

PREDICTING MAIDEN PROGRESSIONS

By Steve Thygersen

I am giving away one of my secrets here boys and girls, seriously. I doubt that any angle in horse racing is as profitable as correctly predicting which maiden runners will progress at a quantum rate in their second and third runs. I have been watching all of the maidens in Southern California and have been making note of those whose Beyers jump significantly after their debuts. I define quantum leap as a second run that is anywhere from 10-20 points higher than their first run; these are the high odds babies that will put a smile on your face. It applies to second runs and to some degree third runs, although I don't use it much in the third run as the accuracy is about half what the second run is, and the odds vaporize after that first progression. Note that this is a work in progress, but there are several clues I can confidently disclose:

Initial Beyer Speed Figure

Those that are candidates for a quantum progression generally had a debut run that was assigned a BSF of somewhere between 45 and 70, although depending on how they ran, you can expand the range down to 35 and up to 75. For those that run under the parameters (debut of less than 45), they can still pull a sizable progression, say from a 34 to a 52, it's just that even with the progression they are not winners, more likely running 3rd or 4th. They do tend to progress again in their next run, usually half the amount they progressed in race two, so in the case I just described they would go from a 34 to a 52 and then on to a 61, where they actually have a chance. That is the reason I say the floor figure is 45, really the base launch point that can progress to contention next out.

Here is the odd part; maidens who run a debut above 70 have a quantum progression in their second run at about 1/8 the rate of those with slower initial runs. It still happens, but less frequently and more on the order of a 6-8 point jump. It is not unusual at all to see one who ran an 83 first out to run their first ten races in a limited 78-89 range. Once you are north of 85 you are talking about future stakes runners, and their progression is usually in smaller increments (something like 85 to 90 to 93 to 97).

Interest and Finish

Here is the other factor that is critical in the prediction, that the runner showed an interest in the race and finished somewhere in the middle to lower third of the pack, but not last (I also tend to exclude the second to last's as well). How they ran – flash and fade, gained ground or “plodder” (passing tired horses) really doesn't seem to matter. I really shouldn't say that, any time they close the gap or hold position, no matter how small is a plus.

Post Debut Works

The works after the debut, especially the second work post race should be as good (or better) than what they ran before their debut. This is the shakiest clue of the lot because many times trainers will either not work them between starts in they are babies or they back way off of them. That being said, post race works that are as good or better than those before their debut are a very good sign that you have a progressor. DO NOT throw one out because they didn't have a work or had mediocre works. I do have heartburn with those that work very slow (1:15 6F, 1:03 5F, :51 4F) but I am really okay with some 1:14's or a 1:01. Use this clue as additional data, not a decision point.

Trip Handicapping

Here is what can tie it all together – what you actually saw in the race. I look for those that had a blown break, or had some other problems (squeezed, checked, bumped) or were running against a very good horse or field. How did they respond to the rider? Were they intimidated or were reluctant to go down low? THIS IS WHY YOU KEEP RECORDS OF RACES!!!

Take a look at the next page for real world examples.

Real World Examples

Now let's take a look at some real world examples:

Hollywood Park – Race 9 (MCL-25K) – Sunday December 21, 2008

There was one runner in this race who fit our profile, and that was second time starter Nordic Storm. Here is his past performance:

5 Nordic Storm		B. g. 3 (Mar)	Life	1	M	0	0	\$720	60	D.Fst	0	0	0	0	\$0	-
Own: Magali Ventures or Wing Haven Farm or Green, Yellow Magali Farms On Back \$25,000		Sire: General Meeting (Seattle Slew) \$10,000	2008	1	M	0	0	\$720	60	Wet(351)	0	0	0	0	\$0	-
POTTS C L (87 11 12 14 .13) 2008: (584 65 .11)		Dam: Nordic Weather (Summer Squall)	2007	0	M	0	0	\$0	-	Synth	1	0	0	0	\$720	60
5Dec08-8Hol fst 5½f < :22.04 :44.58 :56.37 1:02.62 3+ Mid 25000(25-22.5)		Br: Mr & Mrs Homan Hadawi (Cal)	Life	1	M	0	0	\$720	60	Hol	1	0	0	0	\$0	-
WORKS: Nov30 SA < 4f fst :48³ H 26/54 Nov16 SA < 5f fst 1:01³ Hg 48/64 Nov SA < 5f fst 1:03² Hg 48/64 Oct SA < 5f fst 1:00² H 15/36 Oct20 SA < 6f fst 1:13³ H 8/20 Oct13 SA < 5f fst :59¹ H 6/52		Tr: O'Neill Doug (198 27 15 13 .26) 2008: (882 127 .16)	2007	0	M	0	0	\$0	-	Dst(361)	0	0	0	0	\$0	-
TRAINER: 2ndStart(165 .11 \$0.82) Synth(1062 .14 \$1.46) Sprint(1258 .15 \$1.49) MdnCln(447 .16 \$1.24)			Life	1	M	0	0	\$720	60	Squeezed start,3wd str	9					

