Processing Scratches and Changes in JCapper for Past Race Days

Last updated 02-08-2023 4:58 pm pacific

Overview

This Help Doc covers Background Information, Strategies, and Basic Operating Instructions for processing Scratches and Changes in JCapper for Past Race Days.

Background Information

JCapper has three modules that enable you to process Scratches and Changes:

Scratch BOT – Scratches, Surface Changes, Distance Changes, and Rider Changes parsed from the Equibase Scratches and Changes XML file which is updated throughout the current race day in something approaching real time. Scratch BOT also has separate screens that enable you to key and persist Surface-Distance Changes and Rider Changes manually. Scratch BOT also has built-in functionality for archiving ScratchesAndChanges.xml files and loading and parsing archived ScratchesAndChanges.xml files for past race days.

Scratch Parser – Scratches parsed from a text file updated once every 15 minutes or so for the current race day at the HDW site. Also Surface and Distance Changes from a second text file updated once every 15 minutes or so for the current race day at the HDW site.

Manual Changes Module- Functionality: Scratches, Surface Changes, and Distance Changes keyed manually and saved for each race to the following two files: Scratches.txt and RaceHeaders.txt.

For Live Play: I recommend using Scratch BOT when the machine you are running JCapper on is connected to the internet and the Equibase site is up and running. From there it's a matter of using Scratch BOT to download the current ScratchesAndChanges.xml file from the Equibase site, parse the downloaded .xml file, and auto-process scratches and changes.

For gate scratches: I recommend using the Manual Changes Module followed by a single race Calc Races – followed by a quick look at the Html Two report in the HTML Report Generator. It's almost always faster to do it that way

than to wait the 30 seconds or so it generally takes a gate scratch to show up in the XML.

I also recommend using the Manual Changes Module when the machine you are running JCapper on is not connected to the internet, during times when the Equibase site is down, and during off hours when the Equibase ScratchesAndChanges.xml file is either empty or doesn't contain data for the current race day.

I do not recommend using Scratch Parser because the of the lag time between when changes are announced and when they show up in the text files at the HDW site. Also, the text files at the HDW site do not contain rider changes.

Note that Scratch BOT, the Manual Changes Module, and Scratch Parser each were designed to process Scratches and Changes for the current race day.

None were (initially) designed to process Scratches and Changes for past race days. Although in the sections below, I present strategies that will allow you to do just that.

Strategies for Processing Scratches and Changes for Past Race Days

Scratch BOT – The Strategy for using Scratch BOT to process scratches and changes for a past race day involves:

1. Auto-Archiving each day's ScratchesAndChanges.xml file.

2. Persisting the correct Scratch BOT settings in the Enhanced Settings Module.

3. Loading data files from a past race day into JCapper in the DFM Card Loader onto DataFolder1.

4. Clicking **Parse XML File from Local Machine** on the Scratch BOT **Menu** to toggle Scratch BOT Parse XML File from Local Machine functionality On.

and using the dialog box to select the ScratchesAndChanges.xml archive file for the past race day.

5. **Clicking the XML button for DataFolder1** on the face of Scratch BOT to open a dialog box to select the XML archive file matching the card files loaded into the program on DataFolder1.

6. **Running a Calc Races** on DataFolder1 for the data files of your past race day that were loaded into the program in step 3 (above.)

Let's cover these one at a time.

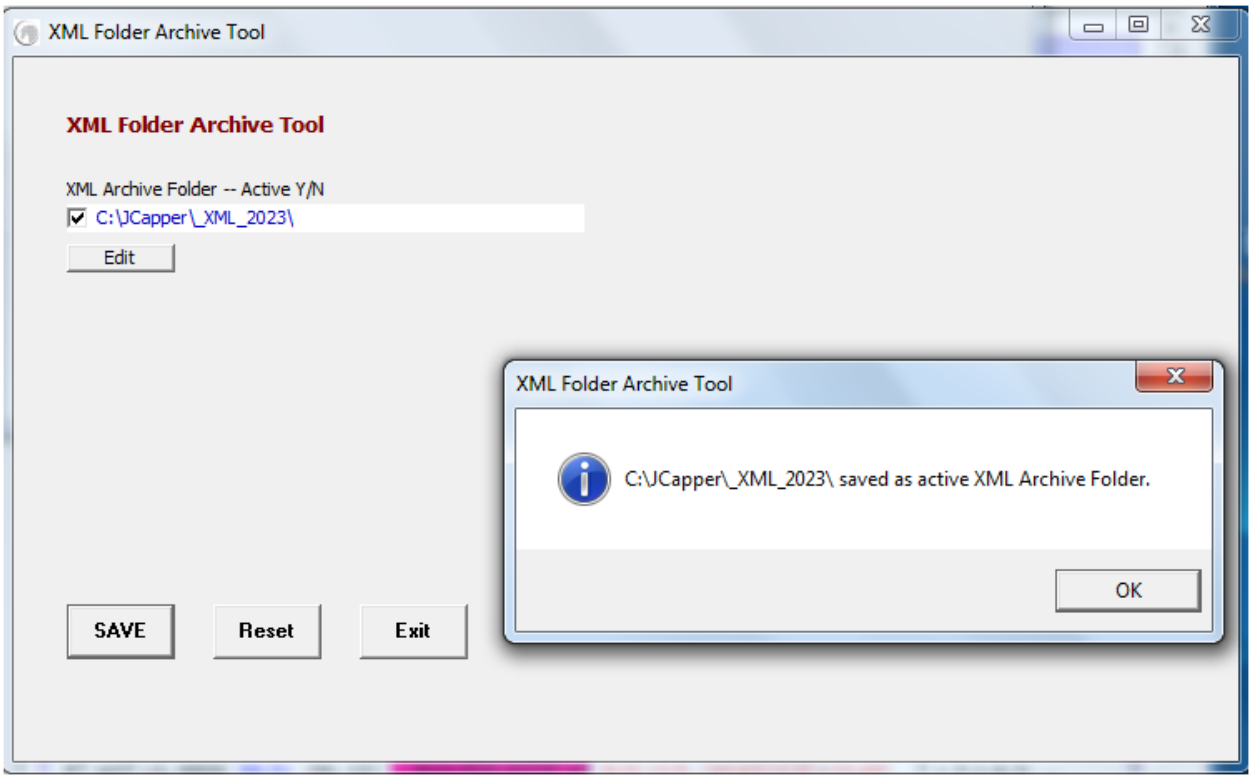
Auto-Archiving each day's ScratchesAndChanges.xml file

Basic Operating Instructions for Setting Up Scratch BOT to auto-archive each downloaded ScratchesAndChanges.xml file:

1. Bring up Scratch BOT (or the Main Module Utilities Tool) and click the XML Folder Icon Tool Launch Button.

2. Use the XML Folder Icon Tool to select and persist the folder where you want your ScratchesAndChanges.xml files for the current year to be archived. This can be any folder on any drive on your machine or network. Operation of the XML Folder Icon Tool is identical to that of the DFM. (Navigate, select the folder you want, double check your work, and hit the Save button.)

