

# SECRET BETTING CLUB

## EXPERT GAMBLER INTERVIEWS

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### WELCOME

At the Secret Betting Club we regularly feature in-depth interviews and expert advice from a whole range of betting industry figures - all designed to help you make money from your own bets

With interviews with everyone from bookmaker insiders to betting fund managers, we have plenty to share with you and in this special free sample magazine have compiled 4 interviews with betting industry experts for you to enjoy.

If you like what you read, you can find regular monthly interviews such as these and much more in our regular SBC magazines

We believe so strongly in our ability to help your betting, that there is an anytime money back guarantee if not satisfied with our service for any reason.

Best Regards,

Peter Ling  
Secret Betting Club Editor



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## WHAT IS THE SECRET BETTING CLUB & HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

Established in May 2006, the Secret Betting Club is a **100% independent** source for reporting, reviewing and monitoring the world of betting advice, through the use of **tipsters, systems and strategies**.

We can point you in the direction of the **best tipsters, systems and methods for making money betting**. We do this via our:

- **SBC Magazines** – Our regular magazines feature our independent tipster reviews, how-to guides, expert interviews and free systems and strategies for you to follow.
- **SBC Tipster Profit Reports** – Published 6 times a year, these unique reports contain our latest tipster ratings, including Hall of Fame and at a glance comparative league tables on over 50 different tipsters.
- Free access to our 3-part **Ultimate Betting Package**, consisting of the...
  1. The Secret List of Award Winning Horse Racing, Football & Sport Tipsters
  2. The Secret Betting System Guide (*Including 3 profitable betting systems for Racing, Football & Golf*)
  3. The Professional Gambler Blueprint
- Access to our dynamic forum rammed full of advice, **free strategies and systems** devised by some of our very shrewd members.
- Entry to the **SBC Discount Club**, providing you exclusive saving deals for many top tipsters that you just won't find anywhere else. Before you join any tipster – check with us first to save money!
- Access to our outstanding **7 year + back catalogue** full of our past reviews, features and profitable betting advice.
- And much more besides, certainly too much to list here.

The great news is that all of this currently available for the equivalent of **just £1.52 per week** and with a **full money back guarantee** if not in any way satisfied once you joined.



### THE SECRET BETTING CLUB MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

We guarantee that you will make money betting in the next 12 months or you can get your subscription fee back

*No Questions Asked!*

## Expert Gambler 1: Stephen Harris

*Hot on the heels of our review of the Betting Expert Nap of the Day service in SBC73, we sat down with their chief racing tipster - Stephen Harris to discuss his approach to betting*

*Stephen has a wealth of experience in the betting industry from horse racing trading to owning a pitch at Oxford dogs and so knows exactly what it takes to make his betting a success. We also asked Stephen about his popular nap of the day tipster service, the kind of profits he expects to make and who it is most suitable for.*

### SBC INTERVIEW: STEPHEN HARRIS

#### EX-BOOKMAKER TURNED BETTING EXPERT RACING TIPSTER

#### **How did you first get involved in racing and betting?**

I went greyhound and horse racing with my dad as a teenager and the interest grew from there.

#### **Would you give us a tour of your CV alongside an understanding of how the connection with Betting Expert developed?**

I started off at SIS in the text room and from there I had my own pitch at Reading dog track having been a successful punter there during university. I have also worked at Sporting Index as a horse racing trader and at UK Betting as horse racing trader/odds compiler.

I then worked for myself concentrating mainly on the dogs, where I also had a pitch at Oxford dogs. From there I began my work for Betting Expert, who found me through the LinkedIn website. I now punt for myself from home while editing the racing pages at Betting Expert. Sadly my dog track involvement ended when Reading closed a few years ago and Oxford wasn't worthwhile with rising expenses and falling turn-over.

#### **How would you describe your early betting career, and what was the key thing that turned you from loss to profit?**

It was the usual steep learning curve as to begin with I simply had a William Hills credit account at college which provided me an expensive pastime in mug-punting. Like most people I lost money when first betting.

