

# A Guide To Wagering On America's Fastest Athlete The Racing American Quarter Horse

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## Introduction

Welcome to American Quarter Horse Racing. It's a brand of excitement that only America's Fastest Athlete can deliver. Ours is an adrenaline-pumping sport, a classic confrontation of speed that you're sure to love. These muscular, American-bred speedsters are the sprinters of the racing world. Almost every race features a thrilling stretch run and a heart-stopping photo-finish. Handicapping America's Fastest Athlete is equally as thrilling and usually provides racing fans with a reasonable return on their investment.

If you are a fan of Thoroughbred racing, you won't be disappointed with our American Quarter Horse events. The excitement is real. And if you're experienced with handicapping the Thoroughbreds, you'll find yourself on familiar ground here because the similarities between the two breeds greatly outnumber the differences. Class, a prime factor with Thoroughbreds, also is important in handicapping American Quarter Horses. The major difference between the two is pace.

Straightaway American Quarter Horse racing is an all-out burst of speed from the starting gate with every horse trying to put a head in front at the finish. There is no time to maneuver for position or come from behind in the final stretch run as in Thoroughbred racing. Therefore, the experienced handicapper can concentrate on speed, class, jockey/trainer combinations and track conditions without having to spend time trying to predict how the race will be run.

Although you may find our sections on the elements of handicapping and wagering of primary interest to you, we urge you read through the entire guide. We've included a lot of information on certain factors in American Quarter Horse racing that will influence your success at the wagering window. You'll find background information on various racetracks around the country as well as charts on leading trainers, jockeys, owners and breeders. Also included are articles by experts dealing specifically with the art of handicapping the American Quarter Horse.

**The Excitement of America's Fastest Athlete. You Can Bet on It!**

## The Elements Of Handicapping

America's Fastest Athlete, the American Quarter Horse, may be America's most consistent athlete. Look at these figures. In 2000, American Quarter Horse wagering favorites finished in the money (first, second or third) 70% of the time, while winning 36%. Those are figures that can't be claimed by Thoroughbred or Standardbred racing! But that's not saying American Quarter Horse racing lacks the excitement of winning long shots. With 42% of the horses finishing first, second or third going off with odds of 5-1 or greater, you know the exotic wagers must have paid some handsome rewards. The key is knowing how to cash in on those rewards yourself. But how? The answer is knowledge.

If you're a smart handicapper you'll do your homework by learning everything you can about the horse, its rider, trainer, bloodline, competition and even the surface the horse will run on before you invest your hard-earned cash. Your competition is the guy standing next to you and all the other patrons at the track. When you learn and observe what they don't, you will increase the frequency of your return trips to the window to cash tickets.

There is much to learn about handicapping, and to help get you started, the American Quarter Horse Association has put together some of what is considered to be the key elements of handicapping. Remember, knowledge is power. Good luck!

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## Class

Class is one of the most important factors in handicapping. Analyze everything you see, hear or read in the context of class. In the most basic sense, class refers to the ability to win, produce winners and develop high quality, competitive races. Class not only involves racehorses, but sires and dams, owners, breeders, trainers, jockeys, races and even tracks. Think of class in terms of levels of excellence and a competitive edge.

Here's an example of class in a racehorse compared to other athletes. During the 1987 National Football League strike, many talented athletes replaced striking players. The replacements made for some exciting Sunday afternoons. But only a few of the replacements were able to keep their jobs when the striking players returned. The reason? They were simply not up to the superior play of the regulars. In other words, they were outclassed. The same can be true of a racehorse. For instance, a horse that may win with a fast time in claiming races would probably lose when going against horses that regularly participate in stakes race competition with similar race times.

Here's how class relates to a racetrack. A horse with a 96 speed index and first place finish at a mid-size racetrack is not necessarily the same as a horse with a 96 speed index and first place finish at major track. Los Alamitos in Southern California emphasizes American Quarter Horse racing, carries numerous graded stakes and boasts one of the highest average purse structure's in the country, thus attracting more of American Quarter Horse racing's premier performers. You'll hear a lot about class throughout this guide.

