

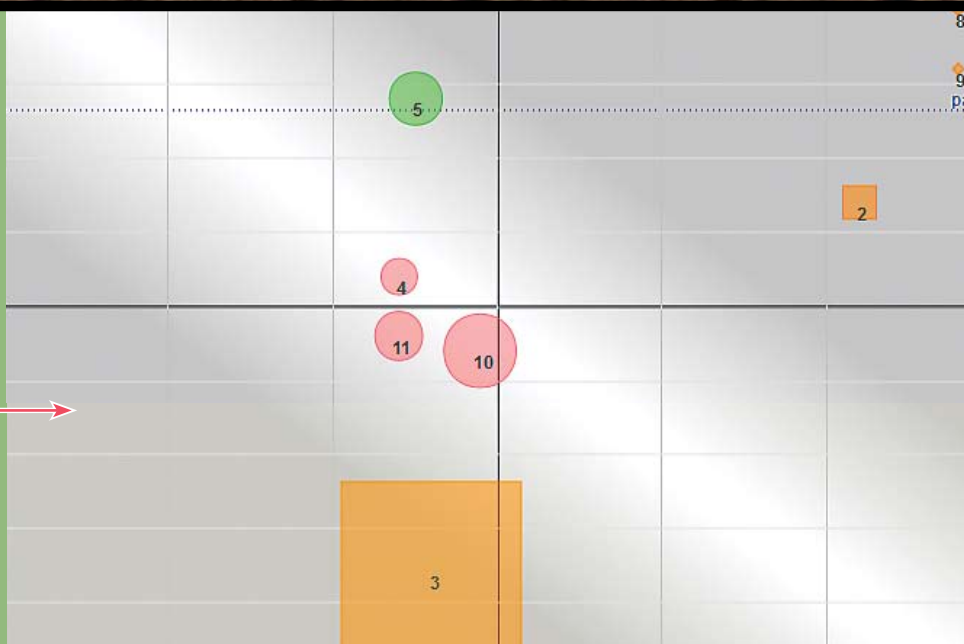


Caracortada speeds to Sprint victory at Rillito Park

Also—Just in time for the Triple Crown races . . .

this →

OptixEQ gets a test run



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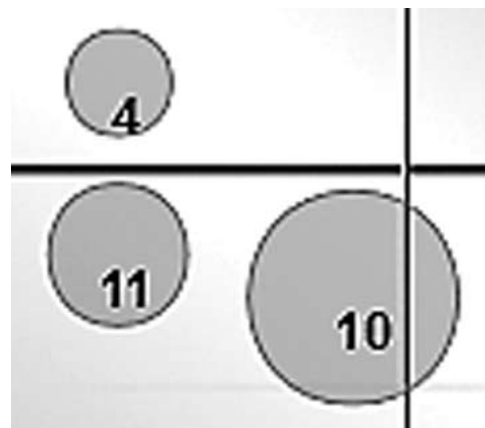
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See pedigree and breeder info in the "Stakes Winners" section of this issue.

On the cover:

Top: The big grey Caracortada (which is Spanish for "Scarface") leads the way in the El Moro de Cumpas Sprint at Rillito Park on March 17 (*photo by Coady Photography*). *Story on page 16.*

Bottom: The plot thickens . . . the OptixPLOT, that is. *Story on page 4.*



New handicapping tool simplifies pace handicapping

Story by Robert Cooke, Jr.

Yaugh! Pace handicapping!

"Pace makes the race," right? Early speed needs an uncontested lead. Closers need a speed duel up front. Why didn't the fastest horse win the race? Pace.

This article is about my experience with, and is my review of, a new pace handicapping tool called OptixPLOT, from OptixEQ.

First, some history

Tom Brohammer started applying math to the question of pace handicapping back in the late '80s and published his findings in 1991, along with a few do-it-yourself tips, in the book *Modern Pace Handicapping*. Brohammer's approach resulted in four pace numbers, labeled as A, E, S, X (Average pace, Early pace, Sustained pace, and X-factor), along with a percentage number for the amount of energy expended in the early stages of the race.

