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Favorite ALL-Ways™ Newsletter Articles

Quirin Speed Points • Quirin Race Shapes • “Quirin” Impact Values

Introduction

Through his many books published over the years, Bill Quirin (William L. Quirin, Ph.D.) has made numerous important contributions to handicapping and wagering on the races. **Quirin Speed Points** is a positional rating that measures a horse's propensity to be on the lead or up close at the 1st Call. **Quirin Race Shapes** is an innovative shorthand notation that indicates both the early pace and the final time of past performance races in relation to par times. It is a great way to evaluate how a horse is likely to handle the pace and speed demands of today's race. **Impact Values, which we first learned about from Bill Quirin**, provide the most accurate and reliable measurement of the influence handicapping factors have had on prior races, far more helpful than measuring percentages. These innovations have indeed influenced the design of ALL-Ways Handicapping Software. See the Bibliography at the end of this article for a list of the books authored by Bill Quirin that have helped us improve our handicapping.

QUIRIN SPEED POINTS

Note: Quirin Speed Points are available on several ALL-Ways handicapping reports as well as on the BRIS Ultimate Past Performances Reports.

Most pace handicapping methodologies consider the “Early Pace” of a race to be determined at the 2nd Call. This is at four furlongs in sprints and six furlongs in routes. The BRIS, Hall, Brohamer (based on the Sartin Methodology) and Hambleton Early Pace ratings in ALL-Ways software, while calculated using different methodologies, all measure a horse's speed and/or velocity from the gate to the 2nd Call. Horse ESP Running Styles (“Early”, “Early Presser”, “Presser” and “Sustainer”) are also determined primarily by the horse's position and/or lengths behind at the 2nd Call. There is a good reason why so much emphasis is placed on the 2nd Call in pace handicapping methods. **It works!** Early pace ratings at the 2nd Call have absolutely passed the test of time. This brings us to Quirin Speed Points which we will refer to as

“QSP”. The QSP rating is determined by a horse’s propensity to be on the lead or up close **at the 1st Call**. The 1st Call is at two furlongs in sprints and four furlongs in routes. The QSP rating does not measure speed or velocity. It is a positional rating that reflects a horse’s desire ... will ... and ability to be on the lead or up close at this very early point in the race.

To calculate the QSP rating, up to three races are selected from the most recent five races in a horse’s past performance record. The specific races selected and the actual method of calculations are different depending on the distance of today’s race. The rating will be within a range of zero to eight (0 to 8). The higher the rating, the more likely the horse will be on the lead or up very close at the 1st Call. Here is how to interpret these numbers.

8 points: The horse has demonstrated its desire/ability to be on the lead at the 1st Call or in 2nd or 3rd but within a neck of the lead at the 1st Call.

7 points: The horse has demonstrated its desire/ability to be on the lead at the 1st Call or in 2nd or 3rd but within 2 lengths of the lead at the 1st Call.

4, 5 & 6 points: The horse has demonstrated its desire/ability to stay in touch with the leaders at the 1st Call. On occasion, it will be among the first three horses at the 1st Call, particularly in the absence of higher QSP rated horses in the race.

1, 2 & 3 points: The horse will generally be in the last half of the field at the 1st Call.

0 points: The horse will be in the back of the field at the 1st Call or has no qualifying races in its past performance lines.

Again, while Early Pace ratings and ESP Running Styles are measured at the 2nd Call, the QSP rating is determined at the 1st Call. The QSP rating shows you how the race is likely to be run early on, right out of the gate. **Here is a key point:** A positional rating, such as QSP, is more effective and more helpful than a velocity or speed based pace rating at this early point in a race. After all, most horses can run very fast for a short distance if they want to do so. The key is determining what kind of pressure a horse is going to come up against from the other horses in the race as it attempts to start the race in the manner it prefers.

The Quirin Speed Points rating is one of ALL-Ways software’s eighty seven Key Handicapping Factors. It can be included in ALL-Ways Handicapping Profiles and ALL-Ways can run an Impact Value Analysis and/or a Top Three Analysis to gauge its power and profitability.

