

Dean Arnold's 2006 Summer Stakes Diary

Last summer, I planned a handicapping sabbatical starting after the Belmont Stakes and running until the Saratoga/Del Mar meets get going. Well, summer's a tough time to tune out. Looking over the upcoming stakes, I realized there were too many summer stakes races around the country I'd want to tune in for. I picked a list of 20 stakes, starting with the Colonial Turf Cup June 24th, and ending with the Coaching Club American Oaks on July 22nd. The races were from tracks across the country. The only pattern or logic to my chosen stakes: I could see most of them at home on TV.

While scaling back, I wanted to try something to give my skills a tune-up. So, for each race I decided to identify the horse I felt was the most likely winner as well as the contender that offered the best value. I kept a diary to remind myself what I was thinking when I made my picks, and so I would have data to review when I was done. I tracked yields from flat win bets on each category, along with any exotic plays I talked myself into. I decided on a mechanical \$20 win bet on each selection with no set approach or dollar amount for exotics. (I decided that a mechanical exacta box or automatically keying picks in a trifecta would be madness.)

First I provide a summary list of the stakes that I selected as well as a few that I initially selected that I decided not to play, along with an explanation. For each race, the winning payoff is noted, along with my Most Likely Winner and Best Value selections with their finish positions and final odds, and the profit/loss from a flat \$20 win bet on each. For exotics, the profit/loss is shown, along with a brief note about the main exotic bet placed for the race.

My diary notes for each race follow the summary list.

This diary supplements my article in Horseplayer Magazine, where I reported what I learned about my summer stakes betting action. The summary from the article is included at the end of the diary. You can apply this review process to any group of races. Keep decent records -- conditions like class level, distance, track, perhaps connections if you're following a jockey or trainer angle, your picks and why, what you bet, and finally the results. Results of one day's betting can certainly tell a story. But results for a specific type of race over time will tell an accurate story of strengths and weaknesses. As handicappers, we benefit from an accurate

understanding of what we do well -- that information identifies which situations are mostly likely to lead to profit (bet more) and which lead to loss (avoid).

I hope that this information helps you review your own play and results.

Summary List of Races and Results

Race (Track) -- Selections (MLW is Most Likely Winner, V is Best Value) include placing @ final odds, results of \$20 win bet; Exotics results (type of main exotic bet and amount bet if won)

1. 6/24 Colonial Turf Cup S (Cnl) -- Win \$7.60; MLW Showing Up 1st@5/2, \$76; V Rock Lobster 11th@39-1 and Chin High 13th@99-1, -\$20 (\$10 each); Exotics -\$24 (exacta, trifecta)
2. 6/24 Beverly Hills H (Hol) -- Win \$18.40; MLW Live Life (FR) 2nd@3-1, -\$20; V Memorette 1st@8-1, \$184; Exotics \$104 (exacta, \$12 bet)
3. 6/25 Queen's Plate S (WO) -- Win \$34.40; MLW Wanna Runner 10th@3/2, -\$20; V Malakoff 3rd@4-1, -\$20; Exotics -\$24
4. 6/30 Iowa Derby (PrM) -- Win \$20.00; MLW Electrify 5th@7/2, -\$20; V More Than Regal 1st@9/1, \$200; Exotics \$191 (Pk 4, \$8 bet)
5. 7/1 Mother Goose S (Bel) -- Win \$8.60; MLW Bushfire 1st@3-1, \$86; V Teammate 5th@8/1, -\$20; Exotics \$74 (exacta, \$12 bet)
6. 7/1 Suburban H (Bel) -- Win \$4.50; MLW Wild Desert 2nd@3-1, -\$20; V Andromeda's Hero 3rd@19-1, -\$20; Exotics -\$36
7. 7/1 CashCall Mile (Hol) -- Win \$7.20; MLW Dance In The Mood (JPN) 1st@5/2, \$72; V Flying Glitter 8th@30/1, -\$20; Exotics \$143 (double, \$24 bet)
8. 7/1 PrM Cornhusker BC H (PrM) -- Win \$48.60; MLW Gouldings Green 3rd@9/2, -\$20; V Good Reward 4th@8/1, -\$20; Exotics -\$20 (exacta)
9. 7/2 Astoria S (Bel) -- Win \$50.50; MLW Octave 2nd@4/5, -\$20; V She's Roughin It 3rd@9/2, -\$20; Exotics -\$6 (exacta)
10. 7/2 Poker H (Bel) -- Win \$7.00; MLW Rebel Rebel (IRE) 1st@5/2, \$70; V Around The Cape 6th@9/2, -\$20; Exotics -\$6 (exacta)
11. 7/2 American Oaks (Hol) -- Win \$7.80; MLW Asahi Rising (JPN) 2nd@3/2, -\$20; V Wait a While 1st@5/2, \$78; Exotics \$68 (exacta, double, \$10 bet)
12. 7/4 Dwyer S (Bel) -- Win \$6.20; MLW Keyed Entry 6th@9/5, -\$20; V Doc Cheney 2nd@10-1, -\$20; Exotics -\$12 (exacta)
13. 7/4 Hol Juvenile Championship S (Hol) -- Win \$4.00; MLW E Z Warrior 1st@1-1, \$40; V Hot Flame 9th@26-1, -\$20; Exotics -\$24 (exacta, trifecta)
14. 7/8 Debutante S (CD) -- Win \$5.20; MLW Richwoman 1st@5/2, \$52; V Come Together 5th@6-1, -\$20; Exotics -\$6

