




HOR\$ENSE

"The PRICE-PERFORMANCE LEADER in thoroughbred handicapping software" SM

Presents the **Expert-ease** newsletter

Here's to 2025 being even better...
maybe I'll find a good "live" tourney to play!!!



Joe's Corner: "The Arizona Days..." aka "four years of less betting, more coding"!!!

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

As the new millennium approached, 1999 found our family on the move... for warmer climates and better jobs. After a long search, we ended up moving to Tucson, Arizona. It was just what we needed: [1] two good jobs, [2] no snow to shovel, [3] a better chance to save up for retirement AND [4] make this our last stop and retire there. It seemed great, but it was missing one thing.

There wasn't much live racing, with just a spring meet at a local bullring and a two-hour drive to Turf Paradise in Phoenix, so I relied on YouBet.com to watch and wager on out-of-state racing. For the first two years, I was playing races at a "normal" pace. But in the two years after the release of the initial Windows version, I made just 77 bets! *What was I doing during that time?*

Well, the slowdown in my wagering life was somewhat planned, as it gave me the time to work on my next **Hor\$ense** endeavor. Having found success with the **Standard** Windows version, I wanted it to become something more than a tool the average player would want to use. I wanted it to be used in multi-track situations; it became the **Professional** version.

After 15 years in business, I was still growing...
as a handicapper AND a programmer! *And then...*

Yours in Racing,

Joe

Quick Hits

Places to Be

At the Track	Get back!!!
Away from the Action	Anywhere!!
Race Books	in Vegas!
In-person Tourneys	Where?

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...

Yes, I went to Phoenix last spring, to see the last season for Turf Paradise. But, just like the city's namesake bird, the track found a way to stay open. Somehow, they got a multi-year contract that runs through... 2027!!!

While this "hard-to-believe" contract only delays the "urban creep" that will someday repurpose the land, it gives all parties time to find a replacement.

Expert Quick Trick

X marks the spot... **Ctrl-X**, that is!!!

Have you ever had trouble restarting **Expert** after exiting by using the **RED** X box in the upper-right corner? If so, then use the **Ctrl-X** option to exit.

Problem solved!!!



Featured – Under the Microscope...

I became a better handicapper, while working to make **Hor\$ense** better. Now, my handicapping success and the performance of **Expert** are tightly intertwined. A brief history of each will tell a story that might help you...

The early years: making “it” work like I did

From 1985 to early-mid 1989: I wasn't sure what I was good at, but I felt that I was better overall than the guys I hung out with. Not because I was a better handicapper, but because I knew when I was playing “just to make a bet”. I knew I needed to be better, but it wasn't something I could figure out... yet.

My handicapping stats: Who really knows! I was mostly “free-wheeling” it and had no idea where I stood.

The educational years: making “it” work better than I did

From mid-late 1989 to 2001: I had two periods of clarity around becoming better. From 1989 to 1995, my focus was on how to improve the program while becoming a better handicapper. Moving to the Windows OS wasn't possible until 1992 (with version 3.1), so I was not in a hurry to convert from DOS to Windows. In 1996, the release of Windows 95 forced **Hor\$ense** down dual the paths of growing the program AND converting the code. All the while, I needed to track my wagers and see where I needed to get better...

My handicapping stats: I was “shield-your-eyes” awful 😞 ... but I was keeping records, which was a start.

The formative years: making “more” work better for me

From 2002 to 2007: After putting the arduous task of the code conversion to Windows behind me, I could finally focus on getting better at handicapping while improving the program. The improvements ended up in the **Professional** version (2005), and led me to using it for the first time in a multiple-day/multiple-track live tournament. Record keeping was finally paying off, and I had an epiphany (in 2004) which pointed out the kinds of plays were affecting my bottom-line, both good and bad. *No bets under 2-1 or “baby” races!*

My handicapping stats: I showed an actual profit, but a tough 2007 made me dig deeper into my stats.

The discovery years: making “more” work better for all

From 2008 to 2017: The next **TEN** years were spent applying all of the lessons I learned (both highs and lows) to create a smarter and easier to use program; first with **Professional**, then an upgraded **Expert** version in 2015. **Expert** led me back to tournaments and I started cashing, but my daily plays... yuck!

My handicapping stats: A two-sided coin. I used the **Professional** version through 2014, focusing on ROI (a small 8.6%) that resulted in 29.2% winners and a nice bankroll. The tournament-friendlier **Expert** version led me to fall for the trap of playing longer odds horses, and my 2015-17 ROI tanked to -30% on 23.1% winners. I cashed twice in tournaments, which nearly offset my daily-play losses. What I needed was a second epiphany to pull me out of the wagering doldrums... and I was surprised where I got it.

The current landscape: never quitting

From 2018 to today: *What happened, Joe?* Well, my epiphany was, in a word... RETIREMENT! Once I didn't have to deal with daily distractions, I was able to focus on what could improve my winning ways. My first two years, I was still focused on tournaments – with my biggest payday in 2019 – so I wasn't making as many daily plays. But, 2020 brought COVID to our homes, and horse racing was about the only thing going that didn't come to a full-stop for very long AND was back quickly! From that point forward, I've taken the time to [1] find the best opportunities to refine the results that **Expert** produces, while [2] doing the same with my handicapping to improve my ROI. My wagering bottom-line has greatly improved...

