

MEASURING TRAINER PERFORMANCE

Looking Beyond Win Percentages

Data drives much in this business.

Horse pedigrees are derived from databases containing centuries of breeding records, most often distilled down to a single sales catalogue page for quick reference. Such information is frequently key to the decision to purchase or pass on a young horse, mare, or stallion prospect. Similarly, a horse's past performance record is central to nearly every claim, and most certainly considered before any serious player places a bet.

There is an abundance of data readily available to purchasers and players, yet when it comes time for an owner to pick a trainer, there really is very little data to which one can turn – beyond their win percentage – before making such an important decision. Sure, the Daily Racing Form identifies the total number of starters/winners a particular trainer has made in the current year, and at a particular race meet, as well as who are the leading trainers in terms of first, second, and third places finishes at any given meet, but that is far from a comprehensive look at trainer performance, from an owner's perspective.

EARNING A PIECE OF THE PURSE

Owners are in the racing business primarily for two reasons. First, because racing offers them an entertaining, fun business alternative. Second, they're in it to be successful, and to earn money. While winning races may be the ultimate goal, if an owner wins races, but continues to lose money, more likely than not, that owner will eventually become an "ex-owner." That subtle but important distinction is a reality often overlooked by new and inexperienced owners, and by some trainers, as it is the latter who earn a living primarily by winning races, not simply finishing in the money. Owners on the other hand do benefit by having their horses finish in the money. Every bit helps, particularly as costs continue to rise.

Many years ago, when asked if he was "giving a race" to one of his many outstanding runners, the great Charlie Whittingham said, "No one gets paid for working fast in the morning." Mr. Whittingham's point was clear; sometimes it is better to race and place in the afternoon, than to work in the morning and earn nothing.

Owners must always keep in mind that there is no shame in running for second, third, fourth, and even fifth place money. Those are earnings that either exceed, cover, or reduce monthly training costs. It's that simple; it's a practical decision that can mean the difference between your stable making or losing money.

2008 TOP 20 NO CAL TRAINERS BY IN-THE-MONEY PERCENTAGE

TRAINER	STARTERS	STARTS	WIN	PLACE	SHOW	ITM %
Gilchrist, Greg	43	146	42	26	26	64.4%
Martin, John	107	276	67	54	47	60.9%
Morey, William	168	545	151	100	79	60.6%
Sherman, Steve	193	585	139	115	86	58.1%
Hollendorfer, Jerry	215	783	198	150	107	58.1%
Miyadi, Steven	209	629	165	110	83	56.9%
Pederson, Dean	59	187	37	40	24	54.0%
Amescua, Rene	55	155	37	24	21	52.9%
Klokstad, Bud	24	80	17	11	14	52.5%
Glatt, Mark	32	78	9	16	15	51.3%
Mason, Lloyd	83	354	56	71	53	50.8%
Hess, Sr. Robert	66	221	42	37	33	50.7%
Penney, Jim	28	93	18	13	15	49.5%
Specht, Steven	61	254	43	41	41	49.2%
Mathis, Andy	38	133	20	25	20	48.9%
Knight, Terry	30	93	16	10	19	48.4%
Morey, Jr. William	39	146	27	17	26	47.9%
Bonde, Jeff	62	224	36	34	33	46.0%
Heads, Barbara	24	79	12	10	14	45.6%
Jauregui, O.	29	96	16	13	14	44.8%

*MINIMUM 75 STARTERS

2008 TOP 20 SO CAL TRAINERS BY IN-THE-MONEY PERCENTAGE

TRAINER	STARTERS	STARTS	WIN	PLACE	SHOW	ITM %
Mitchell, Mike	114	403	95	80	67	60.0%
Kruljac, J	25	111	22	27	15	57.7%
Sise, Jr. Clifford	56	158	32	33	21	54.4%
Gaines, Carla	60	188	41	29	32	54.3%
Pletcher Todd	42	75	20	7	13	53.3%
Walsh, Kathy	27	103	22	19	13	52.4%
West, Ted	36	118	29	21	11	51.7%
Canani, Julio	61	264	51	36	48	51.1%
Mullins Jeff	147	419	82	75	56	50.8%
Frankel, Robert	97	265	43	43	48	50.6%
Spawr, William	61	219	36	35	39	50.2%
Baffert, Bob	87	275	45	54	39	50.2%
Hollendorfer, Jerry	109	280	52	45	42	49.6%
Sadler, John	166	628	122	103	85	49.4%
Ellis, Ronald	59	170	32	35	14	47.6%
Koriner, Brian	92	269	44	42	41	47.2%
Machowsky, Michael	33	94	16	18	10	46.8%
Harty, Eoin	55	125	19	23	16	46.4%
Eurton, Peter	29	119	18	21	16	46.2%
Shirreffs, John	41	102	16	16	14	45.1%

