

Handicapping: Art of winning money

Some people think it's all glamour and glory being a columnist. It's not. For one thing, it won't support you. That's why I work at the race track. I'm a cocktail waiter. I live to serve. If I'm not serving, I'm not living.

I bring drinks to people who sit at tables in the club house. The people who sit in the grandstands get their own drinks. I also clean off the tables

Chuck Jagoda

which, although it is the least fun part of the job, sometimes leads to the discovery of tips my customers have thoughtfully hidden under the refuse.

My customers sometimes ask me to give them tips on which horses will win which races which I find difficult to do since I have never mastered handicapping. Now betting is important at the race track, but handicapping, as Shakespeare would have said had he the occasion, is the thing.

Handicapping is not to be confused with tout-ing. Handicappers handicap, touts tout.

The main difference, as Damon Runyon once pointed out, is money. A bettor who can predict enough winners in time to leave the track with more money than he brought is a handicapper.

Handicapping is like science: The apparent connection between two elements is less important than the predictability one gives you about the other — or — the more money you win, the better handicapper you are.

In three years of working at the track I have still not mastered this subtle art. But my confusion has not prevented me from observing the various methods of others. In fact, that is part of the reason for my confusion — such a variety of

methods I can't decide which to choose.

People pick their winners by using any and sometimes all of the following information: the horses' previous performances — against each other, at different distances, in different conditions, and at different post positions; the previous and recent record of the jockey (also in different situations); the condition of the track; and how lively the horse looks in the paddock and walking on the track.

People also use such data as: their age, the age of a family member, the sound of significance of the name of the horse (A co-worker named Bob suggested he and I bet on a horse named Bob and Chuck. We did, it won), or the heat a name gives off. Yes, I have seen a 30-year-old college student pass her fingers over the names in the program to feel which one gave off the most heat.

If this seems complicated, there are computers available that are portable and programmed to use track data to predict winners.

For the more theoretically minded, there are, of course, theories, like the theory of the out-of-town horses. This theory states that you should always bet on the out-of-town horses in a race because no one would transport a horse hundreds of miles to lose a race. He did not explain what to do when there are two or more horses from out of town in a race. Bet on the horse from furthest away, I suppose. The other thing that has to be taken into consideration is: one number or combination of numbers will come up very often in a given space of time. Some days most of the winners will have the number two. Or four and one will win the daily double for three days in a row.

Well, you can see how complicated a thing handicapping is. I have decided it is far too complicated for me to ever sort out. I have enough trouble sorting out which drinks go to which tables.

Kimball concert . . .

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The encore, which Tyler admitted they "just happened to have," was based on a well-traveled melody, anonymously written for a Medici wedding. It was so popular all over Europe for the next three centuries, that many different ethnic groups claimed it as their own folk tune. It has now been immortalized as part of the Israeli national anthem. The lutes, cello, and violin were all plucked to accompany the vocals, making for an interesting end to the evening.

To those who attended the performance of the London Early Music Group, its one unresolved and

very dissonant chord was the realization that the Kimball Performing Arts Series remains in danger of severe budget cuts. Both Kimball and the Sheldon Film Theatre represent the core of the vitality of the university — and indeed, of the entire Lincoln community. There is an intimacy and an artistic diversity to be taken advantage of in the small, comfortable darkness of Kimball and Sheldon, without which UNL ceases to truly serve its students' needs, ceases to be a university and becomes a mere vocational training center and parking lot for Nebraska's young people.

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