



THE IMPORTANCE OF IN-RUN POSITION

Consideration of a horse's likely in-run position for today's race is a critical element of good analysis and profitable betting decisions.

In a betting sense, horses that race on the lead or just off the lead win far more often and are on average significantly better value than those that race midfield or further back. They are rarely unsuited by race pace, have minimal if any ground to make up to hit the front and are much less likely to strike interference, lose momentum or cover extra ground.

On the other hand, horses coming from the back in the field are much more subject to race pace, have more ground to make up in the straight and are much more likely to cover extra ground and / or lose momentum as the jockey tries to navigate a clear path. On average they don't win anywhere near as often as their market price suggests and are extremely difficult to profit from in the long-term.

Examples

The following table summarises the results for genuine chances up to \$10 in the market based on in-running position at a selection of metropolitan tracks.

Track	On lead - 1st / 2nd		Handy - 3rd / 4th		Back - 7th+	
	SR%	POT%	SR%	POT%	SR%	POT%
Flemington	20.0%	9.4%	19.0%	4.6%	13.5%	-16.6%
Moonee Valley	26.3%	28.0%	17.4%	-9.0%	11.9%	-30.8%
Rosehill	24.2%	15.7%	17.7%	-7.5%	14.0%	-15.0%
Doomben	23.6%	15.1%	17.7%	-10.0%	11.7%	-33.0%
Ascot	24.3%	15.6%	18.4%	-7.0%	13.7%	-21.8%

As you can see, there is a big gap between the strike rate and profitability of horses settling up near the lead compared to those settling back. Remember that we are looking at horses that otherwise appear to be a good winning chance, at no more than \$10 in the market.

My Experience and Stats

One thing I learned very early on in betting is that it's extremely difficult to win if you consistently back horses that will settle back in the field. If the average return from these horses is -25%, you have to ask yourself if those you like are being incorrectly priced in the market by at least 30% or more? That's the type of mistake the market needs to be making in the price on offer to overcome that position in-running disadvantage and actually provide you with a genuine value bet.

On the other hand, if you like a leader and more often than not they find a forward position in running; you can feel confident that over the long-term these bets will make you a very good profit. The overall statistics of horses that find those positive positions in-running are well and truly in your favour.

More than 13 years down the track of keeping very detailed betting records, my bets that raced on the lead have been incredibly profitable, with the next best those that settled 3rd / 4th, followed by those that settled 5th / 6th and so on. Those that settled well back have been big losers for me, even though I really liked them at the time of placing the bet. The very large majority would be horses I expected to settle further forward, but they ended up back.

Practical Application

One of the best things you can do to improve the profitability of your betting is to have an overriding rule to pass on any potential bet that looks certain to settle further back than 4th in running. Many of those decisions will be easy, but some will be difficult and marginal; the horse may settle in the first four or it may not. In these cases you just have to use your best judgement.

You can use your own analysis to determine the likely position in-running or any of the free speed maps available through well known web sites or Corporate Bookmaker apps. When trying to determine the likely position of a horse you like, don't become too concerned about wide barriers. They seem a big risk to on-pace / handy runners but as you've seen from other articles, wide barriers usually provide the best betting value. You will be well rewarded over the long-term if you can overcome a bias against wide barriers.

It's important to recognise that you will never make the right call 100% of the time, but the key point is if you can improve the overall percentage of your bets that settled 1st / 2nd in the run and 3rd / 4th in the run then I guarantee that your profitability will improve.

There are certainly some specific track set ups (i.e. track, track condition & rail combinations) which provide off pace and back horses with a much better chance than the average and in those instances it's reasonable to relax your decision making a little. We have covered some of these in our articles on betting insights into different metropolitan tracks.

However unless you are well and truly aware that the conditions of today's races is likely to suit those back off the pace, you should maintain the discipline needed to stick to on pace / handy runners.

Smart punting!

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