



Frandsen Publishing Presents  
Favorite ALL-Ways™ Newsletter Articles  
“The Curse of the Legitimate Favorite”

We have touched on this subject in prior ALL-Ways newsletters. Now, we want to try to really drive the point home. If you are approaching your handicapping in any way that is not reasonably consistent with what you are about to read, chances are you are not making money at the track.

One solid piece of handicapping advice is to never bet against a legitimate favorite. Another solid piece of handicapping advice is to “never” bet on a legitimate favorite. What? That’s right. In almost every case, it is best to pass the race than to bet on or to bet against a legitimate favorite. About the only exception to this would be if one or two long odds horses (15 to 1 or so) are likely to finish in-the-money. In this case we may play an Exacta and/or a Trifecta with the legitimate favorite over the long odds horse(s). Under no circumstances would we bet against a legitimate favorite.

**Never bet against a legitimate favorite!**

**“Never” bet on a legitimate favorite!**

The reason we pass almost all races with a legitimate favorite is because the payoffs just do not support any kind of a profitable wagering approach. You will have a VERY hard time making money playing favorites. And if you bet against them, they will often come in and cause you to lose the wager or ruin your payoffs. Let’s look at the payoff situation.

*Win Betting*

Crowd favorites tend to win, on average, about 1 out of 3 races. If you wager \$2 on favorites in three races your single winner must pay you \$6 to break even on your total \$6 wagered. This means that the winner has to go off at odds of at least 2 to 1. But, who wants to break even? To make a profit, you are going to need to win with horses paying 5 to 2 or 3 to 1 or higher. The problem is that these slightly higher paying

favorites are not going to win as often as even money favorites meaning these higher paying favorites are not going to win 1 out of 3 races and your profit equation falls apart. Studies have shown that betting on favorites to win will eventually cost you, on average, about a 10% loss on the money you wager.

### *Exactas and Trifectas*

We used the Track Payoff Analysis that is built into ALL-Ways software to see what happens to average Exacta and Trifecta payoffs based on the winning horse's win payoff. We did this for the tracks shown below for which we had a total of approximately 16,000 races in our ALL-Ways software race databases. The charts show the average payoffs where the winners paid \$4 or less (even money or less odds), \$7 or less (5 to 2 or less odds), \$8 or more (3 to 1 or higher odds). We show the \$8 or higher payoffs for all such races. (\*)We also show the \$8 payoffs where we excluded the abnormally high payoffs that may distort the averages.

#### Average \$2 Exacta Payoffs Winner Paid to Win

	\$4 and less	\$7 and less	\$8 and higher	\$8 and higher(*)
<b>SAX</b>	\$22	\$35	\$145	\$118
<b>LAD</b>	\$23	\$35	\$154	\$118
<b>LSX</b>	\$26	\$42	\$197	\$124
<b>FGX</b>	\$19	\$38	\$152	\$112
<b>OPX</b>	\$26	\$40	\$160	\$112
<b>APX</b>	\$23	\$34	\$146	\$118
<b>CDX</b>	\$23	\$38	\$173	\$123
<b>TPX</b>	\$23	\$36	\$159	\$115
<b>BEL</b>	\$20	\$33	\$152	\$110
<b>GPX</b>	<u>\$26</u>	<u>\$38</u>	<u>\$165</u>	<u>\$114</u>
<b>Average</b>	\$23	\$37	\$160	\$116

\* Excludes abnormally large payoffs

**Average \$2 Trifecta Payoffs  
Winner Paid to Win**

	\$4 and less	\$7 and less	\$8 and higher	\$8 and higher(*)
<b>SAX</b>	\$177	\$241	\$1,341	\$896
<b>LAD</b>	\$135	\$211	\$1,361	\$821
<b>LSX</b>	\$215	\$379	\$1,842	\$951
<b>FGX</b>	\$139	\$280	\$1,377	\$878
<b>OPX</b>	\$246	\$316	\$1,716	\$879
<b>APX</b>	\$133	\$195	\$1,142	\$801
<b>CDX</b>	\$157	\$279	\$1,586	\$927
<b>TPX</b>	\$155	\$267	\$1,581	\$859
<b>BEL</b>	\$113	\$236	\$1,219	\$802
<b>GPX</b>	<u>\$134</u>	<u>\$230</u>	<u>\$1,459</u>	<u>\$826</u>
<b>Average</b>	\$160	\$263	\$1,462	\$864