The next section on handicapping is divided into two parts: first, what to do before coming to the races, and second, what to do on race day.

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## Before Race Day Preparations

In order to evaluate the entrants in any race, you'll need historical data or past performances, as they are called. Pick up a program and a *Daily Racing Form* the day before the race and analyze them.

## Everything You Want To Know Is In The Past Performances

The *Daily Racing Form* is recognized as America's Turf Authority and lists valuable information including:

- **Ten Most Recent Races**
  - **Race Number, Racetrack Abbreviation**
  - **Track Condition**  
(Track condition abbreviations are: fst - fast; fr - frozen; gd - good; sl - slow; sly - sloppy; my - muddy; hy - heavy.)
  - **Race Distances**
  - **Wind Direction**  
(Wind directions are: hw - head wind; cw-cross wind; tw -tail wind.)
  - **Winner's Final Time**  
Final Time of Individual Horse and Beaten Margins  
(Beaten margins behind winners are calculated into time values by this formula - a nose equals .01 seconds; a head equals .02 seconds and one length equals .16 seconds.)
  - **Type of Race Conditions**
  - **Post Position**  
(Sometimes post positions can be different from program numbers. When wagering, always refer to the horse's official program number.)
  - **Fractional Calls with Margins**  
(Position calls will be listed at the following distances in the races, break -220 yards from the finish (1/8th pole); the second stretch call at 110 yards from the finish (1/16th pole) and finish.)
  - **Jockey**
  - **Equipment/Medication/Weight**
  - **Closing Odds**
  - **Top Three Finishers**
  - **Comments**
  - **Number of Starters**
- 

## Reading between the lines

The past performance information for each horse in a race is there in black and white for everyone wagering on the race to follow. The only way you can out-handicap the competition is if you can read between the lines.

**RACE FREQUENCY**- As many as 10 of a horse's past races are listed by date beginning with the

most recent race.

**TIP** - Look for excessive or irregular layoffs between races which could indicate a fitness problem that could keep the horse from running true to form. Conversely, look for a history of regular layoffs with an immediate return to peak form.

**TRACK CONDITION**- Weather can change a track's condition quickly.

Dirt tracks are rated as follows: ft-fast; sy-sloppy; m-muddy; gd-good; sl-slow; hy-heavy; fr-frozen.

**TIP** - Horses that performed well in conditions similar to today's could have the edge.

**DISTANCE**- There are three types of races in American Quarter Horse racing: short sprints of 220, 250, 300, 330 and 350 yards; long sprints of 400, 440, 550 and 660 yards; and distance or races around one turn of 770, 870 and 1,000 yards.

**TIP** - Determine the horse's suitability to today's distance. A horse that performs well at short distances could fade during a longer race. And conversely, a horse that breaks slowly but performs well in the stretch may need the extra distance to win. In some cases, American Quarter Horses, which have not been top performers at short or long sprints, may become competitive at 870 yards.

**TYPES OF RACES**- Maiden, Speed Index, Trial, Claiming, Allowance, Handicap and Stakes. You'll find a more complete description later and in the glossary.

**TIP** - Think of race classifications as levels of the class of horse they attract with stakes races being the highest and \$2,000 maiden claiming the lowest. The conditions of a race (non-winners of two, three or four) or claiming prices (\$2,000-\$20,000) are significant differences in the same type of race.

**POST POSITION**- At certain times or conditions, tracks might have surfaces which favor the inside, middle or outside post positions. Most programs list the percentage of wins from each post position. Some horses also favor certain post positions.

**TIP** - On races around the turn, unless a horse has a great deal of early speed to go to the front and take the inside rail, an outside post position is definitely a disadvantage. A fast-breaking horse that usually wins when it breaks first can have an edge when positioned with room to run. Look for horses that break well with a post position between two horses that generally do not get away fast. In straightaway races, the one hole is generally a disadvantage, while the outside might be an advantage.