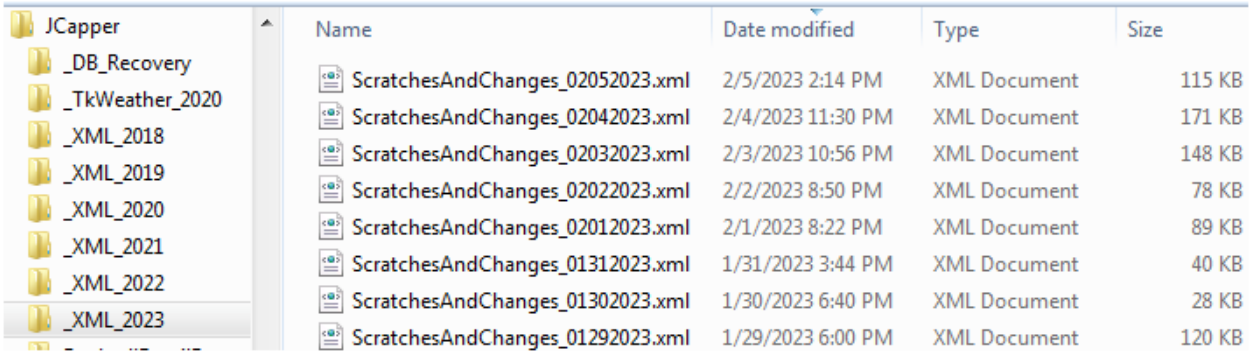
Screenshot:



From this point going forward, each time you run Scratch BOT in BOT Mode, Scratch BOT will write an archived copy of the most recently downloaded and parsed ScratchesAndChanges.xml file to the archive folder.

Note that the archived copy will be renamed in such a way so as to indicate the race date. For example, the filename downloaded from the Equibase site will be ScratchesAndChanges.xml – but the archived copy would be named ScratchesAndChanges_02042023.xml if the scratches and changes data inside of the file is for the races of 02-04-2023.

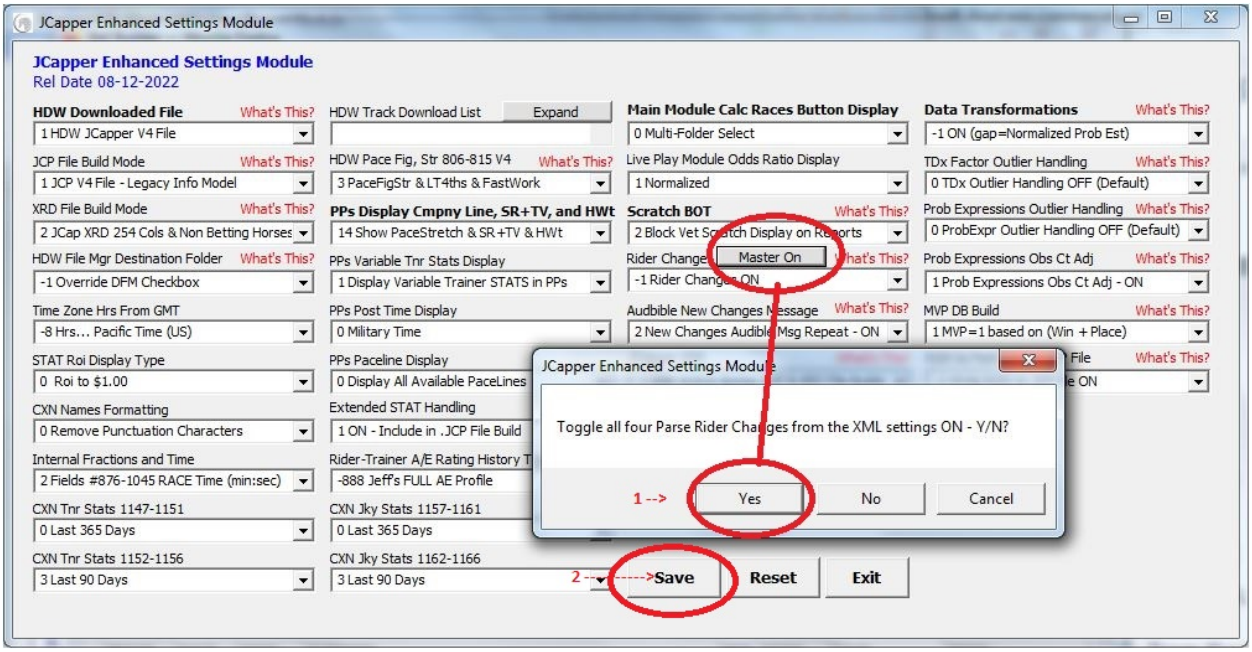
Screenshot:



Persisting the correct Scratch BOT settings in the Enhanced Settings Module

The easiest way to get your Scratch Bot settings right in the Enhanced Settings Module is the Master ON button.

Screenshot:



Basic Operating Instructions for the Master On button:

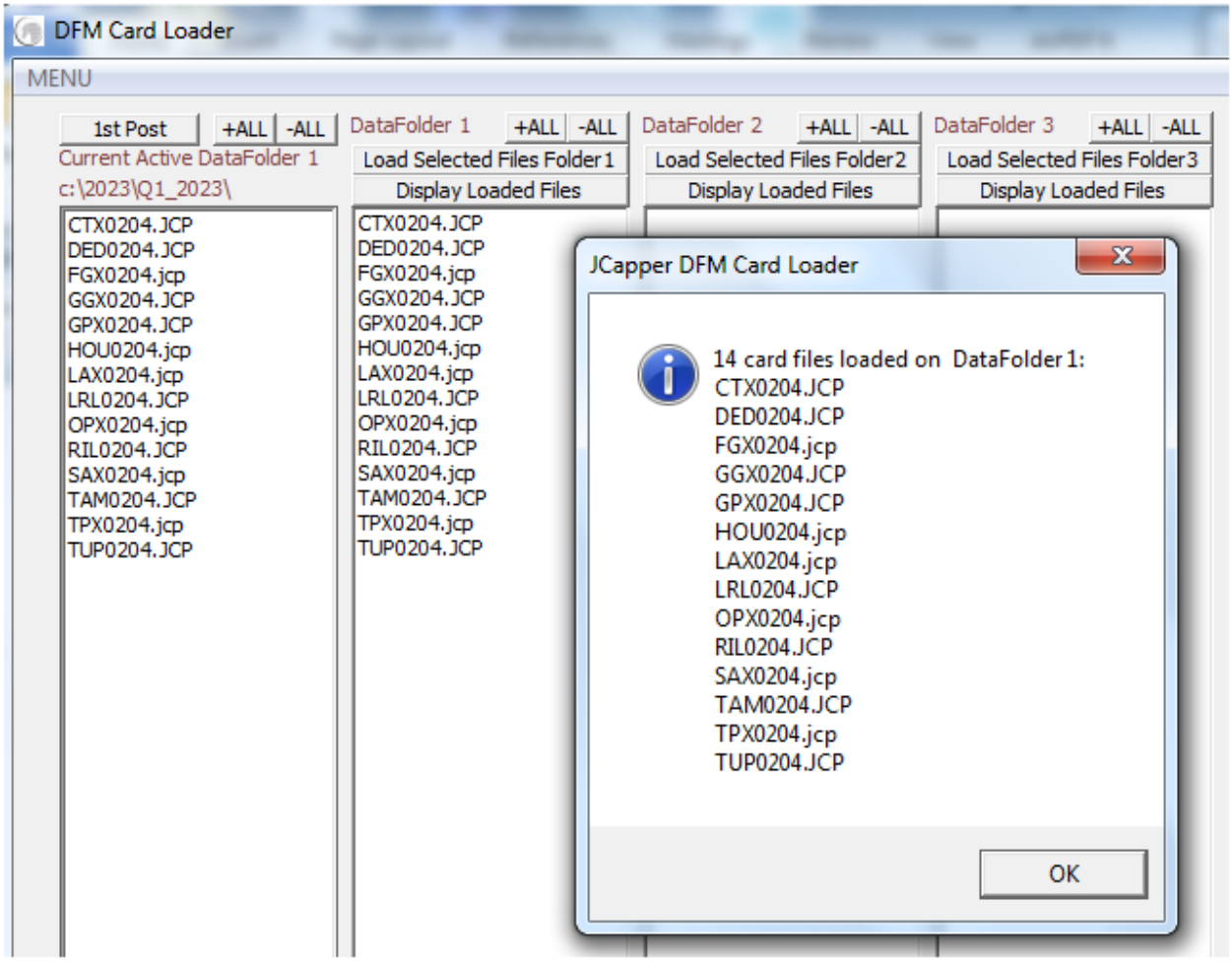
1. Bring up the Enhanced Settings Module, click the Master ON button and answer Yes at the prompt.

