Six Important Long Shot Factors Every Horse Racing Fan Should Know

by

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Six Important Long Shot Factors Every Horse Racing Fan Should Know

**Factor #1 ⇒ “The Class Comparison Factor”**

*If a horse has been finishing worse than 3rd or 4th in most of his starts... you should not automatically disregard him. Even if he has been finishing 5th, 6th and 7th, etc... look to see if he has been beating a substantial number of higher-class horses than those he will face today.*

If there is one secret to picking Long Shots... it is to be able to intelligently take a second... and even a third look at horses that, at first glance, appear to have no chance.

Most members of the general public like to bet on horses that finish in the first three frequently.

They are hesitant to bet on horses that have a lot of 6th's, 7th's, etc. in the past performance lines. I will never hesitate to bet this type of horse if the circumstances are right.

**Look at the following hypothetical past performance lines:**

Today's race is at 1-1/16th miles for a claiming price of $32,000.

**Horse A:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Distance</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Win</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
<th>4th</th>
<th>5th</th>
<th>6th</th>
<th>7th</th>
<th>8th</th>
<th>Odds</th>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug 13</td>
<td>DM 1-1/16</td>
<td>:23</td>
<td>:47</td>
<td>1:37</td>
<td>1:43</td>
<td>3-1</td>
<td>3^2</td>
<td>3^3</td>
<td>2^2</td>
<td>32,000</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 4</td>
<td>DM 1-1/8</td>
<td>:23</td>
<td>:47</td>
<td>1:37</td>
<td>1:49</td>
<td>8-5</td>
<td>4^3</td>
<td>4^3</td>
<td>3^1</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Horse B:**

| Date   | Distance | Time  | Win | 2nd | 3rd | 4th | 5th | 6th | 7th | 8th | Odds | Post | Weight |  |
|--------|----------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|--------|-
| Aug 10 | DM 1-1/8 | :23   | :46^3| 1:36^2| 1:49| 10-1| 7^6 | 8^7 | 6^9 | 40,000| 71   | 12   |       |
| Aug 3  | DM 1m    | :22^2 | :45^4| 1:10 | 1:36| 13-1| 3^5 | 4^5 | 7^11| 50,000| 73   | 12   |       |

I can assure you that horse A will go off at much lower odds than horse B. Horse A has just run a second and a third. Horse A has been closer to the winner than horse B. Finally... horse A has run higher speed ratings on both occasions. However... take a second look at horse B. He has been racing in higher-class races.
The pace (early fractions) has been faster, and the final times have been faster. But... the most important factor is this:

Horse A beat 6 horses worth 32,000 on August 13.
Horse A beat 6 horses worth 25,000 on August 4.
Horse B beat 6 horses worth 40,000 on August 10.
Horse B beat 5 horses worth 50,000 on August 3.

In addition... considering the caliber of horses that horse B faced relative to horse A... he did not do too badly! Horse A ran higher speed ratings, but it is easier to maximize one's speed rating when the pace is less demanding and the caliber of competition is weaker.

Factor #2 ⇒ “The Erratic Horse Factor”

If a horse has run at least one good race at today’s distance, and at the same class level as today’s race... and the races prior to that good effort, and since that good effort, are too bad to be true... he may still be worth a bet.

The reasoning behind this is that the horse has shown that he can “do it” when he is ready and may not try at all in his other races.

I have won some sizeable bets on horses whose past performance lines were absolutely horrendous except for one race.

This is what I call the “Erratic Type.” Let's say that today's race is a 6-furlong dash for a $12,500 claiming price:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Track</th>
<th>Distance</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Time 2</th>
<th>Time 3</th>
<th>Time 4</th>
<th>Time 5</th>
<th>Time 6</th>
<th>Distance</th>
<th>Time 2</th>
<th>Time 3</th>
<th>Time 4</th>
<th>Time 5</th>
<th>Time 6</th>
<th>Distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb 26</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>7f</td>
<td>:22 1</td>
<td>:45 5</td>
<td>1:23 7</td>
<td>5 7</td>
<td>9 22</td>
<td>12,500</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>30-1 12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 12</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>6f</td>
<td>:23 3</td>
<td>:45 3</td>
<td>1:10 7</td>
<td>1 9 10</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>22-1 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 15</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>6f</td>
<td>:22 3</td>
<td>:45 3</td>
<td>1:10 3</td>
<td>3 1</td>
<td>12,500</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>45-1 10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 6</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>6f</td>
<td>:21 4</td>
<td>:44 4</td>
<td>1:09 1</td>
<td>9 10</td>
<td>9 24</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>45-1 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is this type of horse that is often the key to tremendous exactas and large pick-sixes. True... one would not want to wager his life savings on such a creature. However, the important point is this:

If the horse ran a bang-up race at this distance once... and at the same class level, there is no reason why he cannot do it again.

He is obviously not the type of horse that is going to run his best effort every time. As a matter of fact... it appears that the horse, the jockey, or the trainer
has decided that if the horse seems to have no chance in a race… he will not try at all. Either the horse is a notorious quitter, or the trainer and jockey decide that if the horse is going to lose, it is best to turn in as poor a showing as possible.

