Advanced handicapping made easy.

Handicapping is the art or science of selecting a winning horse based on the information that is available to you before the race. A first time visitor to the track might select a horse based on its name or the colors of the silks worn by the jockey. A more experienced handicapper will use past performance information that is available in the program. An even more advanced player will make his picks by using the Daily Racing Form. Professional handicappers might employ computer programs and upload raw data into a system that spits out results based on algorithms developed for specific race types.

In general everybody is making their decision based on the same information. How that information is interpreted is the difference between winning and losing at the race track. Looking at dozens of handicapping factors and evaluating them in a given race scenario can take hours, and the calculations required can be overwhelming. Not anymore…

We are going to assume that you already have a basic understanding of how to read a program or racing form, so we are going to skip all discussion of how to use those items. In fact, we are not ever going to have to use those items in our handicapping approach. We will be discussing specific factors that are available in the racing form or track program, and will provide definitions for those terms later in the book as we address them.

This guide is going to focus on how to select horses based on the Betmix handicapping system. Betmix is a website – http://www.betmix.com – that we will reference throughout this guide. You can access one race per day free at Betmix.com, but to truly take advantage of the system and all of the powerful techniques at Betmix you need to subscribe to the service. We want to be up front about that, so if you are not interested in spending $1 per day for access to the Betmix program you should probably stop reading at this point. If you are already a frequent handicapper you know that you spend far more than that on track programs and racing forms, so the $1 a day cost is going to save you a great deal of money right from the start.

If you were to purchase the Daily Racing Form everyday of the month you would be spending well over $150. At a cost of about $1 per day we can safely say that Betmix is the most valuable bargain available to the handicapper. We should also point out that the data contained in Betmix is for North American racetracks. If you are interested in handicapping European or Asian horse racing, this guide will not be very useful to you either. We are going to focus on major horse racing at tracks in the United States and Canada. We're not trying to offend our

European, Australian, or Asian friends, we love your racing, but we do not have access to the type of data we need to handicap those races using Betmix.

Handicapping a horse race

When you sit back and think about what goes into your decision process for each race that you bet, you would agree that there are several factors that you consider for each horse in the race. What is their race record? How fast are they? How fast are they at this distance, on this track or on this surface? Are they a front runner or do they have late pace? What are the trainer and jockey win percentages? Are they bred to like this surface or distance? The list goes on and on. You will also consider different factors for each race type you bet. The factors you use to handicap a turf race will be different than the ones you use for a dirt sprint, and you would look at a Stakes race differently than you would a Maiden claimer. Factors that may be very important at Saratoga might not be as useful at Keeneland. From race to race and track to track you are constantly adjusting your handicapping method – or at least you should be.

When you have finally made your selection, is it a good bet? Is there any value there? If you have reasoned that the 1, 4, and 8 horses are the most likely contenders, which one of them is the best bet? Can you say with any certainty that horse 4 is 3% more likely to win that horse 8? If so, is it worth betting on horse 4 if his odds are 6:5 and horse 8 is gong off at 10:1?

If you were able to successfully handicap the race, do you know exactly how you arrived at that decision? How long did it take you, and more importantly, how long would it take you to do it again? Could you make a slight adjustment to your process and know for sure that you were getting accurate and consistent results?

The science and art behind Betmix is its ability to allow you to select the factors you want to use in your decision, give those factors weight, and then see the horses ranked through the filter of your choices from top to bottom on a point scale – and most importantly – Betmix allows you to save your handicapping methods and apply them to other races at the touch of a button.

Assigning weight to handicapping factors

When describing how Betmix works, the first question we are usually asked is: "What do you mean by giving factors weight?"

Let's assume that you are going to handicap a 6 furlong race and the only two factors you are going to consider are best lifetime speed number and average lifetime earnings at the distance. It is easy enough to look through the PP's and pull out the best lifetime speed number for each horse. It's also fairly simple to find out how much the horse has earned in 6F races, and the number of races he has run at that distance. To get the average earnings you would just divide the

total earnings by the number of starts he has made. That is pretty simple, but time consuming, and you might make an error or two along the way since you are not a computer.

After you have computed those two factors for each horse in the race you would rank them from top to bottom for each factor. Again, it's easy enough create a list and put the horse with the best lifetime speed number on top and then work your way down. Do the same thing for the average lifetime earnings at the distance. Now you have two lists. How do you combine them? Is the speed more important than the average earnings at the distance? If so, how much more important is it? If the horse with the best speed is also the horse with the highest average earnings at the distance then you have a likely winner using those 2 factors alone.