\* Excludes abnormally large payoffs

As you can see, when heavy favorites up to even money (\$4 payoffs) win races, the Exacta and Trifecta payoffs are paltry indeed. And, it does not get much better when you add the luke warm favorites all the way up to 5-2 (\$7 payoffs). But, look what happens when we exclude these public favorite winners. The Exacta payoffs increase more than four-fold and the Trifecta payoffs increase more than five-fold. (\*) Even when we exclude the very large payoffs, Exacta and Trifecta payoffs more than triple in size. It is extremely difficult to make any money betting favorites to win when playing Exactas and Trifectas.

*Pick 3*

In ALL-Ways Newsletter #15, we published an extensive article on how best to play the Pick 3. It included a chart first published in Dick Mitchell's book "Commonsense Betting". The chart shows the average Pick 3 payoffs at Santa Anita based on the number of favorites that won each leg. Here is a reprint of that chart.

### Average \$2 Pick 3 Payoffs

Number of Legs Won By Favorites	Average All Payoffs	Average Excluding Large Payoffs
0	\$ 1,768	\$567
1	\$ 641	\$353
2	\$ 119	\$119
3	\$ 31	\$ 31

Winning only \$31, or even \$119, for a \$2 Pick 3 is simply not going to make you any money at the track. It is clear that you need at least two legs of the Pick 3 to be won by non-favorites.

The payoffs discussion above presents a pretty compelling case as to why you should not wager on legitimate favorites. But, why do we also say “Do not wager against a legitimate favorite”. If, in your handicapping, you designate the favorite as legitimate, then you would just be engaging in wishful thinking to bet against it. This is simply not a good way to approach the races. When the legitimate favorite does win the race, the payoffs are devastatingly low. How many times have you heard someone say: “I didn’t even get back the amount of my wager?”

#### **Profound Advice**

Here is a profound piece of handicapping advice: If you want to make money at the track, your primary handicapping job is NOT to find the winning horse. Instead, your job is to identify, in advance, the two out of three races that are not won by the public favorite and to identify one or more horses most likely to beat the favorite in these races. If you are not already doing this and if you really let this sink in, it will, or at least it should, change the way you approach the whole handicapping process.

#### **Repeat:**

If you want to make money at the track, your primary handicapping job is NOT to find the winning horse. Instead, your job is to identify, in advance, the two out of three races that are not won by the public favorite and to identify one or more horses most likely to beat the favorite in these races.

## A Simple “Top Level” Process

Let’s look at a simple “top level” 3–step process that has as its focus finding false favorites and exploiting the opportunities. The first two steps have served us well personally for many years. The third step is something we added last year when we began testing and using the Show Partial Parlay wager. We call it a “top level” process because it is intended to define the overall flow of your more comprehensive handicapping methods. For example, this compliments and channels a good pace handicapping process. It does not replace it. This will help bring simple order and consistency to your handicapping approach. **And, this order and consistency provides the opportunity for you to continuously improve, particularly if you keep written notes on what works and what does not work for you.**

The three steps in this process are:

1. Classify the favorite as legitimate or vulnerable or false.
2. Select your Key Horse
3. Select your Show Partial Parlay horse, even if you do not play this wager.

### *Step 1: Classify the favorite*

In this first step, you will classify the public favorite as being either legitimate or vulnerable or false. If at the end of the process you agree with the public’s choice, then you have a legitimate favorite. However, if you are convinced that the favorite will not win and if you have identified the horse or the horses that will most likely finish ahead of the favorite, then you have a clear false favorite. More often than not, it will not be so “cut and dried”. Instead, you will classify the favorite as vulnerable and you will need to make a further assessment as to just how vulnerable the favorite really is.