**POSITION CALLS**- A horse's position during a race and its lengths behind the front-runner are generally described at four locations along the race: the break call at two strides or ten yards from the starting gate; the first stretch call at the 1/8 pole or 220 yards from the finish; the second stretch call at the 1/16 pole or 110 yards from the finish; and at the finish.

**TIP** - Positioning and ability to make up ground can reveal a lot about the horse you're evaluating; his suitability to today's distance; and a pattern of improvement as the race progresses.

**MEDICATIONS**- The two types of legally permitted medications are Bute and Lasix. Bute is an anti-inflammatory drug used to reduce stiffness. Lasix is a diuretic used to treat respiratory bleeding some athletes experience. Racetrack programs and Daily Racing Form provide indicators (B = Bute, L = Lasix, L1 = first-time Lasix) as to which horses have raced or are racing on medication.

**TIP** - If a horse is on the first-time Lasix list and has shown good early performance in past races but has faded toward the end, the effects of Lasix might make a difference in his next race.

**EQUIPMENT**- The symbol "b" indicates the horse wore blinkers during a race.

**TIP** - A horse which has been running erratically and shows to be wearing blinkers for the first time might be a good wager.

**WEIGHT**- The total amount of weight a horse is required to carry (including jockey and tack).

**TIP** - In American Quarter Horse racing, weight is not a major factor in the shorter races. However, in races of 440 yards or more, it does have some importance. The horses with the best performance records may be required to carry the most weight in an attempt to make a more even contest. Look for a horse's ability to carry more weight in his previous races.

**TIME and INDIVIDUAL TIME**- The time of the race (the winner's time) and the time of the individual horse are shown in seconds and hundredths of seconds.

**TIP** - Use best recent times at today's distance, conditions and racetrack. Keep the different elements of class in mind while making your comparisons.

**SPEED INDEX**- The speed index is an evaluation of a horse's speed in a race versus the three fastest winning times for the same distance each year for the previous three years at the same racetrack.

**TIP** - An average of best recent speed indexes is a good basis for comparison. Again, keep the elements of class, wind and track condition in mind.

**WORKOUTS**- The most recent morning workouts for each horse are listed beneath the past performance lines. This information reports:

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date -----|
track -----|-----|
distance -----|-----|-----|
track condition -----|-----|-----|-----|
time-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
type of workout -----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
                        Aug 12 RUI 330 gd :17.12 hg.

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The letter "h", describing the type of the workout means handily while a "b" would refer to breezing, which is an easier workout. The letter "g" means the workout was from the starting gate.

Most American Quarter Horse workouts from the gate are electronically timed and are with other horses. Because of this electronic timing, a handicapper can put more trust in American Quarter Horse gate works than he may be used to doing with Thoroughbreds, which are hand-timed.

**JOCKEYS**- At any given track, there is a broad range of talent. Generally speaking, the best horses will have the best riders (ones who can be found on the leading rider list in your program).

**TIP** - Jockey changes can affect the outcome of a race. For instance, if you note that a leading jockey has been taken off his regular mount and switched to another, you could have a better chance of a winning wager on his new mount.

**TRAINERS**- As with jockeys, any given track will have a broad range of trainers, with varying degrees of expertise and experience.

**TIP** - Pay attention to their winning percentages, not just their total wins, as a good trainer with a few horses will never lead the trainer's list. Try to keep track of a trainer's ability with different classes or ages of horses. Some trainers are better with claiming horses, while others concentrate on stakes performers.

**BREEDING-** A listing of horse's sire, dam and dam's sire.

*TIP - As a general rule, pedigree has a significant influence on a horse's natural ability to run. Keep note of the leading sires and dams as well as breeders and owners when considering class. This is especially true when handicapping two-year-olds and first-time starters.*

**MONEY LINE-** The number of starts, wins, places (second), shows (thirds) and purse money won this year and last year. The lifetime total of wins and in-the-money (first, seconds and thirds) and lifetime purse money.

