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**“The Very Best Way We Know to Play the Daily Double”**

Ask just about any group of handicappers to name their favorite wager and chances are that not one of them will mention the Daily Double. For some reason, the Double is viewed as kind of old fashioned and not very exciting. So, why are we presenting this article on the Double? Pure and simple, the Double is one of the very best wagers in all of racing. True, the Double does not offer the prospect of the mega-payoffs we see from time to time from Trifecta and Pick 3 wagers. But, it does offer a consistent source of overlay wagers where you have a nice positive edge, the key to profitability. And, the Double is easier to win than Exactas and Trifectas simply because it is easier to select winners than it is to select place and show horses. So, if you are only after excitement, by all means stick only with Trifectas and Pick 3's. If you are serious about making money at the track, add the Double to your arsenal of wagers.

In this article, we will examine the Double to see why it is such a good type of wager. Then we will explore effective wagering practices for the Double.

Double payoffs are, far more often than not, solid overlay wagers. We consider the Double payoff to be an overlay if the payoff is higher than what you would have received for a straight two race win bet parlay. For example, let's say the winner of the first leg paid \$10 to win and the winner of the second leg paid \$8 to win. If you bet \$2 on the winner of the first leg, you would receive a \$10 payoff. In a parlay, you would then wager the \$10 on the second race. If you bet on the winner of the second race, you win the \$8 payoff five times. Hence, the parlay paid \$40. If the Double combination on these two horses pays more than \$40, it is an overlay. If it pays \$44, it is a 10% overlay. If it pays \$50, it is a 25% overlay. Several years ago, Dick Mitchell, an author of handicapping and wagering books, did a study of the Double at Southern California tracks. He found that fully seventy-five percent of all Doubles were overlays. That number is even more impressive when you consider that Southern California tracks typically have short fields.

There are two good reasons why Doubles are generally good overlays.

1. First, tracks pay out a high percentage of the Double pool compared to what they pay for a two race win parlay. In a two race win parlay, you pay the track's win takeout twice, once for each race. You only pay one takeout for the Double. It is pretty clear that one Double takeout of say 20% is better than two win takeouts of say 17% each. Also, "Breakage", which is the money kept by tracks when they round payoffs down to avoid paying off pennies, is far more significant as a percentage of win payoffs than it is for the much larger Double payoffs.

2. The second reason Double payoffs generally are overlays is because the crowd is very inefficient at wagering on the Double. The crowd's favorite Double wager is the 3 horse criss-cross which is all possible combinations of three horses in the first race with three horses in the second race. That is a total of nine combination wagers. Dick Mitchell's study mentioned above showed that the 3 x 3 criss-cross resulted in a negative ROI of -37% at Southern California tracks. This is pretty easy to understand when you consider that the 3 x 3 criss-cross guarantees you at least eight losing wagers to get one possible winning wager.

There is still another reason the public is so inefficient at wagering on the Double. They tend to bet the same amount on each combination without regard to the probable payoffs for each combination. They will call the wager something like this: "Give me a \$5 double with the 1, 3 and 5 horses in the first and the 2, 4 and 6 horses in the second." This violates one of the basic fundamentals of good wagering practices which is to bet more money on the higher probability combinations (lower odds) than on the lower probability combinations (higher odds).

Listen to what James Quinn, another author of handicapping books, says about the public wagering on the Double. Paraphrasing Gordon Jones, James Quinn said: "*The betting public is held to behave foolishly at the Exacta and Double windows. They bet jockey combos, trainer combos, number combos and color combos. Saturated with bets based on whim, whisper, sentiment and hope, exotic pools do not resemble the normal distribution of money characteristics of straight pools.*"

Another nice thing about the Double is that you get to see the probable payoffs. You do not have to bet the wager blindly.

Now, let's turn our attention to how best to play the Double. First, let's look at some situations to avoid.