2. Click the Save button.

That's It!

Loading data files from a past race day into JCapper in the DFM Card Loader onto DataFolder1

Screenshot:



In the above screenshot I've loaded .JCP files for Saturday 02-04-2023 into JCapper using the DFM Card Loader.

Note: Because I am loading data files for a past race day into the program I loaded the entire day onto DataFolder1. This is something I would only do for a past race day.

When loading data files into the program for live play I like to break the current race day up by post time for race 1. For example, I would load the early tracks onto DataFolder1, the midday tracks onto DataFolder2, and the late or night time tracks onto DataFolder3.

But here, because I am loading past day race cards, loading the entire day onto DataFolder1 works just fine.

Not only that, but as you'll discover (below) when I illustrate parsing an archived XML file from the Scratch BOT Menu - loading the entire day onto DataFolder1 is easier because you can parse scratches and changes from the XML file by clicking the XML button for a single DataFolder (as opposed to clicking multiple XML buttons had I broken up the race day by loading .JCP files onto three DataFolders instead of just one.)

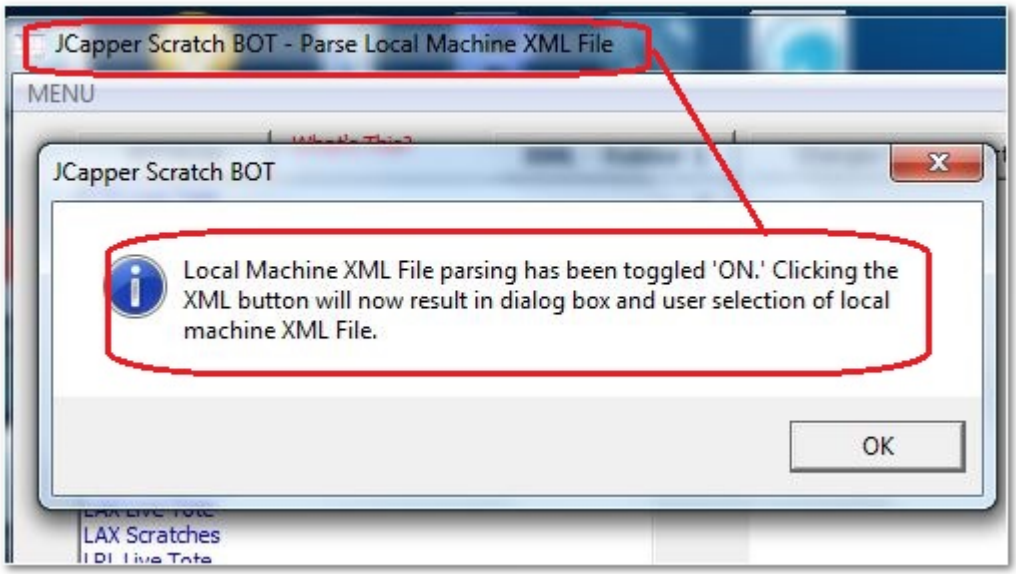
If you need a refresher for using the DFM Card Loader, watch the JCapper Basic Video titled "Loading .JCP Files into JCapper using the DFM Card Loader" on the JCapper 101 Audio Video page here:

http://www.jcapper.com/podcasts/podcasts.asp#V00

Clicking Parse XML File from Local Machine on the Scratch BOT Menu to toggle Scratch BOT Parse XML File from Local Machine functionality On

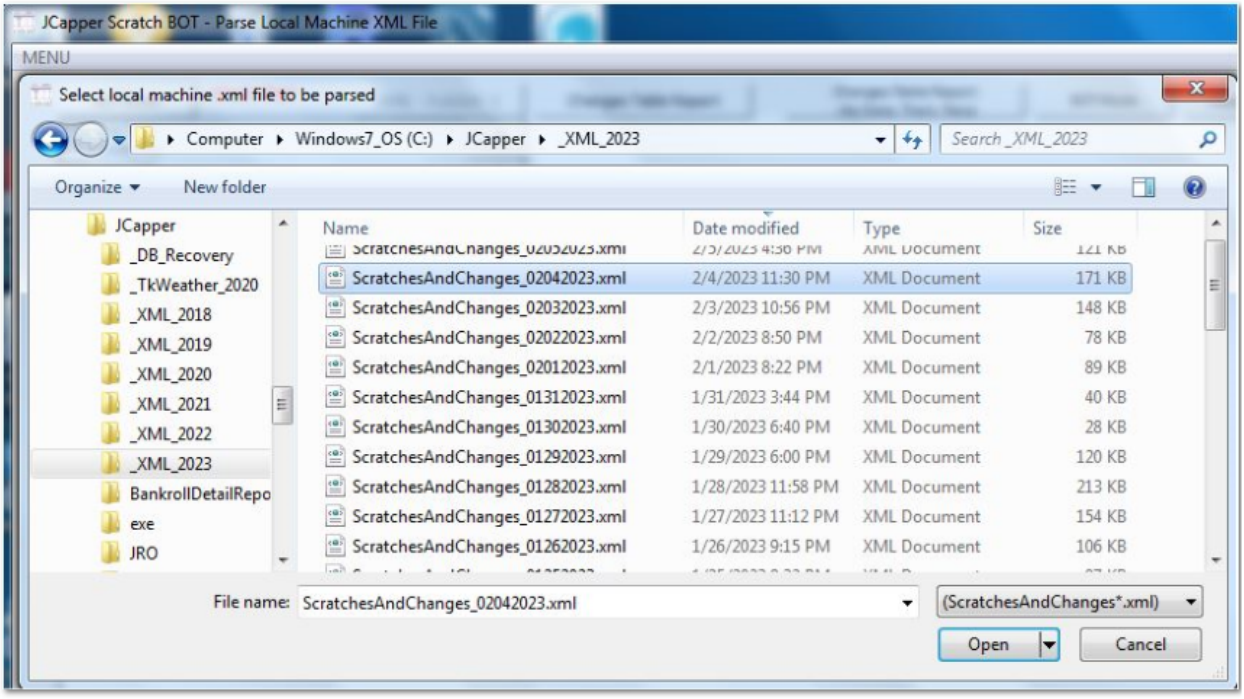
The screenshot below shows Scratch BOT after I clicked MENU, selected Parse XML from Local Machine, and selected Yes at the prompt.

Note the circled text at the top of Scratch BOT's title bar text indicating that Scratch BOT Parse XML File from Local Machine functionality is now toggled On. That's how you know you are about to parse an XML file from the local machine instead of the Equibase site.