My handicapping stats: In the last five years, I've made 1147 wagers (200+ per year since 2021), with 284 winners and a win rate of ~25%. The ROI of 4.8%, from about \$8,000 in wagers, made a \$367 profit.

While **Hor\$ense** was an “overnight success” (five years after my first line of code), my skills as a handicapper took a little **LOT** longer to reach the same level. You don't have to wait that long, just let **Expert** and a researched wagering plan get you there sooner!



Handicapping Tips – How Expert handles “bad trips”

We’ve all seen them... but how do we treat them in PP analysis?

The focus here will ONLY be those that can be quantified... a.k.a. assigned a value. Specifically, we’ll look at how to you can have **Expert** handle your “bad trips”.

What’s the trouble?

There isn’t a true handicapper who doesn’t at least glance at the “trouble line” of an interesting looking PP. The hard work is to choose which words and phrases are actual trouble... and how many lengths the words equal. With **Expert**, the “hard work” of evaluating a PP with trouble is... “no trouble”. In the “**Interactive**” mode – a setup option – each PP will show the comments on the “Trouble” screen... simply enter the matching numeric info and your PP will be adjusted.

Analyzing post positions... in real time!

Not track biases, but how post positions cause “lost lengths” around turns; for the 1-turn race below it’s 1/2 (per pace type & post position combo). In **Expert**, it’s part the SPEED analysis.

Pgm No.	Horse Name	1st Call	2nd Call	Final Call	Last 1/8	S&F PP	Lost Lengths	Hor\$ense Raw Score
Leader's Time:		:21 2/5	:45	1:09 3/5				
		:21.46	:45.02	1:09.69				
3	ECHO AGAIN	2 1/4	—	—	:12.59		—	+1.01
5	ISLAND CRUISER	9 1/4	6	nk	:11.89	Y	1/2	+1.13
4	TRIPLE ELVIS	5 3/4	4 1/4	7	:13.49		—	-0.41
2	DEWY'S BEAST	2	1 1/4	8 3/4	:13.68		1/2	-0.65
6	MR MCGREGOR	11 1/4	10 1/2	8 3/4	:12.30	Y	1	-0.67
7	HUNTER JOHN	—	1 1/2	12 1/2	:13.61	Y	1	-1.00
1	GOOD LIKE MAGIC	5 1/2	5 1/4	14 3/4	:13.54		—	-1.00
								-1.00 MIN

Expert makes easy work of adjusting a PP for a BAD TRIP!!!

“Tip by the Book”... Don’t Cut Corners!!!

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?**

A quick review of *Winner’s File* by Henry Kuck will do it no justice, as he lays out seemingly infinite details on what it takes to be a “sharp” handicapper. He makes it simple to understand right from the start, as you’ll find this nugget in the second paragraph of the Introduction:

“Successful betting is a... process...” where you need to “first handicap meticulously...” to get a “thorough ranking of the horses...”

He then proceeds to explain just how he does it, providing you with easy-to-absorb chapters, none of which is longer than **SIX** pages!!!

My man! Kuck, the Brief & Meticulous!!!

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???

After a “long and winding road” of race track related travel, I decided to “cool my jets” and camp out at home... and it felt kinda weird...

Of course, that doesn’t mean that I can’t make plans for 2025!!!

Let’s start in California, which is closest to my home base in Las Vegas. I want to get back to Santa Anita in the winter. I’d like to hit the “Los Alamitos & Del Mar” double in July... part of a busy summer.

I’m currently planning an August trip to Century Mile (in Edmonton, for the Canadian Derby) and the Canadian Rockies. I also owe myself the “3-fer” to Presque Isle, Thistledown and Mountaineer. I may return to Kentucky Downs. And maybe even the Breeders’ Cup at Del Mar.

Maybe I’ll see you out there!

In closing...

Here’s one for the books... and it was only a matter of time!!! I’ve been around this sport since (gulp!) 1971, and I’ve heard SO many wild stories. Most of the time, they no longer catch my eye... but this article from *The Paulick Report* was just too funny to be true.

It was just another lazy day in Altoona, Iowa – home of the Prairie Meadows racetrack – that literally went “all to pot” for a local trainer. You see, his horse ran second, and as such was tested for drugs. Well, the horse tested positive... for... a cannabis derivative!

The trainer chose to take his case to the local HIWU – a branch of HISA – review panel. The trainer stated that the horse “... got loose at the farm and ran [into] a field containing wild ditch weed of the neighbors. He ran loose ... before we caught him and I did observe him eating near a patch of wild cannabis.” While it was a good story, he received a 15-day suspension and a \$1,000 fine. **DUDE!!!**

The horse might have won, if it hadn’t been so high!



UNIQUE SOLUTIONS SOFTWARE

On the Web:

www.ponypicker.com



What I Learned...

Rillito Park – along the banks of the (dry) Rillito River in central Tucson, Arizona – first opened in 1942. It’s just five miles from the world renown Race Track Industry Program on the U of A campus. **Why do I share this?**

I went to the old 5-furlong track when I lived there at the turn of the century, and I wondered why it was still standing. It turns out that it can’t be torn down, as it’s on the National Register of Historic Places. This is mainly due to having the first starting gate chute AND the earliest use of photo-electric timers.

Rock on, old Rillito!!!

Joe Mainardi

Owner, Developer, Writer...

“a one man show”

jdm@ponypicker.com

uss@ponypicker.com