

# The Picks with the Professor Betting Syllabus

## Live Like a PhD Sports Bettor

Professor Sides, PhD in Statistics

---

### Course Description

This course is designed to help sports bettors think more clearly, bet more responsibly, and evaluate decisions more honestly. We will use the language of probability, market pricing, bankroll management, model projections, and long-run process to approach sports betting as a decision-making problem rather than a collection of hot takes.

The goal is not to become someone who never loses; that person does not exist. The goal is to become someone who understands what they are betting, why they are betting it, and how much they are risking per event. The goal is to both know whether the bets are good before the game starts and not rewrite the decision after the game ends.

This is not a course in locks, guarantees, or pretending variance is not real. This is a course in making better decisions under uncertainty. We cannot control the bullpen, the bounce, the whistle, the dropped pass, or the weather. What we do control is the decision before the game.

---

### Prerequisites

You do not need a statistics degree to take this course. You do not need to know calculus, build a model, or explain a probability distribution at a dinner party while everyone slowly stops inviting you to places.

You do need to be willing to learn the basics of probability, betting markets, and long-run thinking. If terms like implied probability, expected value, variance, correlation, or closing line value are new to you, that is fine. That is part of why this course exists.

But you do need to be willing to track your bets, review your decisions, accept that good bets can lose, and be honest about whether your process is improving. You do not need to be perfect to succeed here. You do need to be honest.

---

### Course Objectives

This course is designed to help students think, bet, and evaluate decisions like long-term sports bettors rather than short-term scoreboard chasers. Students will learn:

1. To speak the basic language of sports betting, including odds, implied probability, expected value, bankroll, unit size, closing line value, variance, and market price.
2. To correctly distinguish between predictions, probabilities, and bets, including why “I think this team wins” is not the same thing as “this is a good bet.”
3. To accurately evaluate betting opportunities by comparing model projections, market prices, implied probabilities, and available sportsbook lines.
4. To appropriately interpret wins, losses, ROI, and tracked betting results without overreacting to small samples or confusing outcome quality with decision quality.

*Syllabus subject to change*

5. To develop disciplined betting habits, including tracking bets, shopping for prices, respecting correlation, avoiding chasing or pressing, and separating betting money from life money.
6. To understand that successful sports betting is not measured by never being wrong, but by repeatedly making honest, well-priced, well-sized decisions under uncertainty.

---

### **Required Material: Bet Tracker**

The only truly required material for this course is a way to track your bets.

I do not care whether you use an app, a spreadsheet, a notebook, or a stone tablet from Mount Degenerate. You need some way to record what you bet, when you bet it, what price you got, how much you risked, what kind of bet it was, and what happened.

I personally use Pikkit, but this is not an advertisement or official recommendation. Use what works for you. If you do not know where to start, ask around, search, or try a few options. The tool matters less than the habit.

---

### **Course Materials: Lessons and Shows**

There are two types of video content in this course.

First, there are the daily Picks with the Professor shows on YouTube. These are slate-based videos where I walk through games, explain what I like, what the model is seeing, how I am using projections, and why a bet may or may not make sense at the available price. These shows are live examples of the course in action and are encouraged viewing if you bet the covered sport.

Second, there is the lesson video library. These are conceptual videos not tied to one slate and will cover topics like implied probability, expected value, bankroll management, correlation, parlays (and the real math behind them), closing line value, and all the other ideas that matter if you want to become a better bettor.

The shows help you see the process applied. The lessons help you understand the process itself.

---

### **Recommended Materials**

The following are not required, but they will make this course much more useful.

A reliable odds screen or bet-tracking app with odds comparison will help you understand whether the number you are seeing is actually the number worth betting. Price matters. A lot. If two sportsbooks are offering different prices, those differences may look small in the moment, but they add up over time.

Access to model projections, whether from my predictive model, SideLine, or another source you trust, will help you think beyond “who do I like?” and toward “what does the market imply, and is there value at this price?”

