OPENTOTE

POOL BETTING BACKGROUND

Pari-mutuel, pool or tote betting is a betting system in which all bets of a particular type are placed together in a pool; taxes and the "house-take" is removed, and payoff odds are calculated by sharing the pool among all winning bets. In some countries it is known as the Tote after the totalisator, which calculates and displays bets already made.

The pari-mutuel system is used in gambling on horse racing, greyhound racing and all sporting events of relatively short duration in which participants finish in a ranked order. A modified pari-mutuel system is also used in some lottery games.

General Bet Types

Tote betting can be broadly broken into 3 bet type groups:

Group	Description	Examples
Single Leg, Single Race (LR)	A bet where the outcome will be decided based on the results of a single race, and where only 1 runner is required to make a valid combination	Win, Place, Show
Multi Leg, Single Race (xLR)	A bet where the outcome will be decided based on the result of a single race, but more than one runner in that race is required to create a valid combination	Exacta, Trifecta
Multi Leg, Multi Race (xLxR)	A bet that spans many races, and will be decided by the outcome of those races as a group	Placepot, Pick 6

WillPays, Probable Pays, Odds and Dividends

One of the most talked about topics in tote betting is the fact that you never know the odds until the race is started. This means that a bet on a pool can at best be given a guide payout at the time of bet placement. Only once the pool has closed, all the money from all sources on that pool is counted, and deductions taken does the 'true' price become known. Because of the various points in a pool lifecycle, there are 4 key data points you might want to know about.

Data Type	Description
Odds	The current odds on a runner for that pool. Odds are only given for Single Leg, Single Race pools (see above). Only once the pool is closed will you get 'final' odds, as they may change before then.
Probable Pays	Essentially the odds in a different format (one can be used to calculate the other) but often a more useful and wider supported format. Probable pays tell you how much a dollar bet on the runner or runners (Exacta and Trifecta pools often have probable pays declared) will be worth at current prices. That may change before the off of course!
Will Pays	On a bet that spans multiple races, it's possible to know the actual dividend that will be declared before the last race runs. A pick 2 (also known as a Daily Double) bet will declare a Will Pay after race 1 is run. This is possible because once the winner from race 1 is known, and the pool is closed, the tote can calculate all the remaining outcomes and put a value on each.
Dividend	The final stage in a cycle, dividends are the actual payouts that will be made, and calculated after the race is run. Think of them like a ratio though, as the dividend will be declared to a unit of currency, which might not be what your bettor bet!