

## *October 2017—Information, Please*

One of the frustrating things about betting horses is getting information.

No, I'm not talking about past performances, which are easily obtainable from several sources via a few clicks of your computer mouse. I'm talking about what racetracks provide.

Not long ago there was a super high 5 carryover at Gulfstream. But on which race? The track offers several of these bets per day, seemingly at random. Maybe there'll be a super high 5 on race 3, or race 7, or maybe not—even if they offer similarly large fields. Apparently someone spins a dial to decide the day's schedule.

Anyway, back to the carryover. I was thinking about putting in a ticket, but I couldn't figure out what race would offer (a) a super high 5 and (b) the carryover. Maybe it was the first race, maybe the last, or maybe something in between. The track's website stated that yes, there was a carryover—but was mum on which race. I checked all over the site and couldn't find a thing. Nor could I find out on other sites. So I skipped the whole thing.

Not that Gulfstream is unique. Some tracks offer early and late pick 5's, but good luck figuring out which one offers the carryover. A few months back, I was able to play a pick 5 at Turfway only after calling the track that morning, and having the phone go from official to official until somebody finally was able to verify which races were involved.

You would think that track websites would offer full, up-to-the-minute gambling information to interested players, but for the most part, you would be wrong. Among the answers I have tried in vain to find on some tracks' websites:

- Which races offer a carryover? When is the next day's carryover information posted?
- Is it a jackpot carryover or a regular one?
- Is it a mandatory payout?
- If it's a mandatory payout with a carryover but is usually a jackpot bet, are you paying off for five winners if somebody hits six (which is not the case during regular jackpot bets)?
- Which dates later this meet do you offer mandatory payouts?

- Do you offer consolation payoffs on the pick 5?
- What is your current takeout schedule for all bets?
- What is the up-to-the-minute weather condition?
- Which races have been taken off the turf?

Oh, you can find out about dining reservations and free toys promotions, but gambling information? Sometimes such a search requires the detective skills of Columbo, which is a strange way to run a business:

*Horseplayer:* I would like to give you money. I just need some information.

*Racetrack Employee:* Sorry, it's just too much work. I'm on break.