The turnaround to making it work for me came when I concentrated on one area of expertise - which for me was greyhound racing. I watched every race over and over and made copious notes which were then inputted into a database. More recently I have done a similar thing for the horses, where I use Timeform I and make my own notes on each race. The National Hunt would be my main strength over the flat.

#### **Was there anything that triggered a change in your betting or someone that you learnt from which shaped your punting style and approach?**

Becoming a bookmaker at the dogs made me realise that you simply can't let emotions interfere with the "business" of winning.

#### **Do you have one key piece of advice that you would pass onto a punter wanting to turn professional or make a second income from betting?**

Without a doubt - to specialise. Find an area you know and only play into that and forget the 'interest bets' on other sports - they will only lose you money.

**What are the key tools of your trade, do you have any special set-up or facilities which help your betting?**

Timeform is excellent for horse racing punters as it provides one view and plenty of room to add one's own comments. I use it extensively for my own horse racing betting.

**Describe your typical race analysis, and indicate what your starting approach to analysing a race is.**

My approach is fairly straightforward in that I try and find something at the front of the market that is underpriced and play against it, probably each-way if the shape of the race is right.

**What are you looking for when you watch race replays, and why is race watching so important?**

Any kind of bias is vitally important, either on the track or in terms of the pace of the race. Quiet rides in relation to exchange moves should also be noted. Try and look away from the obvious and find a reason why a winner may have been flattered i.e. will be overbet next time.

**Most people number crunch, do you follow any systems or use number crunching methodology?**

No systems, my approach is instinct and hard work.

**Mentally how do you cope with losing runs and retain the discipline needed to make betting a success?**

Try and play to consistent stakes and don't get too excited when its going well or badly. Keeping the emotion out of betting is vitally important.

**What do you think gives the punter the best chance of winning in the long-term, quality of bets or quantity?**

This really is a case of each to their own as you could argue that with betfair dominating, there is "value" in every race if you can find it. If you bet a lot it also means you are bang up to date with the form. A Saturday punter or someone who plays just in Group races for example is unlikely to find anything too original or wrongly priced.

**Do you think the media helps or hinders punters, and is there anyone you pay particular attention to?**

Most working in the racing media are clueless with one or two notable exceptions. The gravy train keeps them well fed in the press room without having to state anything rather than the obvious. Also they dare not criticise any jockey or trainer for fear of being cut out of the loop.

**What do you believe are the key characteristics of a successful punter or tipster?**

Discipline and expertise in a specific area.

**How did the Idea of the Betting Expert Nap of the Day come into existence?**

We have tried to build up the interest in the expanding Horse Racing Pages at BettingExpert, and encourage punters to put their own selections up on a daily basis as well. The Horse Racing Competition with £5000 in prize money for the most successful tipsters have proved very popular.

**Performance so far looks strong with a 15% ROI to advised prices, do you feel this is about right long-term or under/over performing?**

The flat has been a struggle in the past few months, with bad weather meaning there is no consistency in the form. Before that we were flying along but I'd guess that 15% is about right to be honest.

**Given that you give out tips each morning at 9am, before many bookies have priced the markets up, do you have any suggestions on the optimum time to place any bets?**

I would try and take a price as soon as the firms go up, with B.O.G if anyone still has that on their accounts!

**Have you noticed any market movements on your naps after you post them up?**

We are still at early days really so no immediate snowball effect as yet. Hopefully if the naps are "right" they will shorten up through the day as Betfair is very close to the perfect market by the off.

**Given that your service is a 1 a day bet service, how much of a long-term approach would you advocate to follows of your service?**

I would say play level stakes and be patient with the naps, you won't win all the time and should always bet for the long-term. Hunting around for the best price available each day can also make a difference.