This insures that the horse’s odds will be high when he gets ready to turn in his next big effort.

There is usually no way of predicting when this big effort will come again. Generally… there will be four or five poor efforts in-between the good ones.

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**Factor #3 ⇒ “The Hidden Class Drop Factor”**

A *horse that goes from a starters allowance race to a regular claiming race at the same price is actually dropping in class.*

A *horse that goes from a regular claiming race to a claiming race restricted to horses bred in a certain state is actually dropping in class.*

A *horse that goes from a regular stakes race to a restricted stakes race is actually dropping in class.*

There are exceptions to all of the above. For example, a horse could go from a very weak starters allowance race into an unusually strong regular claiming race.

The importance of Factor 3 is that most people are not aware of the more subtle distinctions in class that we have discussed. Therefore, you may be able to get excellent odds on one of these horses that is making a “Hidden Class Drop.”

While one usually gauges the class of a race by the claiming price or the purse of an allowance race, there are also other factors that may modify this.

An ‘**S** in a box’ denotes that a race was restricted to horses bred in a particular state. Let’s say that it is followed by “12,500”… this means that the race was for horses that could be claimed for $12,500, and bred in the state in which the race is being run.

Usually this means that the race is weakened because many of the “12,500” claiming horses that would be competitive in that race are not eligible to start in the race.

An ‘**R** in a box’ means that the race was restricted in some fashion. For example… the race may be restricted to horses that have never won a stakes
race before. Again, this usually weakens the race by not allowing horses that could have been competitive to enter the race.

Now, the opposite of the state bred and restricted race is the “starters allowance” or the “handicap starters allowance” race.

The reason I say this is because these types of races actually raise the class level of the horse.

**H12500** – This means Handicap-Starters Allowance.

The racing secretary will assign weights and the horses must have started for a claiming price of 12,500 during some period designated by the racing secretary.

For example...

“For horses who have started for a claiming price of 12,500 or less since Jan 1, and have not since won a race of that value or more.”

This means the horse could have come in second in the Santa Anita Handicap but could still be eligible to enter the race!

Also… the horse can not be claimed out of this type of race.

Therefore, the horse could have been coming close in much higher class races, and be eligible for this type of race, and be exempt from being claimed.

**A12500** – This means Starters Allowance Race.

This is exactly the same as the above race except that the weights are not assigned by a racing secretary. Instead, the weights are based on such factors as amount of money won, etc.

What is the significance of all of this?

A horse that is racing in a starters allowance or handicap race for a given price is actually racing against a higher class group of horses.

This is because several of the horses in the race may have started for a certain price several months back and have since done well at a higher class.

However, since they are exempt from being claimed in this type of race… they can drop down to the price of the race with impunity.

So a horse that has been racing in starters allowance races for 12,500 may have been competing against horses that generally run in 16,000 claiming races, etc.
Factor #4 ⇒ “The Productive Race Factor”

Learn to keep track of how horses in various races later perform. This is particularly important in races for young horses. Young horses of unknown quality... will through the effect of statistical probability... find themselves in various groups.

Most races will be of average quality. Some will be very weak... but some will be very strong. This will also occur in races for older horses, but is much less likely.

Therefore... keep track of how the horses in a given race do in their subsequent efforts. If you notice that several of the horses have improved considerably in their later or next race... you can assume that the other members of that race will likely improve as well.

If you truly wish to make money at the racetrack... you must learn to use this factor. This will entail following the horses on a regular basis.

This does not mean that you must be out there every day, but you should study the results every day and make mental or written notes.

A productive race is a race that is unusually strong. The productive race is the key to handicapping most two and three-year-old races. It is especially valuable in handicapping quarter horses... but important for thoroughbred races too.

Let me give you an example of what I am talking about.

July 2 Hol 5f 21\frac{3}{4} 59 2\frac{1}{4} 3\frac{3}{4} PincayL6 Mdn 82 “Bold Slew” “Top Up” “Born Again 10”

After the ‘82’ which is the speed rating, are the names of the first three finishers.

Now, a “59 second 5-furlongs” is nothing spectacular.

However, the track may not have been that fast that day (I left off the track variant) and that lightning fast first quarter may have slowed-down the final time somewhat.

Now, let’s say that since this race has been run, the top two finishers “Bold Slew” and “Top Up” have both gone on to run very strong races at faster times.
One of them may have even won a stakes race. You can be sure that this was a very strong field of horses. Obviously, this race may have been a much better effort than it looks.

In addition, let’s say that there is a stakes or allowance race today and you spot a past performance line such as this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>July 14</th>
<th>July 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hol 5f</td>
<td>Hol 5f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>21³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45³</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58³</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1⁴</td>
<td>3²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1³</td>
<td>4⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1⁴</td>
<td>5³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCarronC</td>
<td>McCarronC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mdn 91</td>
<td>Mdn 82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Bid</td>
<td>Bold Slew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunny One</td>
<td>Top Up Born</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooks 9</td>
<td>Against 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The horse above beat our horse by only one length in the July 2 race. He then ran a bang-up race and improved 9 speed-rating points.