15. 7/8 Bashford Manor S (CD) -- Win \$4.40; MLW Circular Quay 1st@6/5, \$44; V Teuflesberg 4th@42-1 (led till 1/16th pole!), -\$20; Exotics -\$12 (exacta)

16. 7/8 United Nations S (Mth) -- Win \$6.80; MLW English Channel 1st@5/2, \$68; V none; Exotics none

17. 7/8 Hollywood Gold Cup (Hol) -- Win \$3.20; MLW Lava Man 1st@1-2, \$32; V Seek Gold 5th@11-1, -\$20; Exotics -\$12

18. 7/15 Virginia Derby (Cnl) -- Win \$8.60; MLW Kip Deville 6th@2-1, -\$20; V Roman Dynasty 7th@8-1, -\$20; Exotics -\$24 (exacta, trifecta)

19. 7/15 Ohio Derby (Tdn) -- Win \$10.20; MLW High Cotton 2nd@1-1, -\$20; V Flashy Bull 3rd@3-1, -\$20; Exotics -\$25 (exacta)

20. 7/22 Coaching Club American Oaks (Bel) -- Win \$20.60; MLW Pine Island 2nd@7/5, -\$20; V Wonder Lady Anne L 1st@9/1, \$206; Exotics \$84 (exacta, \$6 bet)

TOTAL:
MLW \$400 bet, \$540 cashed -- \$140 profit (35% ROI; \$140/\$400), Cashed 9 of 20 races;
V \$380 bet, \$668 cashed -- \$288 profit (76% ROI; \$288/\$380), Cashed 4 of 20 races;
Exotics \$303 bet, \$664 cashed -- \$361 profit (119% ROI; \$361/\$303), Cashed 6 of 20 races -- 2 when Most Likely Winner won, 4 when Best Value won

Diary

1. June 24th, 2006: Colonial Turf Cup (Cnl)

Most Likely Winner: Showing Up 1st +\$56

Value Play: Rock Lobster and Chin High: 11th and 13th -\$20

Exotics: -\$24

1 3/16 (t) for three year olds, \$1,000,000.

A full field of fourteen starters entered this race at Colonial Downs. In my mind the race had two clear contenders: Showing Up and Stream Cat. Showing Up, the stable mate of Barbaro, was undefeated until he ran sixth in the Kentucky Derby. Having all five works since the Derby on the turf, the switch to grass didn't concern me at all. Stream Cat was 3 for 3 on the turf, and had the class to win the Kentucky Cup Juvenile on the dirt. I picked Showing Up as the most likely winner, but expected Stream Cat to be the favorite, so I looked at longshots Rock Lobster at 39-1 and Chin High at 99-1 as huge overlays, both having won turf stakes in the last 90 days. Showing Up ended up the 5/2 favorite, but morning line favorite Stream Cat was 9/2. 9/2 on the Morning Line Favorite or 30-1 and 100-1 on 2 longshots with recent stakes wins? I stuck with Showing Up, and used him in exotics with the other three overlays. Flat \$20 win bet on Showing Up: \$76. The 2 \$10 win bets on the value horses paid nothing, nor did the exactas or tri's I played. \$24 in exotics yielded zilch.

