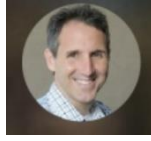


OptixEQ Looks at the 2020 Breeders' Cup Sprint (G1)

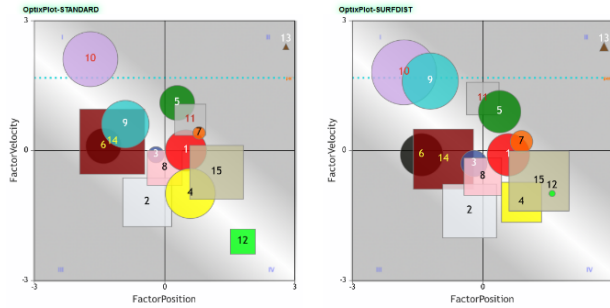
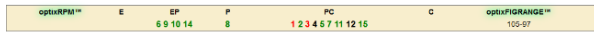
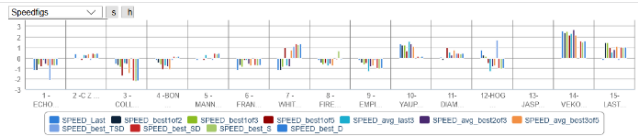
By Frank R. Scatoni



INTRO

While this year's renewal of the \$2 million Breeders' Cup Sprint (G1) lacks the marquee showdown that we saw last year between two very fast racehorses in Mitole and Shancelot, it does provide an interesting handicapping puzzle since it drew an oversubscribed field of 15 horses with no real standout on paper. It also drew an interesting assortment of runners, including a fast 3-year-old filly and an even faster 3-year-old colt, along with the Met Mile (G1) winner (*who is unfortunately going to scratch due to a fever*) and an old warrior who is making his fourth start in this prestigious race. In other words, it's a fascinating and exciting race—and one of these runners will get to step up and claim division honors with a victory today.

During this analysis, I will be using specific features from **OptixPLOT2020**, but just so you know what the entire platform looks like, here is the **OptixPLOT2020** page for the \$2 million Breeders' Cup Sprint (G1) contested at 6-furlongs on the main track:

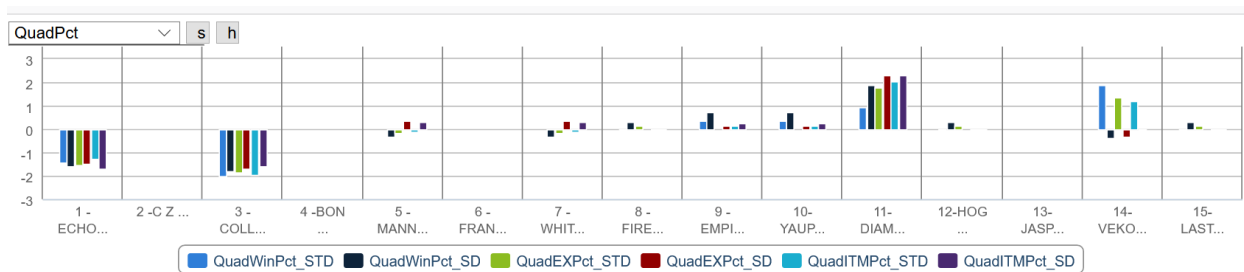


PN	Horse	ML	DISE	Start	Unit	Prior Race/age	Prior Race/Class	offG	offC	offB	offT	optixNOTES	OptixLEAKS	BS
1	ECHO TOWN J. SANTANA RICARDO JR T. ASMUSSEN STEVEN M	20	D	SPR (6) D D	SPR (6) SPR (6) SPR (7)	KEE_2020-10-02_08 CU_2020-09-09_09 RAR_2020-08-01_10	Phoenix-G2 HAlkins-G2 HAlkins-G1	B_54 C4 B+	54 33 97	1 5 1		POCKET	1.1(45)	PC
2	C Z ROCKET J. SAGE LUIS T. MILLER PETER	33	41	D D D	SPR (8) SPR (7) SPR (8)	SA_2020-09-07_08 DWR_2020-08-26_10 KEE_2020-07-12_08	SubSprG-G2 POBee-G2 OCm 150000b	B_99 B B+	99 99 94	1 1 1		HANG_3 HANG_3 SLOG	2.2(113.3(0))	PC
3	COLLUSION ILLUSION J. PRAT FLAVEN T. GLATT MARK	20	41	D D D	SPR (6) SPR (8) SPR (8)	SA_2020-09-07_08 DWR_2020-08-26_10 KEE_2020-07-12_08	SubSprG-G2 BOVee-G1 OCm 150000b	B_96 B B+	96 96 94	1 1 1		SAVED BLUNCHED TACTIC+SAVED CLOSE OTHER	4.4(112.4(112.0))	PC
4	BON RAISON J. DESCHAMPE ADAM T. SUTTERSON ANDY	30	22	D D D	SPR (6) SPR (8) SPR (8)	KEE_2020-10-16_08 CU_2020-09-02_10 RAR_2020-07-23_09	OCm 150000+4 FBIerG-G2 OCm 800000+3	B_97 C+ C+	97 92 91	1 1 1		CLOSE X_FLOW	2.1(110.3(0))	PC
5	MANNY WAH J. GATAPURON TYLER T. CATALANO WAYNE M	30	22	D D D	SPR (8) SPR (8) SPR (8)	KEE_2020-10-16_08 RAR_2020-09-05_10 CU_2020-08-06_09	OCm 150000+4 Geol_wdE05b AndevA100b	B_97 B B	97 96 95	1 1 1		COVER STRONG X_FLOW	1.2(0)	PC
6	FRANK'S ROCKETTE J. ALVARADO JUNIOR T. METTIN WAMM	10	36	D D D	SPR (8) SPR (8) SPR (8)	BEL_2020-10-02_08 RAR_2020-09-05_10 BEL_2020-07-24_10	EmBeeH-G2 Phoenix-G2 VayRde-G3	B+ B B	94 96 96	1 1 1		TACTIC+ DUEL	2.2(112.3(0))	EP
7	WHITMORE J. ORTZ JOE JR T. MOQUETT RON	15	36	D D D	SPR (6) SPR (7) SPR (8)	KEE_2020-10-02_08 RAR_2020-09-05_10 RAR_2020-07-24_10	Phoenix-G2 Fonay-G1 ADVeeM-G1	B_94 C B	94 96 96	4 7 4		SHUFFLE WIDE WEATHER SLOG MOVE WIDE NO KEEP GATE POCKET SAVED	1.1(46)	PC