The QSP rating can be a very powerful tool for your personal pace handicapping analysis. You should always consider a horse's QSP rating in the context of all the other horses in a race. It is the match-up that counts. A QSP 4 horse in a race with QSP 7 or 8 horses will most likely be several lengths off the pace. The same QSP 4 horse in a field of horses with QSP ratings under 4 may well get the lead at the 1st Call. Consider a three point QSP differential to be quite significant.

Reminder: Here are the four basic horse running styles to the 2nd Call

EARLY ("E"): The horse must have the lead

EARLY PRESSER ("EP"): The horse is comfortable on the lead or within one to three lengths of the leader

PRESSER ("P"): Prefers to run four to seven lengths behind the leader, somewhere near mid-pack

SUSTAINER ("S"): Prefers staying in the back of the pack in favor of a strong late run.

Now, here are some observations we have developed as we have used the powerful Quirin Speed Points handicapping factor.

Intensity of a Speed Duel

We know that races with "EE" and "EEE" ALL-Ways Race Pace Shapes have two, three or more horses with an ESP Running Style of Early ("E"). All these horses want to be on the lead at the 2nd Call. We know that the early speed duels that develop in such races can cause these horses to "burn themselves out", setting the race up for horses coming from off the pace. We know if one of these "E" horses is clearly superior to the others, it has a chance of finishing in-the-money or even to win the race while the other "E" horses will then, more often than not, finish off-the-board.

The QSP rating gives us some important insight about how these Fast Pace Shape races will unfold. If two or three of the "E" horses have a QSP rating of 7 or 8, there is going to be a speed duel early on to the 1st Call and it is more likely all this early speed will fall apart. This situation, of course, favors horses from off the pace. If the "E" horses have QSP ratings of 5's and 6's, then the speed duel will not be as severe and the "E" horses are more likely to play a role late in the race. If one of the "E" horses has a QSP rating of 8 and the others are in the range of 5's or less, then the horse with the 8 rating will probably "bury" the other "E" horses and could well wire the field despite the Fast Race Pace Shape.

Loose on the Lead

We consider races with ALL-Ways ESP Pace Shapes of “E”, “EP” and “EP-P” as being Lone Early Pace races. We quite properly expect the lone early runners to have a strong chance of wiring the field if they have reasonable class and speed figures and are in decent form. If such a horse has a strong QSP rating of 7 or 8 and the other horses are down in the 5 and under range, the horse can be counted on to get a very large lead that may be insurmountable for the other horses. In Honest Pace Shape races (“E-EP” and “EP-EP”), if one of the “E” or “EP” horses has a big QSP rating advantage, then it may well get loose on the lead. In Slow Pace Shape races, a “P” horse with a QSP rating advantage could be the horse that gets the unexpected early lead and goes on to wire the race. Conversely, if all horses in a Slow Pace Shape race have low QSP ratings, say 3 and under, then there is a better chance that the horse with the best Final Fraction Rating will win the race because the field will probably stay pretty much intact all around the oval. Following up on these “loose on the lead” examples, here is a spot play to look for. It is not uncommon to see a Presser (“P”) horse with a QSP Rating of 7 or 8. Even though these “P” horses do not want to be on the lead at the 2nd Call, which is why they are “P” horses, they do start fast out of the gate to get to the lead at the 1st Call and then fall back to mid pack by the 2nd Call. In slow paced races, these “P” horses get big leads at the 1st Call and frequently hold on to wire the field at a nice price.

Evaluating Horses With an “EP” Running Style

Horses with a running style of “EP” are generally considered to have the best overall statistical chance of winning races assuming, of course, they are not hampered by poor speed figures, inferior class figures, poor form, etc. This is because these horses have a built-in tactical pace advantage. They can run on the lead or they can be rated to press the leaders from a little off the pace. They will always be within striking distance. With all that said, “EP” horses do not, of course, always win their races. The QSP rating helps us a lot here. If an “EP” horse has a QSP Rating of 7 or 8 along with other “EP” and/or “E” horses in the race, it will probably get caught up in the speed duel to the 1st Call. A rating of 5 or 6, on the other hand, probably says the horse can rate off the pace and be ready to pass the tiring front runners down the stretch. “EP” horses with a high QSP rating in the 7 or 8 point range in a race where the other horses are down in the 5 points and lower range could get loose on the lead at the 1st Call and wire the field. If an “EP” horse has a QSP rating down around 4 or less, it may well lose its built in tactical pace advantage because it would have to expend too much energy to stay close to the leaders.