[Link to Chart: 1_CnlTurfCup.pdf](#)

2. June 24th, 2006: Beverly Hills H (Hol)

Most Likely Winner: Live Life (Fr) 2nd -\$20

Value Play: Memorette 1st +\$164

Exotics: \$12 bet yields \$104.40, for +\$92.40

1 1/4 (t) Grade 2 at Hollywood.

Thought that the race came down to Live Life (Fr) and Moscow Burning, the 2 betting favorites. Memorette, however, had beaten Moscow Burning in her most recent turf start, and had gone on to run off the board on the dirt. The bad recent race must have caused the public to ignore Memorette, who at 8-1 was a big overlay. She ran down Moscow Burning once again, and got past Live Life (Fr) in the final strides paying \$18.40. 3 horse exacta box paid \$104.40, and I never considered betting tri's, missing the \$352.40 trifecta of my 3 contenders :-)

[Link to Chart: 2_BevHillsH.pdf](#)

3. June 25th, 2006: Queen's Plate (WO)

Most Likely Winner: Wanna Runner, 10th -\$20

Value Play: Malakoff, 3rd - \$20

Exotics: -\$24

1 1/4 dirt for Canadian bred three year olds, \$1,000,000.

I tune into this Canadian Triple Crown race each year because inevitably it ends up full of horses that can't go 10 furlongs but are willing to try for a million dollars and a bid to win

Canada's Triple Crown. This race seemed to be a classic case of the most accomplished horse being unlikely to get the classic distance of 1 1/4 miles. Wanna Runner's resume stood out in this field, yet the Bob Baffert shipper was a question at the track and distance. The third choice Malakoff @ 4-1 had the breeding to go long (Lemon Drop Kid and a Vice Regent mare), and had just won a Gr 3 at the track by 7 lengths.

A tough race to bet, but I was right that Wanna Runner was a vulnerable favorite, he was never a factor and finished 10th. The three frontrunners that blazed through a quarter in 22:3, a half in 45:4 and three quarters in 111:1, finished 1-2-3 walking home in final quarters of 26:4 and 27:1 for a final half mile in 54--yet no late runner could rally to hit the board.

No races are more frustrating than cases of a correctly identified vulnerable favorite, yet not being able to pick the upsetter.

[Link to Chart: 3_QueensPlate.pdf](#)

4. June 30th, 2006: Iowa Derby (PrM)

Most Likely Winner: Electrify, 5th

Value Play: More Than Regal, 1st \$20.00x\$20 win bet=\$200

Exotics: \$1 Pk-4 ticket 1x4x2x1=\$8, paid \$191

Prairie Meadows now has a six stakes festival that includes an Oaks, a Derby, a sprint for each gender, a handicap, and a distaff. The first night was the F&M Sprint, the Oaks and the Derby. The Sprint looked to be a 1-horse race and Hot Storm won wire to wire at 3/5. The Oaks looked like 3 evenly matched contenders, so evenly matched that the public made them 9/5, 9/5 and 2-1. They ran 1-2-3.

The Iowa Derby was a field of seven including Triple Crown Trail also-rans Electrify and More Than Regal, and late bloomers Blazing Sunset, Spotsgone and Circle the World. Circle the World was the 3/2 favorite due to his 2 for 2 record and his Pletcher/Bejarano connections, but looked slower than this field, had never tries a stakes nor 2 turns--no thanks. I favor the stakes tested runners over impressive maiden and allowance winners, so Electrify's 5 for 9 record made him the Most Likely Winner. He raced wide throughout and faded early. The other stakes tested horse, More Than Regal, stayed glued to the rail every step until mid-stretch, tilted outside and nailed Blazing Sunset who had led since the gate opened. Late action drifted More Than Regal's price from 6-1 all the way to a generous 9-1.

The final leg of the pick four was a non-stakes event won by the 7/5 favorite I had singled. 3/5 with 9/5 with 9-1 with 7/5 paid \$191. The parlay should only have paid about \$98, so that's nearly a 100% overlay on an \$8 investment that made two unbetttable stakes easy to use and nearly doubled my score on More Than Regal.

