



No rain on her parade as Gai

BY THE NUMBERS ANTHONY KEANE'S ANATOMY OF A WINNER

BACKING the bookies' favourite at the Melbourne Cup is only likely to deliver you a winner once every five years, but other numbers might help give once-a-year punters an edge for Tuesday's big race.

Horsing is a numbers game more than most other sports, so can mathematics help us pick a winner?

Yes, according to Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute executive director Inge Koch, who said statistics were being analysed more carefully across all sports. "As a statistician, I would look at the past and see if I can find connections of properties that horses and jockeys that were first, second and third share," she said. However, statistical success would only put your pick among the first few runners, Professor Koch said. "With those small time differences it's simply luck."

Professor Koch said serious gamblers improved their chances by analysing the numbers. "I think there's a lot more skill in it than we think."

For those of you without connections or hours to spend poring over previous races' data, here's a quick guide to the maths of the Melbourne Cup.

WEIGHTS

The Melbourne Cup is the world's richest "two-mile" handicap race and horses are weighted based on past performance. Since 1983 only three horses have carried more than 56kg to victory. The average weight carried by Cup winners in the past two decades has been 54.5kg and the last top weight to win was Makybe Diva at 58kg in 2005. Fame Game, this year's early favourite,

will be carrying 57kg so will have to buck the trend to win. Snow Sky is the top weight at 58kg.

STALLIONS OR MARES?

Stallions hold the record for wins at 64, while geldings (a castrated male) have won 50 and colts (an uncastrated male aged under four) have won 21. Mares have won just 13 Melbourne Cups but have won five times in the last 12 years, largely thanks to the great Makybe Diva's three-peat.

This year's race is almost all stallions and geldings. Fame Game, Preferment and Amralah are stallions while Trip to Paris and Max Dynamite are geldings.

AGES

The Melbourne Cup is open to three-year-olds and over and it appears that experience plays a role. Four and five-year-olds have won 43 and 44 Cups respectively. Six-year-olds have won 32 times. Red Cadeaux, which has been runner-up three times, is now aged 10. Among this year's favourites, Criterion and Trip to

Paris are aged five while Fame Game is six.

SADDLECLOTH STATISTICS

Saddlecloth numbers are handed out in the order of the weights the horses carry, and UBET says 63 per cent of Cup winners have come from the top 12 saddlecloth numbers. Number one, the top weight, has won 12 times while numbers two, four, six and 12 have won at least nine times.

BARRIER DRAW

Mid-range barriers have had more wins. UBET says 40 per cent of the past 30 winners have come from four barriers - 10, 11, 13 and 14. Barrier 18, or the "hoodoo gate" has had no success.

PLAYING FAVOURITES

The favourite has only won about 20 per cent of

the time, and eight times in the past 32 Melbourne Cups. The latest was Fiorente in 2013. Last year's favourite, Admiral Ratki, came 22nd. Six of the past nine Cup winners have started with double-figure odds.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Amateur punters often pick their Cup horses based on a name. UBET says seven of the past eight winners had a one-word name, which points to horses such as Preferment or Amralah this year.

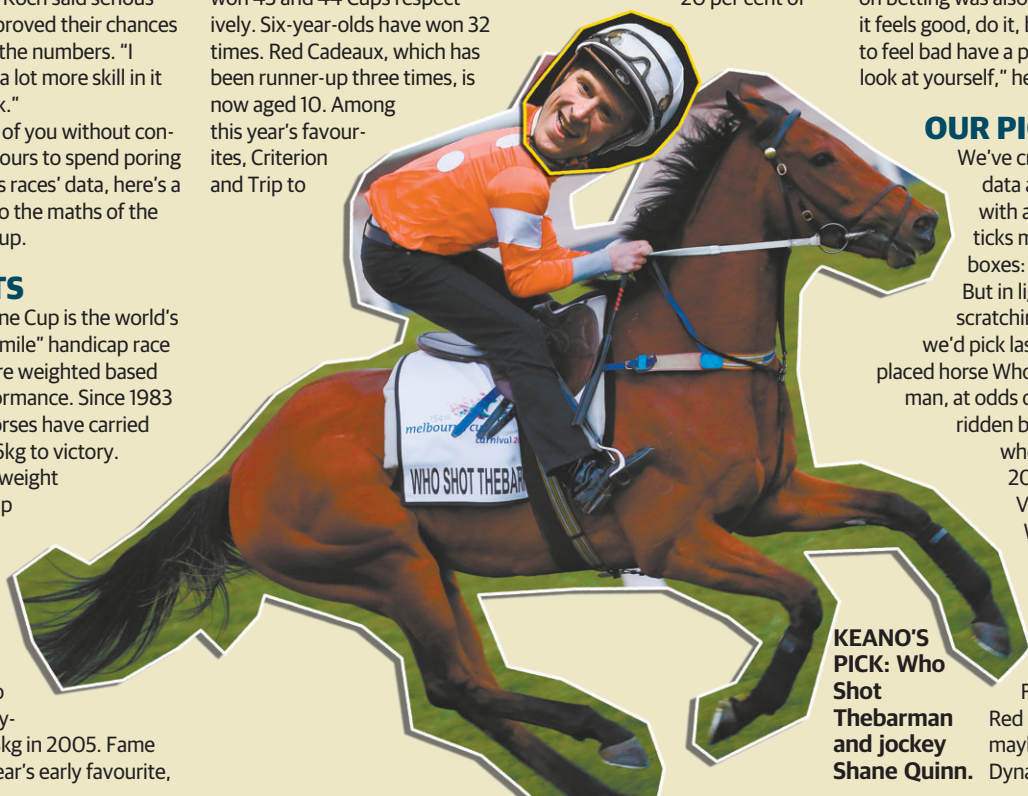
Wealth For Life Financial Planning principal Rex Whitford suggested picking a horse whose name they had an affiliation with "or the dress you are wearing".