Post Position Analysis

Just how advantageous or disadvantageous is a particular post position? It is not enough to just look at post position statistics for the track because the pace match-up in the race can have an impact that overrides these statistics. The QSP rating gives us some powerful information to help us evaluate a horse's post position. Here are three scenarios that pretty well cover the possibilities.

1) A horse with an inside post position and a high QSP rating versus outside post position horses that all have lower QSP ratings: This usually results in an easy uncontested lead for the inside horse.

2) A horse with an outside post position and a high QSP rating versus inside post position horses that all have lower QSP ratings: The outside horse will probably get the lead without too much difficulty, although the outside post makes it work pretty hard to get the lead and move towards the rail. Nevertheless, such a horse can often go on to win.

3) Horses with high QSP ratings in both the inside and outside post positions: Plain and simple, the outside horses with big QSP rating will want to get the lead right out of the gate but will have a very difficult time because of all the early speed standing between them and the inside rail. This is often why outside posts are so poor in high caliber races such as the Kentucky Derby or the Breeder's Cup. There often will be horses with high QSP ratings with inside post positions.

We have touched on a number of different ways to use Quirin Speed Points to help you with your pace analysis of a race. No doubt there are many other scenarios as well. One key point we are trying to make here is that what happens from the gate to the 1st Call can have a profound influence on the pace match-up in a race. Quirin Speed Points are the best way we know for evaluating this early running in the race and deciding on how it will influence the outcome. Once again, Quirin Speed Points are available on several ALL-Ways handicapping reports as well as in the BRIS Ultimate Past Performances.

QUIRIN RACE SHAPES

One of the most important of Bill Quirin's many contributions to handicapping is his original concept of Race Shapes. It is simple in concept, but, incredibly powerful in its application.

Quirin Race Shapes use a short hand notation to describe how fast the early pace of a past performance race was run to the 2nd Call (4 furlongs in sprints and 6 furlongs in routes) and how fast the complete past performance race was run (final time). Bill Quirin used a “fast – average – slow” notation scheme. ALL-Ways software uses a “fast – par – average – slow” notation scheme as illustrated on the next page.

Here are the four notations used for both the Early Pace and Final Time of a past performance race. Note that “Average” indicates the time was not slow, but not quite as fast as the par time.

- F = Fast time
- P = Par time
- A = Average (not quite up to par time)
- S = slow time

This notation scheme gives us sixteen possible past performance Quirin Race Shapes. The first letter relates to Early Pace and the second letter relates to final time.

Quirin Race Shape	Early Pace from Gate to 2 nd Call	Final Time from Gate to Finish
FF	Fast Early Pace	Fast Final Time
FP	Fast Early Pace	Par Final Time
FA	Fast Early Pace	Average Final Time
FS	Fast Early Pace	Slow Final Time
PF	Par Early Pace	Fast Final Time
PP	Par Early Pace	Par Final Time
PA	Par Early Pace	Average Final Time
PS	Par Early Pace	Slow Final Time
AF	Average Early Pace	Fast Final Time
AP	Average Early Pace	Par Final Time
AA	Average Early Pace	Average Final Time
AS	Average Early Pace	Slow Final Time
SF	Slow Early Pace	Fast Final Time
SP	Slow Early Pace	Par Final Time
SA	Slow Early Pace	Average Final Time
SS	Slow Early Pace	Slow Final Time

To arrive at these Race Shape designations requires very complex calculations. You must have pace and final time pars for every past performance track. You must calculate daily track variants for each race day for each of these tracks. You must know the 2nd Call time of the lead horse and the final time of the winner. You must then compare these times against the pars after the times have been adjusted by the daily track variants. For very obvious reasons, very few handicappers have access to accurate Race Shapes. Fortunately, ALL-Ways software automatically makes all these calculations and, thus, arms you with this powerful handicapping factor.