**One criticism people have in relation to services that meet a quota per bets each day is that there aren't always value bets each and every day. Conversely there could be times when there are more than 1 bet to follow. Do you find the 1 bet a day limit is restrictive or causes you to bet when you wouldn't normally?**

There is another section on the site called 'The Value Angle' where we try to find bigger prices winners so there is room for me to tip up more than one bet. This currently has an ROI of 23%.

**Do you specialise in any races in particular, and if so, do you think specialisation is important for punters?**

Yes it is and as a rule I prefer maidens and novice hurdles.

**The Daily Naps service is attracting more interest now due to performance. Does this create extra pressure, with the increased following and expectation/realisation that comes with knowing others are following your advice? How do you cope with any pressure?**

I am betting everyday myself so if I get things wrong I lose myself. The pressure is always on but it is in life whatever you do. If I'm not finding winners I try harder and look back to see where mistakes have been made.

**Do you bet on anything outside of Betting Expert and/or horse racing in particular?**

I still play on the greyhounds at Hove where I watch the DVDS but only bet on betfair at the BAGS meetings. The 130% bookmaker overround shows in the evenings mean there is little point playing away from the exchange.

**Where else should SBC members look to find out more from you? Do you produce other tips or further content they should check out?**

The BettingExpert blog is excellent in all areas of betting on sport and ideas about being a pro. The Hot Horses section in the racing pages is useful for traders looking to see which way the market has been moving in the trading rooms overnight.

## Expert Gambler 2: Ed Hawkins

*We are delighted to bring you our interview with renowned author, columnist and tipster Ed Hawkins on his own approach to betting. Ed has been the SJA betting writer of the year for the past two years and amongst other roles is both a betting columnist for The Times newspaper and Betfair.*

*Ed is also famous for his entertaining betting themed book '[Sporting Chancer](#)', which chronicles how, when out of work and luck, he attempts to bet his way around the globe.*

*We spoke to Ed about his first love and major betting passion: Cricket Betting, a sport for which he is also a [Betfair columnist](#) providing regular tips on all forms of the game.*

### SBC INTERVIEW: ED HAWKINS

AUTHOR OF 'SPORTING CHANCER' AND CRICKET TIPSTER

**Your father was the horse racing correspondent for the Guardian for 27 years, yet you opted to focus on cricket. In your book, you describe this as being an act of rebellion at an early age, but what first attracted you to the sport, and how did this develop into becoming a cricket tipster?**

My dad was a huge cricket fan so it came from him. I had a modicum amount of ability as a batsman and was most keen to play professionally. But I grasped from about 11 or 12 that I was nowhere near good enough – seriously, the pros are freaks - and, besides, I modelled myself on Mike Atherton so couldn't actually get the ball off the square. As for cricket tipping I fell into it, really. I worked at a newspaper called Sport First as cricket correspondent when 20, I think, and when that went bust I wrote off to loads of papers. The Racing Post replied. I ended up writing the cricket.

**How would you describe your early betting career and was there ever a eureka moment when you realised how to make cricket betting work?**

It was a process for sure. Knowing about cricket, spotting a good/average player, being aware of the vagaries of different pitches and conditions was useful as was betting knowledge. But that doesn't mean you can be a good tipster. Not sure about a eureka moment but when you have so many opinions and information swirling around your head, and odds, too, I just thought 'narrow it down to one thing that you know for sure and frame the tip around that'. That might have been a poor batting wicket or a good one.

**In the past you have worked for both The Sportsman and The Racing Post alongside some fairly famous tipping names. How did this help shape your punting style and approach?**

I used to sit next to Bruce Millington, the editor at the RP, when he was sports editor. Smart, smart guy. He used to say 'don't tell me what you think will happen, tell me what will happen'. There was Kevin Pullein, who is the doyen of tipsters. He would drum it home that one should only bet when the price is wrong. Obvious, really but so often forgotten.