[Link to Chart: 4_IowaDerby.pdf](#)

SIDE NOTE: Four races into this experiment I'm wondering already if my "Most Likely Winner" is really the most likely winner or just my assumption of who the crowd ought to favor. In several of these races I've come up with 2-3 contenders, and decided the highest odds one is the Most Value Horse. That's easy. But my estimates of Most Likely Winner seem almost flawed from the thought that "Yeah, the crowd will select this one..." Something to watch as this goes on.

5. July 1st, 2006: Mother Goose (Bel)

Most Likely Winner: Bushfire, 1st paid \$8.60, cashed for \$76

Best Value: Teammate, 5th -\$20

Exotics: \$12 exacta box wins, \$73.50, \$61.50 profit

Bushfire being a multiple grade I winner, she seemed like a solid contender that was surprisingly the 3-1 third choice. Teammate and Pine Island seemed like longshots that would offer value, so those three were an easy exacta box. Teammate was 8-1 and Pine Island was 5-1, so Teammate was the value bet. When Pine Island stumbled badly at the break and Teammate swerved so severely towards the rail that the rider almost fell off, it looked bad. Teammate's rider reacted by putting Teammate into a drive, went from last to first by the end of the first 1/4 mile, led until the head of the stretch, then predictably gave way. Pine Island's rider was much more patient, letting her recover from her poor start, and gradually gain. Another 1/16th of a mile and she would have won--not bad for her 3rd lifetime start and stakes debut.

[Link to Chart: 5_MotherGoose.pdf](#)

6. July 1st, 2006: Suburban H (Bel)

Most Likely winner: Wild Desert, 2nd at 3-1 -\$20

Most Value: Andromeda's Hero, 3rd at 19-1 -\$20

Exotics: -\$36

My nemesis is a situation where I hate the even money favorite in a big stakes, and expect him to run badly. Invasor won the Pimlico Special as a first time US, first time lasix runner that only won when clear leader Wanderin Boy lost focus and waited for competition. Off of this win I was ready to play against Invasor wherever he ran next. My preference was 3-1 Wild Desert, a 1 1/4 Gr I winner, and 19-1 Andromeda's Hero, another long route specialist. I liked the idea of beating Invasor so much I spent \$36 in exotics leaving the 6/5 choice off every ticket. Invasor won for fun and my choices ran 2-3. No regrets about not having a \$16.40 exacta or \$116.50 trifecta, maybe I'm just too stubborn. Isolating 2 contenders that run big but can't close the deal is enough to take the wind out of your sails.

[Link to Chart: 6_Suburban.pdf](#)

7. July 1st, 2006: CashCall Mile (Hol)

Most Likely Winner: Dance In The Mood (JPN) 1st @ 5/2 paid \$7.20 for \$52 profit

Best Value: Flying Glitter @30-1, ran 8th, -\$20

Exotics: \$6 Daily Doubles of the above two with the MLW and BV in American Oaks, 24 bet for a \$47.60 double payout (\$6 ticket paid \$142.80 for +\$118.80 profit.

1m(T) F&M 3&up, \$750,000

Not on my original Stakes List, I played the CashCall Mile when Japanese heroine Dance In The Mood shipped to the United States to run. She went off an overlaid 5/2 as the most likely winner and won for fun. I also played the Ronnie Werner shipper Flying Glitter at 30-1. The race also offered a two-day daily double with the American Oaks the next day. I used these two contenders with Wait a While and Asahi Rising (Jpn).

[Link to Chart: 7_CashCall.pdf](#)

SIDE NOTE: After the CashCall Mile I played the Landaluce Stakes. Pimlico shipper Pinata caught my eye (a once-raced Pimlico winner shipping to HOL for a stakes?); \$16.40 winner with a \$28 quinella with the favorite. Not part of this sample because I didn't play the Most Likely Winner/Best Value format, I just made a hasty decision that turned out for the good. I made a note of it as an opportunistic play that I don't want to forget--2 year old stakes in particular often offer surprising overlays that end up good bets in races that initially look unplayable.