You should start out from the perspective of only looking at the favorite horse itself (or favorite horses if the public is closely supporting more than one horse). You must start out assuming the favorite is legitimate and mark it down to vulnerable or false as you identify real reasons to do so. There are many ways to approach this and most of our readers will have their favorite methods. We tend to approach the task the way ALL–Ways Software’s Key Handicapping Factors are organized, specifically by suitability to distance, suitability to surface, current form, class level, speed, pace and jockey, trainer and pedigree information. And, as you will see, we also look at a number of situational considerations. Remember, at this point we are only looking at the favorite

and we are looking for specific, real reasons to mark the favorite down to vulnerable or false.

### *Suitability to Distance and Surface*

Mark the favorite down if it is going back to a distance or a surface (dirt, synthetic, mud, turf) on which it did not perform well in the past; or if the horse is trying the surface for the first time and has a bad pedigree for the surface; or if it will not like changing from a sprint to route or from a route to a sprint; or if the horse will not like a slight increase or decrease in distance such as a move from 6 to 6 1/2 furlongs; or, and this is our favorite, if the horse's Best 2 of 3 figures are good but its pace line figures are poor and the horse had no excuse for its pace line race. The "Best 2 of 3" figures are the average of the horse's best 2 out of its last 3 races for the factor, such as BRIS Speed 2/3. Since a horse's pace line race is, by definition, intended to be a race that is similar to today's race, poor pace line figures are a real "red flag" for the horse's performance in today's race. Note that ALL-Ways software automatically calculates the Best 2/3 figures and automatically selects each horse's pace line race.

### *Current Form*

Mark the favorite down if its recent performances have not been particularly good and there is no change today that would portend a better performance. If you are an ALL-Ways handicapper, mark the favorite down if the horse has a poor BRIS Weighted Moving Average Total figure compared to the other horses in the race. The BRIS Total factor is the sum of the horse's BRIS Early Pace rating plus its BRIS Speed rating. The Weighted Moving Average is the average rating for the horse's last four races with more importance ("weight") given to the horse's most recent races, making it an effective measure of a horse's recent form.

### *Class*

Mark the horse down if, based on the class level of today's race, it is going back to a level at which it has not performed well; or if the public believes the horse is running at about the same level as its last race but the class level of today's race is actually materially higher than the horse's last race; or if the horse is taking a rise in class today that will take it up to its "Level of Incompetence" which, in the business world, is known as "The Peter Principle". This principle simply says that managers will keep being promoted until they reach a level at which they are no longer competent (i.e., "the Level of Incompetence"). Horses may be viewed the same way. Note that ALL-Ways software automatically calculates a Race Rating for today's race that can be compared

to the BRIS Race Ratings of the horse's past performance races. This is a very powerful way to assess whether the horse is at a class advantage or disadvantage in today's race.

### *Speed*

Mark the favorite down if it has low speed figures (This won't happen very often because the public is in tune with speed figures to a fault). ALL-Ways handicappers should mark the horse down if it does not have a recent top 10 BRIS Speed figure on the ALL-Ways Top 10/Ranking report. Also, mark the favorite down if its Best 2 of 3 figures are good but its pace line figures are poor and the horse has no excuse for its pace line race (This was repeated on purpose.). Finally, ALL-Ways handicappers should mark the horse down if it has low Hall Speed figures and is changing distance category (sprint vs. route) and/or changing surface (dirt vs. synthetic vs. turf). Note that, using the concept of "Conservation of Energy", the past performance Hall Pace and Speed figures in ALL-Ways software are all adjusted (i.e., "normalized") to reflect how the horse would have performed at the exact distance and surface of today's race. The Hall figures are particularly helpful for evaluating horses that are changing distance and/or surface.

### *Pace*

ALL-Ways Newsletters #3 and #21 have extensive articles on pace handicapping that will be useful here. Mark the favorite down if it looks to have a pace disadvantage such as getting caught up in an early speed duel; or such as being a late closer in a race with a "Lone Early" or "Honest" pace shape where a modest early pace will not tire out the front runners; or such as the horse being an Early (E) runner with an outside post and other Early (E) runners with high Quirin Speed Points in the middle and/or inside post positions – Note that Quirin Speed Points measure a horse's propensity to be on the lead or up close at the First Call (the 2 furlong point in sprints and the 4 furlong point in routes); or the horse's past performances show the horse does not do well in races with the likely pace shape of today's race (see ALL-Ways Newsletter #4).