**Do you have a preferred format of the game for betting on and why?**

The spreads. Had some good wins down the years and I was a sucker for the thrill of not knowing how much one might win or lose depending on a sell or buy. Had some horror moments, though. Buying Ronnie Irani's performance in a 1-day series in Oz years ago. I remember willing him to be dropped because of the non-runner rule and they just get picking him, failure after failure.

**Is the majority of your cricket betting based on trading with the likes of Betfair or are you happy to take a value bet at the start of a match and let it ride?**

Trading is a great way to make profits but it feels a little like cheating, really. Is it as fun as being proved wholly accurate over a five-day Test or for 30 minutes of it? Of course not.

**In Sporting Chancer, you regularly discussed cricket spread betting, where you can buy or sell the number of runs or wickets across a variety of markets. Do you still spread bet and if so, do have you any advice for those looking to do the same?**

Recognise it is hugely volatile and only wager if you can afford the worst case scenario.

**Do you keep a record of your own betting performance over the years? If so, how do your stats work out?**

I think it is key to keep records. For example, I rarely like to make recommendations on bowler markets because I have a poor record but have a solid record with top bats on innings markets. I am disappointed if I don't hit a target of around 40-45% profits for a season and thankfully I manage that.

**How many tips a year do you expect to put forward via the Betfair column? Will you be tipping throughout the summer for the South Africa Test series and ODI tournaments?**

Gosh, not too sure about the overall number but I will preview every England Test match so at the very least there will be tips for the summer series, yes.

**One of the downsides of being a tipster for a major publisher is the requirement to provide a tip for every feature event – something that lets down fantastic tipsters like Pricewise Extra's Tom Segal for example. Is this something that impacts you with your current Betfair column or are they happy if on certain days you are unable to find a value tip?**

Agree. It is difficult but it's the nature of the beast. I guess you should start to worry when people don't want to read your tips. With Betfair there has to be a tip, yes, but as I said earlier if you stick to that principle of 'what you know' then there is such a plethora of markets or possible trades that it is rare indeed that you are not confident with a selection.

**In our experience, the most lucrative areas for betting profits come in markets where the bookmakers are lazy or simply don't have the time to research properly. It allows the dedicated bettor to spot value tips. Is this the case with the likes of cricket, perhaps on the English Domestic scene for example? Are there any areas or markets ripe for exploration by a canny punter with time on his hands?**

County cricket is a gold mine. If you do your research and spend hours doing it, too, you will get a definitive edge over the layers. It is a small piece of the business for them so they don't spend much time on it all.

**Are there any pitfalls that catch out most cricket punters to be aware of? What should someone know before they get started?**

Always read the rules of each market thoroughly. I have lost count the number of times people have wagered on a Test or ODI unaware that there is a market for tied match and express surprise that their wager will not be refunded.

**What other resources do you use to help formulate your cricket tips? Are there other experts that you listen to before putting your own tips together?**

Cricinfo's statsguru is invaluable. As is Cricket Archive. I tend to ignore weather forecasts in terms of standing up a bet because in my experience they are most often inaccurate. But I don't like to listen to other opinions. You have to have faith in your own otherwise you'd be flip-flopping every week and readers would lose trust.

**Do you have one key piece of advice that you would pass onto a punter wanting to turn professional or make a second income from cricket betting?**

Only do it if you are dead emotionally. Very tricky otherwise.

**Many successful bettors these days find themselves having their betting accounts restricted or closed as UK based bookmakers in-particular are increasingly turning away winners. Only recently I had yet another well known bookmaker account closed down due to a 'Trading Decision'. Have you experienced this yourself and do you have any thoughts on this practice?**

We have all been restricted and, in the end, one leaves the traditional fixed odds guys behind. It is hugely frustrating but bookmakers don't need 'proper' punters. They are there for the five or ten quid stakers and that's what keeps the cash rolling in. We are better off apart. Betfair has been a Godsend in that regard.



