

## **What is the best way to use TowerForm Ratings to either back to win back or lay to lose?**

This is a question frequently asked but cannot be definitively answered. I cannot answer a laying question with any authority because I don't lay horses. There are plenty of online articles dealing with methods about laying.

But my first response is always: Please read the first three paragraphs in [About the Ratings](#) - especially the first paragraph.

Second, I would urge you not to place too much emphasis on systematic betting. I explain my thoughts on this page <https://www.towerform.net/hints.html>

Apart from that I can only suggest how to approach the ratings lists. Everyone has different approaches so this cannot be definitive. All I can do is provide the following PDF which is a collection from previous answers and general articles I have written over the years. All is still relevant and, hopefully, will help guide you to a profitable approach when considering the ratings.

The contents of this PDF may not entirely satisfy the headlined question above but I would hope it goes some way towards assisting you in your individual approach. I never give precise, would-be-infallible advice when it comes to betting. Because I always emphasise that every bettor is just as perceptive as the next and no worse than the best professional. Racing is all about opinion and I am certain your opinion is as good as anyone's.

You may disagree with some aspects and physically baulk at others but everything in this pdf comes from decades of personal experience.

The PDF begins on the next page.

## **Initial Advice**

Don't be tempted to carpet bomb the ratings; that is, make a flood of bets randomly from the ratings. I never make more than six or seven bets on a busy race day, many times not even close to that amount. It is pointless me betting every clear top rated because I know that no matter who handicaps horses, they will never be right in much more than 25% to 30% of the time. You need to be selective in your approach.

You should treat a top rated as you would treat a favourite: Is there a possibility a 2nd top or even a third top could beat it. Since only approximately a third of all favourites win, you can expect similar or less results from the top rated.

You could also do the same with the speed ratings; maybe combine the effort of finding a winner by utilising both. On many occasions - not all occasions - a second top rated on the handicap could be the top rated in the speed ratings, That isn't, of course, the be all and end all of selecting winners from the ratings but it is an aspect worthy of consideration.

## **Have an area you can specialise in, whether it be Group races, sprints or middle distance handicaps etc.**

Here are some things I do and don't do:

Personally, I rarely bet in maidens or novice races during Spring, Autumn and Winter. Also during these periods, I tend to favour 3-Y-O+ horses that show or intimate that they run best at these times of year. Additionally, in late season, I favour horses that began the season well without winning, then dropped out of form but late in the season show a little bit of improvement to the previous few runs. Fillies in form at the above times of year tend to keep their form (in the main) and it is probably the best time to follow trainers in form (the Sporting Life seems a good site to check).

I never bet on the All Weather.

I rarely bet in Selling races and will only ever consider betting here if it is a Grade 4 race – even then I may leave the race alone.

**I never bet Amateur, or Apprentice, or Conditional, or Bumper races. The only exceptions would be is if they are Grade 4 races. And, as with Selling races, I still may leave well alone.**

**I do not frequently consider big field maidens where there are more than 33% newcomers – unless they are Grade 4 races.**

**The majority of my bets are in races up to 8f (Flat) and 20f (NH).**

**I only consider betting in races further than 8f (Flat) and 20f (NH) if they are Grade 4 races.**

**I tend not to bet in races of more than 14 runners unless it is a Grade 4 race or a personal Notebook horse. Beyond 14 runners, I sometimes (not all times) look for an each way bet. This could be any of the top three in either the Handicap Ratings or Speed Ratings.**

**In the (1) and (2) graded races, I watch for market moves and I don't always stick to the top rated on the handicap. I may back the top rated on Speed or the second or third top on the handicap etc.**

**On the whole I mainly consider the top four rated horses – usually the top 3 including joints.**

**Though I bet some top rated horses, I always bear in mind the following figures:**

- **On average only between 25% and 30% top rated will win**
- **On average only around 55% of top 2 rated (including joints) will win**
- **On average around two thirds of top 3 rated (including joints – never more than 4 horses) will win.**

**The above figures are for all races rated and are, at the minimum, equal or better than other pure handicap ratings I have encountered (currently Racing Post Ratings and Timeform). The Grade (4) races give, on average, a much better strike rate – over 40% top rated winners and around 80% top two rated winners (including joints).**

**Thus I tend to concentrate my main bets on the Grade (4) races up to 8f (Flat) and 20f (NH).**

**I also note trainers in form when their horses are top two rated (including joints). You can keep track of these in-form statistics on the Racing Post website (preferred) or the Sporting Life website.**

## **Factors to consider.**

The actual process of handicapping gives us clear initial insights into a horse's chance. The ratings list should work the same for you.

