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## Strength in numbers

Wagers enable groups of fans to share the excitement of handicapping

By Frank Angst

The buses and mobile homes that line the Keeneland parking lot are testament to the track's popularity with groups of people.

Groups enjoy tailgate parties on the immaculate grounds and congregate near the paddock for close views of Thoroughbreds. Their fun can continue to the betting windows, where many discover strength in numbers.

With some creative thought, many wagering opportunities at Keeneland lend themselves to a group approach. Keeneland's wide variety of wagers, a range of minimum bets and friendly tellers make it easy. Betting as a group can be a great social outlet, allowing everyone a chance to offer his or her "two cents" while combining dollars in pursuit of a winning bet.

Such an approach is especially attractive to newcomers, who might feel overwhelmed if they attempt to wager on their own. So what are some bets that lend themselves to a group approach? Let's start with a classic.

### Show parlay

While many players hope for a single big score at Keeneland, the show parlay awards the tortoise as opposed

to the hare. Here's how it works:

- Before the first race, all players in the group submit the same amount of money, say \$5.

- They select a horse to bet all the money on to show.

- If the horse finishes first, second or third, the bet pays off—typically a small amount.

- The group takes all of the money returned from the initial wager and bets it to show on another horse in the next race.

Most groups attempt to let the show parlay ride through the entire card, but each group can determine a number of races to play. At day's end, each person in the group might receive a significant payoff for his or her \$5 investment.

Of course, any individual could make a similar wager, but the group dynamic contributes to the fun. The following bets also have the added incentive of enabling a group to spread the expense in pursuit of a big score.

### Pick four

Keeneland offers a great opportunity to take a stab at a potentially large payoff for a relatively small cost in its pick four wager. With a group approach, more horses can be included

in the wager because the total cost of the bet will be spread out among players.

The pick four requires bettors to select the winners of four consecutive races; at Keeneland, the pick four is offered on races 2 through 5 and on the final four races on the card. Most groups include several horses in some or all of the pick four races, creating a “wheel” bet that carries a very affordable 50-cent minimum.

One approach is to have each participant select his or her top horse in each leg (race) in the pick four. If the group reaches a consensus on one leg, it can select just that horse for that race. This approach allows the group to select more horses in the other races without consensus.

For instance, the group agrees on horse No. 2 in the bet’s first leg. A group of five people could put together a ticket with that horse in the first leg, three horses in the second leg, five horses in the third and six horses in the fourth. The total wager would cost just \$45, or \$9 a person. (To figure out the cost of the bet, multiply the number of horses in each leg by the cost of the bet. This bet would be 1 X 3 X 5 X 6 X 50 cents = \$45. This program includes a page on determining how much a bet costs and how to state bets to the teller.)

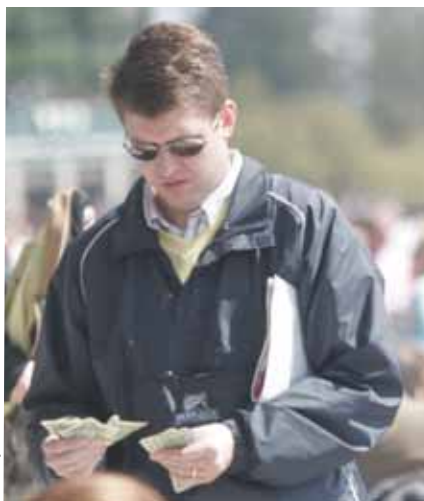


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The person with the most handicapping experience could make the final decision on the selected horse and place the wager.

Be sure to include some longshots on the pick four ticket because those horses produce big payoffs. In a string of four races, there typically is at least one surprising winner.

Advanced groups may attempt the pick six, which requires bettors to select winners in six consecutive races and carries a \$2 minimum bet. Like the lottery, when no one wins the pick six, a carryover pot builds.

### Two Super wagers

New to Keeneland this spring is the Super High Five, a bet that could lend itself to groups. This is a single-race bet that requires selecting the

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## New season, new wagers

Keeneland is offering several new wagering opportunities during the spring meeting.

### Super High Five:

This wager is offered on the final Keeneland race of the day and requires you to pick the horses that finish first, second, third, fourth and fifth—in the exact order. The minimum wager costs \$1.

If no one picks the Super High Five, the entire Super High Five pool carries over to Keeneland’s next racing day. There are no consolation payoffs.

### Maker’s Mark Mile/Toyota Blue Grass Stakes Double:

Try your hand at picking the winners of two Grade 1 races on consecutive days. April 11 is the day of the \$300,000 Maker’s Mark Mile, a one-mile turf race for four-year-olds and up. April 12 is the day of \$750,000 Toyota Blue Grass. The 1 1/8-mile race is for three-year-olds, many of whom will make their next start in the Kentucky Derby (G1).

### Advanced wagering on the Toyota Blue Grass:

On April 11, Keeneland also will begin to offer advanced wagering on its most famous race.

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# Strength in numbers

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first five finishers in exact order in the day's final race.

The bet has the added attraction of offering carryover money if no winning bets are cashed the previous day. The Super High Five's minimum bet is \$1.

Another bet of interest for groups could be the Superfecta, which requires the selection of the top four finishers in a given race. With a minimum bet of 10 cents when it is boxed or wheeled, groups could play this wager throughout the day.

## Group dynamics

When betting with a group of people, it's important to set ground rules on how horses in the wager will be selected. Some teams prefer to assign a captain to make the final decision on the horse after the group gives input and to go to the window to place the wager. If one member of the group has more experience with wagering than others in the group, he

or she could serve this role.

Members of a group also can vote for their top choices, reach a consensus through discussion or have each member take turns making a pick. The point is to devise a system the group enjoys and keeps everyone involved.

Be sure to consider everyone's opinion. Sometimes the first-time bet-

tor comes up with the key longshot. At the races, you never know who is walking around lucky. It could be someone in your group. 🐎

Frank Angst is a senior writer for *Thoroughbred Times*.



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