## Expert Gambler 3: Rowan Day

*One of the best websites out in the betting blogosphere is that of the ['Portfolio Investor'](#), which updates on the real life ups and downs involved in running a portfolio of tipsters. It's written by SBC member Rowan Day and his entertaining writing style and honest approach has captured the imagination of many a reader, including us here at SBC.*

*We were delighted when Rowan agreed to be interviewed by us here at SBC to try to gain insight into the man behind the Portfolio Investor for other members wishing to emulate him.*

### SBC INTERVIEW: ROWAN DAY

#### THE PORTFOLIO INVESTOR PART 1

**Firstly, can you give those SBC members not familiar with your blog a brief description of who you are and what you do?**

I'm a long term SBC member who started gambling "seriously" about three years ago. Over that period of time I have grown a portfolio of tipping services that I follow, and which provides the subject material for my blog, The Portfolio Investor.

**What is it that introduced you to betting and tipsters and inspired you to try your hand making money? For example, do you have a background in betting or was it something that developed as a way of making a second income?**

Dick Francis. It was he that got me into betting. I read his first book, 'Dead Cert' when I was about 16 and it sparked an interest in horse racing. I, along with my best mate, had always tried to make money since being not much more than nippers, and suddenly the world of betting opened up to us. It seemed like discovering our very own land of opportunity. Trouble was, we were both pretty rubbish at picking horses that would run fast, whilst occasionally hitting on a great winner that would convince us we knew what we were doing.

Moving forward to about three years ago, and allowing for a big break in betting that ran from the ages of 19 (when I became a broke student) to 38, I discovered the SBC. Simultaneously, my young children started at an expensive school and I needed a source of income to complement my salary. You can guess the rest.

**Why did you choose betting over other forms of investment such as the stock market?**

Well I did try the stock market for a while with an ISA or two, and quite frankly over eight years, the returns were pitiful. In fact one of them was showing a loss. I couldn't help but think that betting, although higher risk of course, had a lot more potential because of the ability to turn over your bank much more frequently. I actually used the money from the ISAs to provide the funds for my betting bank. Inspired or foolish? Not too sure, but I have no regrets so far!

I have also invested a little in property with a small house that my wife and I let out. Thing is with that though, is that I've realised that tipsters tend not to give you as many problems as tenants. Still, I leave the management on that to my wife. I'm not daft!

**What was it that made you decide to start writing a blog on the topic and how much time does it take up each day to put it all together?**

I have always wanted to be a writer. If I'd had my head screwed on when I was younger I'd have trained to be a journalist. The thing is, and this isn't false modesty, I know full well there are far

more talented writers than I am out there. Anyway, it was the frustrated writer in me that first made me think of blogging. The other factor was JP stopping his blog. Like so many, I read JP's blog religiously every night. When he stopped, I realised there might be a gap in the blogging world to try and fill.

Obviously the time it takes to write the blog depends largely on the available suitable material to write about. I try and limit it to half an hour though, otherwise I'd never see my wife! Mind you, if there's a meaty subject to discuss, I can get absorbed and before I know it the evening has gone.

**Where do we at SBC come in? You have been a long-term member of the service, can you remember when and why you first joined?**

Ah, well...

Put it this way. Without the SBC, I wouldn't now have a portfolio of services to run, and there wouldn't be a blog to write. So it's fair to say the SBC have had a fundamental influence on my life, which sounds rather dramatic!

In a nutshell, I have learnt almost everything I know about sports investing from the SBC. That covers everything from identifying a worthwhile service, to staking, to bank management, to handling the psychological ups and downs, and everything in between. Others that I've met and interacted with subsequently have helped incredibly with a few things along the way (I'm thinking of people like Graeme Dand of The Football Analyst service, Skeeve, and the aforementioned JP here), but ultimately, I wouldn't have come across those people, or be running a portfolio, were it not for the SBC, who I first joined three or four years ago (my memory isn't what it was!).

