



NSA Official Notices

Friday, April 26, 2024

Message From the Ratings Handicap Committee

To add clarity to the NSA Ratings Handicap Committee and its work, please note the following principles:

1. The system was created several years ago in response to owners and trainers who wanted to de-emphasize the claiming-based system, which plays to the strengths of bigger stables and isn't the best practice for horse welfare.
2. It is a subjective system. Horses are assessed and rated based on the opinion, experience and judgment of the Committee. The Committee uses live viewing, video replay, past performances, official charts, projected performances, weight carried, finishing margins, race flow, race courses, race distances, race conditions, perceived effort and any other variable to make educated decisions.
3. For the convenience of owners and trainers, and to encourage opportunities, horses with ratings from other countries are allowed to race, once, on foreign numbers. In most cases, current ratings are used, not necessarily hurdle or chase numbers as a rule. However, the Committee retains the option to adjust a foreign rating based on all information used to determine horses already in the U.S. system.
4. In its current format, the handicap system only rates winners of hurdle races as there are regular opportunities for maidens to race. Maiden special weight winners with fewer than three NSA starts are not assigned ratings. Winners of restricted maiden races (claiming, starter, filly/mare) are assigned automatic numbers to ensure opportunities for horses who might not otherwise have specific paths for additional starts.
5. The Committee does not have to provide a reason behind the rating of a specific horse. The Committee can explain it, to a point, but the Committee exists to assess all horses in training for all owners and trainers. Owners or trainers lobbying for lower numbers for their horses does not necessarily sway the Committee. The Committee is not obligated to provide a reason or explanation for a horse owned or trained by another person.

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