

Why the Durban July is a 'handicapped' race

On Tuesday, 11 June 2013, the weights of the nominated runners for the Durban July 2013 were announced. For the betting public, this is the first important phase of the horse racing event.



"The weight allocated to a horse gives those wanting to bet a good starting indication of the horse's skill," says Scott Canny, marketing manager of Sportingbet South Africa. "The weights range from 52kgs at the lowest to 60kgs at the highest and the heavier the weights, the better the horse's merit rating."

Handicapping explained

The Durban July is a 'handicapped' race, which means that the horses in the race are carrying varying weights to try to even things out by making higher rated horses carry more weight and giving the others a chance by giving them a lighter weight. This makes the race more interesting and the outcomes more difficult to predict. It is important to note though, that the favourites can only be weighted with a maximum of 60kgs, so the strongest competitors are likely to remain the favourites.

"The weight carried by each horse is determined by its Merit Rating, its current racing form and performances in the Graded and Listed races over the past year and is allocated by the handicapper," explains Canny. "The weight carried includes the jockey and riding equipment and, if necessary, lead weights are added to make up the required weight."

The Merit Rating of a horse is earned over its career, by taking into account their previous performances, simply stated this means that the revealed ability of the horse is the primary basis for determining their handicap rating.

High stakes

"Essentially, knowing that a horse has been given a weight of 60kgs lets you know that the horse is seen as a very strong competitor who has won a lot of races and has performed exceptionally throughout their career," says Canny. "Other important things to keep an eye out for in the buildup to the big day are the reputation of the stables and trainers, the final field and the positions in which they are drawn, announced on 25 June. You can also tell a lot about the horse's pedigree from the quality of the jockey riding it and by seeing the horses in action for the final time before the race at the Gallops on 27 June."

"The July is the biggest betting day in Africa," says Canny. "With 56,000 people attending on 6 July at Greyville Racecourse and millions more following the action on TV, hundreds of millions of rands is wagered on the day. As South Africa's largest online sportsbook, Sportingbet South Africa guarantees the top price on the top two horses, currently Capetown Noir & Pomodoro."

This year Sportingbet SA is running a Pick 8 competition with the incredible prize of R1 million. Entrants need to pick the finishing order of the top 8 horses in the Durban July to win the prize. If no one gets it right the closest pick, the most horses in the correct finishing places, wins R10,000. The competition is open from after the Final Draw on 25 June. Entry is free but you need to have a FICA verified Sportingbet account in order for your entry to be valid.

For further information, go to [the Sportingbet website](#).

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