

The In-Play Symbols

The In-Play symbols have been created using the expertise of Timeform's race assessors, and detail the key aspects of a horse's racing character and style based on previous runs.

Master In-Play symbols are awarded only sparingly, when the horse has definitely shown a specific characteristic. For ease of use, the various symbols have been broken down into the three phases of a race:

Start

M – made running

Useful pre-race when combined with other 'Start' symbols to ascertain the likely pace of the race, e.g. if there are five 'M's in a ten-runner field the race is likely to be well-run.

IN-PLAY POINTER: If there is only one 'M' in a field there is a strong possibility of an easy lead for the horse, which could indicate a pre-race back as the horse's odds In-Play may well be shorter, although an In-Play lay bet also to be placed to 'lock in' profit.

m – raced prominently

To be used pre-race alongside other 'Start' symbols to establish the likely pace.

H – dropped right out

As with the 'M's, it is always important to know before the race that a horse is likely to be dropped out when assessing how strong a pace the race is likely to be run at.

IN-PLAY POINTER: If most of the runners in a race have 'M's or 'm's, then the likelihood is that the pace will prove very strong, perhaps even overly so, and a horse held up may be able to pass labouring front-runners in the closing stages.

h – held up

Offers similar benefits to 'H's and is to be used pre-race to assess the pace in the race.

S – started very slowly

A characteristic that it's important for pre-race backers to be aware of, as it can be infuriating to back a horse pre-race, only to see it miss the break by lengths and instantly be available at a considerably bigger price In-Play than its SP.

IN-PLAY POINTER: A large 'S' is only used for horses with a persistent habit and therefore you should be very wary of backing them pre-race as their odds In-Play are likely to be bigger.

s – started slowly

As with 'S's, a trait to be wary of with pre-race backs. It is less of a concern when applied to debut efforts though.

Mid

K – travelled notably strongly

Used to denote horses who travel through the middle part of the race without coming off the bridle and with little assistance from the saddle. A very useful symbol when forming an In-Play strategy.

***IN-PLAY POINTER:** If a horse has the pattern of one who will travel strongly, there is every chance his odds will be shorter In-Play than pre-race, as they attract the attention of sole In-Play backers. Therefore, adopting a back-to-lay strategy can prove fruitful, i.e. backing pre-race and laying back In-Play at a shorter price to lock in profit.*

***IN-PLAY POINTER:** If a horse has a 'K' along with, perhaps, a 'F' or a 'S', then they are ones to be looking to lay when a short price In-Play (having travelled strongly) as they may well not find extra when coming off the bridle.*

k – travelled strongly

A symbol that is applied when a horse has travelled through the race with ease, but perhaps not as strikingly as a large 'K' would warrant. Useful when used in conjunction with 'F's, 'R's or 'S's.

L – raced very lazily

One to bear in mind when contemplating a pre-race back, as horses who display this characteristic are likely to trade at a bigger price In-Play as they come off the bridle early or receive reminders.

***IN-PLAY POINTER:** Lock in a margin by laying pre-race and subsequently backing at a bigger price In-Play.*

l – raced lazily/went in snatches

The small 'l' is to identify horses who have a tendency to hit sporadic flat spells in a race that may prompt vigorous riding/reminders. As with 'L's, horses who have this trait tend to trade at a bigger price In-Play.

! – raced freely

This is a factor to consider when thinking of backing a horse pre-race as it could well be a bigger price In-Play after a couple of furlongs.

NH Only

x – made mistakes

A flaw to consider In-Play if a horse is trading at a short price and apparently going well, but has obstacles still to jump.

xx – made numerous mistakes

Horses to be very wary of backing either pre-race or In-Play. Equally, these horses could be laid given the likelihood of making a mistake.

IN PLAY

J – jumped very well

Clearly a positive asset, both when contemplating a pre-race back or back-to-lay. Large 'J's denote horses either whose jumping gained them ground or who never looked likely to make a mistake.

j – jumped well

As with 'J's, a symbol to view positively, used for horses whose jumping never caused them to lose momentum but perhaps not with the aplomb of the larger 'J'.

End

F – found nothing

Recorded on horses who don't respond at all to any pressure once they've come off the bridle. Horses to be very wary of backing In-Play and horses who should perhaps be laid at shorter In-Play prices if others in the race are also travelling well.

IN-PLAY POINTER: Particularly interesting with horses who also have 'K's.

f – found less than seemed likely

For horses who travel well but then fail to see out the final part of the race in the manner expected. Not as dramatic as the 'F's, but, nevertheless, horses who should not be backed (and should potentially be opposed) In-Play at short prices when travelling well.

I – idled markedly

Used to indicate horses who don't maintain their forward momentum upon hitting the front, but will likely renew their effort if they are challenged.

IN-PLAY POINTER: A trait to bear in mind for In-Play layers if a horse appears to be getting caught – they'll likely respond when pressed.

i – idled

As with 'I's only not as severe a tendency.

R – responded most generously to pressure

A symbol used to signify horses who show the characteristic of coming off the bridle but respond and renew momentum when ridden along by their jockey.

r – responded well to pressure

Recorded for horses who will respond to their jockey's efforts, but perhaps not with such dramatic results as to warrant a large 'R'. The same principles apply regarding being wary of laying In-Play horses who show this trait.

IN-PLAY POINTER: Horses who have this trait tend to be available at a bigger price In-Play than pre-race, but as they respond to pressure, have every chance of still winning the race. Of course, In-Play layers should be wary of laying horses with this symbol when they come under pressure.

§ - signs of temperament

The Timeform 'squiggle' is used to highlight horses who are unreliable, particularly in this context with regard to their temperament. This translates as horses who In-Play backers should be wary of (and layers looking to take on) as they may be reticent in a finish and may not go through with their effort.

§§ - marked reluctance

Rarely used, but horses who earn this symbol should be avoided by backers. Applied to horses who have shown a reluctance to race, have run out more than once, are particularly recalcitrant etc. These horses should be of interest to layers.

Anticipate The Markets With Historical Betting Data

Add a further dimension to your analysis with historical Betfair in-running betting data. See how the market has reacted to a horse's style of running in previous races. Such information can also be used to back-up the impression that symbols such as 'F' suggest.

The In-Play data provides the lowest or highest Betfair price that was matched In-Play with a payout to backers of more than £100 (e.g. £50 @ 2 or £2 @ 50). If the horse has won the race, the In-Play High is shown, whilst the In-Play Low is shown if the horse has been beaten.

IN-PLAY POINTER: If a horse has consistently gone shorter in-running than his pre-race price, but hasn't won, then they can be identified as a back-to-lay or In-Play lay.

Making It Pay

The odds available on a horse will change during a race as the market reacts to what it is seeing. The In-Play symbols provide extra information on each horse's racing character, providing a better idea how the race will unfold. With this information you have an edge on the market and can back or lay (or both) at the right time for the best value.

Below are some examples that show how In-Play information was used for profitable betting.

GUARANTEE A PROFIT IF YOUR HORSE WINS OR NOT

PALMERIN Sandown 29 August 2008. **Master In-Play Symbol kf**

STRATEGY: Knowing the horse will travel strongly but find little towards the finish you back it pre-race with the intention of laying it in-running at a shorter price to lock in a profit. Historical betting data backs up this strategy as it shows he traded at 1.6 in his last race and lost.

RESULT: Finished 6th with a Betfair SP 6.00 but an In-Play Minimum 2.50

PROFIT/LOSS: Back £20 @ 6.0 (- £20 if loses; + £100 if wins)

Lay £50 @ 2.5 (+ £33 if loses; - £50 if wins)

Overall – (+ £13 if loses; + £50 if wins)

BACK A WINNER UNDER THE IDEAL CONDITIONS

TRANQUIL TIGER Newbury 17 May 2008

Master In-Play Symbol M

STRATEGY: Tranquil Tiger is second top on Timeform ratings and has a good chance on form racing under ideal conditions. As the only horse in a field of five with a 'M' he is likely to get an easy lead and so represents a good pre-race back.

RESULT: WON at Betfair SP 6.00 and In-Play Maximum 6.20

PROFIT/LOSS: back pre-race £20 @ 6.00

Profit £100

MAKE YOUR MONEY IN-PLAY

THE OIL MAGNATE Beverley 17 September 2008

Master In-Play Symbol Hr

STRATEGY: A horse who is dropped right out in a field where a number of runners usually make the running (and one of the favourites is likely to find little at the end). A small bet In-Play at a big price looks justified in the belief that the front-runners go off too fast and the selection will be the one horse finishing strongly.

RESULT: WON at Betfair SP 18.0 and In-Play Maximum 60.00

PROFIT/LOSS: back In-Play £5 @ 60.00

Profit £295