8. July 1st, 2006: Prairie Meadow Cornhusker (PrM)

Most Likely Winner: Gouldings Green, 3rd @ 9/2

Best Value: Good Reward, 4th @ 8-1

Exotics: \$24 bet, 0 cashed

Plan "A" for this race was that Gouldings Green would be a overlaid favorite at about 3-1, and that New York shippers Mayan King and Good Reward would offer value at 15 or 20-1. The Pletcher favorite Master Command @ 3-1 was entering off wire-to-wire wins against small fields, and figured to struggle against a 13 horse field with lots of speed.

That was Plan "A". Reality turned everything upside down when 15-1 morning line Mayan King was the 5/2 favorite in the post parade. Gouldings Green was hovering around 6-1, and Good Reward about the same. I stuck to Gouldings Green as the Most Likely Winner, played Good Reward as the Best Value, and boxed them with Mayan King. There were enough other entrants at big prices to tempt me to go nuts with exotics, but I resisted (a rarity) because the odds board seemed so out of whack. By post time I didn't trust my own assessment.

It saved me money when the top two finishers were runners I wouldn't have used if I had gone 10-deep. Well, my assessment of Master Command was correct--he fought 4-wide, never got better position than 6th, and gave up. Mayan King had a similar trip and ran 13th. There's the insanity, a 15-1 morning line shot runs last--no big deal. A 15-1 shot opens at 8/5, goes off at 4-1 and runs last, and a lot of people must be scratching their heads. Gouldings Green and Good Reward ran non-threatening 3rd and 4ths.

[Link to Chart: 8_Cornhusker.pdf](#)

9. July 2nd, 2006: Astoria S (Bel)

Most Likely Winner: Octave, 2nd @ 4/5 -\$20

Best Value: She's Roughin It, 3rd @ 9/2 -\$20

Exotics: \$3 exacta box -\$6

5 1/2 f 2 Year Old Fillies

Finally some 2 year old races in the sample! My specialty. The downside is that they tend to be dominated by odds-on standouts in the Summer until there are more maiden winners to fill the ranks in added-money events. As a result, Most Likely Winners tend to pay poorly. Octave, a 1 for 1 Pletcher trainee figured to romp at 4/5. She's Roughin It was a 9/2 Best Value play--was a much better value when I bet with a minute to post and she was 7-1.... The two choices were boxed in an exacta, and proceeded to get upset by the longest shot on the board at 24-1. Ugh.

[Link to Chart: 9_Astoria.pdf](#)

10. July 2nd, 2006: Poker H (Bel)

Most Likely Winner: Rebel Rebel (IRE), 1st @ 5/2, \$7.00 for \$50 profit

Best Value: Around The Cape, 6th at 9/2, -\$20

Exotics: \$3 exacta box: -\$6

1m (T) Belmont Park 3&up

Originally not in the sample, this came up as a perfect example of having a standout and a longshot that both looked too good to pass up. Around the Cape was closer to 9-1 when I bet, so 9/2 was again not the best value I was looking for, but I liked both horses and saw nothing else of interest so I stuck with the plan. Rebel Rebel (IRE) avenged his poor showing in the Dixie H on the Preakness under card, while Around the Cape showed he's a turf sprinter that wants no part of anything beyond 3/4 mile.

[Link to Chart: 10_PokerH.pdf](#)

11. July 3rd, 2006: American Oaks (Hol)

Most Likely Winner: Asahi Rising, 2nd @ 3/2 -\$20

Best Value: Wait a While, 1st @ 5/2, \$7.80 for \$58 profit

Exotics: aforementioned doubles that won, plus a \$5 exacta box of the above two, \$27.00 payout = \$67.50 for \$57.50 profit

1 1/4 m (T) 3 y o fillies, \$750,000

I had bet Wait a While big in the Kentucky Oaks earlier this year and didn't win, but knew she was a classy runner by her 4th place finish. Japanese Asahi Rising was an obvious choice, but couldn't win on this day, maybe due to a slow pace which she trailed early. This was one race where by the time Wait a While reached the quarter pole, I was already making plans to bet her in every race she ever runs for the rest of her career, she was that brilliant. All this for \$57.50 profit, hmm, felt like a much bigger win.

[Link to Chart: 11_AmericanOaks.pdf](#)

July 4th, 2006: Tremont S (Bel)

Dropped from the sample due to a field of four that I just won't play. Won by 1/5 shot that had little competition. No way to fit this format, completely unplayable.