From the top two or three in the final handicap list we go through a number of basic stages before deciding whether a horse should be considered a bet. There are a few stages but the time taken to get through them is relatively short with practice. At each stage we shortlist horses, then decide at the end whether a horse is worth betting - not before the end.

We limit ourselves to 20 minutes form study per race. Any longer and all sorts of negative problems can arise. If you want a simple analogy, remember that the best artists know when to lay down their brush.

### **CLASS**

First we decide whether the horse has run well in the class it is contesting, or if it has shown that it is capable of running well in a higher class. A horse running well in class 3 handicaps may not necessarily be capable of winning a class 4 handicap - and, not so strangely as it sounds, it may not even be capable of winning a class 5 race. All I need do here is quote what we say on our General Hints page:

A horse running consistently 4th, 5th and 6th, for example, in class 4 races, may not be necessarily in as good form as a horse finishing in the same places in a class 5 race. In correctly framed races where the top weight is close to the upper official handicap rating, it's logical to assume the class 5 horse running in a class 5 race has been carrying much more weight than if it had been contesting a correctly framed class 4 race. As every racing follower knows, put enough weight on a horse's back and it will not win. That is, we know, logically illogical. But it is an example of how putting blind faith in race classes can put you away from the correct horse to back. In the old handicap bands (why they were changed is anyone's guess) many class D(4) races were in effect only class E(5) races; ie; a class D(4) race rated 0-80 had a class E(5) 70 rated horse as top weight. So look at classes carefully.

One way we decide upon a horse's capability to win in a higher class is to look at the form of those horses finishing close to it in the lower class races. If some of them have run reasonably well in higher class races, then the form can be taken as fairly solid and indicate that the horse being studied is capable of running well in a higher class.

Classes are not so hard bound in maiden/novice races. The mission of the trainer in maidens/novices is one of three things; 1: To gain racing experience. 2: To lose the maiden tag; 3: To gain a reasonable handicap rating. The trick is to decide which is which. On the flat it is fairly easy. Most high profile trainers run to gain the best placing. One of the times when we may be able to spot such trainers preparing for a handicap mark is when they run 2 or more per race or when the style of the run or the breeding clearly indicates the need for a longer distance.

## DISTANCE

With seasoned flat and national hunt horses this is very straightforward. It is the flat maidens and national hunt novices that are the problem. It is always safer to note the style of running rather than breeding (Red Rum was a miler by breeding). How a horse runs is always the main indicator. So we note where in the field a maiden/novice is when it starts weakening or cannot pull out any extra. At the absolute basic level (and it is extremely basic) and assuming the horse is race fit:

A horse that weakens fairly quickly could be running too far.

A horse that is one paced may prefer a bit more give underfoot.

A horse that can find no extra is probably running at the right distance as is one that keeps on (sometimes) and is possibly one or two runs short of its best. This can be a useful factor in early season race.

A horse that keeps on could also need either an extra furlong or slightly easier ground.

A horse noted as staying on can be deceptive. It could merely mean that it is playing catch up after a soft ride. It could mean it wants further, but it could also mean simply that it was passing tired horses. The only way you can decide which it is, is by looking at its other form. If a positive pattern emerges, we put the horse on the shortlist.

## COURSE

This is a very important aspect of our short listing methods. No two courses are alike, but many have similar configurations. To be shortlisted, a horse must have run a decent race on a similarly configured course. You can see at a glance the different course aspects and whether the course will definitely suit the horse being studied via this link:

[Geegeez.co.uk Racecourse Guide](http://Geegeez.co.uk Racecourse Guide)

## GOING

Quite a simple aspect of our short listing methods, going, is factored into our handicapping. So if a horse is highly rated it is capable of running well on the prevailing going. The only time this is not true is when there has been a significant grade change in the going overnight. (fast to soft or good to heavy).

