

# Student horse player gives tips

By TOM LUCAS  
Collegian Staff Writer

Horse racing, once known as the Sport of Kings, has evolved into the sport of the masses as over 50 million people passed through the turnstiles of the nation's race tracks in 1974.

Most patrons can be classified as small-time bettors—attending the races to enjoy themselves without an undue regard to whether they make or lose a small amount of money. However, there is a group of professional handicappers at any track, said David Cowman (5th science).

Cowman played the horse heavily for about a year and a half several years ago. He classified himself as a "semi-professional" at that time because he was an advanced handicapper. On the other hand, he didn't support himself solely from his winnings.

However, Cowman stressed, he quit his heavy betting and only goes to the races occasionally now. "I knew I couldn't do it forever," he said.

*"I didn't make a fantastic amount of money, but I did make some ..."*

Cowman would not say how much money he made while he was betting heavily. "I didn't make a fantastic amount of money," he said, "but I did make some money." Cowman said his biggest payoff for a race and night was about \$1800 and \$2000 respectively. On the other side of the ledger, the most he ever lost was about \$250 and \$1000 respectively.

While betting heavily, Cowman employed some tactics the average bettor probably wouldn't know about. One such tactic involved employing friends to follow horse trainers and owners around and

observe the bets they made. If either one would put down a large sum of money on a horse, Cowman might also bet heavily on the horse, figuring the trainer either knew the race was fixed or had inside information.

The subject of fixed races is an understandably touchy one. Cowman said he felt there was a substantial percentage of races that were fixed at most of the smaller thoroughbred tracks in Penn-

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sylvania. "Sometimes the jockey makes more money losing the race than winning it," he said, referring to races with small purses.

However, Cowman said, it is one thing to say a race has been fixed, as opposed to proving it was fixed. "It's pretty hard to gather evidence," he said.

Fixed races become much less of a problem at the bigger tracks, Cowman said, because the race purses are higher, making it possible for the jockey to make some decent money.

Besides knowing who to follow Cowman used several other special tactics to further his winnings. Just as he employed people to follow and observe trainers and owners, he carried several disguises, with him to foil anybody following him. He would sometimes bet as one person and collect as another.

"When you're at the track, you've got to beat the other people," he said in defense of his tactics. Another tactic Cowman used was cross-handicapping, which involves predicting how a horse from one track will perform at another track. Cowman said, "It's a good way to make money if

you know what you're doing, but it's an easy way to lose if you don't know what you're doing."

Cowman said he would do a lot of cross-handicapping at the beginning of a meet at a track. He said one time he was at Bowie, a track in Maryland, and noticed that a lot of horses from Monmouth in New Jersey were winning, even though their respective times may have been several seconds slower. Cowman said the insight could lead the experienced handicapper to conclude the track in Monmouth must have been considerably slower than Bowie and to bet accordingly. The average bettor wouldn't usually notice this, Cowman said, at least not right away.

Cowman also used to analyze the racing forms, which have the past performances of the horses running in the races. He said he would look for things such as if the horse could come from behind and how strong it was.

Cowman suggests that anybody interested in horse racing read a couple of good books before they start going to the races with any regularity. However, he said, the only way to really get good is to get experience.

*"It's a good way to make money if you know what you're doing, but it's an easy way to lose if you don't ..."*

In the long run, the average bettor will probably lose money because the state takes its percentage, the track takes its percentage and some races are fixed, Cowman said.

The moral is: Don't bet like a king and lose a mass of money.



Awaiting transfer

Immigrants relaxing at Ellis Island, New York, are the subject of this photograph by Lewis Hine, well-known for his photographs of early 20th century social issues. It is among his works on view in Zoller Gallery through April 3 during History of Photography Week 1976.

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