- Avoid Double combinations that require the same trainer to win both legs. These are typically over bet by the public thus creating underlays and they rarely work.
- Avoid double combinations that require the same jockey to win both legs. These are typically over bet by the public thus creating underlays. You can limit this restriction to the best and most well known jockeys at the track.
- Avoid Double combinations that pair the crowd's favorite in the first leg with the crowd's probable favorite in the second leg. The public over bets this combination as well and it is almost always an underlay.
- Avoid Doubles where both legs have short fields. One field being short is OK, but not both.

If you avoid the situations described above, the vast majority of the remaining Doubles will be overlays.

Enough about what not to do. Now, we will cover some things that you should look for.

- Look for false favorites in either leg of the Double. This is where you see a good reason why the crowd's favorite will not, in your opinion, win the race. Very often such a situation arises when the favorite does not fit well with the pace scenario of the race.
- Look for a legitimate long shot in each leg.
- Studies indicate that the crowd seriously under-bets short odds favorites in the second leg of the Double. Remember the point we made earlier about the public betting the same amount on each combination. Here is where it really helps us. If a legitimate favorite is going off at 3 to 2 or

lower odds in the second race of the Double, chances are you can use that horse in combinations with confidence that you are getting nice overlays. Of course you do not want to bet such a horse in combination with a legitimate low odds favorite in the first race.

- Most tracks include at least an early Double and a late Double on a race card. The late Double almost always presents great wagering opportunities. At this point in the day, the public is generally trying to catch up and makes indiscriminate and larger wagers on the Double. Be on the lookout for good plays in the late Double.

Now, we will look at how we might structure our wagers on the Double. First, here is an absolutely vital rule:

**Too many combinations mean too many losing tickets such that the losing combinations ruin a solid overlay winning double combination. Remember that the Double is a great wager because the public bets too many combinations. You will lose your advantage if you bet too many combinations as well.**

Here is a simple and very clever way to cut down on the combinations you play and that also gives you the possibility of winning the Double twice. Let's say you like horses "A", "B" and "C" in the first race and you think horse "A" has the best chance of winning. Then let's say you like horses "A", "B" and "C" in the second race and you think horse "A" has the best chance of winning. The public would bet this as a 3 x 3 criss-cross with 9 combinations. Their wager would be ABC with ABC. Now, here is how we would make this wager:

	Race 1	Race 2
Wager set #1	A	ABC
Wager set #2	ABC	A

In other words, we would bet combinations of horse "A" in race one with the three horses in race two and we would bet combinations of the three horses in race one with the "A" horse in race two. That is a total of six combinations instead of the nine combinations of a 3 x 3 criss-cross. **And, if your favorite in each race, horse "A", wins both legs, you win the bet twice.**

This wager structure works well for other situations as well. Lets say you like four horses in the first race and two in the second race, again with the “A” horses being your favorites. Here is how we would structure the wager:

	Race 1	Race 2
Wager set #1	A	AB
Wager set #2	ABCD	A

Again, we have only six combinations and we have the opportunity to win the wager twice.

Remember to bet proportionately more on the lower paying combinations than on the higher paying combinations. You do not need to be precise. Approximations will do. Here is an example of betting four horses in the first leg with a single Key horse in the second leg:

Combo	Probable Payoff	Bet Size	Total Payoff
A/A	\$20	\$4	\$40
B/A	\$30	\$3	\$45
C/A	\$40	\$2	\$40
D/A	\$40	\$2	\$40

### Summary

Wagering experts will tell you that the proper way to play the double is to use the win odds for each horse to calculate the fair payoff for every two horse combination and then increase this amount by the amount necessary to cover your losing combinations. Then you would wager on only those combinations where the probable payoff exceeded your calculated figure. That is indeed the right way. However, it is very time consuming and quite difficult to do at the track, particularly when the odds and the probable payoffs keep changing right up to post time. What we have presented in this article is, we believe, a better way.

The Double is a very unique wager. If you avoid the specific situations we described earlier, the Double almost assuredly will be a nice overlay. When you see the probable payoffs, you will most likely instinctively know if there is

enough of a premium to cover your losing combinations. Just remember that you want a premium over what a two race parlay would pay.

The Double is a great wager. Plain and simple, it will help you be profitable at the track.

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