



RATINGS BASED HANDICAPPING SYSTEM

Principles of the Ratings System

The basis of the Ratings Based Handicapping System (RBHS) is unashamedly gleaned from the universally acclaimed thoroughbred model introduced in 2006 and its ideology which dictates that handicapping principles remain fair, consistent, transparent and with the highest level of integrity at all times.

Like the thoroughbred code, we must be mindful that all racing participants, as well as the general public, have every right to gain an understanding of the way in which their horse is handicapped. So, in addition to functionality, any new handicapping system must be considerably more user-friendly than the present system.

The Ratings Based Handicapping System will yield a far more appealing racing product and consequently deliver enhanced wagering returns whilst simultaneously offering a fairer degree of prizemoney opportunities for all horses irrespective of ability.

The ratings system is bound by the below matrix, with horses commencing their career at 50 points:

Race Stake	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th - Last
0 - 2,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2,001 - 4,500	2	0	0	0	0	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1
4,501 – 5,500	3	1	0	0	0	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1
5,501 – 8,500	4	1	0	0	0	-1	-1	-1	-1	-2
8,501 – 14,999	5	1	0	0	0	0	-1	-1	-2	-2
15,000 – 49,999	6	2	1	0	0	0	-1	-2	-3	-3
50,000+	7	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

FUNDAMENTALS

The fundamentals of the RBHS are:

Simplicity

An essential goal for good understanding by all stakeholders but critical for owners, trainers and punters. Movement in the proposed RBHS is up and down one single line without reference to or locking into adjacent and complicated scales as is now the case with R, C and M classifications.

Accuracy

A horse's rating points must truly reflect its overall performance profile.

Uniformity

Harness benchmark values need to closely relate to the very successful thoroughbred RBHS. This will greatly assist punters to evaluate the ability of horses and piggy-backing the thoroughbred RHBS will breed much-needed familiarity with harness handicapping.

Equality

Each and every horse will commence and progress through the system via an incremental allocation of pre-designated rating points, penalties or deductions.

Real Time

Goes hand-in-hand with ultimate accuracy as the rating for every horse is automatically subject to change after each start therefore its ability and current form is immediately reflected by its rating points. Consequently, the present 'drop back' rule would be superseded by a more functional and wholly integrated process.

OBJECTIVES

Whilst differentiated from the above 'fundamentals', the following elementary objectives are nonetheless most important and will help to deliver significantly more favourable outcomes under a RBHS than under the present three-tiered class system.

Competitive Racing and Attractive Wagering Propositions

With horses progressing through the ratings and simultaneously, horses dropping back quicker, racing within well-ordered benchmarks will result in more competitive racing and improved outcomes for the industry. With dominant horses finding a more competitive fields quicker and horses struggling in their current grade finding they can be more competitive more often, more attractive wagering will result.

Improved Utilisaton of the Population

On average, 50% of the standardbred crop will not race and 5% will successfully qualify but not race. Ratings Based Handicapping allows improved utilisation of the crop by making it easier for horses to win at lower levels and allowing horses to race like for like horses below the starting point of 50 level down to a 30 benchmark. This will have the effect of encouraging connections of lower ability horses to race their horse as they will race like for like horses and result in more horses getting to the racetrack.

Encourage Longevity and Stop Horses Hitting Their Mark

Racehorse populations will benefit by real-time handicapping as a horse can progressively drop down the ratings in real time until it finds a competitive level. In this regard, the combined nature of uncompetitive horses finding a competitive race quicker whilst horses progress through the grades will result in more horses racing competitively for longer.

To this, the elimination of the ten start drop back system and its cessation at the C1 class level, replaced by a fluid matrix with benchmarks down to 30 and up to 120, horses will no longer reach their 'mark' in result in them dropping out of the racing population.

FUNCTIONALITY

Streamlining

The ease of administering a RBHS will deem redundant things like field selection points, interlocking or floating handicapping scales, age penalties and drop-back provisions.

Transition by Age

Within the proposed application of ratings points, all horses will be gifted 50 rating points with which to commence racing.

For a horse that commences racing as a 2YO, they will receive 40 points, and any ratings points earned will be discounted by 50% until it turns 3, the age in which all horses receive the full percentage of points.