Let's see if he met our criteria:

- First Run Beyer of 45-70: 60
- Interest and Finish: 4th of 9
- Post Debut Works: no works after debut
- Trouble: Was squeezed at the start

Now let's look at the chart for that race:

Last Raced	Horse	M/Eqt.	A. Wt	PP	St	¼	½	Str	Fin	Jockey	Cl'g Pr	Odds \$1
5Dec08 8Hol4	Nordic Storm	LB	3	122	5	5	1hd 1hd	12½	14	Potts C L	25000	6.10
21Nov08 4Hol2	Winning Yield	LB b	3	120	7	6	5hd 4hd	22½	21¼	Gryder A T	22500	3.20
6Jun08 4Hol10	Captain Charisma	LB	3	120	4	7	4½ 7¹	42	31¾	Quinonez A	22500	11.10
6Dec08 9Hol4	Premier Issue	LB bf	3	122	12	1	6hd 6hd	3hd	42¾	Delgadillo A	25000	15.90
29Nov08 1Hol7	Don's Early Flight	LB	3	122	2	8	9hd 111½	81½	5¾	Rosario J	25000	3.80

Hollywood Park – Race 6 (MSW-36K) – Saturday December 20, 2008

Here is a race where we have TWO that fit our criteria, Point Attended and Flat Bold. Let's take a look at their past performances:

1 Point Attended		Dk. b or br c. 2 (Feb) KEENOV06 \$70,000	Life	1	M	0	0	\$720	69	D.Fst	0	0	0	0	\$0	-
Own: Southern Equine Stable LLC		Sire: Tale of the Cat (Storm Cat) \$37,500	2008	1	M	0	0	\$720	69	Wet(385)	0	0	0	0	\$0	-
Red White, Blue And Yellow Blocks, Yellow		Dam: Southern Tour (Tour d'Or)	2007	0	M	0	0	\$0	-	Synth	1	0	0	0	\$720	69
BAZE M C (136 16 19 13 .12) 2008: (897 107 .12)		Br: Dixiana Farm (Ky)	Life	1	M	0	0	\$720	69	Turf(284)	0	0	0	0	\$0	-
6Dec08-4Hol fst 6f < :33.12 :44.54 :57.93 1:09.27 Mid Sp Wt 37k		Tr: Guillot Eric(9 0 0 1 .00) 2008: (102 9 .09)	2007	0	M	0	0	\$720	69	Dst(388)	1	0	0	0	\$720	69
WORKS: Dec17 Hol < 3f fst :36³ H 2/8 Dec3 Hol < 4f fst :49⁴ Hg 14/28 Nov23 Hol < 5f fst 1:12⁴ Hg 5/14 Nov15 Hol < 5f fst 1:01² Hg 14/37 Nov9 Hol < 4f fst :47² H 7/47 Oct29 Hol < 4f fst :51 H 12/16			Life	1	M	0	0	\$720	69	4wd into str,no threat	8					
TRAINER: 2ndStart(22 .14 \$2.40) 2/O(40 .25 \$4.34) Synth(116 .14 \$1.95) Sprint(179 .15 \$2.56) MdnSpWt(67 .12 \$2.68)			2007	0	M	0	0	\$720	69							

- First Run Beyer of 45-70: 69
- Interest and Finish: 5th of 8
- Post Debut Works: 3F :36³ (2/8)
- Trouble: Was squeezed at the start

8 Flat Bold		Dk. b or br c. 2 (Apr) FTKJUL07\$150,000		Life 1 M 0 0 \$400 68		D.Fst 0 0 0 0 \$0 -	
Own: West Point Thoroughbreds		Sire: Flatter (A.P. Indy) \$5,000		2008 1 M 0 0 \$400 68		Wet(385) 0 0 0 0 \$0 -	
Pink Gold, Black Star, Gold Bar On Black		Dam: Be a Quiet Honey (Quiet American)		L 120		Synth 1 0 0 0 \$400 68	
BEJARANO R (224 48 42 50 21) 2008: (1241 256 21)		Br: Mohammed Jawad Abdul Mohsin Al-Jamali (Ky)		2007 0 M 0 0 \$0 -		Turf(182) 0 0 0 0 \$0 -	
		Tr: Dollase Craig(28 3 2 3 .11) 2008:(194 30 .15)		Hol 1 0 0 0 \$400 68		Dst(372) 0 0 0 0 \$0 -	
8Nov08-7Hol fst 6f f 22:22 4:17 1:08.29 1:14.45 Mid Sp Wt 39k 68 7 9 41 31 5 4 7 1/2 Bejarano R LB120 8.00 87-07 Gato Go Win120 1 Position A120 4 The Pamplermousse120 2						Off slow inside 10	
WORKS: Dec9Hol 4f f 1:12 2 H 2/7 Dec2Hol 4f f 1:13 2 H 3/5 Nov25Hol 5f f 1:59 3 H 3/27 Nov2Hol 5f f 1:58 3 Hg 3/45 Oct26Hol 4f f 1:11 1 H 1/18 Oct19Hol 5f f 1:59 4 H 11/37							
TRAINER: 2ndStart(35.29 \$1.82) 2/O(68.19 \$1.12) Synth(199.17 \$1.32) 31-60Days(110.19 \$1.57) Sprint(198.19 \$1.32) MdnSpWt(172.22 \$1.85)						J/T 2007-08 HOL(6 .17 \$1.40) J/T 2007-08(17 .29 \$1.97)	