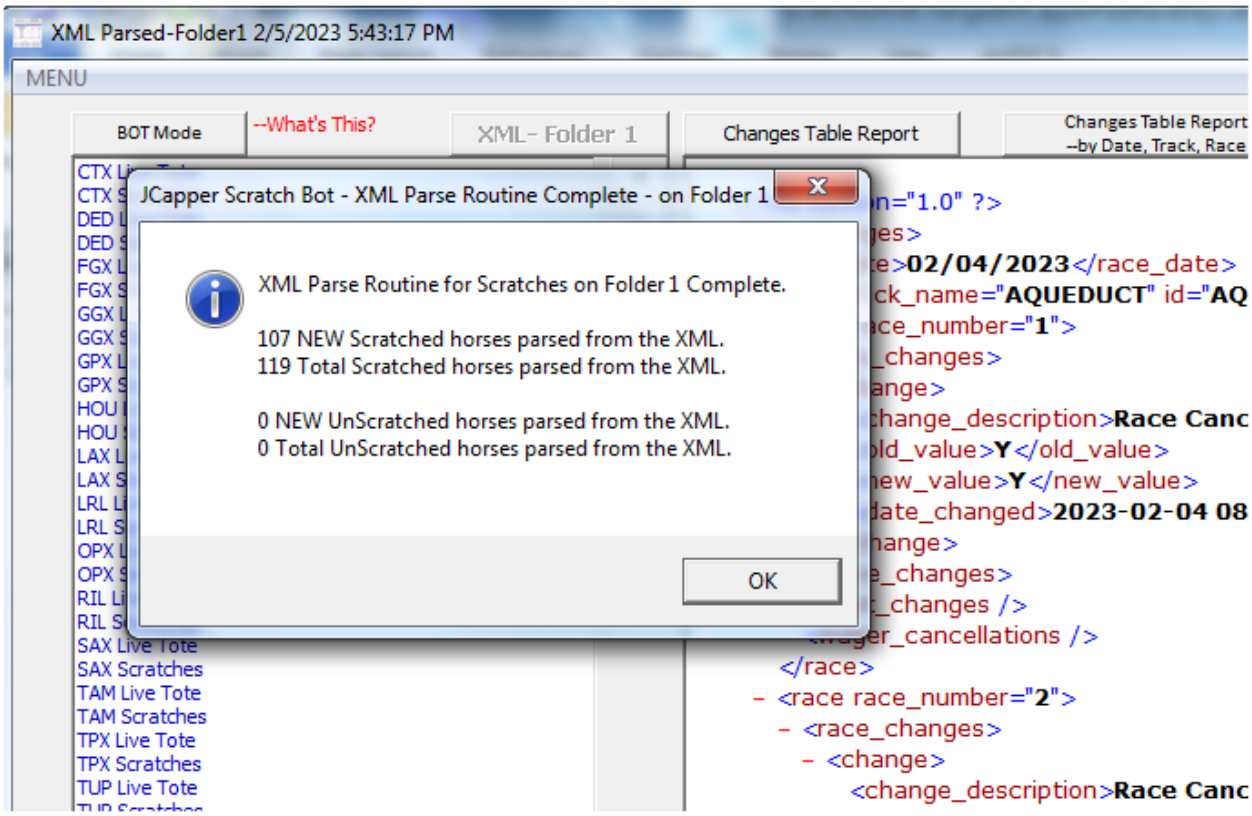
Clicking the XML button for DataFolder1 on the face of Scratch BOT to open a dialog box to select the XML archive file matching the card files loaded into the program on DataFolder1

The screenshot below shows Scratch Bot after clicking the XML button for DataFolder1 which opens a dialog box that enables you to select the XML archive file that you want to parse.



Note the dialog box is now open and I've single clicked and selected the ScratchesAndChanges.XML file for 02-04-2023 on the XML archive folder.

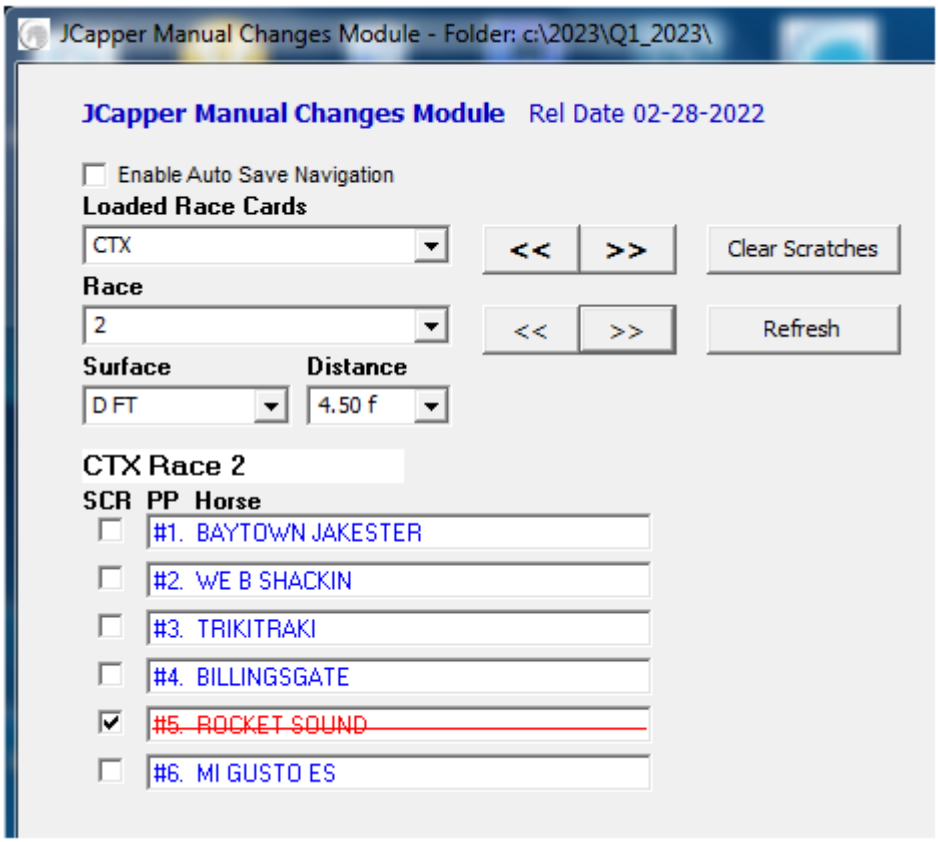
From here, as soon as I click the Open button on the dialog box Scratch BOT will parse scratches and changes from the selected XML file.



The screenshot above shows the XML parse from local machine routine in progress. Note that because I hit the + button to expand the Scratch BOT interface beforehand, the xml itself is visible in the background. Also note the date (02/04/2023) is displayed in the race_date node at the top of the xml. This provides a quick and dirty way to verify the date of the xml file against the date of the .JCP files loaded into the program.

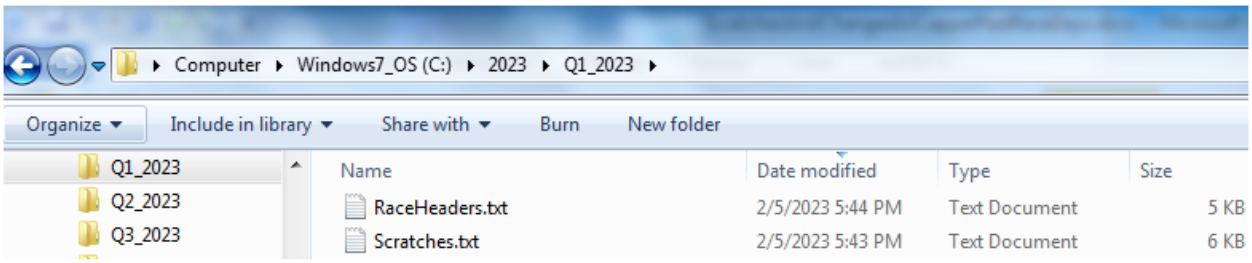
At this point you have Scratches and Changes for the past race day.