Why did I join the SBC? I remember finding them on the internet and my first thought was that it must be a scam. It must have been a good few months between my becoming aware of them and actually joining up. What made me finally take the plunge was probably the school fees I mentioned beginning to really squeeze and a desire to relieve the pressure that was causing. That allied to the fact that there was a money-back guarantee - what did I have to lose?

**How do you use the SBC to help you with your betting?**

Goodness, that's a question! I have my portfolio where I want it now. It's taken me over three years to get to the point where I can say that. I've used the SBC to identify good services, to learn about bank and risk management, to get my staking right, to learn how to cope with the psychological challenges gambling brings and so much more. I'm also of the opinion that you should never stop learning about something you want to be good at, and I still find that a sentence in an SBC mag will challenge me and get me thinking. So in a nutshell, I've used it massively to get to where I am with my gambling now, and also as something that will provoke me into the sort of ongoing self-analysis that I think is essential.

**Describe your approach to betting, how do you decide upon the make-up of your portfolio and the services you join?**

I've learnt over time that I don't do losing spells well. I have the sort of personality which dictates that I would rather make a long term 8% ROI with relatively few massive downs than a 15% that comes at the cost of having to ride a rollercoaster of huge highs and depressing lows. Thus over time, I've learnt to go primarily with services that demonstrate higher strike rates and shorter losing runs. I've learnt that the shrewd use of Asian Handicaps can make the path we tread smoother too, so perhaps I pay more attention to services that use this angle in their betting.

Over time, the make-up of my portfolio has been heavily influenced by the likes of Bet365, Ladbrokes, and the like. When these companies stopped taking my bets, I had to ask myself a question: how do I maintain and then grow my level of turnover when fewer bookmakers were prepared to lay me a bet. The answer, obviously, is to use bookmakers who aren't so quick to close winning accounts or impose severe restrictions on staking. Of course I was aware of the likes of Pinnacle and SBO Bet and how they had a different business model to our own, high street bookmakers. From there, it was clear to me that I had to gear my portfolio towards football and sports betting and away from horse racing. In the interests of portfolio diversity, and because I have a belief in the racing tipsters I follow, I wanted to continue to have a racing element to my betting, but I realised it had to be a smaller part.

From that, I simply look for services which display characteristics that the SBC have taught me to look for. Transparency of results, long term record, customer service, and of course value for money are all boxes I look to see ticked now before subscribing to a service. Of course the reports in the SBC mags have all this info to hand - I still think that even as the SBC has grown over the years, its core strength remains it's tipster reports.

I still look to maintain diversity and where I am now with the portfolio is that I need to look at what a new service might provide that isn't already provided for. For example, I'd be reluctant to sign up to a service providing tips in the top leagues in Europe and gives out about 100 bets per season as I already have Football Elite that does just that. As an example, when I looked at my portfolio last spring, I could see that come the summer, my turnover was going to dramatically decrease as the main European football leagues closed down. I read the report on the Summer Of Football service and I could see that this could be a way of increasing that turnover. Same with Sportyy, which would have tennis picks through the summer months.

So, identify a hole in the portfolio, and then look to see what might fill it. That's my strategy now.

**Can you outline the make-up of your current portfolio and why you have chosen some of the services it includes?**

I've covered some of this in answering the previous question but in terms of actual portfolio make-up I have six racing services and nine sports services (primarily football, but tennis and darts covered too). Of the football services, between them they cover the top European leagues, English non-league, and Central/South America. One is purely ratings-based, three stats-based, and others a mix of the two.

Sounds a lot when I put it like that!

**You regularly discuss the importance of staking properly on the blog. Why do you consider the topic of staking plans and betting banks so crucial?**

You know, I think that to be a good tipster, the ability to get the staking right is just as important as the ability to identify value and pick winners. Similarly, if you follow a series of tipster services, if you get your staking wrong, you won't succeed. Why not? because put in very basic terms, if you understake a service going through a good spell, and overstake one that is going through a bad patch, overall it is likely that you will be losing money. At the very best in this situation, you're not making as much as you should be. It is vital that if your portfolio is actually performing well, you are reaping the benefit. As crazy as it sounds, your portfolio could be performing very well but you're not actually making any money if you don't get your staking right.