12. July 4th, 2006: Dwyer S (Bel)

Most Likely Winner: Keyed Entry, 6th @ 9/5, -\$20

Best Value: Doc Cheney, 2nd @ 10-1 -\$20

Exotics: \$12 exacta box yielded nothing -\$12

1 1/16th dirt for 3 year olds, Belmont Park

The most likely winner in my mind was Keyed Entry, 20th in the Kentucky Derby, but a KY Derby returnee nonetheless. I like the big class drop. In this case it didn't help--he stopped with 3 furlongs to go. Strong Contender was the choice of many at 2-1, but I didn't like a non-stakes winner that's getting a lot of attention, but has never closed the deal before. He won going away. Doc Cheney rallied for a clear second, ducking in and out in the stretch for the 3rd straight race, as if he was mocking me once again. He did this in the Withers behind Bernardini as well. I didn't like Strong Contender and was mad when the public was right and I was wrong. 10-1 shot runs big for second and I get nothing. Huff!

[Link to Chart: 12_Dwyer.pdf](#)

13. July 4th, 2006: Hollywood Juvenile Championship (Hol)

Most Likely Winner: E Z Warrior, 1st @ 1-1, \$20 profit

Best Value: Hot Flame, 9th @ 26-1 -\$20

Exotics: -\$24

6f dirt stakes for 2 year olds

Baffert ran 2 entrants, one that looked tough to beat, and one that had last run a troubled trip on the Kentucky Derby undercard. The Baffert uncoupled entry looked solid, and while E Z Warrior was pinned down inside after breaking from post 1, Hot Flame had a good run on the outside to challenge for the lead at the top of the stretch. I envisioned tax form trifectas and \$400 exactas, but then in an instant Hot Flame faltered and E Z Warrior got through an opening and won going away. Much ado about nothing to end the Fourth of July weekend.

[Link to Chart: 13_HolPreview.pdf](#)

14. July 8th, 2006: Debutante S (CD)

Most Likely Winner: Rich Woman, 1st \$52

Best Value: Come Together, 5th @ 6-1, -\$20

Exotics: -\$6

Rich Woman was unbeaten going into the race, was unbeaten after the race. Her stakes-winning resume was not enough to make her the favorite over a maiden winner from the Pletcher barn, Chagall, who ran well but could not hold off Rich Woman. This was a simple 3/2 solid favorite that didn't take too much brain power to play.

[Link to Chart: 14_Debutante.pdf](#)

July 8th, 2006: Swaps BC S (Hol)

Field of 4, making a typically entertaining betting race unplayable--no bets

15. July 8th, 2006: Bashford Manor S (CD)

Most Likely Winner: Circular Quay, 1st at 6/5 \$44

Best Value: Teuflesberg, led to the 1/16th pole at 42-1, -\$20

Exotics: -\$12 exacta box, nothing

6f 2 year olds on the dirt, GR3

Super longshot Teuflesberg beat the gate, led for 5 1/2f, and then got the wobbles and fell back to 4th. Circular Quay, the 6/5 favorite, looked beat at the 1/8th pole when 5th, then switched leads and closed to just get up. This Thunder Gulch/Circle of Life homebred from Michael Tabor is more bred for 1 1/4 than 6f, and is 2-2. A serious early threat to be a BC/Derby type of horse.

[Link to Chart: 15_BashfordManor.pdf](#)

16. July 8th, 2006: United Nations (Mth)

Most Likely Winner: English Channel, 1st \$68

Best Value: none

Exotics: none

1 3/8th (T), \$750,000 GR1

4 contenders at 7/2 or less, 2 rabbits @ 45-1 and 85-1, and one shipper at 9-1 that didn't figure, no value plays at all, but English Channel going off at nearly 5/2 was a good price for the most likely winner. That's about all I can say about a million dollar race where an obvious choice does what he's supposed to.

[Link to Chart: 16_UnitedNations.pdf](#)

17. July 8th, 2006: Hollywood Gold Cup (Hol)

Most Likely Winner: Lava Man, 1st, 1-2, \$32

Best Value: Seek Gold, 5th at 11-1. -\$20

Exotics: -\$12

1 1/4 dirt \$750,000 Gr1

Lava Man faced little opposition but almost lost to the longest shot on the board. Leading through a 1/2 in 48:3, Ace Blue (BRZ) then dropped back, but came on again to get his body in front, but lost the bob to Lava Man. The slow pace kept Seek Gold from having any chance to steal a second Gr1 in a row.

