalty for this win but must have a great chance if there is plenty of give in the ground as she handles the C&D. It will be interesting to see if she goes for that race or is put away for next year? Whatever happens she is one filly you want to get in your notebook for next year".

EYECATCHER BETTING RULES

1. Don't back under 5/2
2. Don't back over 25/1 in the betting
3. Don't back if they're running outside of the type of race they were EyeCatchers in
4. Don't second-guess trainers in regard to going or distance

These rules shouldn't be seen as set in stone as everyone has their own way of betting. In the case of point 4, I will actually oppose an EyeCatcher if I feel that the horse is clearly not running under its optimum conditions.

Don't forget, if you'd like to follow my EyeCatchers then you can do that automatically using the [EyeCatcher Pro software](#).