8	FIRENZE FIRE J. LEZCANO JOSE T. BREEN KELLY J	8	42	D D D	SPR (6) SPR (7) SPR (9)	BEL_2020-09-26_09 SAR_2020-09-05_10 RAR_2020-07-24_10	VayRde-G2 Fonay-G1 ADVeeM-G1	B_97 C B	97 98 96	1 13 4		WEATHER WIDE X_FLOW MOVE	1.1(46)	P
9	EMPIRE OF GOLD J. CARROLL DECLAN T. EOFF TERRY	30	36	D D D	SPR (8) SPR (8) SPR(9)	KEE_2020-10-02_08 SP_2020-08-13_07 RP_2020-08-28_09	Phoenix-G2 Ala 30550b Ala 34000c	B_97 B B	97 91 92	1 1 3			1.0(3)	EP
10	YAUPON J. ROSARIO JOEL T. ASMUSSEN STEVEN M	33	37	D D D	SPR (6) SPR (8) SPR (9)	PMA 2020-10-31_09 SAR_2020-09-05_10 RAR_2020-07-24_10	ClacLag-G3 AndevM-G2 Ala 76000+4	B+ B+ B	102 98 98	1 1 1		DUEL OTHER BOG GRT		EP
11	DIAMOND OOPS J. BERGLIN FLORENTE T. SANCHEZ PATRICK L	8	36	D D D	SPR (6) SPR (8) RTE (8)	KEE_2020-10-02_08 CU_2020-08-06_09 GP_2020-06-11_11	Phoenix-G2 FBIerG-G2 HepS600	B+ B+ B	98 99 99	1 1 1		SHUFFLE SAVED CLOSE HOT DUEL	2.1(146.3(0))	PC
12	HOG CREEK HUSTLE J. LAMIRE C J T. FOLEY VICKI L	30	29	D D D	SPR (7) SPR (8) RTE (9)	KEE_2020-10-02_08 CU_2020-08-06_09 GP_2020-06-02_07	OCm 800000+3 ADVeeM-G2 ADVeeM-G2	B_100 B C	100 92 92	2 1 1		FIRE OTHER	2.0(111)	PC
13	JASPER PRINCE J. ORTZ JOSE L T. MISH HENRY W	30	27	D D D	SPR (7) SPR (8) SPR (7)	OK_20-10-11_19 CVO_2020-08-12_11 TOK_20-02-19_10	Gm OvrnH18k EarS413k ValeRde318k	B_16 B B	16 16 16			1.3(0)		
14	VEKOMA J. CASTELLANO J J T. WEAVER GEORGE	3	128	D D D	RTE (6) SPR (7) SPR (8)	BEL_2020-07-24_09 BEL_2020-06-08_09 GP_2020-05-26_09	MuyHrt-G1 CalaH-G1 ScheMeeG15k	B+ B+ B	106 103 101	1 1 1		REFLECTED TACTIC+ STRONG PERFECT BURST	2.2(111.4(12))	EP
15	LASTING LEGACY J. HERRANDEZ B J JR T. HESS R B	30	29	D D D	SPR (7) SPR (8) SPR (9)	KEE_2020-10-02_08 CO_2020-09-04_09 LS_2020-06-19_07	OCm 800000+3 OCm 800000+3 ALW3900	B_97 D B	97 105 92	4 2 2		SLOW WIDE NO LEAD	1.3(0)	PC