*MINIMUM 75 STARTERS

VARIED STATISTICAL MEASUREMENTS

According to The Jockey Club, based on the number of 2007 Thoroughbred starters in the U.S., the average number of starts per starter was approximately 6.3. To obtain a clearer sense of how that number compared to similar information for California Thoroughbred racing, TOC identified the comparable numbers for 2008 California Thoroughbred starters as 3.7

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starts per starter in Southern California, and 4.1 for Northern California.

Additionally, TOC analyzed starts, starter, earnings, and placing data – overall and by race type – for all trainers starting a Thoroughbred on the Northern and Southern California circuits, in 2007 and 2008. Because we did our analysis on a circuit basis and by trainer, rather than statewide and by horse, the numbers are admittedly not entirely comparable to the national average number of starts by starters/horse, as some horses were claimed or changed barns, and thus started for more than one trainer in the same year. Nonetheless, the intent of this effort was to establish an objectively derived basis from which owners might have a better sense of comparison within the circuit their horses most often compete. For instance, in Northern California, for the year 2008, Thoroughbred trainers started a horse an average of 3.4 starts/year whereas in Southern California, during the same period, they averaged 3.2 starts/year, with the median for starts at 2.4 and 3.0 respectively.

Because every trainer’s stable varies in composition – i.e., stakes, maiden, claiming, and allowance horses – simply comparing average numbers between them would only tell half the story, if that. After all, one would expect that those stables consisting predominantly of stakes caliber horses would lead certain statistical categories such as average earnings per starter and per start, which they generally do.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA 2008, by Earnings Per Start						
Overall Average	14.3	45.6	\$239,114.03	3.2	\$7,225.15	
Overall Median	4.0	12.0	\$31,360.00	3.0	\$2,613.33	
Trainer Last Name	First Name	Starters	Starts	Earnings	Starts/Starter	Earnings/Start
Shirreffs	John	41	102	\$3,369,793.00	2.5	\$33,037.19
Pletcher	Todd	42	75	\$1,768,378.00	1.8	\$23,578.37
Paasch	Christopher	26	85	\$1,876,158.00	3.3	\$22,072.45
Baffert	Bob	87	275	\$5,538,805.00	3.2	\$20,141.11
Harty	Eoin	55	125	\$2,478,042.00	2.3	\$19,824.34
Frankel	Robert	97	265	\$5,237,693.00	2.7	\$19,764.88
Headley	Bruce	38	148	\$1,993,761.00	3.9	\$13,471.36
Gaines	Carla	60	188	\$2,496,520.00	3.1	\$13,279.36
Canani	Julio	61	264	\$3,168,240.00	4.3	\$12,000.91
Hollendorfer	Jerry	109	280	\$3,307,040.00	2.6	\$11,810.86

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA 2008, by Earnings Per Start						
Overall Average	12.8	43.1	\$101,789.99	3.4	\$2,364.22	
Overall Median	5.0	12.0	\$17,470.00	2.4	\$1,455.83	
Trainer Last Name	First Name	Starters	Starts	Earnings	Starts/Starter	Earnings/Start
Gilchrist	Greg	43	146	\$1,054,070.00	3.4	\$7,219.66
Hollendorfer	Jerry	215	783	\$3,866,333.00	3.6	\$4,937.85
Morey, Jr.	William	39	146	\$650,834.00	3.7	\$4,457.77
Klokstad	Bud	24	80	\$352,270.00	3.3	\$4,403.38
Morey	William	168	545	\$2,345,188.00	3.2	\$4,303.10
Specht	Steven	61	254	\$967,110.00	4.2	\$3,807.52
Tekos, Jr.	Angelo	17	56	\$207,745.00	3.3	\$3,709.73
Martin	John	107	276	\$954,206.00	2.6	\$3,457.27
Pederson	Dean	59	187	\$632,026.00	3.2	\$3,379.82
Bonde	Jeff	62	224	\$751,782.00	3.6	\$3,356.17

