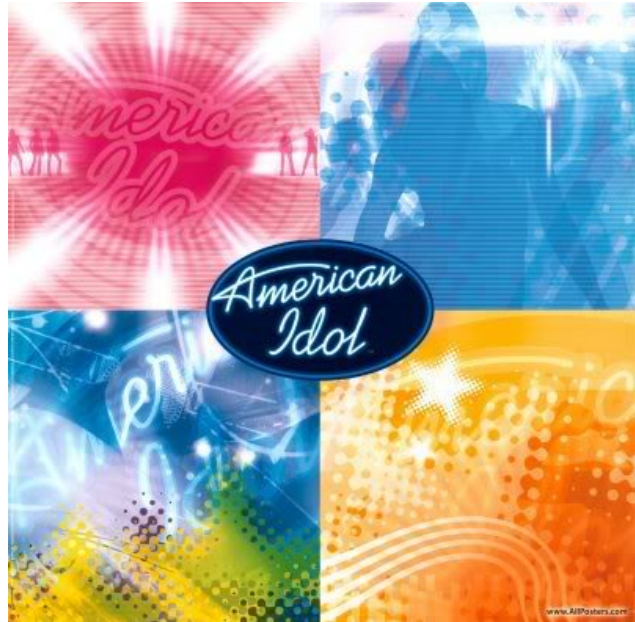


Idol Chatter

Written by {ga=leadpipe}

Wednesday, February 27 2008 7:00 PM -

In his latest, TCF resident handicapper Lead Pipe reminds us that despite his prowess at the betting windows, he is just like many of us. Living in middle America with a wife, kid, and a couple of pets. With this scene comes responsibilities, diapers that need changed and things at the Leadquarters that need some fixin'. Well players, what if Lead told you he had a plan? What if he told you this plan would not only dull the wife's memories of the football season, but would also placate her for the upcoming March Madness? What if it did all this AND got you to the window? Too good to be true? Think again.



When a player stops Lead on the street (usually as Lead is heading to the bank) one of the most common questions he hears is, how do you find the time to correctly handicap all those games? Many of these same players lament the fact that they can only watch so many college bowl and NFL playoff games before the nag starts getting on their case. "Lead, I just watched 200 hours of football in the last couple months. How in the world am I going to be able to view 100 or so hours of March Madness without getting divorced?" they say. This is not only a fair question, but to be honest, a pretty fair reaction from the wife. You see players, the Lead Man is a lot like many of you. Living in Middle America with the wife, a kid, and a couple of pets. With this scene comes responsibilities, diapers that need changed and things at the Leadquarters that need some fixin'. Sitting on the couch watching games from December to April is bound to present some problems. Well players, what if Lead told you he had a plan? What if he told you this plan would not only dull the wife's memories of the football season, but would also placate her for the upcoming March Madness? What if it did all this AND got you to the window? Too good to be true? Not so fast Lead's friends, THIS is American Idol.

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Lead can hear the groaning through his computer screen. "What kind of 'mo is watching every episode of American Idol?" Well, first off, Lead is a numbers man, and the numbers tell Lead that quite a few of you out there are doing it already, whether you'd like to admit it or not. Secondly, understand you are in a desperate situation. The dead time between football season and March Madness is a time to be proactive. If you wait until your wife is already on your case for your zero-productivity during the football season - it's too late. Pretending you're fired up to watch Idol and looking forward to spending some "special" time a few night a week with the spouse has a way of putting out one fire, and starting another. The latter blaze is the one that cloud's your wife's memory and opens the door to college basketball bliss. Done right, it should go something like this:

Lead: "Honey, Lead is taking a couple of vacation days next Thursday and Friday, with no intention of spending them with you and the kids. Just 12 straight hours of hoops each day."

Lead's wife: "Sounds great. Idol isn't on Thursday's during the tourney anyway, so have fun."

Thirdly, remember Lead's mantra when swallowing your pride. That is, the world is comprised of 90% morons - so, if someone thinks you're a fruit for watching Idol, understand there is a very good chance that person is a moron anyway. What's more important, looking cool in the eyes of a moron, or lying, unencumbered, on the couch, with a spicy wing in one hand and a brew in the other. That's what Lead thought. And last, but not least - Lead is going to get you to the window. So, a ton of football plus a ton of hoops plus a little American Idol equals a happy wife and a trip to the window. Not a bad equation.

Before Lead forwards you his strategies on how to hammer the bookie while wagering Idol, let's take a brief look at The Lead Man's American Idol Betting History. In 2005, Lead did his best Tony Romo impersonation. That is, he got behind Kerry Underwood and rode her to the finish line. A straight 6-1 opening

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wager, wire to wire. 2006 - Lead wagers Katharine McPhee at an opening line of 11-1. "But Lead, she didn't win." Well, no she didn't, but it was clear who was going to win with three weeks left, (as is the case many times) which allowed The Lead Man to become the Hedge Man and hedge his bet on the Soul Patrol, available at that time at 2.5-1. Last year, a similar situation with Lead's choice, Melinda Dolittle, opening at 7-1. Again, 3 weeks out it was CLEAR that Jordin Sparks was going to take it down, again allowing for an easy hedge. Three years, three cashes. The Lead Man.

"It just can't be that easy Lead Man." Trust Lead players, it is. Pay attention to the following Lead's American Idol Do's and Don'ts, and you too could lock up an easy win.

DO - Judge character. If you are any good at judging character at all, you are making a positive expectation wager here. The lines are posted when they are down to twenty-four contestants. The reality is, out of these 24 people, there are usually only about 5 or 6 people that are NOT either a tool box, a knob, or a hump. (90% rule) These people could be the best singers in the world, but they are so unlikable that they have zero chance to win.

DON'T - Bet on a male drama queen. Research shows that 30 year old females drive the voting, and while it may be very true that a chick wouldn't mind if her man shed a tear during an emotional movie, they don't want him crying and blubbering like Dick Vermeil. Anyone overly dramatic, or overly effeminate, cast aside.

DON'T - Bet on a "rocker." Lead has told people time and time again that a rocker cannot win this competition. Many had Chris Daughtry in the winner's circle a few years back. Lead knew better, and kept a firm grip on his Katharine McPhee ticket. Another example was Bo Bice. Much better wire to wire than Underwood, and it did him no good.

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DO - Keep an eye on the females opening weight. Lead isn't speaking of the annual Nell Carter look-alike. He's talking about the girls who are cute, but might be about 15 pounds over par. Underwood, McPhee, Clarkson, and to a degree Sparks, all fit in this category. This is the type of person that shows those short term, positive effects of the Idol diet, personal chef and makeover personnel. These ladies all climbed a few points on the ten-point scale during the course of the competition. This is an edge.

DON'T - Wager someone who talks back to Simon. Anyone who watches that show understands Simon is the only one on that panel doing their job. Thinking you are "getting over" on Simon costs you votes.

DON'T - Wager a contestant that struggles with song selection. This is tough to spot early, but very important. Perhaps the most frustrating part of the show is watching a show that has a whole decade of songs open to the contestants, yet they pick the most played out wedding songs in history. Horrible.

DO - Follow the online polls. This is where Idol becomes much easier than sports futures. The pulse of the public is readily available. Again, with about a month left you should have a really good idea who is going to win.

DO - Wager early. Here you're not only taking advantage of the "dead weight" that is on the show early, but, as a rule, a betting line tends to become more accurate as the volume of the bets increases. (Pinnacle Sports takes as much action on Idol as they do on an NFL Sunday, so, they will be getting action). The smart money will eventually overwhelm the square money and push the line in the proper direction. This is market efficiency, and a valuable tool. Remember, Idol provides a great hedging opportunity. This softens the risk associated with an early wager, because of the value obtained by a weak line.

DON'T - Worry about the legitimacy of the vote counts. While it IS curious that they don't make the vote counts public, remember you are in an entirely different

situation than you would be if a game were being fixed. In this case, any tweaking is done for entertainment purposes, and would be relatively easy to predict, and use to your advantage.

There you have your tips, and what follows is The Lead Man's take on this years contestants. The current odds are also displayed.

Michael Johns - (+275)- Probably a deserving favorite. (Along with Archuleta) 28 years old, which appeals to a main voting demographic. Also a guy capable of attracting guy votes. Allow Lead to explain; you know how guys hate Brad Pitt, and girls assume we do because he's good looking. You ladies need to understand that the majority of us have come to grips with who we are as guys. He's good looking - good for him. This isn't the problem. The reason we hate him is because he wants to tell us how to he is going to save the world by adopting all these kids, even though it's obvious he's just been roped into it by an insane wife. We hate him because he's blindly going into New Orleans in another attempt to save the world and rebuilding areas that were worthless in the first place. We hate him because he gets together with George Clooney and tries as hard as he can to show us he's smart and funny, when he isn't close to either one. Well, Johns is the opposite. A truly likeable cat, and that counts for something.

David Archuleta- (+275)- Immensely talented. He'll be tough to beat. The only thing that could hurt him is his age. Not sure if Kevin Arnold is the next American Idol. But if anyone who looks like a child TV star can win this competition, he can.

Ramiele Maluby- (+700) - A contender. Lead believes she will have versatility issues.

Jason Castro-(+700) - Will get the teenage chick vote. He and the above two males are the ONLY possible male winners. This is why there is value in Idol.

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Syesha Mercado- (+750) - This is the brown sugar Mick was referring to. Lead isn't sure if she'll be up to the task as far as song selection is concerned.

Carly Smithson (+900) - The best singer of the 24. And, while this doesn't guarantee anything, the very best singer at 9-1 odds has gotten Lead's attention. Best value on the board right now. Remember, if she gets to the top five, you are sitting a month out from the final with a 9-1 ticket, and a good idea of who will win.

Asia'h Epperson-(+900) - Just not memorable.

Kady Malloy-(+2000) - Every year there are about 3 or 4 girls that would have a chance to win if they performed naked. This year is no different, and while Kady may be the best of this kind this year, Idol historically has not treated Barbie Dolls well.

Amanda Overmeyer-(+2000) - Probably gone before you read this. A rock chick that is unlikable is certainly a losing combination. Only so many "dudes" and "rock outs" Lead can take before he develops serious hate.

Brooke White-(+2000) - If you are looking for a big time sleeper, this might be the one. Unique and likeable. Probably not up to the task, but has a better chance than several ranked above her, so she has some value.

David Cook - (+2200) - Too many cooks spoil the broth, one Cook spoils American Idol.

Danny Noriega - (+2500) - This is the male drama queen Lead recommended you

avoid.

Kristy Lee Cook - (+2500) - One of the "better off nude" girls who's claim to fame was selling her horse to earn money for the airplane ticket from her home state of Oregon to Philadelphia, for her audition. This fact begs a few questions;

1. How much does a plane ticket from Oregon to Philly cost? So much you've got to sell a horse?
2. What 24 year old can't charge 400 bucks to a credit card in lieu of selling her horse?
3. Generally speaking, families that have horses as pets aren't too poor off financially.
4. They had auditions closer to Oregon. Cali and Texas for example. Why not go there?

Alexandra Lushington-(+3300) - Will never beat out Mercado, who is similar in style.

David Hernandez-(+3300) - See Noriega.

Alaina Whitaker-(+3500)- Who?

Chikezie Eze-(+6000) - If Barry White had no sex appeal, no charisma and a worse voice, he'd be Chikezie Eze.

Jason Yeager-(+6000) - Not only is he bad, but to make matters worse they keep showing his son in the audience. And, no offense to the kid, but he's got one of those faces that launches 1,000 punches. You just want to hit that kid. Especially when his Dad is groaning out an awful tune.

Good Luck Players, see you at the wondow. Lead Man...OUT!