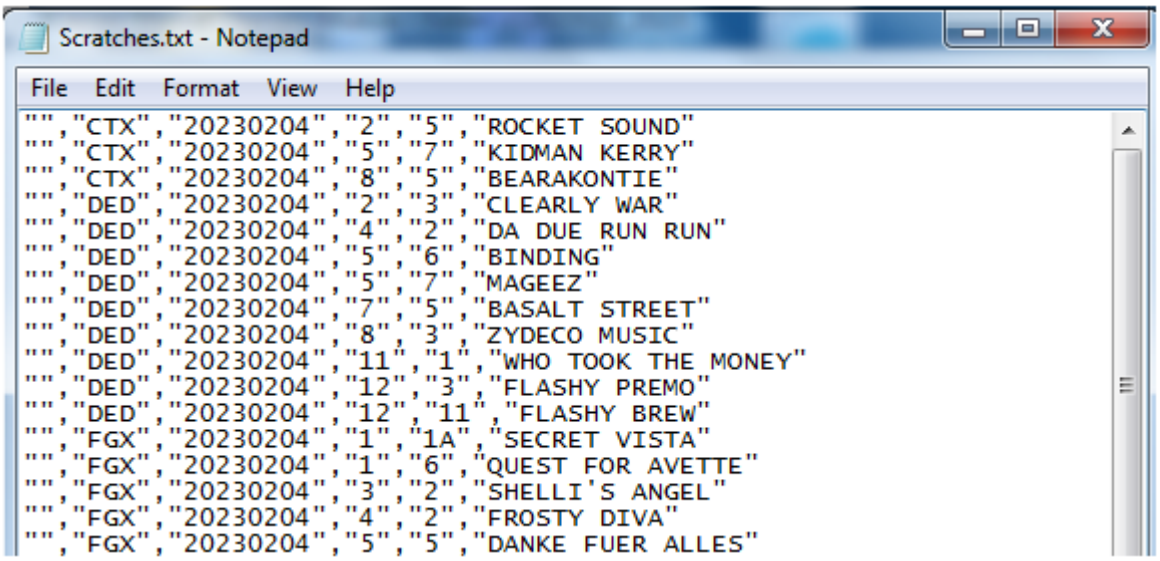
You can verify this in the manual changes module, screenshot here:



You can also verify this by opening the following two files on the current active data folder in Notepad:

Scratches.txt and RaceHeaders.txt





Running a Calc Races on DataFolder1 for the data files of your past race day that were loaded into the program in step 3 (above.)

That's It!

At this point the reports generated by your Calc Races will reflect scratches and changes for the past race date.

I'm guessing most of you will find the auto archive XML file function built into Scratch BOT (presented above) to be the easiest way to get scratches and changes prior to running a Calc Races to generate JCapper reports and past performances for a past race date.

But for those of you who are using the Manual Changes Module or Scratch Parser because you are used to doing it that way, I am going to present two alternate strategies.

ALTERNATE Strategy #1 – Using Scratch Parser to parse archived copies of the HDW text files from the HDW site

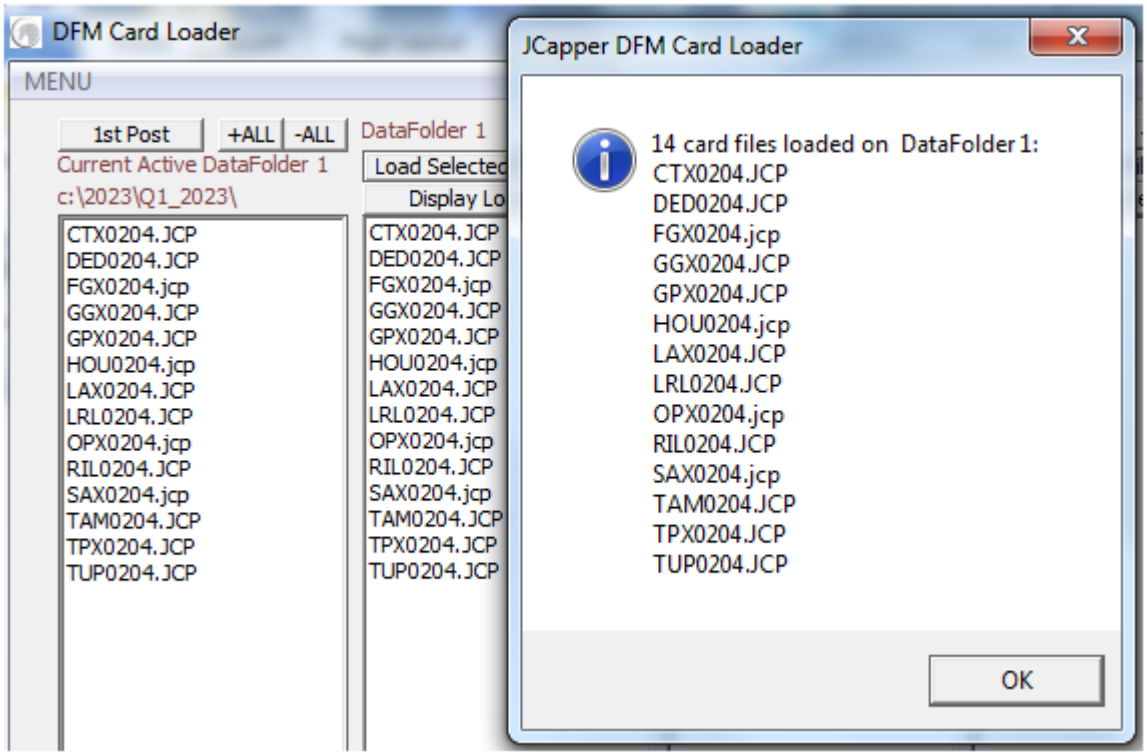
I had a phone conversation about scratches and changes for past race days with Ron Tiller at HDW late afternoon on Monday 02-07-2023. Ron was kind enough to inform me that HDW had maintained an archive of their two scratches and changes files dating back several years. He was also kind

enough to email me a url that would enable JCapper customers with a current/active HDW data subscription to parse these files for past race dates.

Basic Operating Steps for ALTERNATE Strategy #1 – Using Scratch Parser to parse archived copies of the HDW text files from the HDW site:

Step #1. Bring up the DFM Card Loader, and **clear all loaded race cards**.

Step #2. Load race cards for a past race day onto **DataFolder1**, and x-out of the DFM Card Loader. Screenshot below for 02-04-2023:



Step #3. Bring up **Scratch Parser**.

Note: During **unit testing** of this Alternate procedure on one of my machines, Scratch Parser refused to load after clearing loaded card files in the DFM Card Loader. Instead it gave me an **error message** saying there were No Loaded Race Cards.

