THT TWO-YEAR-OLDS PATTERNS OF MOTION ANALYSIS

BY KERRY M. THOMAS AND PETE DENK

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About the authors: Kerry M. Thomas is a pioneering researcher of equine athletic psychology. His work began with the study of wild horse social structures and communication, and how those areas affect patterns of herd motion. He is the founder of the Thomas Herding Technique and author of Horse Profiling: The Secret to Motivating Equine Athletes. For more information, visit www.thomasherdingtechnique.com or follow Kerry on Twitter @thomasherding.

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A note from Kerry and Pete: We have included a glossary of terms, as an introduction to some of our terminology. This report primarily was designed as an equine talent evaluation tool, but one of our long-term goals is to change the way people look at races and to impart an added appreciation understanding of the minds of these magnificent horses. There is a lot of communication going on during a race. The study of equine communication is like opening a window to the invisible. It will change the way you watch horse races.

We spent the latter half of this summer analyzing the two-year-old races from Saratoga Race Course and Del Mar. We also have included a few races from other tracks in order to give evaluations of some of the top rated members of this crop. In each race that caught our eyes, we analyzed the winner, plus tried to identify the top horse on herd dynamics, regardless of finishing position. We are looking for horses responding best to the chaos of herd motion, those that have the mental tools to get the most out of their physical bodies. If we identify a particularly high herd dynamic horse, there is a good chance the horses that finished behind it will perform well when out of its shadow. We already have seen a number of "key races" forming within these results. You also will find that our reads on distance aptitude are quite valuable from a handicapping standpoint.

It is important to understand that the finish line is a human creation. Horses see the world in a circle. There is no front-to-back to them, so to speak. A horse can manage another horse's intentions from behind or the side. To the horse, he/she may be winning it space, regardless of positioning. Horses do not always finish in herd dynamic order.

One of the reasons we like longer races is that over time in motion, horses **will** fall into herd dynamic line. In shorter races, there often is not enough time in motion for the horses to fully sort themselves out on herd dynamic, from a physical position standpoint. It will happen relatively quickly mentally, but that doesn't guaranty they will cross the finish line in herd dynamic hierarchy.

Distance, surface, pace, and **jockeys** all have a great effect on the order of finish. We include the surface each performance profile is based on. This is very important to note, as footing can play a dramatic role in performance. A champion on dirt may be barely above average on turf, and vice versa.

Thank you, and we hope you enjoy this report.

Glossary of terms

Behavioral overcompensation: when one sensory avenue, either by physical limitation or psychological aberration, is made inefficient by another sensory avenue. Example: a horse whose vision is restricted by wearing blinkers for the first time, overcompensates by turning its head to see the world around it, thus disrupting the efficiency of its forward motion.

Buddying up: When a mid-level herd horse seeks the comfort of movement with another horse. Buddy-up horses are dependent on another horse for safety, direction and rhythm of motion.

Emotional conformation: the mental and emotional psychology of a horse, that makes up who they are. It includes way they communicate, interpret stimulus, and almost everything they do, including compete on the on the racetrack.

Group herd dynamic: a horse's awareness of the group around them. It goes hand in hand with the ability to interpret multiple stimuli. A horse with a good group dynamic can see the big picture and where the horse itself fits into that picture. A healthy group dynamic is integral for a horse to run well through traffic or from far back in a race. Many horses with big group herd dynamics will prefer to be near the back of the field early in a race in order to read the other members of the group's intentions. They are in fact sizing up the field and determining where they want to go. The U.S. champion mare Zenyatta is the classic example of a horse with a big group dynamic (she also had a big individual dynamic, which she could turn on when needing to fight for space and pass horses).

Herd dynamic: a general term we use to describe a horse's overall herd level (its group and individual herd dynamics combined).

Individual herd dynamic: the dynamic that involves just the self and a singular target. Example: a horse engages in a pace duel with one other horse, not thinking about the rest of the field, the length of the race, or anything else but that one-on-one struggle. Horses that rely too much on individual herd dynamic will get lost if they have too much stimuli to interpret. Front-running horses that only run their best races when they are near the front of the pack, where there are limited stimuli, are usually very high on individual herd dynamic. A high individual herd dynamic is integral to being a good racehorse, but the best horses are strong in both dynamics. When you're only operating on one dynamic, it's easier to have the rug pulled out from under you. And when things don't go their way, individual dynamic horses tend to fall apart.

Space infraction: When another horse infringes upon another horse's comfort zone. Picture an invisible egg surrounding each horse. The size of that egg is dependent on the individual horse. Some horses shy from space infractions, some feed off of close contact.

2 YO Races of 2012 through September 16th

6/30/12 Woodbine Race 8   Clarendon Stakes   5.5f   polytrack

Uncaptured (Lion Heart) made up a lot of ground in a short amount of time here in his second start. He has a big powerful forward focus. He does have some group dynamic, and he has a lot of heart. His individual dynamic looks quite high. This is a high intensity horse.

7/28/12 Woodbine   Race 3   **Vandal Stakes   7f polytrack**

Uncaptured (Lion Heart) broke from the rail and engaged very quickly. His jockey sent him up the rail early on, and he reacted well to coming through into space and then having a group of horses coming from behind on his outside. He showed a good group awareness. That will help him from being hunted down on the lead. He burns a lot of energy with his forward-focused individual dynamic. We think his wheelhouse will be in the 6 to 7 furlong range. He's probably a tick below the top juvenile sprinters off his first three starts, but there is potential for him to join that circle. He will win his emotional space more times than not. He also will need to be in the lead herd or have the lead herd in his sights to take advantage of his strong forward focus.

9/9/12 Woodbine   Race 3   Swynford Stakes   7f   Polytrack

This race looked like a nice workout for **Uncaptured (Lion Heart)**, who showed a little growth here in the group dynamic mode. He continues to look very strong into space. After breaking sharply, he sat behind a pair of horses, with another horse right behind him, and made a nice efficient move at the leaders. We'll increase the ceiling of his distance range up to a mile off of this effort. He still runs with a ton of intensity, very willing.