First Run Beyer of 45-70: 68
 Interest and Finish: 7th of 10
 Post Debut Works: 6F 1:12² (2/7)
 Trouble: Off Slow

So the question is which one is the more likely to progress, they are pretty much even. There are two clues, first Point Attended finished up better than Flat Bold, finishing a steady 4 behind the leader, and secondly (and most importantly) watch the race on December 6th, where he was beaten by a very good Position A – one of the same horses that beat Flat Bold in his debut. The runner I was on was first time starter Turk, a Baffert horse that was burning up the track in the morning. Fortunately I combined Turk with Point Attended and Flat Bold in a quinella box. Look at the odds – do they make any sense? Why was Point Attended at 5.70/1 and Flat Bold 1.00/1? The rest of the world obviously had a clue on my first timer as he went off at 2.60/1.

Now let's look at the chart for that race:

6Dec08 4Hol5	Point Attended	LB	2 120 1 3	1hd 12 1/2	13	1no	Baze M C	5.70
	Turk	LB	2 120 5 1	3 1/2 21	21 1/2	24 1/2	Nakatani C S	2.60
	Black Feather	B	2 120 3 6	6 1/2 41 1/2	3hd	31 1/4	Rosario J	38.90
8Nov08 7Hol7	Flat Bold	LB	2 120 7 2	4 1/2 3hd	42 1/2	41 3/4	Bejarano R	1.00
	Coleville	LB b	2 120 6 7	7 5hd	63 1/2	5no	Smith M E	7.70
	Congaree Park	LB	2 120 4 5	5hd 61	5hd	67 1/2	Flores D R	9.00

A \$13.40 pay for the win and a \$24.80 pay for the quinella is not too shabby.

Wow, do they always work like this?? Of course not, like everything handicapping there are only general "guidelines", there are no hard and fast rules. Let's take a look at the last race on December 20th, the screwball Super High Five Race.

Hollywood Park – Race 10 (MCL-25K) – Saturday December 20, 2008

There was one who met the criteria, second time starter Natpolean:

3 Natpolean		B. f. 3 (Feb)		Life 1 M 0 0 \$400 55		D.Fst 0 0 0 0 \$0 -	
Own: St Georges Farm		Sire: In Excess'Ire (Siberian Express)		2008 1 M 0 0 \$400 55		Wet(393) 0 0 0 0 \$0 -	
Blue White, Hunter Green Emblem On Back, Pink \$22,500		Dam: Nat's Lea (L'Natural)		L 120		Synth 1 0 0 0 \$400 55	
ESPINOZA V (103 19 20 10 .18) 2008: (828 114 .14)		Br: St George's Farm (Cal)		2007 0 M 0 0 \$0 -		Turf(353) 0 0 0 0 \$0 -	
		Tr: Gallagher Patrick(49 5 6 5 .10) 2008:(342 42 .12)		Hol 1 0 0 0 \$400 55		Dst(365) 1 0 0 0 \$400 55	
29Nov08-10Hol fst 6f f 22:21 4:55 1:09.11 1:15.41 3+@Mdn25000(25-22.5) 55 12 1 10 7 10 9 1 7 1 6 1 1/2 Espinoza V LB121 21.90 79-08 Threat121 1 Tiz Salsa121 1 Skim the Pool121 1						Broke out it slow 12	
WORKS: Dec11Hol 4f f 1:48 3 H 6/18 Nov17Hol 5f f 1:00 1 H 10/46 Nov10Hol 5f f 1:01 2 H 13/22 Nov21Hol 5f f 1:59 4 H 10/39 Oct27Hol 4f f 1:49 1 H 21/41 Oct20Hol 4f f 1:48 1 H 6/21							
TRAINER: 2ndStart(58.14 \$1.84) Synth(331.13 \$1.71) Sprint(368.14 \$1.73) MdnCln(147.16 \$1.80)						J/T 2007-08 HOL(28 .04 \$0.44) J/T 2007-08(61 .05 \$0.48)	