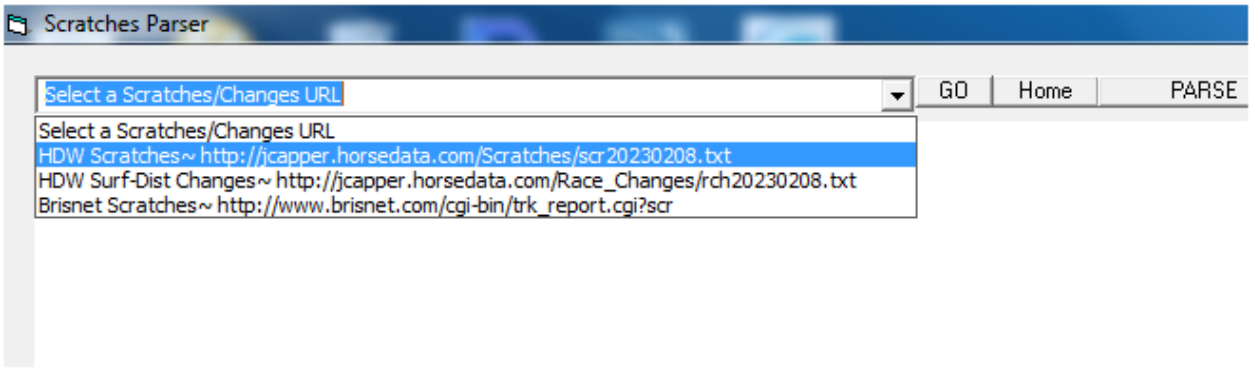
If this happens to you, use the following **workaround**: X-out of the Main Module, and re-launch the Main Module.

Afterwards you should be able to bring up Scratch Parser *every single time*.

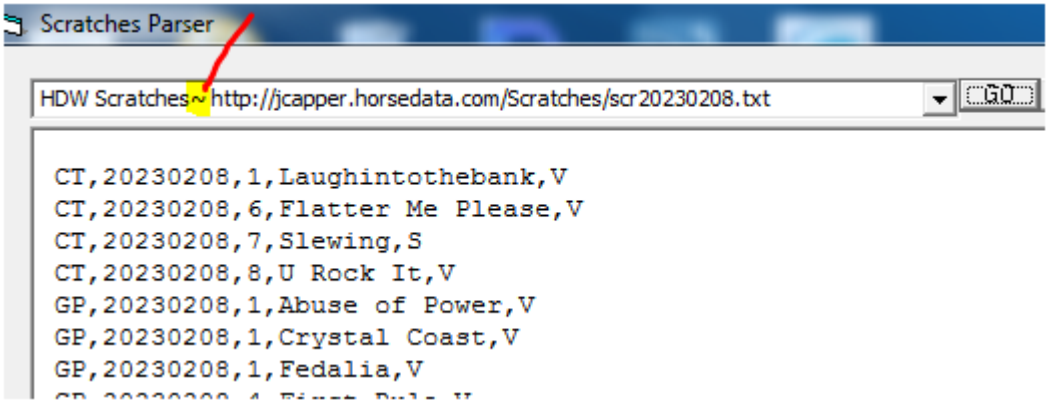
Step #4. Open up the drop down and select the **Scratches file** for **today's** races, and log into the HDW site if prompted.

That's right. I said **Today's** races even though we are working with card files loaded for a past race day. The reason for doing it this way will become clear enough in the steps and screenshots that follow.

In the screenshot below I am about to select the Scratches file at the HDW site for **today's** races.



The screenshot below shows the upper area of the Scratch Parser screen after selecting the Scratches file for today's races (02-08-2023 as I write this.)



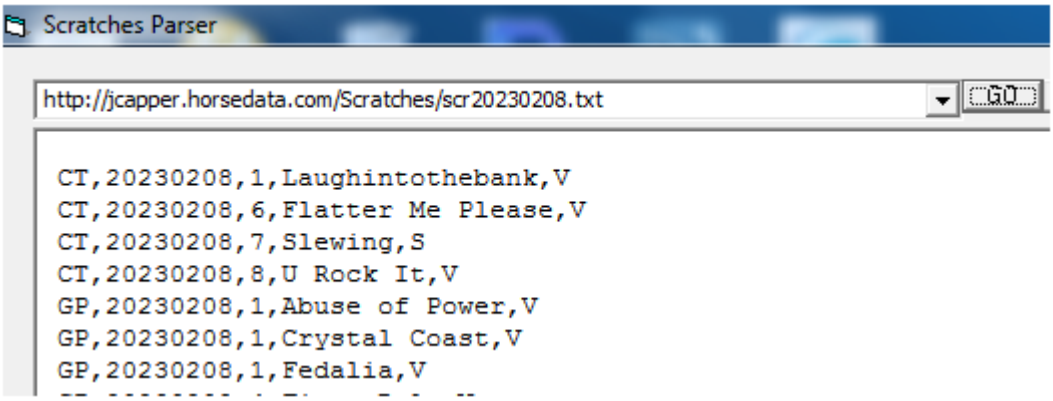
Step #5. Note the text inside of the drop down. Specifically, note the squig or ~ character (highlighted in yellow) that separates the leading text "HDW Scratches ~ " (without the quotes) and the actual url that reads "http://jcapper.horsedata.com/Scratches/scr20230208.txt" (again without the quotes.)

Starting immediately after the "~" character everything to the right not including the blank space is the url or link text for the 02-08-2023 scratches text file on the HDW site.

Click inside of the Drop Down immediately to the left of the "h" character. Then use the Backspace key on your keyboard to remove the leading characters "HDW Scratches ~ " (without the quotes) from the drop down.

The screenshot below shows what this looks like.

Note that the remaining text in the drop down is the url text for today's scratches text file at the HDW site (02-08-2023 as I write this.)



Note the filename in the url text for today's scratches text file at the HDW site is scr20230208.txt.

The first three characters "scr" (without the quotes) indicates the file type – scratches.

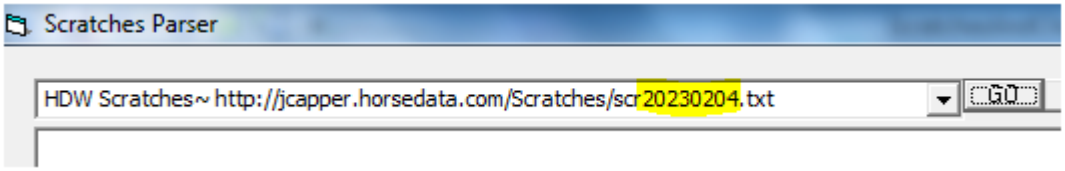
The next four characters "2023" (without the quotes) indicates the year – 2023.

The next four characters "0208" (without the quotes) indicates the month and day of month of the race date – in this case February 8th.

Step #6. From here, to get Scratch Parser to load, display, and parse a scratches text file at the HDW site for a past race day:

Edit the filename embedded in the url text inside of the drop down to match the year, month, and day of month of the past race date you want.

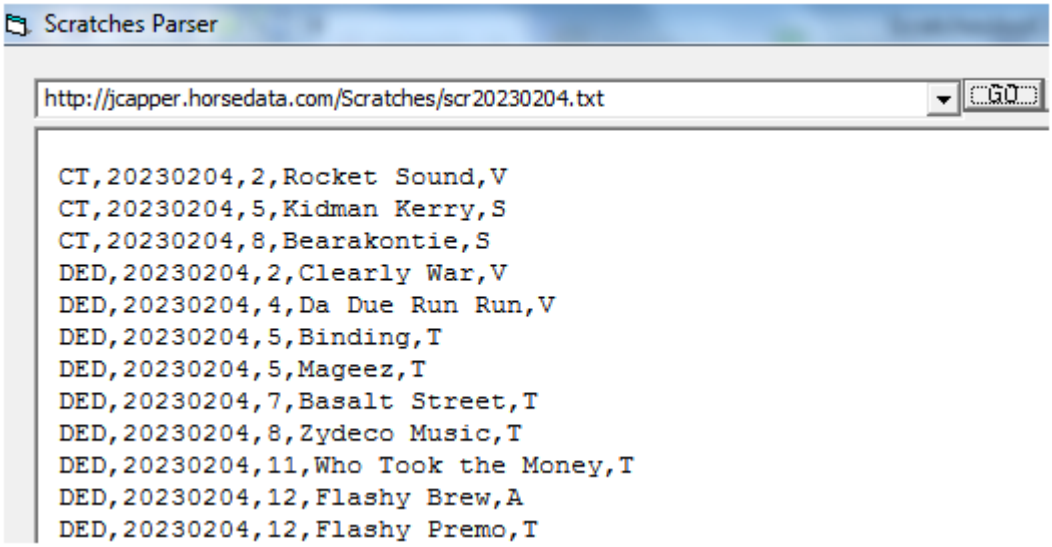
The screenshot below shows what that looks like for 02-04-2023:



Step #7. Click the GO button.