## DRAW (Flat)

We don't get overly perturbed by the draw unless it is Beverley, Chester, or races on the day that are tending to favour high, low, or middle draws. But even at the two quoted courses the draw doesn't always revert to type. On the 7.5 furlong course at Chester a high draw is not insurmountable in fields of 12 and below runners. And at Beverley when the going is very soft, middle to high draws are similarly not insurmountable. On soft to heavy ground, the Beverley track drains down to the rails and the inside can become quite slow. So we wouldn't get all twisted up in the draw

good, draw bad scenario. Certainly we take note of the draw, but we don't discard a badly drawn horse without thought.

### TRAINER/JOCKEY

At no stage of our handicapping does a trainer or jockey enter the calculations. But we wouldn't discourage you from adding a point or two for your favourite jockey or a jockey currently at the top of his game. Neither would we if you consider your favourite trainer or a trainer in recent hot form. We add a point or two ourselves from time to time. Though we only do that if a horse is in the top 3 or 4 quoted in the handicap.

If a horse shows positive in all the above aspects then it is considered a possible bet. There is just one final piece to our jigsaw.

### VALUE:

We assess what price we are willing to bet at using the very basic 1 point for each danger: 1 danger = Evens; 2 dangers = 2/1; 3 dangers = 3/1 etc. If we are a tad uncertain about whether a horse is a danger or not, we play safe and make it a half a point danger.

When looking for value, it's worth bearing in mind that one point each way on a placed horse at 20/1 (1/5 odds) gives the same return as two points to win on a 6/4 winner.

If the horse is the correct price, it is a bet. If it isn't, it is a no bet regardless of the strength of its form.

### DUTCHING

Noting everything above and looking just at the top two or three in our handicap listings, we sometimes consider Dutch betting (betting two or three horses in one race or one in each of two or more races - almost always just two in either scenario). We only consider Dutch betting in a single race if we cannot separate the top two for a bet. We have just one rule to consider before considering this type of bet. The lowest priced horse must be no lower than 5/2

Using this price rule, we bet on two horses 7 points the lowest priced horse, 3 points the highest priced horse.

If there are three horses to be dutched, we bet 4 points the lowest priced horse and 3 points and 2 points the other two - though the lowest price horse in this case would be 3/1.

You may think much of the above a little generalised and simplistic, but the simple things in life are generally always best (no groans at the pun please!!).

Being too complicated in your form reading can lead you down all sorts of false trails. This is the prime reason we don't give you multiple columns. Everything conceivable, form-wise, is factored into our handicapping. So if a horse ran such and such a race

over some distance on a certain type of going at a similar time of year, it will be factored into the final rating.

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## SPEED RATINGS EXPLAINED

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### How is the speed rating arrived at?

The speed rating is a figure arrived at with reference to six major factors:

- 1: Finishing time of the race run.
- 2: Distance.
- 3: Going.
- 4: Class of race (Group 2, Class 4 etc.).
- 5: Course configuration.
- 6: Horse type (small, close coupled, sharp, long striding galloper etc).

For the time of the race, we take the Racing Post Standard times. But instead of just using them as a basis of time run over distance on any given track, we assess them to gain insight into the speed configuration of each distance on a course rather than into the general configuration of the whole course.

For example, everyone could agree that Goodwood is a sharp track suited to the sharp, handy type of horse. And everyone would agree that Ascot is galloping track that is suited to the long striding galloper. Yet the standard time for Goodwood's round 7f course is virtually the same as Ascot's straight 7f. I also think everyone would agree that while the sharp, handy type is capable of running to form on Ascot's straight 7f, it would be more difficult for a long striding galloper to handle the gradients of Goodwood. The main reason the times are so similar on two dissimilar tracks is that Ascot's straight 7f is downhill for the first furlong or so. Plus, the configuration of each 7f course is very different.

As an aside, one little known quirk of Ascot is the fact that according to standard times, horses run faster per furlong in 2m races than they do in 1m2f races. And a quirk of Goodwood standard times is that horses run faster per furlong over 2m than they do over 1m4f. These are speed figure errors-in-waiting for all except the most adept speed raters. The quirks are not only down to the configurations of the distances but also are down to the classes of horse that generally run over those distances.