It wasn't easy, but, yes, I created pace numbers for Les Bois Park, my home track. I was already doing my own Beyer-style speed ratings for Les Bois Park—well before *Daily Racing Form (DRF)* included Beyers in its past performances (PPs)—so I stayed up late a few nights and incorporated my pace numbers into my Lotus 1-2-3 program.

It looked like this:

f	A	E	S	X	%
7	52.07	52.98	51.63	51.05	49.54
5	55.58	54.73	55.88	55.80	46.47

f	A	E	S	X	%
7	51.08	52.78	50.26	49.18	50.70
6½	52.47	53.31	51.19	50.30	50.09
6½	52.00	51.46	52.26	50.87	47.37

Almost every horse in almost every race had A, E, S, X, and % numbers like these. I found that comparing the 5-furlong race by Horse A (the first set of numbers) to the two 6½-furlong races by Horse B was nearly impossible, and it was useless to even try to interpret these pace numbers for a field of ten. (Incidentally, on my Beyer-style speed ratings, Horse A earned a 63 and Horse B had a 48 and a 52. So much easier. Horse A beat Horse B by 15½ lengths.)

These pace numbers came in handy about once in a blue moon and probably not in a way that Brohammer expected. When a longshot won an early race, I would scan the "%" column for consistency, and then look for other horses with similar energy-expenditure percentages. It sometimes indicated a running style that was advantageous on off-tracks and drying-out tracks. And it worked! *But* it hardly ever rained during racing season.

Brohammer himself later simplified his math to yield "+" and "-" figures based on expected par times (in which a "par time +2" is slower to the first call than a "par time -1").

Randy Moss (the horseracing Randy Moss, that is, not the wide-receiver Randy Moss) had begun publishing his Moss Pace Figures, when I heard his presentation at the 2007 Horseplayers Expo with Tom Brohammer about pace

handicapping. By 2010, he was already tweaking *his* system and requesting input from Pace Figures customers.

One of them, identified only as "GregB," answered his question with a question: "What good is a measure of central tendency without a measure of variance?" Good question, GregB! I already slave to produce accurate daily track variants. Do I have to do points-of-call variants now, too?

Just last year, *Daily Racing Form* began publishing "Timeform US Pace" ratings in the PPs. (They were already available in the online "Formulator" version of the PPs). They're about as useful as training-track workout times from a prior year.

Into the future

John Doyle started OptixEQ, a company dedicated to solving handicapping challenges—including pace handicapping.

John's no stranger to racing. His dad took him to Aqueduct and Belmont on weekends when he was growing up. "My father and I found racing together," says Doyle. "We saw all the greats in person—Secretariat, Seattle Slew, Spectacular Bid, Affirmed, and Forego."

Doyle quit his job as an IBM account exec in 2010 to pursue the life of a full-time horseplayer. The following year, in January 2011, he won the *Daily Racing Form*/NTRA National Handicapping Championship—the NHC, now known as the National Horseplayers Championship—on his first try, and on the final race of that year's event. (See the story on page 5 of the March 2011 issue of *TRJ*.)

An Eclipse Award and a \$500,000 first-place prize? No regrets on that whole quitting-the-9-to-5, I'm guessing.

Now a 50-something living in Scottsdale, Arizona, Doyle hasn't duplicated that feat (nobody has), but he's competed in five more NHCs, including being a double-qualifier in 2014 and competing in the most recent NHC in February.

In his new pursuit, Doyle appears to have again won big on the first try. His innovative OptixEQ tools finally solve pace handicapping by providing easy-to-understand pace models with OptixPLOT. In the tool, horses are "plotted" on a graph, and users can see a representation of how each race will be run. No mystical numbers, no endless "figures" comparisons, no giving up the effort.

You just look at the PLOT.

What am I looking at?

Check out the PLOT on the following page.

Briefly, horses are represented by circles and squares. Horses closest to the left side of the PLOT have are fastest to the first call. Horses closest to the top of the PLOT are fastest from the first call to the second call. So a horse that appears in the upper left should be a front-runner. And looking over the whole PLOT, you can see where the other horses are likely to be positioned as they enter the final portion of the race, from the front-runners (upper-left) to the closers (lower-right).

