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## Identifying Vulnerable Favorites Using "Prime Power" Ratings

"There's a sucker born every minute."

-P.T. Barnum

"If it's too good to be true, it probably is."

-Anonymous

Imagine this scenario. A fellow comes up to you and says "I just bought a red sports car a few weeks ago for \$50,000. It looks great. But now I need to sell this car, TODAY. I'll let you have it for \$40,000. You have 15 minutes to decide." You ask, "Can I at least drive the car?" He replies no, you have to take the car "As is."

Probably no one reading this article would take up the mysterious man's proposition and buy the car. But let's try a new scenario. Let's say the item for sale was a claiming horse entered for \$50,000 two weeks ago, and won its last start. Now today that same horse is in for \$40,000. Obviously the horse is "for sale" today, for some owner to claim. Would you bet on this horse? Usually these horses appear dominant on form, because they are facing outclassed animals. But these types of 'dominant' horses do lose quite often, and they go off at short odds. The argument I will present to you today is that these "for sale" horses could well be past their peak form and are not 100% for today's race. That's why they have the "for sale" sign with the drastic drop in price from past efforts, making these favorites vulnerable.

### Santa Anita, March 23, Race 5, 6 ½ f turf, \$50,000 claiming

Turkish Prize, a career earner of \$606,095, was entered off a layoff of 57 days, with 2 wins in 12 downhill sprints. A Cal-bred, Turkish Prize was eligible for the lucrative stakes races set aside for Cal-bred horses, but rather than wait for one of those races his connections entered for a rather low claiming price of \$50,000. This should set the alarms that all was not well. A horse with his background should have been entered for at least \$62,500, if not \$80,000 or an allowance race.

The obvious contender was Ditch Digger. A winner of 3 races in 4 starts this year, he ran a BRIS speed figure of 97 in his last two downhill sprints, 2 lengths faster than par.

Here's how the two horses compared on the Brisnet numbers:

<u>Horse</u>	<u>Speed</u>	<u>Prime Power</u>
Turkish Prize	(103)	162.1 (1 <sup>st</sup> )

Ditch Digger	97	150.8 (2 <sup>nd</sup> )
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The large edge in Prime Power told me that Turkish Prize was "entered too cheap" and was probably a vulnerable favorite. Ditch Digger won in a photo with another horse at 5/2 odds. Turkish Prize dead heated for 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2 ½ lengths back.

Santa Anita, March 29, Race 9, 8f turf, \$50,000 claiming

Que Facil Corazon had just won her last race by 2 ½ lengths for \$62,500 at odds on. Today she was dropping to \$50,000. Again, warning belles should sound. Her main competitor was Hazen, who ran second at the \$40,000 level and was being stepped up to \$50,000 by the sharp Jack Carava barn. Here's how the two matched up:

<u>Horse</u>	<u>Speed</u>	<u>Prime Power</u>
Que Facil Corazon	90	142.4 (1 <sup>st</sup> )
Hazen	87	127.4 (2 <sup>nd</sup> )

Again, it looks like Que Facil Corazon in a runaway. But Hazen was peaking that day, coming on late under Martin Pedroza to win by a head at 13/2 odds. Que Facil Corazon was second, completing a \$52 exacta for \$2. Note not only was the fire sale horse lost, but that the "outclassed" horse stepped up and won. Winning claiming barns know when there stock is peaking and point for the right race(s) to get the money.

Santa Anita, April 5, Race 9, 6-½ f turf, \$40,000 claiming

Eventually in the claiming game, every dog has his day. And vice versa. Ditch Digger, our hero on March 23 for \$50,000 claiming, was entered 13 days later for \$40,000. This is a horse, going into the race, who was 8 for 17 lifetime, and had won 4 of his last 5 starts. Great form and a class drop is a 7-alarm fire.

Here is how Ditch Digger matched up:

<u>Horse</u>	<u>Speed</u>	<u>Prime Power</u>
Ditch Digger	97	152.5 (1 <sup>st</sup> )
Deploy Venture	91	138.1 (2 <sup>nd</sup> )
De Valmont	??	Australian import

De Valmont, with first-time blinkers, showed high speed and went wire to wire in his U.S. debut. Brave souls were rewarded with a 9/1 return. Deploy Venture ran second. Ditch Digger, "for sale" sign and all, did not fare very well, running 11<sup>th</sup> in a 12-horse field at 6/5 odds. Bill Spawr claimed him back for \$40,000 for his former owners.

## Conclusion

Horses that appear dominant on form in claiming races may be "running too cheap" and may be in declining form. Be especially wary of horses dropping in class off wins or excellent form. These horses are vulnerable to losing at short odds. Inflated Prime Power numbers can point out these "vulnerable favorites."

-- Tony Kelzenberg is a long time Brisnet.com member who relies on BRIS performance ratings in his handicapping. This is just one of many applications using Prime Power. Please note that Tony's unique application is specifically targeted to claiming events.

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