But what if the horse that has the best speed is ranked 5th on the earnings list? And the horse with the best earnings is ranked 3rd on the speed list? You could devise a points system and give the horse at the top of each list 10, the second ranked horse 8, and so on. Then you could tally up the points from each list and come up with a combined ranking.

But what if you want the speed ranking to be more important than the earnings ranking? That is what we mean by giving a factor weight. When you weigh a factor more heavily in your decision it should count for more in the final rankings.

Looking back at the lists, you could say that the top ranked speed horse is going to get 10 points and the top ranked horse on the earnings list is only going to get 5 points – the second ranked horse on the speed list is going to get 8 points and the second ranked horse on the earnings list is going to get 4 points, etc. What you are saying is that the speed factor is twice as important as the earnings factor. Your final decision gives the speed factor **more weight** than the earnings factor. If you were to do this by hand you could probably get pretty good at it and spend about 10 minutes per race coming up with your lists. But, maybe you decide that early pace is also an important factor in a 6F race, and you want to add that too. And let's do a list for jockey and trainer win percentages. Now you are talking about a serious time commitment, and also a very boring day. Not to mention the math involved if you want to handicap based on weighting factors for each horse in the following way: Speed 30%, Earnings at the distance 20%, Early Pace 20%, Trainer 15% and Jockey 15%.

Betmix takes care of all of that and much more.

Betmix pulls in all of the data for each horse running at every major track in North America and presents the information to you in a simple interface. Let's take a look at how easy it would be to rank the horses in a race based on best lifetime speed number.

In the example below – only one factor is selected – Best Lifetime Speed Number and it is set to 5. Since that is the only factor selected, the weighting does not really matter. The important thing is to see how the horses are ranked for you from top to bottom.

Best Lifetime Speed Factor turned "ON" and set to 5

Horses ranked based on 1 factor

To get a better idea of how this works, go to Betmix.com and select the 'free race of the day' from the menu at the top of the screen. Or simply type this into your web browser:

http://www.betmix.com/free-race-of-the-day

Find the factor for Best Lifetime Speed Number, click the on/off button to "on" and then move the slider to any value. Since we only have 1 factor chosen at this point, the value can be anything as long as it is greater than zero.

You should now see the horses ranked from top to bottom based on Best Lifetime Speed number. The horse at the top is going to have a value of 100 and the horses below will have values less than that – if the second ranked horse has a value of 89 that means that his best Lifetime Speed Number is 89% of the top ranked horses. As we add in other factors the top ranked horse will not always have a value of 100, unless he is ranked at the top in every category you select.

In addition to the values in the POINTS column, you may see some **Red** or **Green** arrows under the columns labeled **S** and **F**. The S stands for **SPEED**, and F stands for **FINISH**. If a horse has a green arrow pointing upward under the Speed column, that means that he has shown increases in his speed rating over the last 3 races. For example, his most recent race could have earned a 90 speed rating, the race before that an 85, and previous to that an 80. He is showing consecutive improvement in speed ratings. If the upward green arrow is under the F column that means the horse is showing improved finish positions over the last three races. For example: 2nd, 4th, and 6th. A downward red arrow means the exact opposite – the horse is showing *declining* speed numbers or finish positions over the 3 most recent races.

Add another factor.

To add another factor to your mix, simply select a factor, turn it on and give it a value with the slider. Now we can start to measure the weighting of the factors. If you have 2 factors turned on and they are both set at 10 – then they are being given equal weight in the overall rankings of the horse. The same would be true if you set them both at 20, or 84, or 12. To make this easier to understand, think of your decision as a total being equal to 100 points. So – if you wanted both factors to represent half of the total you would set them both at 50. This becomes more helpful when you add more factors to your mix. As you add them and turn them on, think in terms of a combined total of 100. This will make it easier as you think about how important each factor is – for example if you wanted Trainer Current Year Win % to represent 12% of your total decision, you would make sure that the values that you have selected total to 100 – and then set the Trainer Current Year factor to 12.

The computer does not care what the settings you use are. If you have selected 8 factors, and set them as follows:

FACTOR	VALUE ON SLIDER	% of Total Ranking
Best Lifetime Speed	9	4.6 %
Best Speed Turf	18	9.2 %
Best Speed Last 3	23	11.7 %
Avg. of last 3 Late Pace	44	22.5%
Avg Turf Earnings	32	16.4%
Avg Lifetime Earnings	13	6.6%
Trainer Current Meet	34	17.4 %
Turf Pedigree Rating	22	11.2 %
TOTAL:	**195 Points**	

The point to be made from the chart above is that no matter how you set your ranking, the computer is going to look at the grand total of points, and base its decision on the factors selected, and weight the factors according to the value you have given to each factor.