The horses are represented as either circles or squares based on finishing ability. "Circle horses" do not finish the race as strongly as "square horses." The bigger the circle, the more you can expect the horse to lose form, shorten strides, slow down. The bigger the square, the more you can expect the horse to finish with gusto.

Got it?

Trying it

I got the concept, and I took OptixPLOT on a test run in March with that basic understanding—big circle bad/big square good—jumping in with both feet. OptixPLOT is designed for computers and iPads, so I fired up my iPad and took it to an OTB with free wi-fi—the Race & Sports Book at South Point Casino in Las Vegas.

I hit some races, I missed some races, I was going back and forth from the iPad to the PPs . . . the tool wasn't the perpetual money machine I'd hoped for. Some of the biggest squares were too far behind to make a difference and some of the biggest circles got so far ahead that nobody could catch them.

I caught a \$30 winner at Charles Town at the end of the night that brought me back to almost-even, and I felt lucky. I also felt like there must be more to OptixPLOT than my basic understanding.

I decided to study the PLOTs for a few days, and there's a lot to study. The product website is robust. Six "training" video clips (about 12 minutes total) explain how to use the product. It's a lot more detailed than big circle/big square. But it's very easy to find all the pieces in the tool, once you know they exist.

Here are just a few things I didn't know when I jumped in.

- The "PlotFit" rating indicates the degree of confidence in the PLOT. A "red" rating might indicate a race with inexperienced horses, or horses that have not run on the track, or run the distance, or run on the surface. A "green" rating means the PLOT is pretty solid. As in other areas of life, green means go, red means stop.
- Two other ratings, "SpeedRate" and "Contention," indicate how hot the pace could be and whether it will be hotly contested.
- The PLOTs can be adjusted to vary the distance, surface, and the combination of distance and surface. The "dist/surf" PLOT is more accurate than the standard PLOT.
- Statistics are available for each of the four quadrants on the PLOT. The "Quad STAT" button reveals the winning percentages and ROIs of circles and squares for each track, on each surface and distance.

I'm back

Armed with a little more info, I was ready to try again, and it was a Derby prep day—March 10, Tampa Bay Derby/Gotham/San Felipe Day.

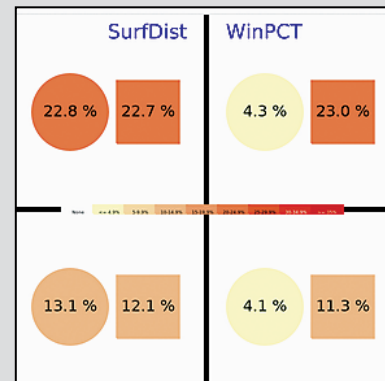
The first of the three, the Derby, had the red PlotFit rating, meaning low confidence in the PLOTs accuracy. In addition, the speed rate was low and the contention rating was a snowflake (ultra cold, in other words). (Note: the PLOT for the Tampa Bay Derby appears on the front cover.) But the PLOT had the #5 horse—Flameaway—as a possible stalker-type who could be in contention turning for home. A circle for sure, but, heck, they're all circles for the early pace, and at least he wasn't a *big* circle . . . and he was 6-to-1.

TAM 2018-03-10 **Race 11** \$400,000 8.5f Route **Dirt**
 Grade II stk/hcp(TamDby-G2) 3 year olds Only -
 PlotFit ● Contention ❄ SpeedRate 🏇 11

Above, the Tampa Bay Derby PlotFit, Contention, and SpeedRate ratings. Flameaway finished second, paying \$6.80 and \$4. Good thing I got a win/place on him.

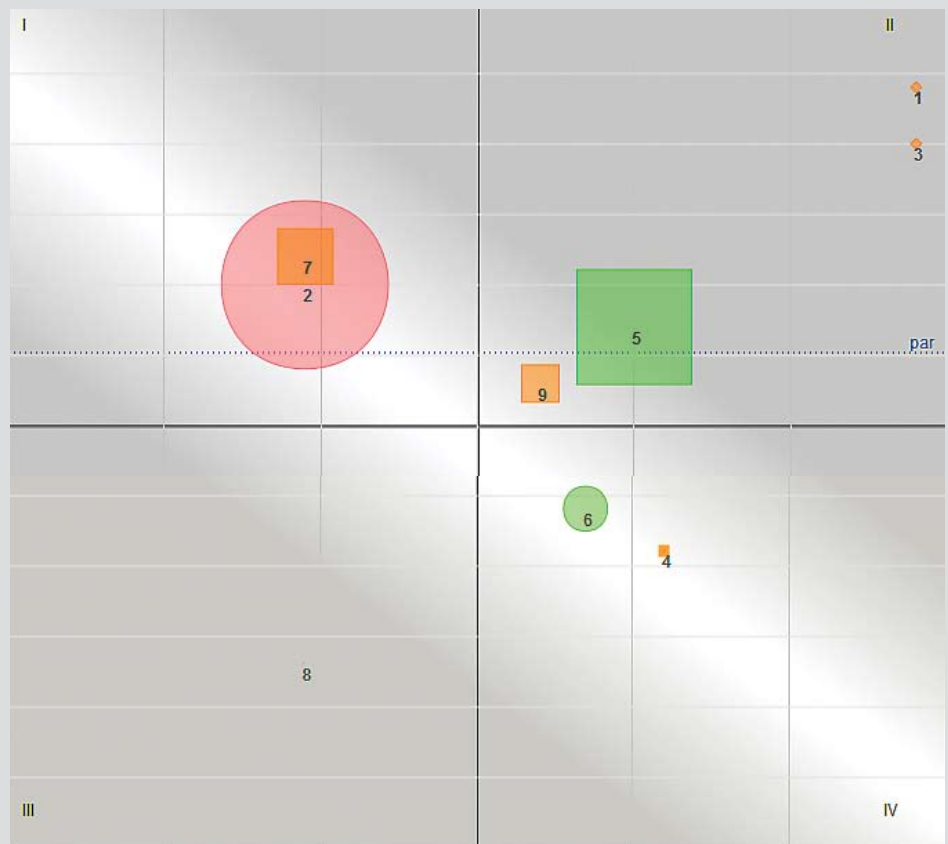
On to the Gotham, another red PlotFit, but the PLOT showed two horses running near the lead, with one of them (#2, Cove Blue) a gigantic circle and the other (#7, Old Time Revival) a medium-sized square, which means he should hold his form while #2 falls apart. (See the PLOT below.) Could Cove Blue falter and simply leave the race to Old Time Revival? And did the odds on Old Time Revival just hit 35-to-1?

I would again ignore the red PlotFit rating and go across-the-board on #7, and look for an exacta. A quick check of the Quad STAT (right) revealed that, for the distance and surface, squares in the upper-right quadrant won at a 23% rate while squares in the upper-left won at a 22.7% rate. The squares in the upper right represented #5 (Firenze Fire) and #9 (Enticed), and I threw the three squares together in an exacta box 5-7-9.



Just as the PLOT predicted, Old Time Revival and Cove Blue went out for the lead, with Cove Blue throwing in the towel

(Continued on page 28)

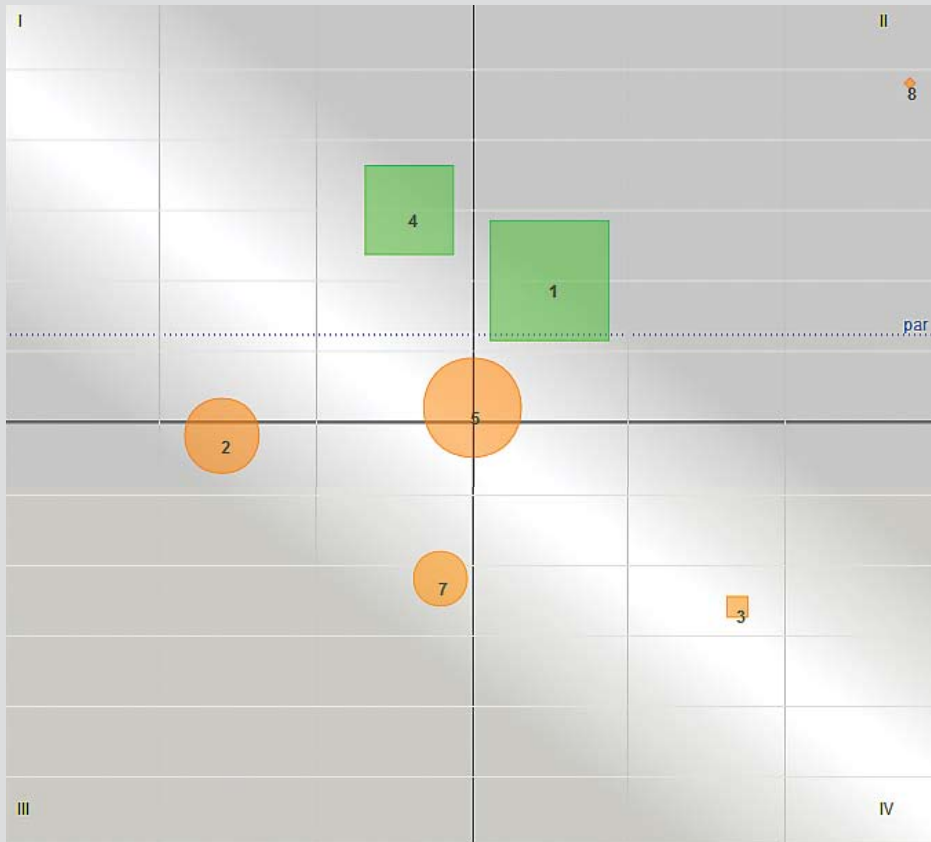


OptixPLOT for the Gotham Stakes

(OptixPLOT, continued from page 5)

after a half-mile. Old Time Revival held the lead into the stretch, but eventually gave way to Enticed (#9) for the win. He held second, though, and my tickets paid \$25.80 and \$9 for the WPS and \$123.25 for the \$1 exacta. Nice!

Now on to the San Felipe, where the the PlotFit was another red flag. But just look at those two great, big squares! (See the PLOT below.) Upon closer inspection, the squares belonged to McKinzie (#4) and Bolt d'Oro (#1), at even odds and 6-to-5, respectively. With only seven entrants after one scratch, I deemed this to be a "non-betting race."



OptixPLOT for the San Felipe

Sure enough, it was a faves-fest (although with some drama) that produced low payoffs.

My faith in OptixPLOT was resotred. I just needed a bit more instruction. I could hardly wait 'til I saw a green flag on the PlotFit.

I used OptixPLOT the following day, too, to great success. And there are even more pieces of full OptixEQ suite of products:

- **OptixNOTES.** Available for several eastern tracks and the larger California tracks, NOTES helps to identify longshots coming into form and favorites going off-form. "It's more than just trip notes," the company claims.
- **OptixWORKS.** Contains grades for morning works, with clocker's notes.
- **OptixGRID.** Provides searchable, sortable PPs.
- **OptixSCAN.** Helps to identify chaotic, contentious, and paceless races across multiple tracks.

The products all work together, starting from OptixPLOT, with just a click here and a click there.

Drawbacks?

Not for the live racing experience. OptixEQ products appear to be geared for simulcast players, whether they play at the OTB or from home through an ADW like Idabet or TVG. Not so much for live racing at the track.

No Quarter Horses. But Quarter Horse racing doesn't exactly lend itself to pace handicapping, does it?

Not all tracks. While the OptixEQ products cover many tracks, they do not cover all tracks. In **TRJ** territory, Canterbury Park and Prairie Meadows are on the list, and the company announced on March 17 that Emerald Downs has been added for 2018. But no Canada racing except for Woodbine. No Arapahoe Park or Portland Meadows. No Wyoming. No fairs. Again, the product is geared for the simulcast/ADW player.

Not cheap. Check out the list below (prices as of the end of March). On the plus side, the cost is per day/week/month instead of per track. On a day with a lot of tracks running, you could spend a lot on *DRF* PPs at \$3.50 per track.

- OptixPLOT is \$10/day or \$80/month
- OptixPLOT with OptixNOTES is \$25/day, \$50/week, or \$150/month
- OptixWORKS is \$10/day or \$100/month
- OptixGRID and OptixSCAN are not available separately, but are free with any PLOT or NOTES purchase

But finally

This is not an ad. This is an honest review by a longtime horseplayer of a new handicapping product. Go online to www.optixeq.com to look at some of the information, view some of the video clips, and see if you might like to try it. Read some of the Blog posts, too.

I'll leave you with one more PLOT for your consideration. I wasn't playing the races on March 12, but I reviewed some of the PLOTs and results that evening. The PLOT from the Parx eighth race was interesting. (See the PLOT on the following page.)

A green PlotFit (see below), a flame (ultra hot) Contention rating and a fast SpeedRate of 44 (50 is considered very fast).

PRX 2018-03-12 Race 8 \$20,500 8.318f Route Dirt
Claiming(Clm 7500n3l) 4 year olds and Up -

PlotFit ● Contention 🔥 SpeedRate 🚩 44

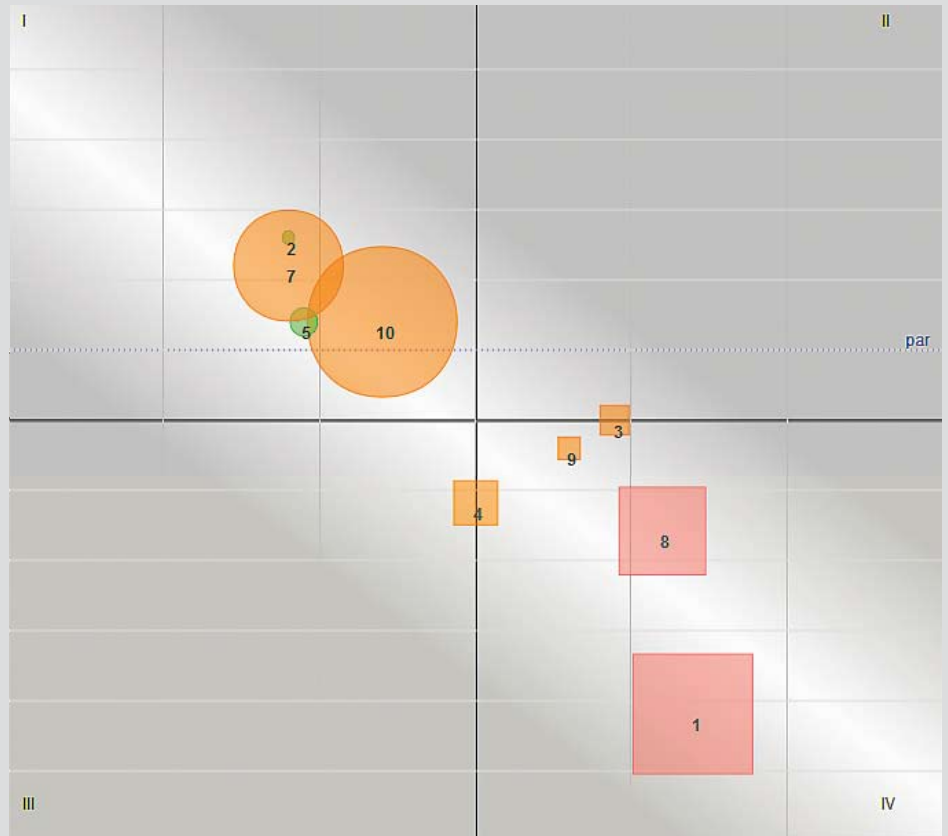
Now, how much time would it have taken to discover all that with your *DRF* PPs?