*TIP - Can be an indication of improvement or deterioration and class. Compare percentages of wins, in-the-money or average money earned per start.*

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## The Day Of The Race

Now that you've done your homework, it's time to go to the races! But do yourself a favor that could mean the difference between winning and losing. Take a trip down to the paddock and/or watch the post parade prior to every race before placing your wager.

## What To Look For In The Paddock & Post parade

**CONFORMATION-** Generally, a racing American Quarter Horse has a well-balanced physique with a short back, deep chest, straight legs and an attractive head and neck. The power comes from the hind legs and hip muscles which should be well-defined. Size is not usually a factor, although a big two-year-old may need maturity to develop coordination.

**APPEARANCE-** Look for a horse that's fit, healthy, anxious and alert. A healthy horse has a defined, streamlined underline. His coat is shiny and well-groomed. If he has bright, shining eyes and his ears aren't missing a sound, then you have a horse that's alert and ready to win.

**SWEATING-** Sweating can be a sign of nervousness and discomfort, which means the horse may be expending too much energy in the paddock or post parade. Watch for signs of excessive sweating or "washing out" in the chest and neck areas or white lather visible between the horse's hind legs. Remember, though, that wetness alone does not mean the horse has been adversely affected because all horses sweat profusely on hot days, or some may be brought to the paddock drenched in water to reduce sweating. The determining factor here is lathering.

**BANDAGES-** Bandages are not usually a sign of unsoundness. They are normally used for support or to prevent abrasions. Bandages can generally be ignored when evaluating racing American Quarter Horses, unless the horse previously has raced without front bandages.

**POST PARADE-** Take note of a horse's gait or stride. A horse should carry his head held high and alert. A fit, eager to run horse will move with a smooth, even stride.

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## How To Wager

Now that you've picked the horses worthy of your money, it's time to decide how you'll wager. An important thing to note is what the odds are. This is an indication of how the crowd has evaluated the competition in the race.

## PROBABLE PAYOFFS/ODDS CHART

Odds Payoff Odds Payoff

1-9 \$2.20 3-1 \$8.00

1-5 2.40 7-2 9.00

2-5 2.80 4-1 10.00

1-2 3.00 9-2 11.00

3-5 3.20 5-1 12.00

4-5 3.60 6-1 14.00

1-1 4.00 7-1 16.00

6-5 4.40 8-1 18.00

7-5 4.80 9-1 20.00

3-2 5.00 10-1 22.00

8-5 5.20 12-1 26.00

9-5 5.60 15-1 32.00

2-1 6.00 20-1 42.00

5-2 7.00

Remember, these are odds on the horse to win only, as the place and show odds hinge on who finishes second and third. However, most toteboards provide the amount of money wagered on each horse to place and show.

**MORNING LINES-** The morning line is established by the track's handicapper and reflects what he feels will be the final odds at the start of each race as established by the wagering public. The morning line does not necessarily reflect his predictions as to the outcome of the race.

**BASIC WAGERS-** The three basic wagers are win, place and show. Exotic wagering is any deviation of these types of wagers.

- Win -your horse must finish first for you to collect.
- Place -your horse must finish first or second for you to collect.
- Show -your horse must finish first, second or third for you to collect.

Your better payoffs come from the win wagers. However, some fans make it a rule to back up each win wager with a place wager on the same horse to "protect" their investment. Unless the odds to

win are 4-1 or longer, a place wager will generally not cover the wager to win.

**ENTRIES-** There is an instance when you can get more than one horse for a \$2 wager. This is when an owner has more than one horse in a race. In that event, the horses are coupled and constitute one wagering interest. They will be numbered 1 and 1A, 2 and 2B, and so on. Playing entries can be an attractive proposition. However, two long shots coupled does not increase your chances of winning.

**EXOTIC WAGERS-** The oldest and most common example is the Daily Double. Playing exotics is attractive to many fans, as the payoffs are generally greater than straight wagering. However, the odds against cashing a ticket also are greater.

**Daily Double-** This wager consists of picking the winners of two consecutive races. It is normally the first two races on a card. However, many tracks have added a second Double for later races. Picking the winners of these races will cost you a minimum wager of \$2.