[Link to Chart: 17_HollywoodGC.pdf](#)

18. July 15th, 2006: Virginia Derby (Cnl)

Most Likely Winner: Kip Deville -\$20

Best Value: Roman Dynasty -\$20

Exotics: \$12 in exactas, \$12 in Trifectas, -\$24

1 /14 turf \$1,000,000 3 year olds

This was a classic case of multiple contenders squaring off with no easy way to pick between 4 or 5 evenly matched foes. Since Kip Deville appeared to be the lone speed and had run 3/4 in 1:08:3 in his prior race, he figured to have a big tactical advantage. He never used that advantage, keeping with the field in 1:12 rather than opening a five length lead and relaxing in 1:11 or so. He kept the other contenders in the race, and typical to turf races, he was out-kicked in the stretch. Roman Dynasty, the 8-1 best price of the contenders, never fired. Two other contenders finished 1-2. Nothing more frustrating than correctly identifying the key contenders then playing the wrong ones.

[Link to Chart: 18_VirginiaDrby.pdf](#)

19. July 15th, 2006: Ohio Derby (Tdn)

Most Likely Winner: High Cotton, 2nd at 1-1 -\$20

Best Value: Flashy Bull, 3rd at 3-1, -\$20

Exotics: -\$25

1 1/8 miles, \$350,000 3 year olds on the dirt

This was the biggest mistake I made in the sample. Six horse race, 3 contenders, three outsiders. Thinking Flashy Bull would offer the Best Value, and thinking that High Cotton and Deputy Glitters would be the top two choices, I decided to play exactas only using Flashy Bull over and under the other 2 runners. I expected a High Cotton/Deputy Glitters exacta to pay \$10 one way, \$12 the other, thus offering no value whatsoever. Instead, Flashy Bull took late money, Deputy Glitters went off 4-1 3rd choice, and the Deputy Glitters-High Cotton exacta paid \$28.40. If I had bet Deputy Glitters as the Best Value and just bet a \$5 exacta box, \$70 in bets would have netted \$173--not a huge score but easy money in a 3-horse affair. Instead I got zilch.

[Link to Chart: 19_OhioDrby.pdf](#)

July 16th, 2006: Delaware H (Del)

1-2 Favorite with no knocks, no value plays to back, not bet

July 16th, 2006: Leonard Richards S (Del)

3 late scratches turned this from a decent 3 year old stakes into a glorified small field allowance, top 3 finishers fit the ALW NX2 condition, no bet.

July 22nd, 2006: Bob Umphrey Turf Marathon (Crc)

2-mile \$250,000 turf event taken off the grass and reduced to a sloppy track mess, no bet.

20. July 22nd, 2006: Coaching Club American Oaks (Bel)

Most Likely Winner: Pine Island, 2nd 7/5 -\$20

Best Value: Wonder Lady Anne L, 1st @ 9-1, \$20.60, \$206

Exotics: \$3 exacta box, won paying \$84

1 1/4 dirt 3 year old fillies Grade I

This race lost some luster when the winner of the first two legs of the Triple Tiara didn't even bother to enter. Also the \$300,000 purse only puts this once prestigious race on par with many three year old filly events offered on the East Coast. Still, the race included some Grade I runners, and figured to be a match between Pine Island, who had just run 2nd in the Mother Goose, and Wonder Lady Anne L, who had contested many of the top filly races of her division and had been one of my top choices for the Kentucky Oaks back in May.

Baghdaria had not shown herself to be Grade I quality, but had faced a number of top divisional rivals and had just won the Iowa Oaks. She appeared a better value than Lemons Forever, the Kentucky Oaks upsetter who had no other performances to show her 47-1 Oaks win was anything more than a fluke based on a fast pace causing the race to fall apart.

Wonder Lady Anne L fended off all early and late challengers, leading to a 3/4 length win that never really looked in doubt. Whether she was geared down or just tired at the end, Pine Island showed once again that trying to rally from last rarely works against good dirt horses. Lemons Forever finished a never-in-contention 4th, and Baghdaria was off slow, rushed to reach contention, then faded.