The situation is made even more complicated by the fact that consistency in staking is also key. Let's face it, most of us have upped stakes after a good run with a service, then lost more than previously won, so decreased stakes and consequently taken longer than it should have done to recoup the losses. We have, haven't we? I know I have, and it's a stupid if easy mistake to make.

Betting bank(s) is another aspect to gambling that is so, so important to get right, more for psychological reasons than anything else, I think. I don't believe that I could see losing runs through if I didn't think I had sufficient funds set aside. The temptation to lower stakes and make the mistakes I mentioned in the paragraph above would be just too great. To me, having a proper betting bank in place is the difference between being a speculative chancer and a serious, strategic investor.

**Recently, you have been blogging about ROC or Return on Capital. Can you explain why this is such a crucial topic for you?**

It was Graeme Dand who coined the phrase, "ROI for show, ROC for dough", and I like it.

I'm not going to say we don't want high levels of ROI. We do! But, what I have come to realise is that basically, portfolio gambling is ultimately about turnover. If we have good tipsters, we should be able to make an acceptable level of ROI. However, if by doing it, we can turn over our bank frequently, then the ROC figures become more important. High ROC figures translate into high cash profit levels faster - ultimately, I'm doing this to make money. Money I can spend, save, reinvest, or do whatever with. I think sometimes ROI can blind us a little to this. We can get so wrapped up in aiming for higher levels of ROI, we forget that actually, if the ROI level is relatively low but the ROC figure high, we'll be very happy with our bottom line cash figures. Happier than in the ROI was high and the ROC low. Bang for your buck. That's what we need.

**Now the critical questions - just how successful has your betting been for you through using tipsters?**

I'd say satisfactorily successful up to now, but I'm confident that my performance levels will improve further.

Look, I made mistakes with my betting, even with guidance from the SBC, and ultimately mistakes in this game are punished - quite simply your profit levels suffer. It's taken time to get to the point where I'm completely happy with the make-up of my portfolio, with my staking, with the psychological demands my portfolio places on me. Like anything, you get better with practice and experience. I'm a better gambler now than I was this time last year, and I feel I'm on a completely different level to the one I was at two years ago. That's not to say I've made it. I certainly haven't, and I would anticipate that in twelve months time, I will be able to say with justification that I am better at it than I am now.

My target ROI has always been 10% across the portfolio. I'm getting there now but for a long time I was running at about 5-6%. Before that, I was struggling to make a profit - like I said, I've made many mistakes. Can't tell you my ROC figures, as it wasn't until fairly recently that I started recording them!

**Do you feel the time involved to date has been worth the financial reward? Do you plan to stick with following tipsters in the future?**

Yes, and yes. As far as the financial reward, I'm at the stage now whereby the additional income does make a difference to my life, so the work involved now is certainly worth it.

## Expert Gambler 4: Ben Linfoot

*Ben Linfoot is the primary contributor to Sporting Life's Value Bet service, which is a free online service first reviewed in SBC 68 and showcasing a fine ROI to date well into double figures.*

*Following the simple concept of finding value in the big races of the weekend or festivals Ben has already carved out a fine reputation as one of Sporting Life's premium tipsters.*

*In this interview we look to gauge how Ben works and the methods he uses to make his profitable selections.*

### SBC INTERVIEW: BEN LINFOOT FROM THE SPORTING LIFE VALUE BET COLUMN

#### THE INSIDE TRACK ON HIS BETTING SUCCESS

**Ben, how did you first get involved in racing and betting?**

My Grandad first took me to Ripon and then Wetherby as a young child and I've always loved racing since then. Like many who get into racing as a kid it was all about the Grand National for me and my first winning bet was on Party Politics in 1992 when I was 11 thanks to the £1 put on for me by my Dad! I didn't really start betting properly until I went to University though.