You could have set your values this way to get roughly the same results:

FACTOR	VALUE ON SLIDER	% of Total Ranking
Best Lifetime Speed	5	5 %
Best Speed Turf	9	9 %
Best Speed Last 3	12	12 %
Avg. of last 3 Late Pace	23	23 %
Avg Turf Earnings	16	16 %
Avg Lifetime Earnings	6	6 %
Trainer Current Meet	18	18 %
Turf Pedigree Rating	11	11 %
TOTAL:	100 Points	

In the above example we have made our total 100 points, so it is easier to visualize that a value of 23 is going to be 23% of 100, and that a value of 16 is going to be 16% of 100. The results from both tables are essentially the same.

The lesson here is that as you think about how important each factor is in your handicapping decision; keep an eye on where you have set your sliders.

THE FACTORS
At the time of this writing, there are 33 handicapping factors that can be used when creating your mix. Here is a brief description of each of them:

SPEED FACTORS

Best Lifetime Speed Number: This is the best speed number the horse has run in its lifetime regardless of date, surface, or track condition.

Best Speed Number at Today's Track: This number represents the fastest number run by the horse at the track at which he is competing today. If the horse has never run on the track before, he will not have a number. Use this number more heavily when handicapping a race where several of the horses have competed at today's track, or when you are trying to find a "horse for the course" – which means a horse that may prefer one track over another.

Best Speed Turf: This number represents the horses best speed number on a turf surface. Great for handicapping turf races, but not very useful on a dirt track. There factor can be used for a horse that is running for the first time on an all weather surface, as it is believed that some horses who perform well on turf also like an all weather surface.

Best Speed Fast Track: This number represents the highest speed figure earned by the horse when running on a fast dirt track. Use sparingly when the track is muddy or sloppy.

Best Speed off Track: This number represents the highest speed figure earned by the horse when running on an "Off Track" – muddy, sloppy, sealed, etc.

Best Speed Distance: This number represents the highest speed figure earned by the horse when running at today's distance, for example if the distance of today's race is 6 furlongs, this number would represent the best speed number this horse has earned running at the 6F distance.

Best Speed Last 3: When considering the horse's last three races, this is the highest number earned in those 3.

Avg. Speed Last 3: This factor takes the speed figures earned by the horse in his last three starts and averages them. It does not consider what distance or surface the figures were earned on.

Avg. Best 2 of Last 3: This factor looks at the last 3 races, finds the best 2 speed numbers of the three and averages those. This is a powerful factor since it tosses the lowest number which may have been due to trouble in the race, off track, etc. Again, surface, distance and condition of track are not considered in this factor.

Best Speed All Weather: This number represents the highest speed figure earned by the horse when running on an all weather surface.

PACE FACTORS

Last E1 Pace: This number represents how fast the horse ran from the start of the race to the 1st call. In a sprint race (7F or less) the 1st call will be at 2F, in a route (races longer than 7f) the first call will be at 4F. Turning on E1 pace by itself will give you a good idea of which horses will be running early, and help you determine how the race may shape up.

Last E2 Pace: This number represents how fast the horse ran from the start of the race to the 2nd call. In a sprint race (7F or less) the 2nd call will be at 4F, in a route (races longer than 7f) the 2nd call will be at 6F.

Last Turn Time: This number represents how fast the horse ran between the first two calls, and is calculated by subtracting the E1 pace number from the E2 pace number.

Avg. of last 3 E1 pace: This number represents the average of the last 3 E1 pace figures the horse has earned.

Avg. of last 3 E2 pace: This number represents the average of the last 3 E2 pace figures the horse has earned.

Avg. of last 3 turn times: This number represents the average of the last 3 turn time figures the horse has earned.

Last late pace: This number represents how fast the horse ran from the 2nd call to the finish of the race. Late pace is often a big factor in turf route races and again should be looked at by itself to see which horses may be running late.

Avg. of last 3 late pace: This number represents the average of the last 3 late pace figures the horse has earned.

EARNINGS FACTORS

Horses beaten (% avg placement last 5 races): While this number is not technically a representation of earnings, it is a measure of where a horse is finishing in a race. This number looks at where a horse finished in a race and determines how many horses he beat in that race. A horse that finishes 2nd in a 5 horse race beats 3 horses, or 60% of the field, while a horse that finishes 4th in a 10 horse race beats 6 horses, or 60% of the field. This number is useful for determining how well the horse has been spotted by his trainer. A horse that is beating a larger percentage of horses in his races is running at a level where he is competitive.