These percentages while appearing arbitrarily simple, are logically determined and do two important things: firstly, and because harness horses race more often than thoroughbreds, they effectively manage the potential accumulation of points so that the parallel values of the thoroughbred and harness RBHS's are maintained; and secondly, it can be demonstrated that there is an effective likeness with the 'freebies' now inherent in the current system but without allowing horses to transition by age or class to race against obviously far inferior opposition.

Programming

Ratings Based Programming (RBP) is the natural progression forward from Ratings Based Handicapping. As is the practice with the thoroughbred RBHS, a carefully considered number of races would need to be programmed for 2YO and 3YO maidens. This is a very important component in the thoroughbred RBHS and it should also be for harness racing.

To this, the programming of maiden races, along with races for horses who have had a certain number of wins are encouraged in the system with the purposes of quarantining horses from ratings races.

An optional tool for programmers is the ability to further refine a RBHS race by adding specific conditions when warranted.

The RBHS would account for the core of most race programs but a lot of races would also be programmed outside the RBHS; classics, futurities, free-for-alls, etc.

Barrier Draws

It is essential for a RBHS to function effectively within harness racing that most if not all races be programmed with a preferential barrier draw. The preferential draw (in mobile start events) is

the only real mechanism available to harness handicappers that is anywhere near comparable with the weight differentials used in thoroughbred races. The most obvious is 'PBD/Rating' but there is no reason why other preferential draws cannot also be used.

An attraction of the RBHS is that trainers will have more opportunity to place a horse to advantage according to the barrier draw, either by racing out of class to draw inside barriers or by racing to the upper benchmark against potentially lesser horses but from a challenging draw.

RATINGS TRANSITION

Transition to Ratings

Upon implementation of RBHS, the below table shall be used as a guide to transition horses from the class system to the ratings system.

Class	Rating
2YO	40
3C0/3C1	50
3C2/ C0	50
C1	55
C2	60
C3	65
C4	70
C5	75
C6	80
C7	85
C8	90
M2	95
M3	100
M4	105
M5	110
M6	115
M7+	120

An alternative to a straight transition according to the above table may be considered to take into account recent form.

This alternative may involve the table as a starting point with all horses consequentially being assessed on their last ten starts per the rating matrix as an adjustment from the transition guide.

Example: A horse assessed C5 is assessed as 75 using the guide. It has contested ten \$5,000 races and has finished 7th to 10th in the last 10 starts. It will therefore drop 10 Rating points to 65 points.

OTHER RATINGS CONSIDERATIONS

Concession Drivers

The proposed RBHS provides a great opportunity to equate wins with a reducing scale of concession points as is the case with the weight allowances afforded to apprentice jockeys.

Caps on Ratings Points

No horse shall be rated less than 30 points, and no horse shall attain a rating higher than 120 points.

Mare's Concession

A mare's concession of 2-5 rating points in all races is suggested and to be considered along with the question of a double mares/concession driver discount.

Claiming Races

Zero points are accrued in claiming races and as such are ratings free races. Accordingly, claiming races are excluded from any transition calculations.

Trotters in Pacers' races

A concession of 20 points in pacers' events is suggested. This is marginally less than the current equation but it does compliment the exponential improvement in trotters' bred in Australia in the past 20 years.

Handicaps in Standing Starts

Standing start handicaps could simply be based on the brackets of ratings points, for example: each bracket of 5 ratings points above the specified benchmark equates to 10m.

Horse Movements

Trainers will welcome the ease of determining eligibility for any race, local or interstate, that will be available under a RHBS; and determining a rating for international horses cleared into Australia will also be infinitely easier to calculate under a RHBS.

Balloting

Balloting procedures would not change under a RBHS and the standard for balloting, that is, from the top down would remain as would the opportunity to program the alternate practice of balloting from the bottom up.

Discretion

In the proposed allocation of ratings points, discretion has been deliberately left out. The omission of discretion is due to the fact that the industry has previously demonstrated a very negative disposition toward such discretion.

Retired & Pulled Up Horses

Horses that are retired out of races and/or pulled up will not accrue any ratings points for their performance.