*For trainers with 50 or more starts

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA 2008, by Earnings Per Starter						
Overall Average	14.3	45.6	\$239,114.03	3.2	\$22,973.87	
Overall Median	4.0	12.0	\$31,360.00	3.0	\$7,840.00	
Trainer Last Name	First Name	Starters	Starts	Earnings	Starts/Starter	Earnings/Starter
Shirreffs	John	41	102	\$3,369,793.00	2.5	\$82,190.07
Paasch	Christopher	26	85	\$1,876,158.00	3.3	\$72,159.92
Baffert	Bob	87	275	\$5,538,805.00	3.2	\$63,664.43
Frankel	Robert	97	265	\$5,237,693.00	2.7	\$53,996.84
Headley	Bruce	38	148	\$1,993,761.00	3.9	\$52,467.39
Canani	Julio	61	264	\$3,168,240.00	4.3	\$51,938.36
Abrams	Barry	53	248	\$2,731,966.00	4.7	\$51,546.53
Harty	Eoin	55	125	\$2,478,042.00	2.3	\$45,055.31
Sadler	John	166	628	\$7,228,026.00	3.8	\$43,542.33
Pletcher	Todd	42	75	\$1,768,378.00	1.8	\$42,104.24

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA 2008, by Earnings Per Starter						
Overall Average	12.8	43.1	\$101,789.99	3.4	\$7,953.63	
Overall Median	5.0	12.0	\$17,470.00	2.4	\$3,494.00	
Trainer Last Name	First Name	Starters	Starts	Earnings	Starts/Starter	Earnings/Starter
Gilchrist	Greg	43	146	\$1,054,070.00	3.4	\$24,513.26
Hansen	Roger	27	169	\$521,248.00	6.3	\$19,305.48
Hollendorfer	Jerry	215	783	\$3,866,333.00	3.6	\$17,982.94
Morey, Jr.	William	39	146	\$650,834.00	3.7	\$16,688.05
Specht	Steven	61	254	\$967,110.00	4.2	\$15,854.26
Buc	John	7	60	\$104,328.00	8.6	\$14,904.00
Klokstad	Bud	24	80	\$352,270.00	3.3	\$14,677.92
Delia	William	32	172	\$469,402.00	5.4	\$14,668.81
Morey	William	168	545	\$2,345,188.00	3.2	\$13,959.45
Paszkeicz	Alex	24	139	\$316,866.00	5.8	\$13,202.75

*For trainers with 50 or more starts

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But by breaking down these statistics into general race-type categories, owners are able to gather a better sense of trainer performance than they are afforded simply by looking at trainer win percentages. That is precisely what TOC did; in addition to providing general statistics, we broke the numbers down further, separating performance in stakes, allowance, allowance/optional claiming, claiming, maiden special weight, and maiden claiming race categories. The complete analysis can be found online at www.toconline.com.

In our experience, there are several additional insightful measures by which one might choose to gauge trainer performance, including:

- Average earnings per start;
- Average earnings per starter;
- Total number of starters and starts;
- Average earnings per non-stakes race starters;
- Success with maidens.

No matter what measure of trainer performance an owner prefers to consider – including non-statistical considerations such as communication, service, candor, personality, etc. – it is vital that owners continue to exercise control over their own stables; i.e., the races in which your horses compete, and who it is that trains those horses.

If you are like most Thoroughbred owners, you're in this business not to continually lose money, but to enjoy a modicum of success, both intrinsically and financially. Take the time necessary to gather the facts and to make the important decisions that will affect the success of your stable. Learn as much as you can about those you ask to train your horses. Use all of the information you can obtain to ask meaningful questions about your horses. If your horses are not performing at levels considered "average" or near the median, make certain you try to understand why that is.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA 2008, by Earnings Per Start (Non-Stakes)						
Overall Average	16.4	49.6	\$209,259.81	3.0		\$4,251.70
Overall Median	6.0	17.0	\$33,540.00	2.8		\$1,972.94
Trainer Last Name	Trainer First Name	Starters	Starts	Earnings	Starts/Starter	Earnings/Start
Gaines	Carla	56	151	\$1,348,844.00	2.7	\$8,932.74
Frankel	Robert	78	185	\$1,626,390.00	2.4	\$8,791.30
Canani	Julio	54	202	\$1,611,372.00	3.7	\$7,977.09
Walsh	Kathy	25	89	\$705,042.00	3.6	\$7,921.82
Mitchell	Mike	103	338	\$2,584,865.00	3.3	\$7,647.53
Machowsky	Michael	33	88	\$657,440.00	2.7	\$7,470.91
Sadler	John	154	497	\$3,666,030.00	3.2	\$7,376.32
Hollendorfer	Jerry	100	226	\$1,606,730.00	2.3	\$7,109.42
Ellis	Ronald	57	158	\$1,113,302.00	2.8	\$7,046.22
West	Ted	35	102	\$718,186.00	2.9	\$7,041.04