Or alternately, press the Tab key on your keyboard to bring Scratch Parser program focus to the **GO button** to the right of the drop down, and then press the Enter key on the keyboard to depress the GO button.

This causes Scratch Parser to load the scratches text file from the HDW site and display its contents in the main textbox. Screenshot below for 02-04-2023:

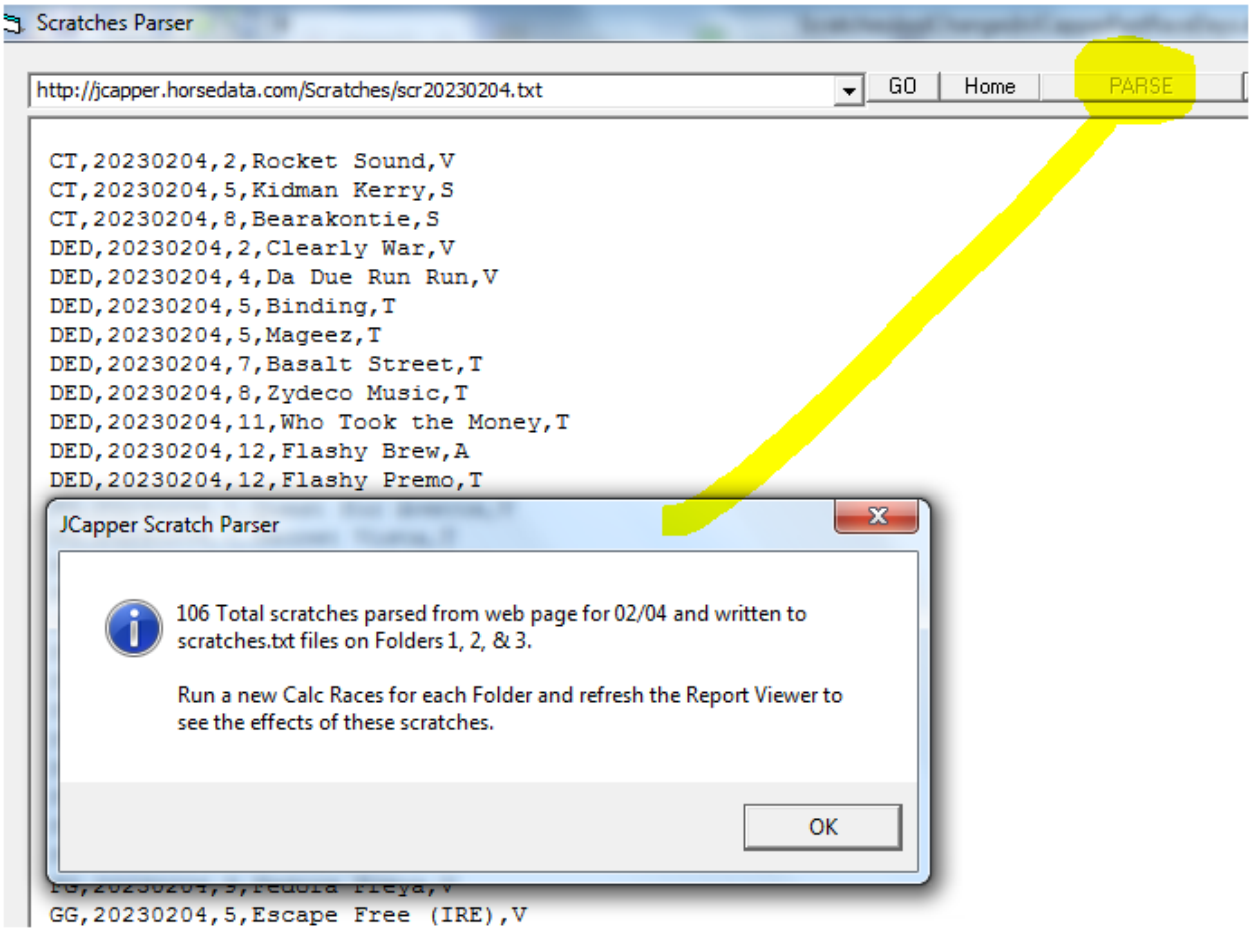


Step #8. Click the **Parse button**.

Or alternately, press the Tab key on your keyboard to bring Scratch Parser program focus to the **Parse button** to the right of the GO button.

With program focus on the Parse button press the Enter key on your keyboard to depress the **Parse button**.

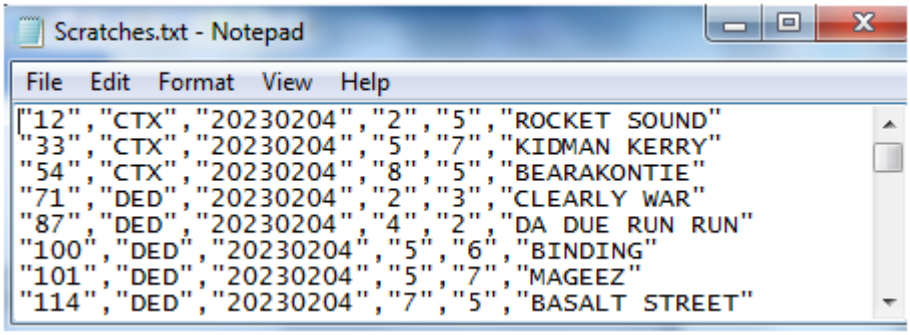
Screenshot below:



This causes Scratch Parser to parse scratches data from the pointed to scratches text file on the HDW site and write the parsed data to the scratches.txt file on DataFolder1.

You can verify this in the Manual Changes Module or by double clicking the scratches.txt file on DataFolder1 to open it in Notepad.

Screenshot below:

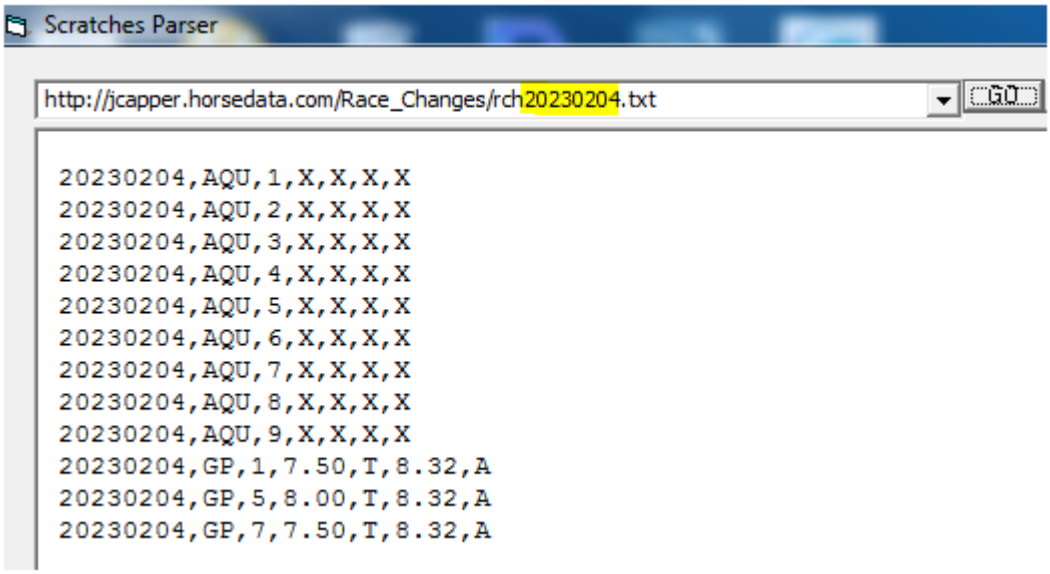


Step #9. Run a Calc Races on DataFolder1 for the data files of your past race day that were loaded into the program in step 2 (above.)