**The Wheel-** This method is used when you are confident of one horse in either race and you combine or "wheel" him with most or all horses in the other race.

**Crisscrossing-** This method consists of picking two or three horses in one race and combining them with two or three horses in the other. This can produce many combinations and will cost you accordingly. For example: Race 1-Horses A and B, Race 2-Horses A, B and C. This will produce six different combinations: A-A, A-B, A-C, B-A, B-B and B-C, and will cost \$12.

**Exacta-** This wager consists of selecting the first- and second-place finishers of a race in exact order. The wager will cost a minimum of \$2 to \$5 depending on the track.

**Exacta Wheel-** The object is to match a single horse with all or part of the rest of the field. You can put him in the win or place position. In a 10-horse field, to key him with all the others would cost \$18 for \$2 Exactas.

**Exacta Boxes-** By boxing two, three or more horses, you cover many possible combinations of order of finish. A three-horse box, A, B and C would make six combinations (A-B, A-C, B-A, B-C, C-A and C-B) and cost \$12 for \$2 Exactas.

**Quinella Wagering-** This wager consists of picking the top two finishers in a race regardless of their order and will normally cost \$2.

**Box or "Baseball"-** You may choose more than two horses as a way to increase your chances of winning. The box or "baseball" Quinella is among the most popular. The following are some examples of what a \$2 minimum Quinella wager would cost:

3-horse box      3 wagers   cost \$6

4-horse box      6 wagers   cost 12

5-horse box      10 wagers   cost 40

**Trifecta Wagering-** You collect if you select the three top horses in the exact order of finish. A Trifecta normally costs \$2. However, this wager may be boxed or wheeled the same as Exactas. Keep in mind you are dealing with three orders of finish and the various combinations will be greater, and so will your expense. Some tracks offer \$1 Trifecta Boxes or Wheels. The following



are the combinations and money necessary for Trifecta Wheels and Boxes.

**Trifecta Wheel-** Wheel one horse in any single position (1st, 2nd or 3rd) with:

Total Number of	\$1 Wager	\$2 Wager
3 other horses	\$6	\$12
4 other horses	12	24
5 other horses	20	40

**Trifecta Box-** A box includes every possible combination that could result from the horses you've selected.

Total Number of	\$1 Wager	\$2 Wager
3 Horse Box	\$6	\$12
4 Horse Box	24	48
5 Horse Box	60	120

If you believe two horses are the class of the field, you could box them in the first and second position and wheel the same or all of the rest of the field for the third.

**Pick Six Wagering-** This type of wagering consists of picking the winners of six consecutive races. Most tracks provide cards with specially marked boxes for each race. The wager will cost you \$2 if you only pick one horse in each race. However, if you want to increase your chances of winning by picking more, the price goes up accordingly. Look at the example below to learn how to figure your cost. Multiply the number of selections in Race 3, by the number of selections in Race 4, by the number of selections in Race 5 and so on through Race 8. That number is multiplied by \$2 to come up with your cost.

# Picks	# Picks	# Picks	# Picks	# Picks	# Picks	Total
1	3	1	5	1	2	x\$2= \$60
Race 3	Race 4	Race 5	Race 6	Race 7	Race 8	Cost (30 Selections)

Pick Sixes have been known to pay as little as a few thousand dollars to as much as a million dollars.

**Other Exotic Wagers-** Many racetracks offer "super" exotics such as the Twin-Trifecta, Superfecta, Twin-Quin and Tri-Super. These wagering bonanzas often offer six figure payoffs. Rules for these types of wagers vary from track to track, so consult your track racing program for details. Other exotic wagers might include the "odd/even" where a wager is made either on an even program number or an odd number. If you wager the evens and a horse with an even program number wins, then you win, too. Another new exotic wager is the "EZQ," in which you choose two horses and if those two horses run first, second or third in any combination (i.e. second and third, first and third, etc.) you receive a payoff. Most racetracks will list the types of exotic wagers they

offer in the daily program.