An important point to make about assessing the final race time is that we do it differently from most speed raters. Some discard the fastest and the slowest race of the day (with reference to standard times) then work out each race on the average of the remaining races. This discounts the possibility of three or more slowly paced

races. In very general terms,, we take the fastest time of the day on both the straight and round courses, calculate the speed figures expected of the race class and adjust to get a final figure. It is from this final figure that we calculate the remaining races.

Like the handicaps the race contested on the day is the one we are interested in assessing. Unlike the handicaps, the speed figure takes no account of a horse's rivals in the race. The figures take account only of time with reference to the track, the going, the course configuration, the distance, the horse type and the class of race. The finalised figure is the one that includes all these factors.

Naturally, with horses that have little form in the book – 2-Y-O, maidens, Novice hurdlers and chasers etc. – the assessment will unavoidably be an educated guess until a horse has run three or four times. Horses switching codes from hurdles to chases and vice versa will have no Speed Figure.

There is no database because, like the handicaps, we take into account only the race being run on the day at the track, on the going and over the distance. Past figures thus have no relevance to today's race.

### **Speed Ratings relationship to handicaps.**

The handicaps are always and will always be the focus of TowerForm. We have added the speed ratings because many subscribers have emailed us about including them in the service. We did not want to add them if they were a long way inferior to the handicaps. Over the years we have managed to produce speed ratings of sufficient quality to supplement the handicaps.

As many of you may know, we consider speed when compiling the handicaps. But this is a general approach. The speed ratings are more detailed and specific than the speed taken into account for the handicaps and thus bear no real relationship to the handicaps.

We have added the speed ratings simply as a supplement to show the relative speed capabilities of a horse. The handicaps strike rates will always outperform the speed ratings. TowerForm handicaps always outperform any known speed ratings. The handicaps gain an average 50% top two strike rate and a regular 60% plus of the top three ratings. The pure speed ratings we have seen only come within 5% or 10% of these figures. So the assumption that speed ratings are more accurate than handicap ratings is a fallacy. Nonetheless, speed ratings can give a valuable insight into any horse's chance. And where Speed Ratings can be considered maybe better or more lucrative is in the SPs on offer for highly rated speed horses.

### **Combining the ratings.**

Because both the handicaps and the speed ratings are assessed differently, the combining of the two figures is not recommended. No doubt, it will succeed in some cases, but not enough cases for us to be comfortable having subscribers do this. If we discover an accurate way to bring the speed ratings figures in line with the handicaps, then it may one day be feasible to combine. But until then we recommend you do not base your betting on combining the two sets of ratings.



## **Scale of speed rating versus scale of handicaps.**

We try to get the speed rating figures to relate as closely as possible to the handicap rating figures to offer a direct comparison. But this is not currently an important issue to us because the speed ratings are not intended to be a comparable service to the handicaps. As said earlier the speed ratings are simply intended to be a guide to the relative speed of a horse.

However, it does not follow that we regard the speed ratings as a useless addition to the handicaps. As with the handicaps, we are constantly working to improve the speed ratings. Currently we estimate that the strike rate of the top three is easily capable of improvement. We aim to get at least a regular 50% to 60% strike rate for the top three.

As I said in many emails to subscribers, I will never claim winners from both sets of ratings as if they were from a single service (except to point out the combined percentages of the top three of each set of ratings). I will quote winners from each service – with the handicaps expected always to be the premier and best service.

## **The best way to use the speed ratings.**

**or**

## **When would it be best to use the speed ratings.**

It may be too complicated to answer this question. But it is always worth seriously considering all horses that are top three in both sets of ratings – as evidenced below. But a good area for large priced each way bets are the speed ratings top rated that are low in the handicap ratings. To mention just two random examples from past ratings, there was Run For Ede's which was top rated on speed but lowly rated in the handicap and which won at 40/1, and Meglala which won at 12/1. You may have notice one or two more in recent races.

Something you might like to note are the sprinters (5f & 6f) that are in the top four in the speed ratings and are subject to a gamble. In fact, any speed rated top four subject to a gamble should be very seriously considered.