**Would you give us a tour of your CV alongside an understanding of how the connection with Sporting Life developed?**

After graduating with a 2:1 in History with Media Studies I went travelling for a year and on my return I did a six-week internship at skysports.com. After that I got a job with a bookmaker in Leeds – ukbetting and totalbet which were part of the 365Media Group that was also the home of sportinglife.com. Having the internship at Sky Sports certainly helped me to move across the office and I've been at Sporting Life now since 2006.

**How would you describe your early betting career, and what was the key thing that turned you from loss to profit?**

My early betting career was a £5 acca on the football and a £5 win single on the big race on a Saturday. I've always been attracted by big-field handicaps and big odds and nothing has changed in that respect. The key is to take the losses on the chin and don't go chasing. Be disciplined. It's so easy to say but so hard to do and I've learnt my lessons the hard way.

**Was there anything that triggered a change in your betting or someone that you learnt from which shaped your punting style and approach?**

Over a period of time I learnt that bigger stakes and shorter prices were not for me. I just couldn't get it right enough times to keep my head above water. It wasn't something I quickly learnt by any means but thinking outside the box and looking for something in bigger-priced horses was something I could always do and it became obvious that I should stick to such bets.

**Do you have one key piece of advice that you would pass onto a punter wanting to turn professional or make a second income from betting?**

Remember it's a job and switch off. Time away from the game helps you focus – you don't go to work 24/7.

**What are the key tools of your trade, do you have any special set-up or facilities which help your betting?**

With free video replays available on the web now from both Racing UK and At The Races there's no need to archive anything from the TV anymore. Watching those replays again and again is more useful to me than any ratings you can buy or analytical software. That's not to say they aren't useful tools – of course they are – but at the moment that's not the way I work.

**Describe your typical race analysis, and indicate what your starting approach to analysing a race is.**

I always go through the card from top to bottom watching the last three runs and looking through their record to see how they might cope with the likely conditions on race day. I look at all sorts of variables like ground, trip, track, how they've done under race-day jockey, if they can handle big weights, if they thrive off light weights, if they go better fresh or at a certain time of year and so on. I'll try to visualise how the race will unfold so you have to look at pace. The draw can be important on the Flat and of course the ability to jump well and getting into a rhythm counts for a lot in the National Hunt game. Once I've gone through the field I'll draw up my own tissue prices before I look at oddschecker, this way I can quickly see if there's anything that massively stands out. Sometimes I won't give a horse much of a chance but then consult the market and see it's double the price or more than I had it at. Clearly this is a time-consuming process but it's why I usually only do 1-3 races a week, apart from at Festival time when I'm permanently glued to the laptop!

**What are you looking for when you watch race replays, and why is race watching so important?**

I'm looking for something that can give me an edge. Everyone sees fast-finishing eyecatchers so it's not that sort of thing I'm looking for. I look for how well a horse has travelled in a race up to a certain point and if they have a viable excuse for weakening. Were they undone by the draw? Did they take a wide course? Did one uncharacteristic jumping error cost? Was the ground slower on their side of the track? There are hundreds of questions like this you need to ask yourself when watching videos.

**Most people number crunch, why do you not follow any system or number crunching methodology?**

I've nothing against it at all and if I had more time on my hands perhaps I would. But I watch so much racing it makes sense for me to trust my eyes.

**Given the high odds you bet at, mentally how do you cope with losing runs and also when your double figured selections finish second, beaten a short head?**

It's difficult but you have to look at the bigger picture. It's all about long-term profit for me and the important thing is to stay focused and not change the way you do things because of a losing run. You have to have faith in yourself and trust that things will come right. It's a lot easier now there are points in the bank and return on investment is healthy and steadily ticking along. However, I know there will be long losing runs again and I hope I can deal with them just by working hard for the next winner.

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