[Link to Chart: 20_CCAO.pdf](#)

Summary

How can this data be turned into information? First, did this sample of races follow typical form? In theory, in a typical 20-race sample:

- 7 favorites should have won (Actual: 6 wins, 6 seconds, 1 third, 7 off the board; of the favored runners, 10 went off 3/2 or lower, 4 of which won for \$16.10 in payoffs, a 19.5% loss).
- 7 runners that aren't favorites but are still under 9/2 should win (Actual: 8 wins).
- 4 runners between 9/2 and 6-1 should win (Actual: 0 wins).
- 2 runners between 6-1 and 12-1 should win (Actual: 3 wins).
- 1 runner above 12-1 should win (Actual: 3 wins!!!).

This sample was therefore typical for low-priced horses winning (below 9/2) and atypical for very high-priced horses winning (over 6-1 and especially over 12-1).

Second, how did my picks and betting strategy fare? Final score through 20 races:

Most Likely Winner: 9 for 20. \$400 bet, \$540 cashed. +\$140, ROI 35% (\$140/\$400)

Best Value: 4 for 19. \$380 bet, \$668 cashed. +\$288, ROI 76% (\$288/\$380)

(Why only 19? In the United Nations S, I felt that the longshots had no shot and only selected and bet my Most Likely Winner.)

Exotics: 6 for 19. \$303 bet, \$664 cashed. +\$361, ROI 119% (\$361/\$303)

(For the 6 exotic hits, 2 were when Most Likely Winner won, 4 were when Best Value won.)

Could I have made more money? In this short and small sample, I had the most profit in exotic betting. Exotic hits and value plays went hand in hand. I was shocked. How could I go 2 for 9 on exotics when my Most Likely Winner scored, but 4 for 4 when my Best Value scored? Was this poor betting strategy on my part or a sign that keying the Most Likely Winner in exotics rarely works out? Just because the Most Likely Winner comes in, it doesn't necessarily mean the rest of the race was predictable.

THE MOST LIKELY WINNER

When planning out my approach, I thought that my Most Likely Winner would be a good anchor for exotics but not prime "win bet" material. I was both right and wrong.

14 winners paying less than 9/2 was exactly on target for my predictions for a typical 20-race sample. But when you look back at 20 races, it's still a bit of a shock to see 70% of them pay that little. Of the 14 well-bet winners, my Most Likely Winner tabbed 9 of them, which is better than I would expect long term. Of the 6 winners that paid better than 9/2, 3 were winners I came up with, and 3 were outsiders -- again, a better-than-usual hit rate.

THE BEST VALUE

I expected better than a 4-for-19 hit rate with my value plays. A 20+% hit rate is not bad, but mentally it took a toll to miss 15 of 19 times. Any time another race outside the sample had a longshot, my thoughts would wander to "that should have been part of the experiment." But it is clear in this small sample that a 4-for-19 hit rate was frequent enough to score big returns on my investment. My 4 Best Value hits netted me profits of \$164, \$180, \$58, and \$186! This piece of information has immediate application if I choose to act on a small sample: I can adjust my way of thinking to recognize that 4-for-19 was good (in fact, great if I can find that kind of value!), not disappointing. This will help me keep a positive frame of mind when I seeking value against favorites -- the favorites will naturally win a lot more often than my value plays.

In this situation, though, we had uncovered something interesting when we compared this race sample to a "typical" 20-race sample. This sample had a fairly typical number of low-priced horses win (below 9/2). But more very high-priced horses won than typical, especially in the "over 12-1" group. Long term, the ROI might not prove to be so generous.

EXOTICS

Exotics paid well, and complimented the win bets. Exotics should usually be played in small proportions to the win bets. In the aggregated sample, it looks like the exotics worked out well, but it takes only tiny variation in the outcome to have zilch instead of boxcars. I played only one Pick-4 (ticket structure 1x4x2x1 for \$8), and although the Pick 4 paid \$191, the parlay should have only paid about \$98. I always like daily doubles that pair feature events from different days, like the Kentucky Oaks/Derby double or, for this sample, the Hollywood CashCall Mile/American Oaks double that I hit, accounting for over \$100 of my exotics profit. My faith in the value of daily doubles was reinforced by this exercise.