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA 2008, by Earnings Per Start (Non-Stakes)						
Overall Average	12.6	42.6	\$91,987.32	3.4		\$2,158.11
Overall Median	5.0	12.0	\$13,810.00	2.4		\$1,150.83
Trainer Last Name	Trainer First Name	Starters	Starts	Earnings	Starts/Starter	Earnings/Start
Gilchrist	Greg	41	126	\$632,670.00	3.1	\$5,021.19
Hollendorfer	Jerry	207	716	\$3,120,833.00	3.5	\$4,358.71
Morey	William	168	540	\$2,299,688.00	3.2	\$4,258.68
Tekos, Jr.	Angelo	17	54	\$204,145.00	3.2	\$3,780.46
Klokstad	Bud	23	77	\$269,770.00	3.3	\$3,503.51
Martin	John	107	271	\$906,906.00	2.5	\$3,346.52
Knight	Terry	29	91	\$304,450.00	3.1	\$3,345.60
Bonde	Jeff	61	211	\$693,182.00	3.5	\$3,285.22
Pederson	Dean	58	178	\$581,936.00	3.1	\$3,269.30
Specht	Steven	60	247	\$783,310.00	4.1	\$3,171.30

*For trainers with 50 or more starts

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA 2008, by Earnings Per Starter (Non-Stakes)						
Overall Average	16.4	49.6	\$209,259.81	3.0		\$12,791.74
Overall Median	6.0	17.0	\$33,540.00	2.8		\$5,590.00
Trainer Last Name	Trainer First Name	Starters	Starts	Earnings	Starts/Starter	Earnings/Starter
Canani	Julio	54	202	\$1,611,372.00	3.7	\$29,840.22
Walsh	Kathy	25	89	\$705,042.00	3.6	\$28,201.68
Krujac	J.	25	100	\$676,760.00	4.0	\$27,070.40
Mitchell	Mike	103	338	\$2,584,865.00	3.3	\$25,095.78
Gaines	Carla	56	151	\$1,348,844.00	2.7	\$24,086.50
Abrams	Barry	51	187	\$1,221,564.00	3.7	\$23,952.24
Sadler	John	154	497	\$3,666,030.00	3.2	\$23,805.39
Cecil	Ben	30	102	\$694,844.00	3.4	\$23,161.47
Frankel	Robert	78	185	\$1,626,390.00	2.4	\$20,851.15
Eurton	Peter	29	118	\$604,356.00	4.1	\$20,839.86

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA 2008, by Earnings Per Starter (Non-Stakes)						
Overall Average	12.6	42.6	\$91,987.32	3.4		\$7,283.68
Overall Median	5.0	12.0	\$13,810.00	2.4		\$2,762.00
Trainer Last Name	Trainer First Name	Starters	Starts	Earnings	Starts/Starter	Earnings/Starter
Hansen	Roger	27	162	\$448,098.00	6.0	\$16,596.22
Gilchrist	Greg	41	126	\$632,670.00	3.1	\$15,430.98
Hollendorfer	Jerry	207	716	\$3,120,833.00	3.5	\$15,076.49
Buc	John	7	59	\$104,028.00	8.4	\$14,861.14
Delia	William	32	171	\$459,302.00	5.3	\$14,353.19
Morey	William	168	540	\$2,299,688.00	3.2	\$13,688.62
Specht	Steven	60	247	\$783,310.00	4.1	\$13,055.17
Mason	Lloyd	82	350	\$1,012,388.00	4.3	\$12,346.20
Tekos, Jr.	Angelo	17	54	\$204,145.00	3.2	\$12,008.53
Paszkeicz	Alex	24	136	\$284,866.00	5.7	\$11,869.42

*For trainers with 50 or more starts