Avg. earnings today's distance: This is a dollar figure representing the avg. amount the horse has earned per start when running at the same distance as today's race. The earnings figures are very useful to determine suitability for today's track, surface, distance, etc.

Avg. earnings today's track: This is a dollar figure representing the avg. amount the horse has earned per start when running at the same track as today's race is being run.

Avg. turf earnings: This is a dollar figure representing the avg. amount the horse has earned per start when running on the turf.

Avg. all weather earnings: This is a dollar figure representing the avg. amount the horse has earned per start when running on an all weather surface, for example polytrack or Tapeta surfaces. Keeneland, Arlington, Del Mar, and Turfway are examples of racetracks that use an all weather surface. Certain horses tend to prefer or dislike all weather surfaces and this factor is useful for determining that.

Avg. off track earnings: This is a dollar figure representing the avg. amount the horse has earned per start when running on an "off track". That is a track that is

rated as muddy, sloppy, etc.

Avg. lifetime earnings: This is a dollar figure representing the avg. amount the horse has earned per start for his career. This figure includes all races without regard to track, surface, condition, etc.

TRAINER/JOCKEY FACTORS

Trainer current meet: This number tells you the percentage of races that the trainer has won at the current meet (same racetrack), as today's race. This factor is more useful when the meet has been running for several weeks, or when the trainer is running several horses at the meet.

Jockey current meet: This number tells you the percentage of races that the jockey has won at the current meet (same racetrack), as todays race. This factor is more useful when the meet has been running for several weeks, or when the jockey is riding several horses at the meet.

Trainer current meet: This number tells you the percentage of races that the trainer has won during the current year. Trainer and Jockey win percentages are very important. The best trainers get the best horses, and the best jockeys ride those horses.

Jockey current meet: This number tells you the percentage of races that the jockey has won during the current year. Trainer and Jockey win percentages are very important. The best trainers get the best horses, and the best jockeys ride those horses.

PEDIGREE FACTORS

Dirt Pedigree rating: Pedigree rating measures the quality and suitability of the horse's breeding for races run on the dirt. Based on an analysis of hundreds of thousands of starts in North America, each start of all offspring from the Sire, Dam, and Dam sire are evaluated and measured for their individual racing aptitudes and preferences. Pedigree factors are very useful in evaluating Maiden Races, when there is limited information about the starters.

Mud Pedigree rating: Pedigree rating measures the quality and suitability of the horse's breeding for races run on wet dirt surface. Obviously, this factor is most important when evaluating a race being run in bad weather.

Turf Pedigree rating: Pedigree rating measures the quality and suitability of the horse's breeding for races run on the turf.

Distance Pedigree rating: Pedigree rating measures the quality and suitability of the horse's breeding for races run at today's distance.

Deciding which factors to use

Looking at all of the factors on the Betmix screen may seem a little overwhelming at first, but you will soon realize that not all factors should be considered for each race.

The best way to start getting familiar with the factors is by turning them on one at a time, and seeing what they do to the horse rankings. It is also helpful to collapse a section when not in use so that you don't have to scroll up or down on the screen to see the results.

To get the best understanding of how the factors relate to the actual race results, it is helpful to pull up a race from the historical race section. The historical race section is an extremely powerful tool at Betmix that allows you to see data for previously run races. Using historical races (any race within the database run before today's date) you can test and build mixes since you already know the results of the race.

Access to the historical race section is granted to monthly ($30 per month) subscribers. Daily subscribers ($5 per day) cannot see the historical races, but they can pull up a race for the current day that has already been run.

Select a race, and then look at the link for the results, or visit Equibase.com to find the race result. Once you know which horse won, start looking at how it ranked in the individual factors.

Turn on each one and take note of where the winner was ranked. If the winning horse was ranked near the top for a particular factor you can reasonably assume that the factor is important for that type of race. Turn off the current factor, or hit the RESET button and move on to the next factor. Again, take a look at where the winning horse was ranked for that factor. Obviously, if the race you are looking at is on dirt, you would not need to consider the turf factors and vice versa.

Through this process, you will begin to develop a feeling for which factors are most important in a given race type. When looking at an historic race, make sure to look closely at the conditions for surface type, distance, and class – is it a Maiden Race, Claiming, Allowance, or Stakes?

Handicapping Maiden races is tough – especially when you have a bunch of first time starters. This is true with Betmix as well. However, the factors that you can use to judge first time starters are Pedigree, Trainer and Jockey.

