

A GUIDE TO BETTING ON HORSERACING AT POMPADOUR



There are no bookmakers on French Racecourses, and all betting is done via the Pari Mutuel – the equivalent of the Tote in UK. At the hippodrome the betting is known as PMH, but if betting is for elsewhere it is PMU. There are a number of betting points around the course, with television screens that show the approximate odds for a win at the time that you placed your bet. Should you win, however, the actual odds you receive may be larger or smaller. The minimum bet is 2 euros and dividends are declared to a one-euro unit. Your stake is not returned. Once the dividends have been declared, the returns appear at the bottom of the TV screen displaying the odds as a continuously rolling display.

Win and Place Betting

The easiest way to bet is to back your horse to win (*gagnant*) or to be placed (*placé*). You can, of course, do both at the same time. Your horse has to come first for a win bet. It must finish in the first three for a place bet, unless there are between 4 and 7 runners when it must finish first or second. Obviously the dividend is less for a winning *placé* bet. You can, of course, do both at the same time, and this is known as *à cheval* and then your stake will be doubled.

Forecast Betting

There are 2 types of Forecast Bet, a win forecast (*couplé gagnant*) and a place forecast (*couplé placé*). A win forecast requires you to nominate the first and second horses. When there are 8 or more runners they can be in either order, but for races with 4 to 7 runners you must nominate them in the correct finishing order, which is designated as *couplé ordre*. For a place forecast, on races with 8 or more participants, you need to choose 2 horses to finish in the first three.

Trio Betting

The trio requires you to pick the first 3 horses home. For races with 8 or more runners they can finish in any order, but for races with 4 to 7 runners you must nominate the correct finishing order (*trio ordre*).

The Ecurie System

One important difference between French and British racing is the *écurie* system. In France horses from the same stable or ownership are coupled for betting purposes. In a race, if horses 2 and 5 are in the same ownership they are said to be 'écurie'. This is shown in the race card by both horses having E1 in the column detailing their names. Should there be another pair of horses in the race both owned by a single, different owner they will be designated as E2. For win bets only, if you back one of those *écurie* horses you are backing them both. So if in the example above you have 10 euros to win on horse 2, which comes in last, should horse number 5 win, then you will still collect. Unsurprisingly, this 'écurie' or coupling process will be reflected by you receiving a shorter price than if the horses were not coupled.

Placing your Bet

On busy days the queues for the *Pari Mutuel* positions can be long. The staff will get through the bets as quickly as they can, but it is important to bet early to avoid the disappointment of letting a winner go unbacked. Make sure that you know what you are going to ask for before it is your turn to bet. The three things you need are the type of bet you want, the number(s) of the horse(s) and the amount you want to wager. Let us suppose that in a particular race you wish to have 5 euros to win on horse number three. When it is your turn all you need to say is: *Gagnant, numero trois, cinq euros s'il vous plaît*.

Then, check the ticket to be sure that it reflects your intended bet. Mistakes cannot be rectified after the race!!

Bonne Chance!

THE RACE CARD



Your race card, which is a mine of useful information, is split into 2 sections. The first part gives you the details of the races, and the second part covers form for each of the runners at the meeting.

Information about the race

Below the time of the race and its title, on the left hand side, is class of the race (flat races only) and then the type of race – flat (*plat*), hurdle (*haies*), steeplechase or cross-country, followed possibly by some qualifying information such as whether it is a claiming race (*réclamer*), a handicap etc. This is followed by the total value of the race in euros and the distance in metres. Over on the right hand side is a guide to the type of bets that are possible on the race – is it *couplé and trio ordre* or not, and numbers showing the forecast by GENY (who are a company who provide horse racing information) of their idea of the likely winner and placed horses.

Under the type of race, prize money and distance is a paragraph detailing the conditions of the race. It starts with the prize money allocation for the first 5 horses home, and then goes onto eligibility for entry: how the weights are allocated: whether the race is restricted to arabs, anglo-arabs, non-thoroughbreds etc, and how any weight penalties or allowances are decided.

As the race details themselves are divided up into 11 or 12 columns, the easiest way of explaining the layout is column by column, starting on the left:

- The first column is gives the owner of the horse.
- Next is the number that the horse will carry in the race.
- The third column gives the horse's name followed in some cases by a variety of little symbols which indicate, where it was bred if that was outside France:

whether it wears blinkers (*les oeillères*) or cheek pieces (*les oeillères australiennes*) etc, and if it is *écurie*.

- Column 4 is the horse's draw (flat races only) as the horses have to start from the position that they are drawn in, with number one on the inside. All flat races at Pompadour are started using a tape. However, the horses have to start from the position that they are drawn, with number one on the inside. This can be important, because over the shorter race distances (particularly 1200 or 1400 metres) it is possible for a good jockey with a low draw to gain a few valuable lengths out of the starting gate. Horse number one in any race is referred to as *l'ace* (literally 'the ace').
- The next column is the name of the jockey, followed by the weight that the horse is due to carry, and in the adjacent column the actual weight it will carry in the race. Differences in the two columns arise because an inexperienced rider may be claiming an allowance, or (more unusually) because a rider is putting up over weight.
- In the following column are details of the horse's sex, M/F/H (H is for *hongre* the word for gelding); its colour (the common colours being - al : chestnut , b : bay , b.b. : brown (dark bay) , b.f. dark brown (almost black) , gr. : grey , r. : roan) and finally its age.
- Next comes the horse's breeding – sire (father) first, then dam (mother) and the name of the breeder.
- The number that the horse will carry is then repeated, followed by the name of its trainer.
- At the right hand side of the details for each race, in the column labelled 'Performances', is a summary of the recent form for each horse. Its most recent race is on the left. Races from previous years come after the pre-fixes (09), (08) etc. The type of race that the horse ran in is shown by the 'p'(flat), 'h' (hurdle), s (steeplechase) or c (cross country). A (*arrête*) indicates that the horse was pulled up, T (*tombé*) that it fell and D (*dérober*) that it refused to jump a hurdle or fence and was disqualified. *Inédit* or *Inédite* signifies that a horse has never run before.

Directly below these columns on the left hand side is a pictorial representation of the colours that each jockey will carry.

The finally piece of information is a short summary, by GENY explaining why they think certain horses have the best chance of winning or being placed in the race.

Detailed Form

In the second part of the card is the detailed form for the most recent races in which each horses has run. It covers when and where the race was: the going: class of the race: race distance and number of horses that ran. The finishing order is then listed, together with the time that the race was run in, distances between finishers, draw and whether they wore blinkers. The jockey of the horse is question is also given. In some cases there is a short commentary on how the horse ran.