

OptixEQ Looks at the 2019 Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1)

By Frank R. Scatoni

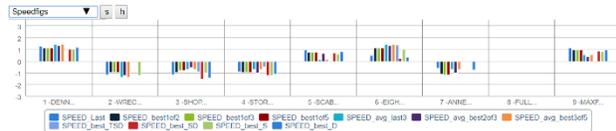
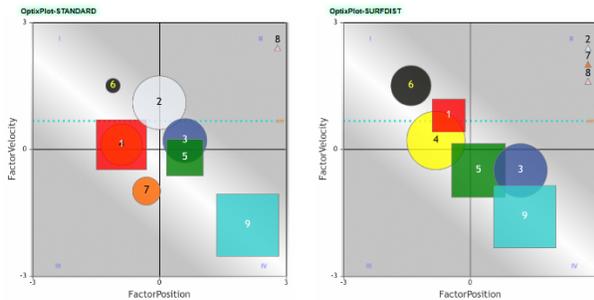


INTRO

The Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1)—an 8.5-furlong main-track affair—is always one of the most anticipated and hyped races on the two-day BC program simply because everyone and his brother wants to try and find next year's Kentucky Derby (G1) winner as early as possible. This year is no different, since the 2019 rendition brings some high-quality and very expensive colts (and one ridgling) to the proceedings. Of course, Bob Baffert has a strong contender, but curiously enough, his "undefeated" Eight Rings is listed as the 2/1 second-choice on the morning-line.

The morning-line favorite distinction goes to Dale Romans' Dennis' Moment, who also is "undefeated"—and the reason I've put quotes around "undefeated" for both Eight Rings and Dennis' Moment is because the one race they didn't win, they lost their jock during the running. With two visually impressive wins under his belt, Dennis' Moment should be the deserving favorite with Eight Rings as the solid second choice—but surely this is more than just a two-horse race, and I do think there is value in beating one of these two runners.

I am going to showcase some of the elements of the new **OptixPLOT2020**, but just so you know what the entire platform looks like, here is the **OptixPLOT2020** page for this race:

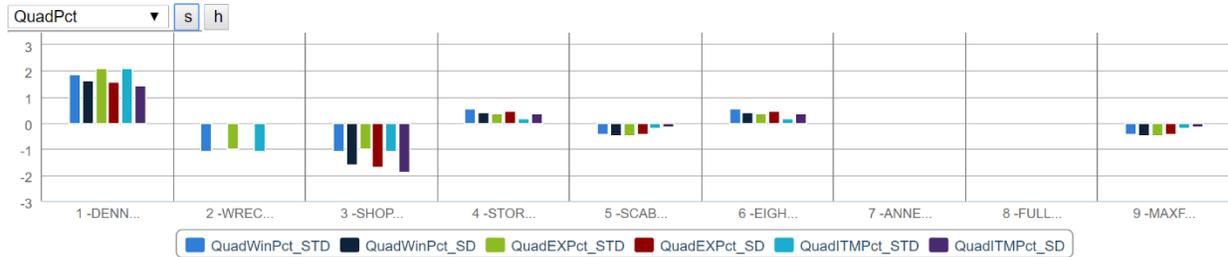
PN	Horse	ML	DSL	Surf	Dist	Prior RaceKeys	Prior RaceClass	chg	oFtg	Fin	OptixNOTES	OptixALERTS
1	DENNIS' MOMENT J ORTIZ ROAD JR F ROMANOS DALE	1.5	48	D	D	RTE (D) CD, 18-09-14, 10 SPR (T) ELT, 19-05-27, 07 SSPR(S) CD, 18-06-23, 82	AmPhoen G1 Mud Sp 1/4	B+	90	1	NO PUSH FOR TROUBLE+	1 NT
2	WRECKING CREW J LARZEL PROSIC/D T MILLER PETER	20	60	D	D	SPR (T) DMR, 10-09-02, 09 SPR (F) DMR, 18-08-19, 08 SPR (F) DMFC, 18-07-27, 01	Chalf G1 Eusebio G2 Mud Sp 1/4	B+	83	2	NASAL S OTHER NASAL S SLOG NASAL S TACTIC+ SLOG MOVE HOT OTHER	
3	SHOPLIFTED J SANTANA RICARDO JR J RODRIGUEZ ROY/FRAN	26	35	D	D	RTE (D) SA, 18-06-27, 88 SPR (T) DMR, 18-08-19, 08 SPR (F) SAR, 19-07-27, 04	AmPhoen G1 Chalf G1 Mud Sp 1/4	B	88	2	WASH TROUBLE MOVE TROUBLE S	
4	STORM THE COURT J REAT FLAVEN T EURTON PETER	28	35	D	D	RTE (M) SA, 18-05-27, 85 SPR (T) DMR, 18-08-19, 08 SPR (M) SAR, 18-06-18, 01	AmPhoen G1 Chalf G1 Mud Sp 1/4	B+	82	3	HOR SAVED	
5	SCABBARD J HENNINGLY EDDIE	8	48	D	D	RTE (D) CD, 18-09-14, 10 SPR (M) SAR, 19-05-27, 07 SPR (F) CD, 18-06-23, 84	Troncas G3 Chalf G2 Mud Sp 1/4	B	84	2	TROUBLE+ SAVED SLOG POCKET SAVED CLOSE GALLOP+ STRETCH?	1 NT
6	EIGHT RINGS J HERNANDEZ JUAN J T SAFFERT BOB	7	35	D	D	RTE (M) SA, 18-05-27, 85 SPR (T) DMR, 18-08-19, 08 SPR (M) DMFC, 18-06-23, 84	AmPhoen G1 Chalf G1 Mud Sp 1/4	B+	91	1	RUSH L DOWN NO LEAD TROUBLE S WIDE RIDE CLOSE	1 CGAS
7	ANNEAU D'OR J HERNANDEZ JUAN J T WRIGHT SUANIC D	15	33	T	T	RTE (M) GG, 19-09-29, 36	Mud Sp 1/4	B+	84	1	WIDE NO COVER MOVE	1 NT
8	FULL FLAT J TAKE Y T MORI HIDEYUKI	38	29	I	I	SPR (T) KYO, 18-10-17, 09 SPR (F) KOK, 18-03-11, 32 SPR (F) CYO, 18-07-20, 05	Mombi S 2/80K MudSpn MudSpn					1 T(0)
9	MAXFIELD J ORTIZ JOSE L T WALSH BRENDAN P	3	27	D	D	RTE (D) KEE, 18-10-09, 09 RTE (M) CD, 18-09-14, 10	Chalf G1 Mud Sp 1/4	B	85	1	SLOG MOVE WIDE CLOSE SLOG X WIDE CLOSE	2 T(32) NT

QuadPct

Before we look at the field, let's first examine the **QuadPct**, since it's extremely important to understand how the field stacks up against each other in terms of where the winners typically come from on this track and at this distance. **QuadPct**, which can be found in the sliding V-Bar on the upper-right part of the

OptixPLOT2020 platform, shows the relative strength of each horse's position on both the "Standard" and "Surface/Distance" Plots. Using "0" as the base-line, you can quickly assess which runners plot favorably relative to their competition (i.e., the higher the bar is above "0", the stronger the position). Note that you can also "show" or "hide" different categories, and that the data includes win percentage, exacta percentage, and in-the-money percentage, so you can really utilize this information when structuring your vertical wagers. Before I even look at the Plot, I like to have this data available to give me a good sense of which horses should really garner my attention.

Here is the **QuadPct** for this year's 2019 Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1):



Right off the bat, you can see that #1 DENNIS' MOMENT holds a distinct advantage in terms of Plot position, so he is a legitimate favorite. #6 EIGHT RINGS, while positive in all of the categories, doesn't hold a particularly strong advantage over some of the other runners, which tells me that he might be one to take on as the expected solid second choice in here. Some of the runners have negative data, but we will look more closely at them in the horse-by-horse analysis. *Remember, we are dealing with lightly raced 2-year-olds, so there needs to be some leeway in terms of how you interpret the data.*

OptixPLOT2020

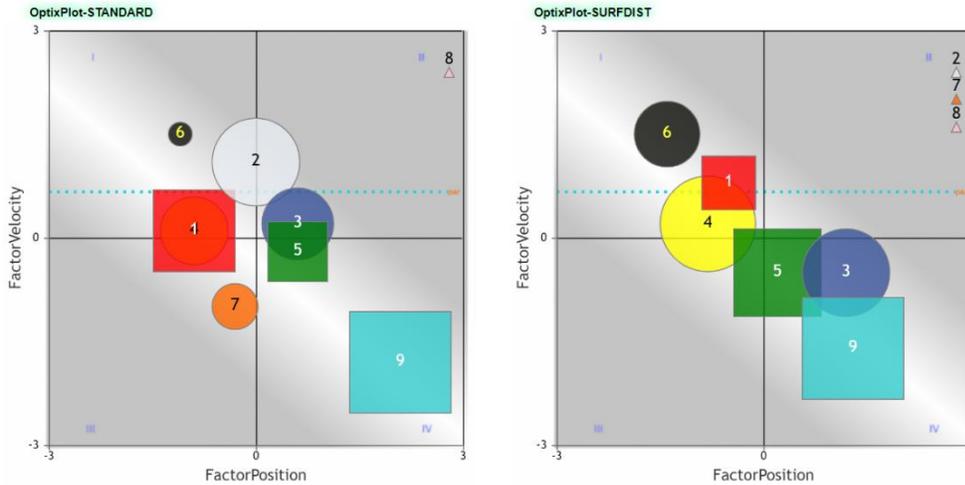
Here is the **OptixPLOT2020** for this race. We've got a **green PlotFit**, which is good—and the "sun" **Contention Rating** and "023" **SpeedRate** suggests there won't be an overly contentious or fast pace, which means we should be looking for horses who are forwardly placed and tactical.

optixRPM™	E	EP	P	PC	C	optixFIGRANGE™
		1 6	4 7	2 3	5 9	96-90

The **OptixRPM**—which categorizes each horse's run style and gives a positive, negative, or neutral designation based on the horse's Plot position—shows a negative "red" marking for two runners in the field (#3 and #4), but considering these are lightly raced juveniles, I'm willing to be more open-minded here, as young horses are still figuring out their preferred run style, and we are also working with some limited data, since no one in the field has run more than three times.

You'll also see an **OptixFIGRANGE**, which projects the winning figure for the race (96-90), so you want to find horses who have either run in that range or project to.

Now let's look at the Plot itself:



OptixPLOT2020 shows both the “Standard” and “Surface/Distance” Plots side-by-side, so you can easily see which horses change position based on the various factors used to create the Plot. In this case, both the stretch-out sprinter #2 WRECKING CREW and the turf horse #7 ANNEAU D’OR fall off the “Surface/Distance” Plot, while #8 FULL FLAT, a Japanese invader, isn’t on either Plot. The other horses are all in similar positions (with the same shapes), so I think it’s okay to lean on “Standard” Plot for this.

PAST 3 RUNLINES

You can access full past-performance data by clicking the “**OptixGRID**” button in the header, but it’s nice to have the most recent form-cycle information readily available right here in the **OptixPLOT2020** page. The fields for the “**Past 3 Runlines**” are pretty self-explanatory, but do note that there is a new category called “**OptixALERTS**,” which calls out positive form-cycle notes by hovering over the data.

Past 3 Runlines												
PN	Horse	ML	DSL	Surf	Dist	Prior RaceKeys	Prior RaceClass	oNg	oFIG	Fin	optixNOTES	OptixALERTS
1	DENNIS' MOMENT J. ORTIZ IRAD JR T. ROMANS DALE	16	48	D	RTE (8.5f) D SSPR(5f)	CD_19-09-14_10 ELP_19-07-27_07 CD_19-06-23_02	Iroquois-G3 Md Sp Wt	B+ B+	96 92	1 7	NO_PUSH TROUBLE+	1[NT]
2	WRECKING CREW J. LOPEZ PASCACIO T. MILLER PETER	20	60	D	SPR (7f) D SPR (6f)	DMR_19-09-02_09 DMR_19-08-10_08 DMR_19-07-27_01	Dmrfut-G1 BestPal-G2 Md Sp Wt	B- B- B	80 85 78	2 2 1	NASAL_S_OTHER NASAL_S_SLOG NASAL_S_TACTIC+ SLOG MOVE HOT OTHER	
3	SHOPLIFTED J. SANTANA RICARDO JR T. ASMUSSEN STEVEN M	20	35	D	RTE (8.5f) D SPR (7f) D SPR (5.5f)	SA_19-09-27_08 SAR_19-09-02_10 SAR_19-07-27_04	AmPharoh-G1 Hopeful-G1 Md Sp Wt	B- B- B	80 85 86	5 2 1	WARM TROUBLE MOVE TROUBLE_S	
4	STORM THE COURT J. PRAT FLAVIEN T. EURTON PETER	20	35	D	RTE (8.5f) D SPR (7f) D SPR (5.5f)	SA_19-09-27_08 DMR_19-09-02_09 DMR_19-08-10_01	AmPharoh-G1 Dmrfut-G1 Md Sp Wt	B- B- B	82 99 85	3 8 1	BOS SAVED	
5	SCABBARD J. SMITH M E T. KENNEALLY EDDIE	8	48	D	RTE (8.5f) D SPR (6.5f) D SPR (6f)	CD_19-09-14_10 SAR_19-08-10_08 CD_19-06-26_04	Iroquois-G3 SarSpcl-G2 Md Sp Wt	B B- B+	94 88 81	2 2 1	TROUBLE+ SAVED SLOG POCKET SAVED CLOSE GALLOP+ STRETCH?	1[NT]
6	EIGHT RINGS J. VELAZQUEZ J R T. BAFFERT BOB	2	35	D	RTE (8.5f) D SPR (7f) D SPR (5.5f)	SA_19-09-27_08 DMR_19-09-02_09 DMR_19-08-04_05	AmPharoh-G1 Dmrfut-G1 Md Sp Wt	B+ B- B+	91 99 96	1 7 1	RUSH LONE NO_LEAD TROUBLE_S WIDE BOS CLOSE	1[CG45]
7	ANNEAU D'OR J. HERNANDEZ JUAN J T. WRIGHT BLAINE D	15	33	T	RTE (8f)	GG_19-09-29_08	Md Sp Wt	B+	84	1	WIDE NO_COVER MOVE	1[NT]
8	FULL FLAT J. TAKE Y T. MORI HIDEYUKI	30	20	T	SPR (7f) T SPR (6f) T SPR (7f)	KYO_19-10-12_09 KOK_19-08-11_02 CYO_19-07-20_06	Momiji S 280k MdSpWt MdSpWt	.	5 1 8	.		1[2LO.]
9	MAXFIELD J. ORTIZ JOSE L T. WALSH BRENDAN P	3	27	D	RTE (8.5f) D RTE (8f)	KEE_19-10-05_09 CD_19-09-14_11	BrdrsFut-G1 Md Sp Wt	B+ B	95 84	1 1	SLOG MOVE WIDE CLOSE SLOG_X_WIDE CLOSE	2[.TG30.NT]

Horse-by-Horse Analysis Using OptixPLOT2020

Note: for more detailed trip-note information where applicable, you can go to [OptixGRID](#) and click on the Extended Comments.

#1 DENNIS' MOMENT (8/5) has no negatives at all in terms of the information here in [OptixPLOT2020](#). He has the most favorable Plot position as a big square in Q1. He can either make the lead from the rail or—more likely—just suck back a little bit to track #6 Eight Rings and the stretch-out sprinter #2 Wrecking Crew. He had **TROUBLE+** in his debut when he clipped heels and lost his rider, yet still earned a “**B**” [OptixNOTES](#) letter-grade because of how he ran the rest of the race without his jock. His next two starts were both powerful performances, earning “**B+**” letter-grades with [OptixFIGS](#) in today's winning range. His works since that smashing victory in the Iroquois (G3), where he was geared down for the final sixteenth (**NO_PUSH**), have been lights-out, and he just recorded a bullet over the deep Santa Anita track. He is a legitimate favorite. The only concerns are that he doesn't have a race over the track and that the rail—which has been good most of the meeting—was uncharacteristically bad last week.

#2 WRECKING CREW (20/1) doesn't Plot well as a big circle in Q1, and that doesn't bode well for a stretch-out sprinter who has yet to go two turns. He also hasn't run an [OptixFIG](#) fast enough to make him a contender against the best in this group. He does have two second-place finishes in graded-stakes races, so it's not like he's completely outclassed, and there is a world in which the connections have been pointing to this spot all along (since he did cost \$875K earlier in the year)—but my biggest concern is that “**OTHER**” note from the debut, which said “not the most efficient mover” in the Extended Notes section of [OptixGRID](#). Granted, he did grind away for two placings against good horses since that debut, but he has to answer many questions today.

#3 SHOPLIFTED (20/1) also hasn't run an [OptixFIG](#) fast enough to win this—and his position on the [OptixPLOT](#) and his red marking on [OptixRPM](#) are big negatives—but he does look a little sneaky in here because you have to do some reading between the lines. He won his debut with ease, earning a “**B**” letter-grade, and then he ran a solid second in the Hopeful (G1) despite a **TROUBLE_S** while having to break from the bad rail at Saratoga. His fifth-place finish in the American Pharoah (G1) doesn't seem exciting, but he did have **TROUBLE** and he made a really nice middle **MOVE** before flattening out and tiring over a deep Santa Anita track. I really like that he got a prep race over the track because it has been playing slow and deep, so I think he'll have gained much fitness from that race. He's been steady in the mornings, and he looks like he's sitting on a peak effort and could possibly spring the upset.

#4 STORM THE COURT (20/1) looks a little similar to #3 Shoplifted in that he doesn't fit well on the Plot or RPM but does look to be sitting on a career-best after prepping in the American Pharoah (G1), where he ran a game third with a strange trip. He was tracking the pace and then seemed a little disinterested around the turn, ceding several lengths before re-rallying late to outgame a few rivals for show. I'm guessing that laziness during a crucial point in the race is the reason why Eurton adds blinkers today on a horse who does have good enough early speed to be in the vanguard if he wants. It will take a big effort to get the win, but he seems like a decent underneath horse at big odds.

#5 SCABBARD (8/1) will probably be a little shorter than 8/1, since he ran a very good second to Dennis' Moment in the Iroquois (G3), despite having a rough **TROUBLE+** trip. He was making a very nice move to get into contention when he had to put on the brakes hard, losing all momentum. He then

kept to task and re-rallied nicely to cut into the winner's margin of victory, but the race was already decided by that point. It's an effort he can certainly build upon, but I do have to say: Dennis' Moment was geared down for the final sixteenth and this guy, who had all the momentum, still didn't pass him on the gallop out. I also don't like that he doesn't have a work over the track—but it is nice to see “Money” Mike Smith hop on board. Plus, he looks terrific on the Plot—as a big square in a tracking position—making him a must-use on your tickets.

#6 EIGHT RINGS (2/1) is the key to the race, since he should be the solid second-choice, and you know he will be a fan favorite because he's trained by Baffert, who has won this race many times. We all know that Baffert has been very high on this runner, but there is some reason to give pause here. First off, he doesn't look that great on the Plot as a circle in Q1, as compared to the big square that is #1 Dennis' Moment; secondly, he made a **LONE** lead last time in the American Pharoah (G1), and even though he won easily, he was a **NO_LEAD** when he flipped leads late. Before that, he ducked in and lost his rider, so he's either still green and figuring things out, or maybe he has some quirks that will be an issue in such a high-pressure race. I know it seems crazy to try and take on a Baffert (especially one who has run two **B+** races), but if you're going to take some money out of this race, I think you have to try and beat him.

#7 ANNEAU D'OR (15/1) was very impressive in his debut, getting hammered to 6/5 in a 10-horse field while going two turns on the turf up at Golden Gate. He raced **WIDE** the whole way around the course and then spurted away with a nice **MOVE** to win easily, earning a **B+** letter-grade in the process. I remember watching that race live from the Eddie Logan Suite at Santa Anita, and saying, “Wow, that's pretty impressive for a 2-year-old.” That said, I didn't expect this guy to show up in a Breeders' Cup race in his next start! Two horses from that race came back to win, but they were in maiden-claimers, so who knows what this guy beat—but it was still visually impressive nonetheless. He doesn't look that great on the “Standard” Plot, but that's off one turf race, so you can't be too harsh about that. I do think there is a world of upside here; I just don't think this is the right spot, especially since the Juvenile Turf (G1) was his first choice.

#8 FULL FLAT (30/1) is an X-factor, since he's coming all the way from Japan to run in this race. That alone makes for a good story, but a win seems a bit beyond the imagination, since he's been double-digit odds in all three of his races in Japan while exclusively sprinting on turf. As a son of Speightstown, he's certainly eligible to move up on dirt, but he's hard to support with any confidence, racing on unfamiliar shores without Lasix—and it should be noted that the Juvenile Turf Sprint (G2) was his first choice.

#9 MAXFIELD (3/1) has done nothing wrong in two starts, winning both races and earning good grades and solid keywords in each of those starts. He earned a **CLOSE** in his debut and another one in his first stakes try after making a really nice **MOVE** around the turn when destroying nine other rivals in the Breeders' Futurity (G1) at Keeneland. That last **OptixFIG** is right there with the top two, and his big square in Q4 means he will be the number-one beneficiary if a speed duel develops. All meet long, it was tough to close from far back over this track (hence the negative **QuadPct** for this guy), but last week played a lot more kindly to rally-wide runners, so if that's the case again today, this guy could easily get the job done, since there is plenty of ability and upside here. That said, only one runner came back to win his next start out of that debut, and zero out of four came back to win next-out coming out of the Breeders' Futurity (G1)—so who has he beaten? Also, he hasn't worked over the track, and that's worrisome to me, since I've seen a lot of shippers struggle lately over these deep California surfaces, making him a little bit of an underlay at 3/1.

CONCLUSION

We have a legit favorite (**#1 DENNIS' MOMENT**) and what I think is a vulnerable second-choice (**#6 EIGHT RINGS**) and a slightly underlaid third-choice (**#9 MAXFIELD**). We also have a potential upsetter in **#3 SHOPLIFTED**, along with good exotics horses in **#4 STORM THE COURT** and **#5 SCABBARD**. To me, the value in the race is trying to beat **#6 EIGHT RINGS**, and I'll play it that way accordingly, looking to get him out of the exacta.