

Focus Ratings

A Guide to the Ratings

What are all the different ratings?

A question that I get asked a lot (especially by new members) is which are the best ratings (of the many versions of the ratings) to use.

To answer this question, it is easiest to explain how the ratings came about.

# In the beginning...

What seems a lifetime ago, I used to try to develop profitable horse racing systems using a piece of software known as Racing System Builder (RSB.)

RSB contained about 12 years of data (if I remember right) and used Racing Post Ratings (RPR) as its backbone.

In February of 2012 it became apparent that the Racing Post had altered the way that they compiled their ratings.

Systems that had been profitable suddenly became unprofitable – across the board.

This was, obviously, very bad news for those Tipsters who relied on RPR and RSB – those 12 years of data suddenly became worthless.

So, I thought to myself (rather recklessly; but I was a lot younger then)…

*“Why not try to create my own ratings; after all, how difficult could it be?”*

# R1

I started reading everything that I could find about horse racing ratings.

I discounted anything to do with Speed Ratings as I realised that Speed ratings only work on the Flat and, at the time, I was far more interested in Jumps racing.

I quickly realised that Clive Holt’s Fine Form Ratings were a good starting point.

*In 1988 when Holt published a book called – Be a Successful Punter: Win with Fineform as Your Guide.*

*This is a very simple ratings system with the following rules…*

*Last 2 Races in the Current Season  
1st Place 5 points  
2nd Place 3 points  
3rd Place 2 points  
4th Place 1 point  
Course and Distance win 3 points  
Distance win 3 points  
Course win 1 point*

*All horses are assigned points based on their last two races.*

*The horse that finishes with the most points is the one that you’re supposed to bet on.*

*If two runners tie for the top spot, then you should award an extra point to a distance winner.*

*Clive Holt later added in points for Private Handicapping (top 3) and Favourite Rating (top 3).*

Now, whilst this was a simple system, it looked a bit too simple to me.

It (initially) only used the last 2 races and…

The points seemed to be too exact; I felt that, in the real world, those numbers for the points awarded would probably have one or two decimal places.

So, I started to analyse about 5 years of recent data to come up with a set of rules that, added together, gave me a simple ratings system.

The rules don’t really matter but, they awarded points for Wins or Places over the last 5 races.

At this point I was quite chuffed as my ratings seemed, on a daily basis, to be more accurate than the Racing Post Ratings.

However, I knew that I could do better.

So, I named these ratings R1 and started work on R2.

# R2

R2 worked in a completely different way.

It was a Trends based system with a myriad of rules taking into account things like Stall Bias and Horse Distance Performance.

It worked well but I had to manually compile the ratings myself.

Using 2 computers (and 3 screens) with about a dozen spreadsheets pre-loaded it would take me about 10 minutes to rate a race.

R2 worked well and, in some races, out performed R1.

But, it wasn’t the Holy Grail that I was looking for.

I couldn’t understand why R2 was better for Jumps racing and R1 better for the Flat (All Weather or Turf.)

At this point I have to admit that I was a bit stumped.

I was seriously considering using both sets of ratings; R2 for the Jumps racing and R1 for the Flat.

Then, one morning, I had a Eureka moment.

I just added both sets of ratings together and called the result R3.

# R3

R3 was a major step forward.

It seemed to be consistently good over all races and it was markedly more accurate than the Racing Post Ratings.

An important fact is that there was only 1 top rated horse in every race whereas with RPR and Timeform Ratings there can be a number of top rated horses in every race.

However, I was still finding ways of tweaking R2 and this was taking up a lot of time.

It was then that I had another Eureka moment and, as a result, R4 was born.

# R4

R4 was basically a script that runs overnight (even now, over 10 years later) that analyses the historical performance of every horse running in the following day’s races.

It takes into account metrics such as the horse’s performance over the distance (in this case a Place is worth almost as much as a Win) and the horse’s performance pver today’s Going.

However, the script can access all of the columns and tables in the database and automatically chooses the data that it thinks is relevant.

The interesting thing is that a horse can have a rating 3.56 in one particular race but only have a rating of 2.14 a week later; every horse’s rating is specific to an individual race.

Now, this is important…

Just say that Black Beauty wins a 6 furlong race on the All Weather. The Official Handicapper will have noticed this and will, accordingly, increase that horse’s Offcial Rating.

Now, let’s say, the Black Beauty runs aging 28 days later. However, this time it is running over 10 furlongs. R4 knows that Black Beauty tends to run out of steam at any distance over 8 furlongs. This means that, even though he won his last race (and recently) Black Beauty’s Focus Ratings R4 Rating will almost certainly be lower than ts rating for the 6 furlong race that it won.

Once again, every horse’s Focus Ratings R4 rating is specific to an individual race.

So, basically, R4 is self-learning.

And it has stood the test of time.

I intially used it for a tipping service which I launched in June of 2012.

That service basically just chose the 3 top rated horses that had the highest R4.

It worked very well until we hit a bad patch in the winter of that year.

A couple of losing month’s in a row and a lot of my customers left.

However, a friend suggested that the underlying ratings were too good to keep hidden and perhaps I should publish those as a service.

Thus, Focus Ratings was born.

After 3 month’s of testing, I launched Focus Ratings in April of 2013 and it has been running steadily ever since.