There are two fundamental ways to use Race Shapes in your handicapping:

1. As a “Key Race” indicator
2. To evaluate a horse’s ability to handle different pace scenarios

You have probably heard the term “Key Race”. The theory is, if two or more horses that raced each other in a past race go on to win their next races, then the past race is designated as a Key Race. Other horses that ran in the Key Race can reasonably be expected to do better in their next effort. This is a powerful concept that does indeed work. The problem with this approach, however, is that two or three horses must have won their subsequent races before their earlier race is designated as a Key Race. The “cat is out of the bag” so to speak. Ideally, you would like to bet on these subsequent winners when they run their next races, not after they have already won them. The power of Quirin Race Shapes is that Key Races are spotted before the horses run subsequent races.

You can consider any race with a “FF” designation as a Key Race. Some people may also want to consider “FP” and “PF” races as Key Races. The winner of a Key Race has a very strong chance to win its next race. However, the public may well bet the horse down just based on the win, making the horse unplayable. A powerful handicapping angle is to look for horses exiting these Key Races that did “reasonably well” in the Key Race. We define “reasonably well” as not winning the race but finishing in-the-money or within a reasonable number of lengths of the winner (perhaps 3 to 6 lengths in sprints or 5 to 8 lengths in routes). It is not at all uncommon for a horse to finish 8 lengths back in a Key Race route only to come back and win their next effort, almost always at a big price. The public shuns horses that finish that far back. But, the public hasn’t the foggiest idea of the Key Race angle. A possible exception to all of this is if a late running horse won the “FF” or “FP” Key Race, it may not do well in today’s race unless today’s race has a fast early pace as well. But, even that is very helpful handicapping information.

Here is a chart showing the ALL-Ways designations of the Probable ESP Race Pace Shape of today's race. See the Favorite ALL-Ways Newsletter Article titled "Race Pace Shapes" posted in the Newsletter section of the Frandsen Publishing Web site for more details.

Race Pace Shape	ESP Running Styles
<i>EEE</i>	3 or more "E" horses
<i>EE</i>	2 "E" horses
<i>E</i>	1 "E" horse and no "EP" horse
<i>E-EP</i>	1 "E" horse and 1 or more "EP" horses
<i>EP-EP</i>	2 or more "EP" horses
<i>EP</i>	1 "EP" horse and no "P" horses
<i>EP-P</i>	1 "EP" horse and 1 or more "P" horses
<i>P-P</i>	2 or more "P" horses
<i>P</i>	1 "P" horse with no other running style designations (1 st Timers)
<i>P-S</i>	1 "P" horse and 1 or more "S" horses
<i>S</i>	all "S" horses

The second way to use Quirin Race Shapes is to evaluate how well horses are likely to perform against the probable pace of today's race. ALL-Ways software helps you project the pace of today's race in a couple of ways:

- ALL-Ways software shows you the probable ESP Race Pace Shape of today's race based on the preferred ESP running styles of the entrants. Projected ESP shapes of "EEE" and "EE" ("Fast") will generally be run very fast to the second call. ESP shapes of "PP", "PS" and "SS" ("Slow") will generally be run very slowly.
- Second, you can compare the top Early Pace ratings for horses in the race to the Early Pace par times. The BRIS Early Pace rating can be compared directly to the BRIS Early Pace par time. The Hall Early Pace rating can be compared directly to the ALL-Ways Race Rating for today's race. (All Hall pace and speed figures are on the same scale as the ALL-Ways Race Rating.) If the Early Pace ratings are 3 to 5 points above the par time, you can expect the pace of the race to be fast and the race will most likely receive a fast early pace QSP designation after it is run, particularly if there are two or more Early ("E") or Early Presser ("EP") horses in the race.

Once you know the probable pace of today's race, you can use the Quirin Race Shape information on the ALL-Ways Past Performance report to evaluate each horse's ability to handle the pace. First, you can probably toss out any horse that didn't run well in a "SS", "SA", "SP", "AS" or "AA" race. Chances are, such horses won't do well today regardless of the probable pace of today's race. You will also spot horses that do very well in slow, average or even par early pace shape races but that fall apart if they have to run against a fast early pace. Toss them out if today's race sets up for a fast early pace. The opposite often holds true as well. There are horses that do very well against a fast early pace but do poorly if the pace of the race is too slow. Generally such horses are late runners that need a fast pace up front to set the race up for their closing run.