First Run Beyer of 45-70: 55
 Interest and Finish: 6th of 12
 Post Debut Works: 4F :48³ (6/18)
 Trouble: Broke Out, Off Slow

Now let's take a look at the chart for the race:

9Jun07	11Hol6	Summer in Dixie	LB	4	124	1	6	2½	1½	12	11¾	Solis A	25000	10.50
		Lil Legal Linda	LB b	3	122	7	3	3hd	42½	31	2½	Rosario J	25000	10.20
29Nov08	10Hol6	Natpolean	LB	3	120	3	8	41½	3hd	21½	34¾	Espinoza V	22500	4.40
3Dec08	6Hol6	Kind Lady	LB	4	122	2	4	11	21½	43	41¾	Talamo J	22500	7.90
6Nov08	8Hol3	Bella Castagna	LB b	3	122	10	1	6hd	63	51	5½	Bejarano R	25000	1.80
10Dec08	1Hol3	Pink Polkadots	LB b	4	124	6	10	10	91	71½	62	B... M C	25000	2.40

So we didn't win, but we still hit the board and didn't miss the place by much. This was a tough race because the winner was back off of a layoff and the place was a first time starter.

Hollywood Park – Race 5 (MSW-37K) – Thursday December 18, 2008

There was one who met the criteria, second time starter Irish Torrent:

7 Irish Torrent		B. 1. 2 (Mar)	Life	1	M	0	0	\$400	63	D.Fst	0	0	0	\$0	-
Own: Drakenstein Stud		Sire: Giant's Causeway (Storm Cat) \$125,000	2008	1	M	0	0	\$400	63	Wet(392)	0	0	0	\$0	-
8-1 Powder Blue, White Diamond, Power Blue		Dam: Indian Torrent (Gulch)	2007	0	M	0	0	\$0	-	Synth	0	0	0	\$0	-
TALAMO J (139.20.18.22.14) 2008: (1008.131.13)		Br: Gaynor Rupert (Ky)	Hol	1	0	0	0	\$400	63	Turf(357)	1	0	0	\$400	63
		Tr: Greely C Beau(21.1.1.0.05) 2008:(113.7.06)	120	1	0	0	0	\$400	63	Dst(372)	1	0	0	\$400	63
23Nov08-6Hol fm 1 @ -24.29.45.10 1:13.48 1:37.13 @MdSpWt41k		63 2 66 64 64 5 64	B120	43.30	75-21	Acting Lady120# G's Heavenly Union120¼ Haka120¼	Chased rail, no rally 11								
WORKS: Dec11Hol @ 5f fst 1:00 H 13/30 Dec4Hol @ 3f fst :36 H 5/16 Nov15Hol @ 5f fst 1:01 H 28/52 Nov21Hol @ 4f fst :48 Hg 10/40 Nov2Hol @ 5f fst 1:04 H 40/45 Oct27Hol @ 6f fst 1:14 H 10/13															
TRAINER: 2ndStart(27.04 \$0.00) 1stLasix(1.00 \$0.00) 2YO(32.06 \$1.21) Turf(107.07 \$1.71) Routes(153.08 \$1.68) MdnSpWt(98.08 \$1.40)		J/T 2007-08 HOL 6 .00 \$0.00 J/T 2007-08/10 .00 \$0.00													

First Run Beyer of 45-70: 63

Interest and Finish: 6th of 11

Post Debut Works: 5F 1:00³ (13/30)

Trouble: None

Let's look at the chart:

23Nov08	6Hol3	Haka	LB	2	120	1	1	11½	11	12½	14	15½	Gomez G K	0.80
23Nov08	6Hol6	Irish Torrent	LB	2	120	5	6	6	6	32	21¾	Talamo J	7.00	
2Nov08	6Hol2	Brooke's Fantasy	LB b	2	120	4	3	3hd	42½	31	2½	32¼	Rosario J	3.00
		Dailies	LB	2	120	3	4	52	51½	5hd	42½	48	Smith M E	16.40
29Nov08	4Hol8	White's Scarlet	LB	2	120	6	5	41	31	42	6	511	V... J... J...	5.70

Yep, Haka won – at less than even money, and who finished right behind her? That would be Irish Torrent at 7.00/1.

Conclusions

So you just took the races that made your point and skipped over those that the theory didn't work for, didn't you? Not exactly, those were all that met the criteria for Thursday, Saturday and Sunday (sorry, didn't have Friday's past performances, but I would bet it worked there as well. It has been an extremely profitable angle for me, and it works in a high percentage of cases. Judge for yourself. Now for the caveat – if you use this system without taking into account the other factors, distance change, new surface, stepping up or dropping in class, you are going to be less likely to make money. As in all things handicapping, there is no free lunch.