Up to this point, we have focused only on the crowd favorite. Now we suggest looking at the other horses in the race to determine which horse(s) have a real shot at finishing ahead of the favorite. You really cannot label a favorite as vulnerable or false unless you can identify the horse(s) that can beat it. And, the more such horses you can identify, the more vulnerable the favorite is. So, at this point you should be able to classify the favorite as legitimate, slightly vulnerable, highly vulnerable or false. We will usually play the race if the favorite is highly vulnerable or false.

### *Step 2: Identify your Key Horse*

Note that a Key Horse is, by definition, a non-favorite horse you are willing to single in the win and place positions in Exacta wagers or in the win, place and show positions in Trifectas. After completing Step #1 above, you should be in a very good, knowledgeable position to select your Key Horse. For ALL-Ways handicappers, ALL-Ways software provides you with its top four Key Horse Candidates on the Search Handicapping Report. At this point, you should be in a good position to select your Key Horse from these four candidates. Remember, the Key Horse you select must never be the favorite.

### *Step 3: Select your Show Partial Parlay horse.*

ALL-Ways Newsletters #28 and #29 introduced the concept of the Show Partial Parlay wager and generated an unbelievable level of interest then that continues to this day. The horse you select as your Show Partial Parlay horse is a horse you believe will finish in-the-money and that is not one of the public's top three choices on the tote board or in the Win Pool. Again, Step 1 has put you in a great position to make a knowledgeable selection of this horse. Repeat: You should select a Show Partial Parlay Horse even if you have no intention of playing the Show Partial Parlay wager.

### *Putting It All Together*

It is important to go through all three steps. It is possible that the most likely horse to beat the favorite and the horse you select as your Key Horse and the horse you select as your Show Partial Parlay horse are all the same horse. However, we always try to end up with at least two different horses and, if possible, we would like them to be three different horses. The reason is simple. If we have three different horses then we have a horse we believe will beat the favorite, another horse that may not win but that we are confident will be in-the-money (Key Horse) and another horse that is not in the top three public choices and that may not win but that we are confident will finish in-the-money (Show Partial Parlay horse). **Think about this for a minute. If you have three individual horses, you probably have the primary horses for Exacta, Trifecta, Daily Double, Pick 3 and Pick 4 wagers and a real "leg up" on Superfecta wagers.** And remember, we will not play any of these wagers unless we have identified a false or highly vulnerable favorite.

### **Summary**

Again, this simple "top level" 3-step process can bring order and consistency to your whole handicapping process. It will really help you focus on whether or not the race is

playable and, if it is, which entrants should be the primary horses used in your wagers. We have presented some of the ideas we use to identify false favorites. It is very important that you develop your own methods. And, we cannot stress enough how important it is for you to keep written notes so you develop an accurate understanding of what works for you and what doesn't.

© Copyright 2009

Frandsen Publishing Corporation

All Rights Reserved

Email: [FrandsenPublishing@Comcast.net](mailto:FrandsenPublishing@Comcast.net)

Web Site: [www.frandsen.com](http://www.frandsen.com)

Phone: 952.937.9180

*Frandsen Publishing Corporation is the publisher of the quarterly ALL-Ways Newsletters, which are widely considered to be one of the best sources of handicapping and wagering insights available in the industry. And, ALL-Ways Newsletters are FREE!*

### [All Newsletters and Major Topic Index](#)

*Frandsen Publishing is also the developer of ALL-Ways Handicapping Software. ALL-Ways is serious software for professional and serious horseplayers. Phillips Racing Newsletter calls ALL-Ways Software "absolutely the best free handicapping tool on the market" and gives ALL-Ways a 9 ½ rating ... the highest ever awarded. And, ALL-Ways Software is FREE!*

### [More about ALL-Ways Software](#)

Bloodstock Research Information Services and Frandsen Publishing Corporation are pleased to provide ALL-Ways Software, ALL-Ways Newsletters and the "Favorite ALL-Ways Newsletter Articles" series, all for FREE.