It is obvious from the subsequent performances of the members of the race that it was a very strong bunch of horses.

It is very likely that the horse that finished 6th in this race should improve in his next outing.

However, those who are unaware of the caliber of this race may let this horse go off at good odds while backing a horse that had run a little bit faster in a weaker race.

I mentioned that this phenomenon of “The Productive Race Factor” applies to older horses as well. From time to time you may see something like this:

**HORSE 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mar 5</th>
<th>Feb 18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SA 1m</td>
<td>SA 1m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 46⁴</td>
<td>23 45⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:36³ 1 5</td>
<td>1:36 9 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ShoemakerW³</td>
<td>PincayL⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>16,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seems Fine</td>
<td>Wonderful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willy Cat Roof</td>
<td>Willy Bold Steppers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HORSE 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mar 15</th>
<th>Feb 18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SA 7F</td>
<td>SA 1m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22⁴ 46¹</td>
<td>23 45⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:23 1 1²</td>
<td>1:36 7 8³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PincayL³</td>
<td>ToroF⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>16,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hershey Bar</td>
<td>Wonderful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go Far Cat Roof</td>
<td>Willy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notice that both of these horses has improved considerably off their Feb 18 races against “Wonderful”

Why is this?
There could be a number of reasons. However, there is a good possibility that the Feb 18 race was a very strong race.

Now… let’s say you have seen these two past performances… maybe on a different day than today.

Today, there is a horse that finished 5th in this same Feb 18 race. There is a good chance that this horse would also improve off the Feb 18 race. There is an excellent chance that you could get a good price on this horse as well.

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**Factor #5 ⇒ “Irregular Race Pattern Factor”**

*A horse that runs an irregular race pattern is particularly impressive when it occurs in his first start or after a long lay-off.*

A first time starter… or a horse that is coming off a lengthy lay-off… is always a risky bet. He may or may not be in good enough condition to win. If his or her workouts are closely spaced, this is a good sign.

However, what we are going to discuss here are horses that have made their first career start… or their first start after a lengthy lay-off.

Feb 28   SA   7f   223   45   1:11   1:232   45   713   44   PincayL3    Alw20,000

This is an example of an “irregular race pattern.” Normally… a horse that is close to the early lead and then begins to drop back will continue to drop back.

In this race, the horse was in contention… dropped far back… and then came on again in the stretch, and passed several horses while gaining on the leaders.

This pattern is quite unusual… but very impressive when it occurs.

A young horse that runs this pattern is signaling that he may be inexperienced… but talented.

A horse that exhibits this pattern after a long lay-off is signaling that he is raring to go. It is possible that the trainer told the jockey to push the horse in the beginning, and then just back off on him.

The purpose of this would be to get the horse sharp and ready for his next race.

After following the trainer’s instructions, the jockey might have found out the horse was in the mood to run… and decided to move up on his own.
Whatever the reason may be… the fact that a horse will drop back and then move up again, is a very impressive sign that the horse should be tough in his next race.

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**Factor #6 ⇒ “Past Performance Record Factor”**

*If a horse shows nothing positive in any of the races that are shown in the Racing From… look at the year’s record in the right upper corner.*

*You may see that the part of the horse’s record that does not show is vastly superior to that which does show.*

*If this is the case, try to figure out if it is possible that the horse is ready to run back to his earlier good races. Though the bet is risky… the odds will probably far out-weigh the risk.*

Let’s say that you look at a horse’s past performance lines… supposing that the Racing Form shows 8 lines today… and not one of these past performance lines shows anything positive at all.

Just when you are beginning to wonder why the owner even bothers to race the horse… you look at his record for the past two years (located in the upper right hand corner) and it shows this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Starts</th>
<th>Wins</th>
<th>Places</th>
<th>Showings</th>
<th>Earnings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$7,565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$9,766</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What this means is that your horse has won one race and finished third twice this year.

They may not be impressive figures… but consider this… the last 8 races show nothing. Subtract 8 from 12 and you get 4.

So all three of this horse’s good races came within four races. The record that you don’t see on the past performance line is this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Starts</th>
<th>Wins</th>
<th>Places</th>
<th>Showings</th>
<th>Earnings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$Most of the money</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So the horse does… or did if there is something wrong with him… have the ability to finish in the money.
Now you should ask yourself some questions:

**Are this horse’s earnings for the year that much less than the other horses in the field?**

*You don’t know the class race that the horse won in, but the earnings might give you some idea.*

**Are there any signs that the horse may be ready to come to life again?**

**How about a significant jockey change?**

**An equipment switch?**

**A drop in class?**

*Don’t forget about hidden drops in class.*

**How about unusually intense early speed in a recent race?**

**Better workouts than usual?**

Any of these might be considered positive signs.

Anyway… the important thing here is that you have made yourself aware of 3 good races that most of the people at the track will not even see.

They will be betting the horse on the eight horrible races that appear in the Racing Form.

Most will not bother to look and see if the horse has done anything this year.

Now the question will be whether the odds are good enough to risk a bet on this horse.

Most likely the answer will be “**Yes!**”

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