Saving a mix.

After you have gone through the process of looking at each factor you will notice which ones were best at predicting the outcome of the race – you knew the results and were able to turn on a few or several factors that delivered the correct ranking for the winner. If for example, you were looking at a 6F Dirt Claiming race at Belmont, and you selected and weighted several factors that predicted the correct result, you might want to save your settings so that you could apply them to a similar race you encounter in the future. That is the power of Betmix – *the ability to apply winning methods to future races at the touch of a button*. By saving and naming your Mixes you can do the work once and apply it over and over again. History repeats itself, and that is especially true in horse racing. The factors that predict the winner in one race are very likely to do so again for a similar race in the future.

Click the Save Mix button, give your Mix a name and it will appear in the dropdown menu next to the MY MIX label. You can also delete saved mixes by selecting a Mix from your saved settings and then hitting the "Delete Saved Mix" button. You can also watch a video tutorial on the process of creating and saving a mix by going to **http://www.betmix.com/tutorials**. As you gain experience in creating mixes you will certainly develop several for different race types, different race tracks, and surface types that will turn you in to a profitable handicapper.

MixMaker

If you are new to handicapping or are an experienced handicapper that wants to quickly discover what factors determined the outcome of a particular race then you will find MixMaker to be an extremely useful tool.

MixMaker allows you to tell the computer the top 3 finishers in a race and then have it try and compute the mix settings that would have predicted that outcome. This is a revolutionary handicapping tool, and will give you an extremely powerful insight into what factors are important in any given race.

To use MixMaker select if from the Historical Races Tab at the top of the Betmix menu:

Then select a date, track and race number. You will see two buttons, one for RUN MIX MAKER and another for CHECK RACE RESULTS.

In this example we are going to choose race 2 from Keeneland on October 17th. We click on the Check Race Results button and the chart is brought up from Equibase in a new window. We then enter the results from that chart in the fields for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd. In this race #5 More Miss Crissy won, #2 Easy Ashley ran 2nd and #9 Prarie Prize was 3rd. We select those horses in the MixMaker drop downs and it will look like this:

Now – to have the computer try and create the mix settings that would have predicted the result we have entered (5,2,9) all we have to do is click the RUN MIX MAKER button and the artificial intelligence program within Betmix will cycle through various combinations until it can find a mix that would have produced the results that actually happened. In some cases the computer is unable to match the results exactly. If that happens it will try and get the top three finishers in the race in any order in the top 3 spots of the results. Sometimes it will only be able

to get the winner on top. After clicking the RUN MIX MAKER button we see the results screen:

In this case, the computer was able to create a mix that predicted the exact order of finish in this race.

You know from the conditions displayed that this was a 6f Claiming race on the main track at Keeneland (all weather surface). You can see that some of the factors that the computer used are Best Speed at the Distance, Best Speed on All Weather, Avg Pace Factors, Distance Pedigree Rating, etc.

It is very likely that the factor settings that accurately predicted this 6f Claiming race at Keeneland would also accurately predict another 6f Claiming race at Keeneland in the future, so go ahead and hit the SAVE MIX button and give your new mix a name, something like "**Keeneland 6f Clm Main Track**".

Now – click the full access button at the top of the screen and select today's date, and select Keeneland from the list of racetracks. If Keeneland is not currently racing then you would obviously have chosen another track that is currently running to use in this example.

As we look at the races that are running today at Keeneland we would look for a 6f Claiming race. Once we find one, we would click on the dropdown list of saved mixes and select the mix we just created - **Keeneland 6f Clm Main Track**.

The computer will automatically apply those factors and weights to the selected race and we will see the prediction for today's event.

The computer has now ranked the horses using the same mix that predicted the result of the previously run 6f Claiming race at Keeneland.

By now you should be getting a very clear understanding of how powerful and easy the Betmix technology is to use.

1. You can create custom mixes based on any number of factors that you choose.
2. You can weight those factors in any way that you wish
3. You can save your custom mixes and apply them to any future race
4. You can use MixMaker to create accurate mixes for you
5. You can save the MixMaker mixes and apply them to future races
6. You can do all of this in minutes
7. Access to all of the current and past data as well as access to MixMaker can be had for about $1 per day.

If you are serious about handicapping and are looking for a simple but extremely powerful tool to help you make money at the racetrack you have found it.

We are constantly adding new features to Betmix, and many of those features have been added based on user requests and feedback.

If you have any questions or comments about Betmix, feel free to send me an e-mail at anytime, and I will get back to you with an answer.

Thanks and good luck at the track!

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