Sometimes a horse is top rated both on the handicap and on the speed ratings. We aim to achieve a 50% strike rate for these horses and a workable profit over time. In the meantime, you might mainly prefer to consider non-handicaps when both are top rated. But remember, it is early days and we are constantly moving to improve both the handicaps and the speed ratings.

## **Our aim in including the speed ratings**

We intend both services to produce a regular combined percentage of 65% to 75% in the top three rated of both services. That may sound a bold aim, but it is achievable (it has occasionally been achieved in the past). We will not achieve that standard every day because the nature of racing just will not allow it. But it will hopefully be achievable on most days of the week (i.e. at least three to four days a week on average – a figure we intend to improve upon over time).

By adding speed to form, we are now in direct competition with the likes of the Racing Post (Racing Post Ratings and Toppseed ), and Timeform. While we cannot offer the full services of those two organisations, we do intend to have the best combination of form and speed ratings available – better than both the above-mentioned organisations. We think we are already there with the handicaps, but we intend to get there soon with the speed ratings.

If you have other specific questions to ask about either the handicaps, the speed ratings, or the format of both sets of ratings, please email us and we will add answers to the emails we have received so far.

### **How many horses to bet a day**

Despite what others might like you to think, there are not opportunities in every race. If you think there are you should stop betting and visit this site <http://www.gambleaware.co.uk/> because you have a problem.

With so much racing many choose the scattergun approach to their betting – what I call carpet-bombing the race cards. People who take this approach never win. They continually bet multiple races with the thought that “one day they’ll hit.” They might. But here the false assumption is that they have won. They haven’t. They’ve probably regained £500 after a £2000 losing run. Such bettors constitute the majority of the 98% club that lose regularly. Don’t join that club and its attitude to betting.

With so much racing (wall-to-wall in summer) you need to focus your betting. When you pick up the paper and study the racing page you will probably look at the form of one or two in some depth and then scan the rest. Though it’s never to be recommended that you simply scan a horse’s form it still means you need a few hours a day. But many haven’t that amount of time to spare which causes them to continually read results and say to themselves, “I could have backed that.”

That’s where we come in.

We do the onerous work of form reading to produce a handicap for each race that enables you to make a shortlist of horses in each race without effort. No betting forecast or form figure randomisation of a race rating, just pure handicaps based solely on handicap theory.

So, you’ve got a handicap list with the top rated top of it and others following in order of the supposed chance each horse has in any particular race. How to make best use of the lists to win more often?

First, the handicap ratings we produce are not tips that say the top rated will win and the 2<sup>nd</sup> top will follow it home, etc. Any ratings, be they based on handicap theory or other random factors, are only guides to the chances a horse has in the race it is contesting. If anyone tells you different, they don’t understand ratings at all and can safely be ignored.

So how do you win more often when using TowerForm Ratings?

Well, no two days will be the same and we never guarantee you'll make a profit simply by blindly following the top rated in every race. On the odd day the ratings will underperform. That is the reality of the beast we are dealing with. But over time the good days far outnumber the not so good. This has been proven through decades of TowerForm (established 1994 and online in the summer of 2004).

First, you may try to confine your main betting to the top two (including joint 2<sup>nd</sup> tops) of the Graded (4) races on our handicaps. Why? Because the top rated of those races have a win percentage of over 40% and the top two have a win percentage of over 80% wins. It's a no brainer, really. Though even here, caution has to be the buzz word.

What about the other races Graded (1) and (2) and the rarely used (3)? Look only at the top four horses in the list (the top three if none are joint second or third top).

Now, if you have been with us for any length of time either now or in the past you will know we never give direct advice on which horses in the list to choose.

So there are some of the general answers to many subscriber queries about the ratings. There may be more questions you can think of.

Please refer to this PDF along with our [General Hints](#) page. One or both could lead you on to something more substantial. And remember, whichever selection procedure you use, you will be just as good as anyone else - quite possibly better.

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This PDF may not show the exact answers you may have needed. But I hope this gives you some inkling of how I use the ratings to good effect on the day of racing. If you have any specific areas you want to discuss please email me and I'll help the best I can.