



BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO BETTING AMERICAN QUARTER HORSE RACES

~ QUICK POINTS ~

AGE: Most American Quarter Horses kick off their career during the spring of their 2-year-old season. Because of their breeding potential, the average career of a female horse is not as long as that of a male. In most cases, females do not race beyond the age of six. It's somewhat rare, but male horses, geldings in particular, sometimes race until they are 10, 11 or 12 years old.

SURFACES: While Thoroughbred races are contested over three types of surfaces – traditional dirt, turf (grass) and synthetics (man made), AQHA events are held almost exclusively on traditional dirt tracks. This helps handicappers find a consistent base for evaluating the talent.

DISTANCE: The shortest regularly run distance in AQHA racing is 220 yards, which is one-eighth of a mile, also known as a "furlong." Races are held up to 550 yards on the straightaway at most AQHA venues, while races at 870 and 1,000 yards are known as "distance" contests and are conducted around one turn, sometimes referred to as "around the hook."

SPEED: American Quarter Horses are bred and built for speed. The typical race lasts less than 20 seconds, and the start is critical for all involved. The speed of an AQHA performer is measured by the official Speed Index, a numerical rating that has been calibrated over thousands of races to determine just how fast each horse has run at varying distances. The Speed Index, also referred to as the SI, is included in the past performances of each horse.

PAST PERFORMANCES: The past racing history of each horse is contained in his or her past performances, which are published in the official track program, or in other outlets (i.e. Trackmaster.com, Equibase.com and *Daily Racing Form*). Horseplayers evaluate the past performances to see which horses fit best in today's races.

~ TYPES OF RACES ~

In order to keep the game competitive, and bettable, a wide variety of races are written by the track's racing secretary. The job of the trainer is to place their horses where they can be the most competitive.

(Listed lowest to highest)

MAIDEN CLAIMING: All horses looking for first win; horses can be purchased by other owners. Common claiming prices range from \$2,000 to \$25,000.

MAIDEN SPECIAL WEIGHT: All horses looking for first win; horses cannot be purchased by other owners.

CLAIMING: Class level for horses that have won at least one race; horses can be purchased by other owners. Conditioned claiming races, for non-winners of two, three and sometimes four races lifetime, are also common. Common claiming prices range from \$2,000 to \$25,000.

STARTER ALLOWANCE: Horses entered have raced previously in a claiming race at a designated level, but today cannot be purchased by other owners. To be eligible to compete in most cases, horses would have had to have started for the designated claiming price one in the current year, or the year before.

ALLOWANCE: Top level of "everyday" racing, horses entered cannot be purchased by other owners. Horses are often the most accomplished or most promising horses at the track. There are traditionally four allowance levels. Once a horse runs through their allowance conditions, they will either transition to either stakes, or claiming races, depending on their level of talent. Talented young horses who have not yet run through their allowance conditions have immediate earning potential.



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TRIALS: Nearly all important AQHA stakes races put their hopefuls to the test in trials before the big dance. That's because the major stakes races are highly sought after by horsemen, and trials give everyone a chance to earn their way into a stakes final's field. Horses cannot be purchased (claimed) out of trial races, and the goal is not only to win the race, but beat the clock. Most often, the 10-fastest finishers in a series of trials will qualify for the stakes final. So it's not a matter if you win or lose, it's how fast you play!

STAKES: Prestigious races where the purse money is substantial and participants must pay a fee for the right to enter the race, thus making the events very competitive.

GRADED STAKES: Stakes races that a national committee ranks among the toughest in North America, based on the yearly quality of horses that have entered. Graded stakes races are ranked from Grade 1 to Grade 3, with Grade 1 being highest. For example, the most notable American Quarter Horse races – the All American Futurity and Champion of Champions – are examples of Grade 1 stakes.

~ EVALUATING CLASS ~

As a rule of thumb, horses stepping up from a lower level to a higher level on the above-mentioned list (Types of Races) to are said to be "jumping up in class". Theoretically, they'll have a tougher time competing as the races get more difficult.

Conversely, a horse going from a higher level on this list to a lower level would be said to be "dropping in class" and often times holds an advantage over the competition in lesser races, at least on paper.

Next to speed, perhaps there is no more important handicapping factor than class.

~ PARIMUTEL WAGERING ~

Unlike a casino, the racetrack has no financial interest in who wins or loses. They merely serve as a broker. Of the money that's wagered, percentages are deducted for the track, the state and for purse money. In essence, you are wagering against everyone else in a competitive format. The money that's wagered creates a "pool". Once the race is run and declared official, payouts are determined based on the number of correct tickets.

ODDS FOR \$2 WIN WITH RESULTING PAYOUTS

1-9	\$2.20
1-5	\$2.40 - \$2.60
2-5	\$2.80
1-2	\$3.00
3-5	\$3.20 - \$3.40
4-5	\$3.60 - \$3.80
1-1	\$4.00 - \$4.20
6-5	\$4.40 - \$4.60
7-5	\$4.80
3-2	\$5.00
8-5	\$5.20 - \$5.40
9-5	\$5.60 - \$5.80
2-1	\$6.00 - \$6.80
5-2	\$7.00 - \$7.80
3-1	\$8.00 - \$8.80
7-2	\$9.00 - \$9.80
4-1	\$10.00 - \$10.80
9-2	\$11.00 - \$11.80
5-1	\$12.00 - \$13.80
6-1	\$14.00 - \$15.80
7-1	\$16.00 - \$17.80
8-1	\$18.00 - \$19.80
9-1	\$20.00 - \$21.80
10-1	\$22.00 - \$23.80