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 2020 Breeders' Cup Sprint (G1):



Two things really stand out: both #1 ECHO TOWN and #3 COLLUSION ILLUSION seem up against it using this metric, while #11 DIAMOND OOPS plots very well in all of the categories. The other runners, while not nearly as strong as #11 DIAMOND OOPS seem perfectly fine and merit further consideration, especially #14 VEKOMA, who is strong on the Standard Plot (*though he is likely to scratch due to a fever*).

OptixPLOT2020

Here is the **OptixPLOT2020** for this race shown below. We've got a **yellow PlotFit**, which means there is a fair amount of consistency between the "Standard" and the "Surface/Distance Plots" with only one runner, Japanese invader #13 JASPER PRINCE, not plotting due to a lack of information. The most interesting data point here, however, in a race called the Breeders' Cup *Sprint*, is a significant lack of contention and early pace. You'll see a cold "snowflake" for the **Contention** rating and a pokey "007" for the **SpeedRate**. That seems unfathomable for a race like this, but there you have it: the 2020 Breeders' Cup Sprint (G1) doesn't look like it will have a blistering pace at all, so I have to think long and hard about playing the few true speed horses in here, even if they might be circles on the Plot.

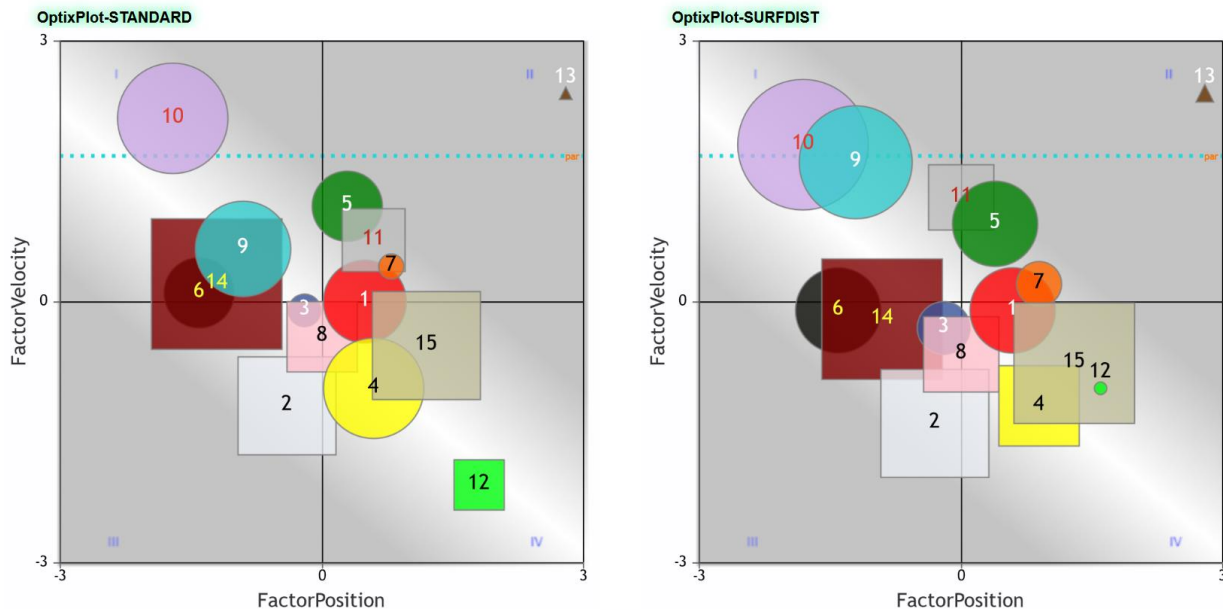
OptixPLOT2020™
 KEE 2020-11-07 Race 8 \$2,000,000 6f Sprint Dirt
 Grade I stakes/handicap(BCSprint-G1) 3 year olds and Up -
 PlotFit ● Contention ❄️ SpeedRate 007
 OptixGRID 2017

optixRPM™	E	EP	P	PC	C	optixFIGRANGE™
		6 9 10 14	8	1 2 3 4 5 7 11 12 15		105-97

Here is the **OptixRPM** above, which measures run styles. The **OptixRPM** categorizes each horse's run style and gives a **positive**, **negative**, or **neutral** designation based on the horse's Plot position. As you can see, there are only a handful of Early/Presser types, so I'll be looking at the "speed of the speed" from that group, since the rest of the field consists mostly of Pressers/Closers. Note both #1 ECHO TOWN and #3 COLLUSION ILLUSION have **red** RPMs, which is another negative along with their unfavorable **QuadPet** data.

Here you'll also see an **OptixFIGRANGE**, which projects the winning figure for the race as being **105-97**, 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. There really isn't much difference between the two Plots with minimal positional change and only two runners (#4 BON RAISON and #12 HOG CREEK HUSTLE) changing from squares to circles, so I'd say the info in each Plot is pretty reliable. One really interesting thing here is just how many horses aren't fast enough early to be over that "Par Line," meaning #10 YAUPON will have a real chance to create separation around the turn as he either gets an early lead or sits right off the filly #6 FRANK'S ROCKETTE and/or #9 EMPIRE OF GOLD. I can see #10 YAUPON in control at the eighth pole while four horses who can track and finish as big squares in a good Plot position—#2 C Z ROCKET, #8 FIRENZE FIRE, and #11 DIAMOND OOPS—bear down on him late. That big #14 square is VEKOMA, but he is due to scratch because of a fever.

