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Autotote Racetrack Totalizator

Autotote, a major supplier of system services to the international racing industry, planned to develop and market a new multiprocessing, fault-tolerant wagering system. The system would support several hundred point-of-sale terminals and would provide these terminals with sub-second response times. The company needed to know which computers to use as the system's central processors.

A study conducted by The Sombers Group resulted in the selection of Tandem Computers (now the Compaq Himalaya) for the company's new totalizator product line. The Sombers Group then was commissioned to build a wagering system that would provide complex wagering on a variety of exotic pools, automatic cashing of winning tickets, and complete accounting for all pools and outstanding winning tickets in accordance with state auditing requirements.

This system accepted wager data from the sell/cash terminals and built the pools for each wager type (win, place, show, daily double, trifecta, etc.). The pool amounts and winning odds were continually displayed on a large infield board and on video monitors located around the racetrack. Betting was halted just as the race began, and winners were posted at the conclusion of the race. Within seconds after posting the winners, the payoff amounts were posted to the infield board and the video monitors; and wagering for the next race began.

Somers also was responsible for implementing terminal firmware for the company's microprocessor-based, highly intelligent point-of-sale machine. This ticket issuing machine (TIM) automatically calculated the fee for very complex wagers and controlled the printing of multi-wager tickets with a machine-readable code that uniquely identified the ticket. The TIM then read each ticket presented for payout to determine winners and to calculate winning amounts. It also had the capability to read mark-sense wager cards prepared by the patron and to print that ticket.

The totalizator system operated in over 50 racetracks and pari-mutual wagering facilities in the U.S. and abroad. It handled several billion dollars in wagers annually.