**TIP SHEETS-** If you don't think you're ready to make a wager by yourself or if you're visiting a racetrack for the first time and are unfamiliar with the horses, trainers and jockeys, there's help available in the form of tips sheets, which are available for sale at the racetrack and surrounding convenience stores, newsstands or by vendors outside the entrance gates. Tip sheets are published by handicappers who might or might not be employees of the racetrack. The horses selected in the tip sheets are the best educated guesses of someone who closely follows the races at that particular track. In the case of the racetrack, it's generally the racing secretary, his assistants, morning clockers, or even the public relations department who do tip sheets. Tip sheets sold outside the racetrack are written by almost anyone, including professional handicappers, horsemen, high school students and other entrepreneurs who are trying to make a profit. Tip sheets normally list three horses and a long shot for each race, with a best wager of the day and suggested exotic wheels, boxes and parlays.

**Newspapers and Daily Racing Form** also provide handicappers' selections for each race. In addition, the program provides the morning line and track handicapper's picks each day. The best way to utilize tip sheets is to follow the success of several by checking their picks against the actual winners. Often a consensus of all the tip sheets and handicapper picks is the best way to utilize this information. The cost of all this advice varies from the cost of a newspaper to about \$5.

## Wagering Conclusion

On the pages that follow, we've included more information on the various types of races and some background on racetracks across the country. Both will be helpful as you evaluate issues of class. Also ahead, a glossary of racing terms and further handicapping analysis by experts.

We cover a mountain of material in this guide. If you read and understood it all, that's a good start but there's a lot more to be learned. Remember, each new piece of information can mean a bigger return for you at the wagering window. And that's the real fun in handicapping. Good luck and enjoy the speed, beauty and rewards of America's Fastest Athlete, the American Quarter Horse. See you at the races!

## Types Of Races

**STAKES RACES-** These races offer the largest purses. They are races in which the purse consists of nomination, entrance and/or starting fees, plus money added by the track or sponsor. These races generally attract the highest quality horses and are abbreviated by the name of the stakes (For example: Allamerfut 1 meaning All American Futurity (G1). Graded races are the premier stakes races, which by a grade one (G1), grade two (G2) or grade three (G3), designate the class of horses participating. The size of purse, amount of added monies and the historical significance of the race also are determining factors in the grade status. Grade one (G1) is the highest designation.

**HANDICAP RACES-** These races feature better quality horses in which the Racing Secretary or Track Handicapper assigns weights designed to equalize the winning chances of entrants. The better horses get higher weights to enable a horse with a lesser record to have a chance at winning. The designation HDCP is utilized.

**CLAIMING RACES-** Claiming races are the most common, constituting approximately 70% of all races run. In these races, horses are entered for a specific price and can be purchased or "claimed" by any licensed owner at the track for that price. This tends to equalize the class or competition in these races. An owner who has a \$25,000 horse is not going to put him in a race with a field of \$5,000 claimers, for fear that someone would claim his horse at a greatly-reduced value. These races are designated by the claiming price (5000). A "C" in front of the claiming price in the past performance line means the horse was claimed in that race.

**ALLOWANCE RACES-** An allowance race is a non-claiming race for better quality or more lightly raced horses. These races generally offer higher purses than claiming races. Eligibility requirements and conditions are similar to those of claiming races, and weight allowances are given based on winnings and/or number or type of wins in a given time. These races are designated by AW plus the purse (AW2500).

**MAIDEN RACES-** Maiden (MDN) races are limited to horses who have never won a race. There are three types of maiden races: "Maiden Special Weights" for better horses; "Straight Maidens" and "Maiden Claiming," which is designated by the claiming price (M5000).

**TRIAL-** A trial (TRL) is a race designed primarily to determine the qualifiers for a final based on the fastest qualifying times or order of finish. A trial may be run as a purse race, or it may be run with no purse at all.

**SPEED INDEX RACES-** Speed index races are limited to horses which have never run faster than the speed index that conditions the race (i.e., SI79 or SI69), or for horses whose last three speed indexes average less than the speed index that conditions the race. This type of race is rarely utilized at pari-mutuel racetracks.