The PWTP Discord is strongly recommended if you want to ask questions, compare prices, discuss slates, learn from other bettors, and see how other people are applying the same

concepts. You can do plenty on your own, but betting gets sharper when good questions are asked in public and the whole class gets to learn from the answer.

Finally, you need a willingness to be wrong, review your mistakes, and change what is not working. That part is technically free, but it is somehow still the most expensive material in the course.

---

## **Grades**

If you thought there were no grades, you haven't yet figured out that I used to actually be a statistics professor! And like back then, I do not do the grading. It used to be software I programmed; now it is you. The difference: when you grade your own betting, cheating only fools you. Honesty with yourself is one of the few rules you absolutely have to follow.

There are two types of grades in this course.

The first is ROI. It is cruel, cold, and literally calculated. It does not care about your bad beats, your vibes, your screenshots, your "if only the bullpen did not explode," or your "that was the right side." It is just math.

But ROI is not the final grade.

Sports betting is a long course. As long as you are betting, you should keep assessing, learning, adjusting, and improving. The past matters because it teaches us, but it does not have to define the entire grade forever. We can look at lifetime ROI, but we can also look at recent windows — one month, six months, twelve months — to see whether the process is improving.

For many bettors, the first goal may not be massive profit. It may be losing less. Then breaking even. Then making fewer emotional bets. Then getting better numbers. Then finally letting the long-run math have a chance to work.

That still counts as progress.

So yes, we use ROI as a report card. But the deeper grade is process.

Are you tracking honestly? Are you shopping prices? Are you sizing bets reasonably? Are you avoiding chase bets? Are you recognizing correlation? Are you learning from your own history instead of repeating the same mistakes with a new excuse?

That is the real grade.

There are no bonus points for attendance. While showing up and working hard are required in order to improve, your final grade is given to you by yourself based on where you assess yourself on the following scale.

---

## **Grading Scale**

### **A: Process Excellence**

You track your bets honestly, shop for prices, size bets responsibly, review results with appropriate sample-size awareness, and make decisions based on price, probability, and process rather than emotion. You still lose bets, because this is sports betting and not fantasyland, but your decisions are repeatable and defensible.

### **B: Strong Process with Identified Leaks**

You are doing most of the important things right. You track, you review, and you usually understand why you are placing a bet. You still have leaks — maybe chasing, pressing, overbetting short slates, ignoring correlation, or getting lazy with price shopping — but you can identify them and are either actively working on them or content with where you are. If landing here is where sports betting is still fun for you, then a B is actually more like an A.

### **C: Inconsistent Process**

You understand the ideas, but your behavior does not consistently match them. You may track bets, but you don't tag them to understand where the issues are. You may know price matters but still take bad numbers. You may understand bankroll management but still increase unit size when emotional. You are in the class, but you are not fully doing the homework.

### **D: Results-Only Thinking**

You mostly judge bets by whether they won or lost. You remember bad beats more than bad prices. You talk about variance when you lose but do not review whether the bet was good. You may be betting a lot, but you are not learning enough from the bets you place.

### **F: Lying to Yourself**

You fail when you refuse to track honestly, hide from your own results, bet money that should not be bet, chase losses, press because of emotion, blame everything on variance, ignore repeated leaks, or keep making the same mistakes while pretending the problem is bad luck.

An F is not a moral failure. It is a process failure. And the good news is that process failures can be fixed once we are willing to name them. Almost every successful sports bettor (including myself) started off here. Some of us (still including myself!) stayed here far longer than we needed to. But the grade is not final unless you stop learning. The only thing you can change is the next decision, and acknowledging where you really are as a sports bettor is the first step toward becoming a better one.

---

## **Recurring Assignments**

There are no worksheets to turn in, but there are five assignments you should repeat for as long as you are betting.

### **1. Track**

At minimum, you should know what you bet, when you bet it, what price you got, what market you played, how much you risked, and whether it won or lost. Further, every bet should also have at least one useful tag. Sport, market type, model play, community play, fun bet, live bet, parlay, emotional bet, whatever helps you understand your own process.

### **2. Watch**

Watch at least one lesson per week, and use the shows to see the concepts applied. The goal is not just to know what I like. The goal is to understand why I like it, what the model is seeing, what the market is offering, and whether the bet still makes sense at the number available to you.

### **3. Shop**

Before placing a bet, check the price. If you have access to multiple books, compare them. If you do not, at least understand whether the line you are betting is still close to the price that

made the bet attractive; a good pick at a bad price may no longer be a good bet. Thankfully, this is one of the easiest ways to improve, and it does not require you to become smarter. It only requires you to stop donating extra vig because the first sportsbook you opened was convenient.

#### **4. Reflect**

Reflect on why you are betting. Are you betting because the price is good, or because you want action? Are you betting because the model and market disagree, or because you are bored? Are you sizing the bet because the edge supports it, or because your mood is loud? There are no automatically wrong answers here. Sometimes we just want action, and that can be okay if we are honest about it. If it is the National Championship game and I want to feel part of it, I can make a smaller wager and tag it as “Funsies.” But at the end of the month, I still need to look in the mirror and accept what my fun bets are costing me. Only then can I decide whether they are worth playing, how often, and for how much.

#### **5. Track (Again)**

Yes, again. Because tracking is the beginning and the end. Track the bet when you place it. Track what happened after. Track the pattern over time. Track honestly enough that the data can teach you.

---

### **Pop Quizzes**

There are no actual pop quizzes, but there is a mastery expectation.

When you watch a video, the goal is to understand the concept well enough that if you were stopped on the street and asked about it, you could have a real conversation.

If you watch a video on correlated parlays and still cannot explain why correlation matters, that is not a failure. It just means the assignment is not finished yet. Rewatch the video. Ask a question. Bring it to Discord. Find another explanation. Keep working until the concept clicks.

You do not need to master everything immediately. But if you want this course to actually change how you bet, you should be spending time with the lesson library every week. At minimum, watch one lesson video per week until you feel comfortable with the core concepts. More is great, but consistency matters more than cramming.

The same applies to the YouTube shows. You should understand why the bet was made and what price you would identify as the line between “bet” and “no bet”. Not being able to do this right away is fine; keep at the material until these concepts feel second nature.

---

### **Late Lines Policy**

Late work is accepted.

Late lines are not always playable.

If a bet was good at +120, that does not mean it is still good at -105. If a spread was playable at +3.5, that does not mean it is the same bet at +2. If the market moves, the assignment changed.

This is one of the most important lessons in the course: the pick is not separate from the price. The price is part of the pick.

Arrive late to a number and you may not get full credit.

---

### **Getting Help**

I encourage you to look for answers yourself — but not to rely only on yourself. If you cannot find it after checking your resources, ask.

Discord is the best place for most questions. Questions asked in public help everyone with the same question. The graduate assistants have been elevated because they understand how we think here and can usually help. I monitor the discussion, clarify when needed, and ramble for too long trying to make a concept land. You are free to speak up and answer each other's questions for areas you have expertise. There are more of you than there are of us, so sometimes answers can come faster from your peers!

Keep account-specific, personal, or sensitive matters to private Discord messages or email. I aim to answer DMs and email within 24 business hours. During busy seasons or heavy family weeks I will miss that — if something important goes unanswered, please follow up with me.

The goal is simple: ask questions, help each other, disagree productively, and do not turn the community into a tilt machine.

---

### **Risk, Eligibility, and Expectations**

The goal of this course is improvement. For some people, improvement may mean becoming profitable. For others, it may mean losing less, betting smaller, avoiding emotional decisions, tracking honestly, or learning that sports betting should not be part of their life right now.

Sports betting involves risk. Following this course and improving your process does not guarantee that you will make money betting sports.

You must be of legal age and in a legal location to place sports bets. If sports betting is not legal where you are, do not place sports bets.

And remember: you can eat your betting money, but please do not bet your eating money.