

Playing the Oscar odds with a bettor's mind-set

By David Leonhardt, New York Times

The Academy Awards ceremony will emphasize the suspense of the unknown on Sunday night. But Hollywood insiders are well aware that many nominees have little chance of winning – and know who those nominees are.

Not only will the award for best picture most likely go to “Birdman” or “Boyhood,” but the best director award also seems destined for one of those two films. Eddie Redmayne (“The Theory of Everything”) will probably win best actor, though Michael Keaton (“Birdman”) has a shot. The other acting categories – best actress, best supporting actress and best supporting actor – appear to offer even less suspense, with Julianne Moore (“Still Alice”), Patricia Arquette (“Boyhood”) and J. K. Simmons (“Whiplash”) each a runaway favorite.

There is nothing new, of course, about Hollywood going into Oscar night with a very good idea of what will happen. That’s been the case for years. The new development is that any of the rest of us who want to know the likely outcomes can do so, with nothing fancier than an Internet connection.

Several betting markets, including European bookmakers, the Wynn Las Vegas casino and a prediction market known as the Hollywood Stock Exchange, publicly list Oscar odds. And their record over the past decade is remarkably good.

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