The PLOT indicates that the horses #2, 5, 7, and 10 are going to fight for the lead. They're all going to go fast, and, as circles, they're all going to fade. The squares are horses #1, 3, 4, 8, and 9.

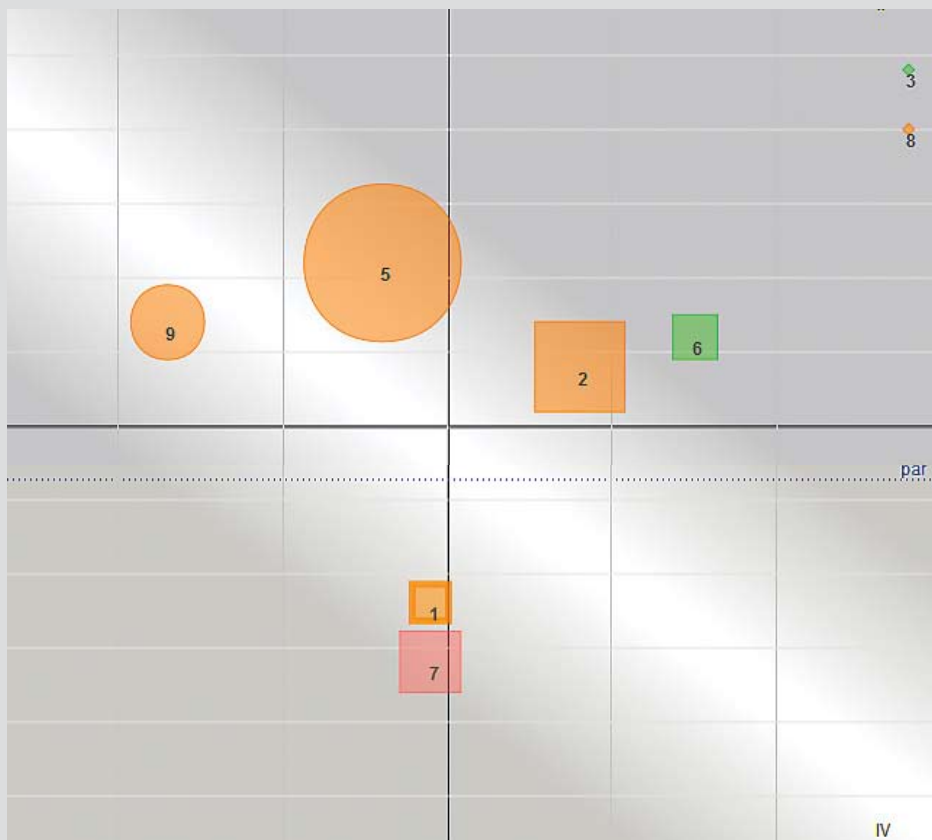
What would you do? Box them all? Leave out the deep closers #1 and #8? Oh, but the #1 is 50-to-1 and the #8 is 36-to-1. Can't leave them out, can you?

The eighth race at Parx finished 1-4-9-3, with the deepest closer, #1, paying \$107.60, \$35.20, and \$13.20. The \$2 exacta paid \$419, and the \$2 trifecta came in at \$3,165.60.

Are there some like that this Saturday? I sure hope so.



OptixPLOT for Parx race #8, March 12, 2018



OptixPLOT for Golden Gate race #8, March 11, 2018

Try one!

In this example (see the PLOT, left), the PlotFit is red, probably because of the two horses with no experience on the distance and surface. However, Contention is a sun, and SpeedRate is 63 (very fast).

Here are the Quad STATS:

SurfDist		WinPCT	
18.0 %	25.3 %	13.9 %	28.9 %
13.4 %	19.8 %	6.8 %	10.5 %

This might be a good race to lay off, but we are, after all, horseplayers. I boxed the squares (1, 2, 6, 7) in an exacta. Was that your answer, too?

This race came in 1-2-5-3. The #1 horse paid \$40, \$16.80, and \$8.60 across the board; #2 paid \$10.20 and \$6.20; and the \$2 exacta paid \$235.