"Punting on an outsider is often a better bet when it comes to the Melbourne Cup than any other race," he said. Mr Whitford said how much money you spent on betting was also important. "If it feels good, do it, but if it starts to feel bad have a pretty hard look at yourself," he said.

OUR PICK

We've crunched the data and come up with a horse that ticks most of these boxes: Amralah. But in light of his scratching yesterday we'd pick last year's third-placed horse Who Shot Thebarman, at odds of 21-1 and ridden by Blake Shinn who won the 2008 Cup on Viewed. And if Who Shot Thebarman shoots through, try current favourite Fame Game, or Red Cadeaux ... or maybe Max Dynamite ...

KEANO'S PICK: Who Shot Thebarman and jockey Shane Quinn.



LINCOLN MOORE

THERE was rain in Melbourne yesterday but none fell on Gai Waterhouse's parade at Flemington with Australia's first lady of racing beaming as Excess Knowledge, ridden by Dwayne Dunn, gave the trainer two hopes for Tuesday's \$6.2 million Melbourne Cup.

There were plenty of damp gowns and sinking heels among the 85,943 fans, and the lowest crowd since 1999 - and Mother Nature watered down a few Champagne glasses - but when Waterhouse's Excess Knowledge was first past the post there were scenes of adulation. They turned to dismay, however, when Damian Lane, the jockey on the second horse Zanteca, lodged a protest.

But the tension dissipated with stewards, led by an under-siege chairman Terry Bailey, dismissing the objection.

"Is he starting? Yes he is!" an excited Waterhouse declared moments after Excess Knowledge's victory. "Can he win? Yes he will! Back him!"

But she's also got a plan-B. Gai Waterhouse will now try to defy the international invasion for the second time in three years when she saddles up two runners in the Cup.

Waterhouse was already guaranteed a Cup start with The Offer, but her hopes of dual representation in the world's greatest staying race hung on the result of yesterday's Lexus Stakes on Derby Day, with the winner of that race automatically included in the final Cup field.

If successful in the 24-horse 3200m classic that will bring the nation to a standstill at 2.30pm on Tuesday, Excess Knowledge would become the 11th horse to complete the Lexus Stakes-Melbourne Cup double and only the third this century after Brew (2000) and Shocking (2009).

Jockey Kerrin McEvoy, who grew up in Streaky Bay on

the West Coast of South Australia, has been booked to ride Excess Knowledge, chasing his second Melbourne Cup success after claiming the 2000 feature aboard Brew at the tender age of 20.

James Cummings was denied the chance of a fairytale with his Melbourne Cup hopes High Midnight and Ruling Dynasty winding up in sixth and seventh place respectively in the Lexus. It's the first Melbourne Cup since Cummings' legendary grandfather, the Cups King Bart, passed away in late August.



SPORT
EXCESS CAN WIN CUP, SAYS GAI
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To add to the tension, there was more Cup drama with levathan owner Lloyd Williams forced to withdraw Herbert Power winner Amralah after traces of cortisone were found in its system. Amralah's jockey Damien Oliver looked like watching from the sidelines before Waterhouse secured his services for The Offer.

The South Australian flavour was to the fore in the last race at Flemington yesterday with the state's leading trainer Phillip Stokes and Dom Tourneur combining for a win.

FAST FACTS

4 The most wins by a jockey shared by Bobby Lewis (1902, 1915, 1919, 1927) and Harry White (1974, 1975, 1978, 1979) Makybe Diva has the most wins by a horse courtesy of her three-peat in 2003, 2004, 2005



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