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~ TYPES OF WAGERS ~

(same-race/intra-race bets – listed in order of difficulty)

TYPE	DIFFICULTY	\$2 PAYOFF	EXPLANATION
Show	easiest	\$2.10-\$4	Your horse can finish first, second or third and you will collect. The most conservative wager in racing and your safest chance at cashing a ticket.
Place	easy	\$3-\$10	Your horse can finish first or second and you will collect. Pays a bit better than show, but you won't get rich on this path.
Win	moderate	\$4-\$50+	Your horse must finish first (WIN) in order to collect. Most traditional bet type and still one of the best.
Quinella	less tough	\$5-\$75	Your horses must finish first and second – in any order – in order to collect. A more conservative approach than the exacta, hence a smaller return. Because exacta boxes are essentially the same thing, not all tracks offer quinellas.
Exacta	tough	\$10-\$150	Your horses must finish first and second – in the exact order – in order to collect. You're beginning to take risks, but the rewards sweeten. Experienced horse players often box, key or formulate partial wheels based on their opinions (see below).
Trifecta	tougher	\$50-\$1000+	Your horses must finish first, second and third in order to collect. Now, you're pushing your luck! Very popular wager with big returns if you can conquer it. Experienced horse players often box, key or formulate partial wheels based on their opinions.
Superfecta	toughest	\$100-\$5000+	Your horses must finish first, second, third and fourth in order to collect. The ultimate thrill-seeking wager for a single race. Good luck, but note that the odds are against you. Experienced horse players often box, key or formulate partial wheels based on their opinions. The 10-cent superfecta has become a very popular wager in recent years. The lower cost allows players to use more horses on their tickets without having to break the bank.



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~ TYPES OF WAGERS ~

(multi-race/inter-race bets – listed in order of difficulty)

Daily Double	tough	\$15-\$150	You must correctly select the winners of two consecutive races. Both must win in order for you to collect. Often held on the first two races and the last two races of the day.
Pick Three	tougher	\$50-\$500+	You must correctly select the winners of three consecutive races. All three must win in order for you to collect. Much tougher than the daily double, but payoffs typically make up for it. Experienced horse players often use more than one horse in each race of the pick three sequence box, but the more horses you use, the higher the cost of your ticket.
Pick Four	toughest	\$200-\$2000+	You must correctly select the winners of four consecutive races. All four must win in order for you to collect. Challenging wager that has become very popular in recent years. Experienced horse players often use more than one horse in each race of the pick four sequence box, but the more horses you use, the higher the cost of your ticket.
Pick Six	lotto-like	\$1000-\$1million	You must correctly select the winners of six consecutive races. All six must win in order for you to collect. The ultimate jackpot wager in the racing industry is not for cautious types. If no one holds a perfect ticket on a given day, the majority of that day's pool will be carried over to the next racing day, greatly increasing the amount of money in the jackpot. Experienced horse players often use more than one horse in each race of the pick six sequence box, but the more horses you use, the higher the cost of your ticket. With six races in the sequence, the ticket cost can multiply quickly.



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~ EXOTIC WAGERING TIPS ~

Box: Most horseplayers utilize the "box" when it comes to playing exactas, trifectas and superfectas. By "boxing" horses, they can run in any order, so long as you have the right combinations. For instance, if you like #1 and #2 for the exacta, if you "box" the exacta, you will collect if they finish 1-2 or 2-1. The chart below will help you calculate the cost to make a "box" wager:

\$1 EXACTA BOX

2 horses costs \$ 2 (2x1)
3 horses \$ 6 (3x2)
4 horses \$12 (4x3)
5 horses \$20 (5x4)
6 horses \$30 (6x5)

\$1 TRIFECTA BOX

3 horses costs \$ 6 (3x2x1)
4 horses \$ 24 (4x3x2)
5 horses \$ 60 (5x4x3)
6 horses \$120 (6x5x4)

\$1 SUPERFECTA BOX

4 horses costs \$ 24 (4x3x2x1)
5 horses \$120 (5x4x3x2)
6 horses \$360 (6x5x4x3)

Wheel: Horseplayers who really like one horse may decide to "key" or "wheel" that runner with all other betting options, hoping to catch a longshot to round out their wager. This option is particularly popular in daily doubles and exactas.

Partial Wheel: This is the art of using multiple horses in a given position. For example, if you like the #1 and the #4 equally, and I think #2 and #7 are also good enough for second, you could construct an exacta ticket this way – 1-4 with 1-2-4-7. You would then have played six combinations: 1-2, 1-4, 1-7, 4-1, 4-2 and 4-7. If you bet this ticket for \$2, your cost would be \$12 (6 combinations X \$2 = \$12).

~ DRAWING "THE LINE" ~

The Morning Line

The job of a morning-line maker is to predict, as accurately as possible, the final odds of each individual race on a day's program. This often is mistaken as the track's selections for how the race should finish. Smart players know that it's merely a gauge of how the official track handicapper predicts the betting will go.

For daring horseplayers who want to make their own version of the morning line, when calculating odds, the final total of points of all horses in a given race should add up to a total between 122 and 126. How many points you assign each horse is mathematically based on the odds you think they will be, as listed below:

Odds	Points	Odds	Points
1-5	70	7-2	22
2-5	65	4-1	20
3-5	60	9-2	18
4-5	55	5-1	17
1-1	50	6-1	14
6-5	45	8-1	11
7-5	41	10-1	9
8-5	38	12-1	8
9-5	35	15-1	6
2-1	33	20-1	5
5-2	28	30-1	3
3-1	25	50-1	2