I was responsive to customers’ suggestions and that is why there are so many formats of the R4 ratings on the daily email.

I also added a System Builder and Live Ratings (compiled every 15 minutes during the racing to take into account non-runners and changes in Going.)

But I wasn’t satisfied; in 2015 I decided to have a go at creating Speed Ratings.

Never again!

For about 3 months I lived and breathed Speed Ratings.

They were very accurate for Flat racing (AW and Turf) for races from 5 to 10 furlongs but they weren’t as game changing as I had wanted them to be.

Still, along the way I learned an awful lot about horse racing.

# Advance Ratings

In late 2016 I decided to re-visit R1 and come up with an improved version.

The results were so good that, although I had intended them to be a complement/upgrade to Focus Ratings, I decided to publish them as a stand alone ratings service.

To read about how I created Advance Ratings you should take a look here…

[How I Created Advance Ratings.](http://advanceratings.com/how-the-ratings-are-generated/)

Focus Ratings members get Advance Ratings for free.

# R5

Finally, I did what I had planned all along and added Advance Ratings to Focus Ratings R4 to create R5.

Thus, if a horse has an ADR (Advance Rating) of 2.20 on Advance Ratings and…

The same horse (in the same race) has an R4 rating of 3.10 on Focus Ratings,

The Focus Ratings R5 will be 5.30.

This was a game changer and, for many people, this is their favourite rating to use.

**R6**

In 2017 I then went one step further.

After a lot of analysis I found that I could create an improved rating by simply choosing those races where the top rated horse on Focus Ratings R5 was also the top rated horse on Advance Ratings.

This I called R6.

This was blindly profitable out of the box.

In other words, if you blindly backed every R6 top rated horse in every R6 rated race you would make a profit to ISP.

# R6 Plus

Howver, although R6 was great, it could be improved by taking out unprofitable race types.

Now, for me (and Focus Ratings) every race type has 3 components.

Race Type

Race Type 2

Handicap

Thus, a National Hunt Novice Hurdle Non-Handicap is a totally different race type to a National Hunt Novice Hurdle Handicap.

R6 Plus became a great basis for creating systems and was the basis for the Original Investment Betting selections (Focus Ratings members get these for free.)

# R7

R7 is simply the R6 Plus ratings but,

Only for the first M races of the day where M is the number of meetings.

Thus, if there are 3 meetings today, the R7 PDF will show the first 3 R6 Plus rated races.

This is very useful as the first races of the day tend to be easier to rate.

It also helps to allow you to focus (excuse the pun) on a few specific races.

# R8

In December of 2020 I came up with a new (and mathematically pure) way of combining Advance Ratings and Focus Ratings.

I gave every race an R8 number.

If the top rated horse (on Focus Ratings R4) is not the top rated horse on

Advance Ratings then the R8 for that race is 0.

If the top rated horse (on Focus Ratings R4) is also the top rated horse on Advance Ratings then the R8 for that race is 1.

If the top rated horse (on Focus Ratings R4) is also the top rated horse on Advance Ratings and the second rated horse (on Focus Ratings R4) is also the second rated horse on Advance Ratings then the R8 for that race is 2.

And so on.

# R9

As I have explained I have two primary ratings agencies.

The first is Focus Ratings and the second is Advance Ratings.

They both produce ratings but, in totally different ways.

At Focus Ratings every race is given an R8 number.

Normally that is zero.

However, if the top rated horse is top rated on Focus Ratings and also top rated on Advance Ratings then the R8 number for that race becomes 1.

Sometimes though, if top rated horse on Focus Ratings is also top rated on Advance Ratings and...

The second rated horse on Focus Ratings is also the second rated horse on Advance Ratings then the R8 number for that race becomes 2.

And so forth.

R9 are simply those R8 races where I can rate every horse in the race.

This just means that there are fewer surprises.

For example, I may rate a 10 horse race.

Now, if I can only rate 8 out of those 10 horses it normally doesn’t really matter but…

What happens if one of those unrated horses is running its first race in Britain or Ireland?

It might be a great horse but, because I have no race history for that horse, I have no way of rating a horse that might be the strongest horse in the race.

From now on, any development work that I do (new strategies and so forth) will use R9.

This does mean that I’ll have less races o choose on a daily basis.

For example, yesterday there were about 50 races but only 7 of them were R9 rated races.

Two of the top rated horses won.

Which brings me to how I intend to use R9.

# R9 Portfolio

I live in France and only bet on French horse racing but, rather than just betting on a horse, I'll make a number of bets over a number of horses all running in the same race.

If you are interested, you can take a look at an article I wrote about it... [Bet the Race, Not the Horse...](http://intelligent-betting.com/articles/bet-the-race-not-the-horse/)

And, I intend to use R9 to create a number of bets for every applicable race (those races where R8 is greater than zero and I can rate every horse in the race.)

Focus Ratings members will be able to pick and mix these selections according to their own preferences.

For example, in one race there might be a win backing selection, a place backing selection, a lay betting selection and a dutching opportunity.

However, I intend to be very selective and am not really aiming for loads of selections every day.

I should also mention that, in terms of strategies, a race where R8=1 is totally different to a race where R8=3.

# Conclusion

I hope that this goes a way towards explaining the different types of ratings available at Focus Ratings.

My kindest regards

Keith