That's It!

At this point the reports generated by your Calc Races will reflect scratches and changes for the past race date.

And of course you can do exactly the same thing using the above steps and editing year, month, and day of month of the url text for the race changes file as shown in the screenshot below.



ALTERNATE Strategy #2 - Using archived copies of the Scratches.txt and RaceHeaders.txt Files

Finally, I am going to present a second Alternate Strategy that involves using archived copies of the two text files (filenames Scratches.txt and RaceHeaders.txt) on your current active data folder that become populated with scratches and changes data as a result of using Scratch BOT, Scratch Parser, or the Manual Changes Module while processing scratches and changes for the current race day.

When you clear loaded card files in the DFM Card Loader, one of the things that happens during the clear files routine is that all of the miscellaneous text files are overwritten with fresh blank copies. That means when you clear loaded race cards scratches and changes are cleared too.

Important: Scratches.txt and RaceHeaders.txt are the two text files that contain scratches and changes data.

The other text files, unzip-these.txt, LiveRunners.txt, ForBill.txt, ForJeff.txt, ataprice.txt, etc. contain data about loaded data files and numbers generated by your most recent Calc Races.

Again: Scratches.txt and RaceHeaders.txt are the two text files that contain scratches and changes data.

With THAT in mind –

If you were to make your own archived copies of the Scratches.txt and RaceHeaders.txt files – and rename your archived copies in such a way so as to indicate the race date – and put them on your own personal archive folder:

Provided your archived copies of the two text files are made while they are still populated with data BEFORE clearing that day's loaded race cards from the DFM Card Loader:

For any past race date that you have archived copies of the Scratches.txt and RaceHeaders.txt files, you have scratches and changes data for that race date sitting in the two archived text files.

From there, by following the basic operating steps below, you have a way to get scratches and changes data for that past race date without having to re-key scratches and changes in the Manual Changes Module.

Basic Operating Steps for ALTERNATE Strategy #2 - Using archived copies of the Scratches.txt and RaceHeaders.txt Files:

1. Load that day's .JCP files into the program with the DFM Card Loader onto DataFolder1 (the current active DataFolder Checked in the DFM.)

2. Delete the existing empty Scratches.txt and RaceHeaders.txt files from the same DataFolder you used in step 1 (above.)

3. Put copies of your archived Scratches.txt and RaceHeaders.txt files onto the same DataFolder from step 1 (above.)

4. Rename the copies of the two text files that you just copied (in step 3 above) from their archived filenames to Scratches.txt and RaceHeaders.txt.

5. Run a Calc Races on DataFolder1 from step 1 (above.)

That's It!

At this point the HTML Report generated by your Calc Races should reflect Scratches and Changes for the past race day - with the needed scratches and changes data supplied by the archived/ renamed Scratches.txt and RaceHeaders.txt files you copied to the data folder in steps 3 and 4 (above.)

Note that you can do this without having to manually key scratches and changes in the Manual Changes Module or parse an archived XML file.

To Recap:

If you aren't using Scratch BOT and you are looking for a way to restore scratches and changes for past race days without having to key the entire day via the Manual Changes Module:

Creating an archive of the daily Scratches.txt and RaceHeaders.txt files renamed so as to reflect the race date (for example: Scratches_02042023.txt and RaceHeaders_02042023.txt) is probably your best bet.

-jp

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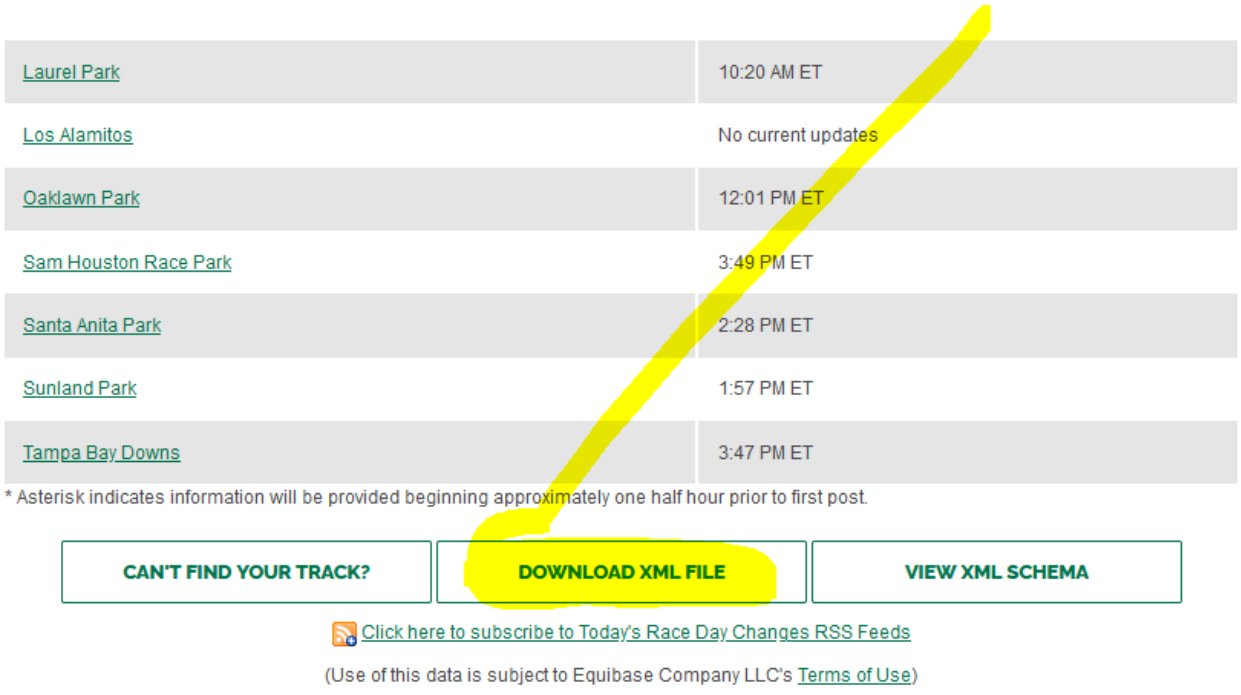
Misc Notes --

Note that you can also use a web browser to download a TodaysScratchesAndChanges.xml file from the Equibase site from the following url:

https://www.equibase.com/static/latechanges/html/latechanges.html

Hint: On the web page at the above link, right-click the Download XML File button, select Save Target As or Save URL As, and save the TodaysScratchesAndChanges.xml file to your archive folder. From there, if you are using a web browser to get the file you need to rename it in order to keep it from being overwritten the next file you download a new file.

Screenshot of the Equibase site: