



Presents the **Expert-ease** newsletter

Summer racing is... the most
fun time of EVERY year!!!



Joe's Corner: In the beginning...

As **Hor\$ense** turns 35, I'm reminded of how it changed my thinking on handicapping. *It seems just like yesterday...*

Before my first sale in 1989, while living near Del Mar, I did four years of prep work. I bought a first-gen IBM PC in 1985. I spent about 18 months learning a new programming language and coding my handicapping experiences, to prove that it worked for me. The last half of 1987 was spent making **Hor\$ense** ready for sale... including the first copyright. Then I spent two years doing "test marketing"... which resulted in virtually NO sales! **Yikes!!!**

My big break was in early 1988, when I discovered the *Phillips Racing Newsletter* [RIP] and saw that they did reviews. So, I spent six more months making it user-friendly, and in early 1989 I sent it in for review. It earned an 8½ score, and then sales went wild! I thought I was ready to enjoy the ride, but there was no time to rest... there was something coming that would change computer handicapping forever: data files. **No more manual entry... YES!!!** For the next 2+ years, I analyzed the vendor's file format (from BRIS) and upgraded **Hor\$ense** to accept the files AND get the same results! By the end of 1992, I was ready for another phase... *ah, but that's a story for another time...*

The **Hor\$ense** journey started from humble beginnings. I'm proud to have served many of you for a big chunk of that time!!!

Have a great summer at the races!!!

Yours in Racing...

Joe

Quick Hits

Places to Be

At the Track	Get out there!
Online	24/7/365
Las Vegas	race books!
	(and some tournaments)

Things to Do... now & forever

- Keep accurate wagering records!
- Skip a race now and then!
- Stop and smell the roses!

Fact that sounds made up...

Washington state racing became ONLY the second state to go to "penny breakage"!!! **How is this not happening in more states???**

Bonus fact...

Eddie Delahoussaye – Eddie D to us older guys – is now in the Louisiana Sports HoF! *Just wondering how his home state took so long to do this?!?*

Expert Quick Trick

Help is only good if you use it... and most men usually refuse to use it. I've tried to make it a little friendlier, by adding context specific "right-mouse" assistance. For the 2024 release, it's only being used on the System Settings screen, for the Screening, Evaluation and Analysis (SEA) areas.

To see it, simply "right-click" on any of the "SEA" headings and you'll see the help for that section of settings.



Featured – The 2024 Release is almost here!!!

Hard to believe that it's been 35 years since someone other than me started using a **Hor\$ense** product. With each release, I always find something that needs to be improved or added to the mix. As you can see on the next two pages, the 2024 release – due out later in July – has plenty of both types. The goal is to make the handicapping experience easier AND better. My testing has done that – at least for me – and I expect that they will for you too! **Let's have a look...**

May I see a Menu?

There are many changes in the menu system. Let's start with the "main menu" bar. The features in the **Maintenance** menu have evolved into setting up the program, so I changed the heading to... **Settings**. Also featured is the addition of some race info (race number, distance/surface, age/sex and class) to the right side of the bar, which meant a change in the order of the existing "wet/dry" and "handicapping mode" toggles. There are some screens that added a "fourth surface" selection, and the first track to need it will be Belmont Park; their starting date moved from this spring to next spring, but I have it ready now.

Is this a Setup?

Why, **YES, it IS!!!** To be precise, it's the new suite of System Settings options. The layout is reorganized, and is now clearly broken into the three main phases (Screening, Evaluation and Analysis), and each phase is organized into three sections (Conditions, Calculations and Customizations). The sections for Input, Output and System choices have a cleaner look. Within these changes are a number of new and updated options in the Evaluation and Analysis sections. *Without further ado, here they are...*

For Evaluation, these are new:

- Hor\$martsPlus confidence levels – basically, your level of understanding about each facet – can be adjusted from the default "High" level to Expert, Medium or Low
- The "Temp Speed Tool Switch" feature lets you use PPs that would normally be skipped. If a PP is missing the DRF Speed Rating & Track Variant, this option switches the Speed Tool (for that race ONLY) to the file-specific Speed Rating tool. This will only be triggered if a PP has valid Speed, Pace/Trip and Finish data. You can also require matches in "wet/dry" conditions and/or racing surface
- Allow the use of dirt PPs in all-weather races
- AI SPEED "smoothing" of times – at both calls and the finish – is done by using a class-based minimum and giving you the chance to adjust it whenever it drops below the expected threshold value
- You can tell **Expert** to cap the "max lengths" of trouble (works for the start, both calls and the finish)

For Analysis, these are the new items:

- For SPEED, you can reduce the number of lengths ahead: [1] for the fastest horse at each call, and [2] for the leader at both calls and at the finish for the projected winner
- With the "more Finish less PACE/TRIP" option, you can adjust the FINISH & PACE/TRIP facet values
- For certain screens – SPEED, PACE/TRIP and Selections – you can change the display defaults
- If you use the DIG DEEP feature, you can now set it to automatically display up to the top-4 selections

It's Evaluation-ary stuff!!!

Sorry for the goofy play on words, but you get the idea. Your evaluations can now be impacted by:

- Using the "Temp Speed Tool Switch" (setup details are above)
- The AI SPEED "smoothing" of fractions (setup details are above)
- The ability to use dirt PPs in all-weather races (setup details are above)
- Using the original PP finish position to influence the current class value, whenever there is no FINISH used in the evaluation of that PP (a Hor\$marts AI feature)
- When using the Interactive handicapping mode, a PP won't be highlighted for use if it's not the same distance type (spring or route) as the race; it's marked as usable, but requires you to manually choose it
- The Trouble, my friends... oh, the trouble:
 - The value for the codes, which were reviewed and some were changed. Plus, the data entered for the Manual Entry (code 99) now primarily uses the input data to make the trouble adjustments
 - Capping the "max lengths" of trouble (start, both calls, finish); based on your setup choice from above



Featured – More from the 2024 Release...

Don't have a stroke... or two!

Yes, the bad puns continue! In my endless effort to shave off a keystroke, click or tap, I removed most of the "forced TAB" choices from various screens... and here are some examples:

- During race extraction from the horse information screen(s), a click on the Cancel button defaults the inquiry screen to YES (saving a TAB to go from NO to YES)
- For the Pass/Play screen, the buttons are now dynamic; the first TAB is now the "other", instead of Help
- During horse evaluation (only in the Interactive mode), if you choose the Stop button in the input data selection screen, the default is now YES (saving a TAB to go from NO to YES); for this same choice, the confirmation message has been removed (this removed an extra click)

Analyze these...

There's a lot new going on in the Analysis phase, to wit:

- The SPEED "smoothing" at the field level – if chosen in the setup – will adjust both calls and the finish time for the fastest finisher if it's considered "too fast" by the AI engine
- When the SPEED analysis notes that the same PP was used for the SPEED and FINISH for any horse, the FINISH value will earn a bonus (based on the FINISH position, from 0.25 to 0.05 points)
- The PACE/TRIP ratios are now dynamic, based on the relative values of the SPEED and PACE/TRIP facet values; they were previously analyzed with a "static" 1/3 each
- For Past Class there are two changes; [1] the race's purse value is now being used along with the average purse class of the field, with the race purse now deemed more important, and [2] the scoring now uses different criteria for assigning bonus values
- The Selection screen has undergone some changes as well:
 - An adjusted AM Line is produced, whenever there are program scratches
 - The updated criteria for "NO HORSE selected" recommendations will result in fewer "no pick" choices
 - The updated criteria for "STAR" horse designations will result in more STAR selections
 - DIG DEEP will flag a pre-set number of horses to display (a setup option)
 - If a DIG DEEP "STAR" horse is "not a STAR", it will now say so (it was previously only presumed)
- If Word document generation has been set, a progress bar will be shown for each facet and the selections (after all of the blue analysis screens have been displayed)
- If the race is impacted due to a SPEED-based change, it will automatically save it (no more Y/N inquiry)

Historically speaking...

As we get to the end of the handicapping trail, there is one last BIG change... the Print History has been moved to the end of the race session (right after the Analysis displays). This represents a much-needed change, in that the analyzed data should stand on its own, followed by a critical review of the raw data in a familiar layout (akin to "the form"). The main changes made to the document are:

- New pedigree options (and their new file templates), which are fully explained in the user manual
- For Word file output, a "PP progress bar" has been added for each horse; A "nice-to-have" feature
- Adjusted AM Line values for scratches (the same odds as shown in the Selection screen)

All in all, the 2024 release lets you have much more control over how you handicap a race. I'm very pleased with the results, especially "at the windows". **I think you'll like them too!!!**



“Tip by the Book”... ARM yourself with knowledge

*Let's talk about tips from books and newsletters. Some are terrific (inspiring me to do similar work), and others not so much. **Let's delve, shall we?***

Every spring, I bury my nose in the American Racing Manual (ARM) for about a month, so that I can validate the speed and class figures in **Expert**. Steeped in data AND history, the ARM – this year at 2,188 pages – is THE old-school source for horse racing facts and figures.

Here's a **very small** sampling:

- The full charts for ALL graded stakes in the USA and Canada
- Full vote totals for each Eclipse Award (for that year only)
- The phone number and website for EVERY racing commission... *you know, to let them know what a great(?) job they're doing*

Want the ARM for FREE? Go to www.jockeyclub.com and click on the **Resources** tab, and in the dropdown select **Fact Book**. There you'll find the most recent editions...

I'm a Travelin' Man... I Get Around!

*Part of my retirement involves travel... and every trip I take – whether it's alone or with my wife – I try VERY HARD to stop at a race track. Big or small, I want to see them ALL!!! So, **where in the world is Traveler Joe???***

Now, this is better!!! Checking off many boxes this time out...

Check off Turf Paradise... and maybe not forever. If you believe track employees and a racing writer – and I do – then a spruced-up facility might make me go back again!!! Enough said, on to Golden Gate...

I cut it as close as I could, attending closing (forever) weekend on June 8. The live racing – and the Belmont – was not that compelling AND secondary to saying hello and goodbye to an old friend... for the first and last time. The crowd was soaking it all in... I miss it already!!!

Fear not, for happier days were ahead! I spent the last weekend in June on an all-Canadian road trip! Before I got to Woodbine, I saw a sign for the Hiawatha (harness) racing, so I stopped by and took a few pictures. As for Woodbine, I enjoying the weekend racing and the oversized magnificence. After the Sunday card, I went to Niagara Falls for a sunset viewing! Monday, I went to Fort Erie and enjoyed a few races... and then it was off to visit my Mom in the Detroit area.

As for the next quarter, I plan on a return to Del Mar (with a possible day as their guest handicapper) and then back to Kentucky Downs.

In closing...

You may have heard... **Hor\$ense** turns 35 this year... It's been a great run, so far... and it never happens... without **YOU** and your support!!!



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On the Web:

www.ponypicker.com



What I'm tracking...

For small track lovers, the old Columbus (Nebraska) “bullring” closed, and a new one-mile oval has taken its place across town.

When Pimlico re-opens (by 2027), the main surface will be synthetic. More synthetics...

Belmont re-opens (in '25 or '26) with a synthetic fourth surface.

Santa Anita has converted its inner training track to synthetic, and the just-under 6 1/2 furlong surface will be used for races starting at the 2024 winter meet.

Joe Mainardi

Owner, Developer, Writer...

“a one man show”

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