



## RATINGS BASED HANDICAPPING SYSTEM

### Principles of the Ratings System

The principles of the ratings system are as follows:

The basis of the ratings system 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.

And like our gallops cousins, 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 ('RBHS') 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 (\$)	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup> - Last
0 - 2,500	2	0	0	0	0	0
2,501 – 4,999	3	1	0	0	0	-1
5,000 – 8,499	4	1	0	0	0	-1
8,500 – 14,999	5	1	0	0	0	-1
15,000 – 49,999	6	2	1	0	0	-2
50,000+	7	2	1	0	0	0

## **FUNDAMENTALS**

The fundamentals of the RBHS are:

- 1. Simplicity.** An essential goal for good understanding by all stakeholders but critical for owners, trainers and punters. Movement in the 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.
- 2. Accuracy.** A horse's rating points must truly reflect its overall performance profile with strong emphasis on most recent form.
- 3. 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.
- 4. Equality.** Each and every horse will commence and progress through the system via an incremental allocation of pre-designated rating points, penalties or deductions.
- 5. 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 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.

- 6. Longevity.** 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, race programmers should find that a RBHS will increasingly facilitate the use of

whatever benchmarks are deemed necessary to attract evenly graded fields, no matter how low.

7. **Streamlining.** The ease of administering a RBHS will deem redundant things like field selection points, inter-locking or floating handicapping scales, age penalties and drop-back provisions.
8. **Competitiveness.** Horses racing within well-ordered benchmarks will get improved money-winning prospects that will likely depend more on 'luck in the run' when competing against horses of similar ability. And a RBHS will consign to history that fateful comment about a horse being "on its mark".
9. **Transition by Age.** Within the application of ratings points, horses will be gifted 50 rating points with which to commence racing.

For a horse that commences racing as a two-year old, they will receive 40 points. When a two-year old becomes a three-year old, if it is rated over 50 points its points above 50 are halved and rounded up (i.e. a horse is rated 59, its rating becomes 55).

If a two-year old nominates for an open age race and it is rated over 40 points, its points above 40 are halved and rounded up (i.e. a horse is rated 49, its rating for an open aged event is 45).

If a two-year old nominates for an open age race and it is rated under 40 points, its points are not changed.

Upon two-year old's turning three, horses who have a rating of less than 50 will revert to 50 upon the start of the season. Two-year old's that accrued more than 50 points at two will not have their points reverted back to 50.

10. **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.

**11. Programming.** Ratings Based Programming (RBP) is the natural progression forward from Ratings Based Handicapping.

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.

## **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

**12. Transition to Ratings.** The below table shall be used as a guide to transition horses from the class system to the ratings system.

<b>Class</b>	<b>Maximum Cutover Points</b>
2YO	40
3C0/3C1	50
3C2/ C0	50
C1	55
C2	60
C3	65
C4	70
C5	75
C6	80
C7	85
C8+ No better than M1	90
M2	95
M3	100
M4	105
M5	110
M6	115
M7+	120

The transition to ratings points shall be calculated with the above table as a starting point for each horse. All horses shall then be assessed on their last five starts per the rating matrix as an adjustment from the transition guide with the lowest rating being used as the transition rating.

Example: A horse assessed C5 is assessed as 75 using the guide. It has contested five \$5,000 races and has finished 7th to 10th in the last five starts. It will therefore drop 5 Rating points to 70 points.

If this horse had accrued any positive points in its last five starts (i.e. any points above 75), its transition points would revert back to 75 points as this is the lower of the adjusted points and the points per the guide.

Two year olds that have raced during the season shall be transitioned according to their performances under the ratings matrix from the starting point of 40 points.

The transition to a ratings system will occur on 1 May 2019 with all horses having a published Ratings Point.

Ratings Points will accrue each race and remain visible, with ratings based programmed races commencing on 1 July 2019.

**13. Concession Drivers.** RBHS provides a good opportunity to equate wins with a reducing scale of concession points as is the case with the weight allowances afforded to apprentice jockeys. The grading of concession drivers is to be on a 5 – 3 – 1 level, with the least experienced driver receiving a 5 point discount. The level of wins applied for each level is to be determined on a state by state basis.

**14. Caps on Ratings Points.** No horse shall be rated less than 30 points, and no horse shall attain a rating higher than 120 points.

**15. Mare's Concession.** A mares concession of 5 rating points will apply.

**16. 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.

**17. Trotters in Pacers' races.** State controlling bodies will apply an appropriate discount for trotters competing in pacers' races.

**18. Handicaps in Standing Starts.** Converting automatic handicaps into an element of a RBHS is not as difficult as first thought given the population of trotters is so much smaller than pacers and the scope of ability so very broad. The scenarios lead to the conclusion that standing start handicaps could simply be based on the number of wins or alternately on brackets of ratings points, for example: each bracket of 4 ratings points above the specified benchmark equates to 10m. Discretionary handicaps would continue unchanged.

**19. 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.

- 20. Balloting and Tie Breaker.** 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. In the event of handicappers requiring to differentiate between two horses with the same rating, the measure of dollars earned in the last five starts shall be used.
- 21. Discretion.** In the 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.
- 22. Horses Retired from Race.** Horses that are retired out of races will not accrue any ratings points for their performance. In addition, zero ratings points will be applied if a horse is declared a non starter, or is disqualified from a race after the all clear is signaled.
- 23. Dead Heats.** In the event of a dead heat, Ratings Points are to be shared and rounded down in the event of a half-point.
- 24. Imported Horses.** Ratings Points allocated to all Imported Horses are applied in accordance with the Ratings Point Matrix as if each individual race had been conducted in Australia.