You can find the Quirin Race Shapes in all ALL-Ways software handicapping reports that show past performance races. You can also find them on the Contender Summary in the last race summary line directly under the horse's last race speed figure. It looks something like this:

DR/FT/FF/4

This shows that the horse's last race was a dirt route (DR) run on a fast track (FT) with a Quirin Race Shape designation of "FF" and that the horse finished fourth. Anyone want to bet that this horse is a prime contender today?

Impact Values vs. Percentages

We first learned about the concept of Impact Values from William Quirin's book "Winning at the Races". We are often asked what Impact Values are and how they are different from statistics expressed by percentages. "In a nutshell", Impact Values provide for the most accurate and reliable measurement of the influence handicapping factors have had on prior races. They are far more revealing than measuring percentages. Let's look at why this is the case.

Let's say we want to see how the four primary horse running styles fare in Allowance dirt sprints at our favorite hypothetical track. The four running styles are Early ("E"), Early Presser ("EP"), Presser ("P") and Sustainer ("S"). Early horses want the lead. Early Pressers are comfortable on the lead or slightly behind the leader(s). Presser horses run about mid-pack and Sustainers run at the back of the field. Look at the following table that shows the percentage of Allowance dirt sprint races won by each running style based on a sample of one hundred such races.

Percentage Wins for 100 Races

Style	#wins	%wins
"E"	15	15%
"EP"	40	40%
"P"	30	30%
"S"	15	15%

On the surface, this shows us that "EP" horses win the most races and that "E" and "S" horses perform about the same, at least they do from a statistical percentage viewpoint. But, what is missing here and, consequently, what is misleading here is that we have no idea how many horses of each running style actually ran in the races.

Let's say in our example that there were a total of 1,000 horses that ran in these 100 races. We have added new columns in the table that show us the number and percentage of horses for each running style and their calculated Impact Values.

Percentage Wins for 100 Races Total Number of Horses is 1000

Style	#wins	%wins	#horses	%horses	I.V.
"E"	15	15%	100	10%	1.50
"EP"	40	40%	350	35%	1.14
"P"	30	30%	350	35%	0.86
"S"	15	15%	200	20%	0.75

When we add this new information, we see things in a whole new light and we get a decidedly different impression. Impact Values are calculated by dividing the percentage of winners having a particular characteristic by the percentage of starters with that characteristic. For example, "E" horses won 15% of the races, but they made up only 10% of the horses. The Impact Value for "E" horses is then:

$$15\% / 10\% = 1.50$$

An Impact Value of 1.00 indicates horses with the characteristic win exactly their fair share of races, no more and no less. In our example, "E" horses won 1.50 times their

“fair share” of races. The “EP” horses no longer look as dominant as they did when we looked only at percentages. They won 40% of the races, but they made up 35% of the horses giving them an Impact Value of 1.14. They won 1.14 times their fair share of races. We also see that “P” and “S” horses both won less than their fair share of races. And, while the percentages showed “E” and “S” horses both won 15% of the races, look how dramatically the picture has changed when we use Impact Values. “E” horses won 1.5 times their fair share of race while “S” horses won only 0.75 times their fair share of races.

Impact Values are at the very core of ALL-Ways software. With just one click of the mouse button, ALL-Ways software will run an Impact Value Analysis and show you the Impact Values for each of its 87 Key Handicapping Factors for every different type of race run at the track. ALL-Ways software also uses the calculated Impact Values to weight the Handicapping Factors it uses in its track specific and race type specific Handicapping Profiles. Again, ALL-Ways software uses these profiles to handicap the race.

Bibliography:

Here is the list of books written by William L. Quirin, Ph.D. that influenced these articles. At the time this ALL-Ways Favorite Article was published in 2010, these three books were available either new or used at Amazon.com. All three books were originally published by William Morrow and Company, Inc.

- Winning at the Races
 - Thoroughbred Handicapping: State of the Art
 - Handicapping by Example
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[More about ALL-Ways Software](#)

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