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 additional trip-note information and key "alert" data available by hovering your cursor over the "**OptixNOTES**" and "**OptixALERTS**" fields while using the **OptixPLOT2020** interface.

Past 3 Runlines													
PN	Horse	ML	DSL	Surf	Dist	Prior RaceKeys	Prior RaceClass	oNG	oFIG	Fin	OptixNOTES	OptixALERTS	RS
1	ECHO TOWN J. SANTANA RICARDO JR T. ASMUSSEN STEVEN M	20	36	D	SPR (6f) RTE (8f) D	KEE_2020-10-02_08 CD_2020-09-05_09 SAR_2020-08-01_10	Phoenix-G2 PDayMile-G2 HAlertns-G1	B- C+ B+	94 93 97	3 5 1	: POCKET	1[TG45]	PC
2	C Z ROCKET J. SAEZ LUIS T. MILLER PETER	3.5	41	D	SPR (6f) SPR (7f) SPR (6.5f)	SA_2020-09-27_08 DMR_2020-08-29_10 KEE_2020-07-12_08	SaSprtCh-G2 PDBien-G2 OCIm 150000b	B B B+	99 99 94	1 1 1	: NASAL_S PERFECT : NASAL_S : SLOG	2[RW1.3LO]	PC
3	COLLUSION ILLUSION J. PRAT FLAVIEN T. GLATT MARK	20	41	D	SPR (6f) SPR (6f) SPR (6.5f)	SA_2020-08-27_08 DMR_2020-08-01_10 SA_2020-06-20_09	SaSprtCh-G2 BCrosby-G1 LBrrea-G3	B- B B	96 96 90	3 1 1	: SAVED : BUNCHED PERFECT FREE : TACTIC+ SAVED CLOSE OTHER	4[RW2.RW3.NT.2LO]	PC
4	BON RAISON J. BESCHIZZA ADAM T. SISTERSON JACK	30	22	D	SPR (6f) SPR (6f) SPR (6.5f)	KEE_2020-10-16_08 KD_2020-09-12_11 SAR_2020-07-23_09	OCIm 15000n4x TrfSprnt-G3 OCIm 80000n3x	B C+ C+	97 92 91	1 10 3	: CLOSE : X_FLOW	2[TG30.3LO]	PC
5	MANNY WAH J. GAFFALIONIE TYLER T. CATALANO WAYNE M	30	22	D	SPR (6f) SPR (6.5f) SPR (6f)	KEE_2020-10-16_08 ELP_2020-07-26_08 CD_2020-06-06_08	OCIm 15000n4x GoodLrdB50k AristidesL100k	B B B-	97 99 95	2 3 3	: COVER STRONG : X_FLOW	1[2LO]	PC
6	FRANK'S ROCKETTE J. ALVARADO JUNIOR T. MOTT WILLIAM I	10	35	D	SPR (6.5f) SPR (6f) SPR (6.5f)	BEL_2020-10-03_05 SAR_2020-09-05_10 BEL_2020-07-04_03	GlntBlmH-G2 Pnoress-G2 VctryRde-G3	B+ B+ B	94 96 95	1 1 1	: TACTIC+ : DUEL	2[RW2.3LO]	EP
7	WHITMORE J. ORTIZ IRAD JR T. MOQUETT RON	15	36	D	SPR (6f) SPR (7f) D	KEE_2020-10-02_08 SAR_2020-08-29_08 SAR_2020-07-25_10	Phoenix-G2 Forego-G1 AGVndthH-G1	B- C+ B	94 90 96	4 7 2	: SHUFFLE WIDE : WEATHER SLOG MOVE WIDE NO_KEEP : GATE POCKET SAVED	1[TG45]	PC
8	FIRENZE FIRE J. LEZCANO JOSE T. GREEN KELLY J	8	42	D	SPR (6f) SPR (7f) D	BEL_2020-09-26_09 SAR_2020-08-29_08 SAR_2020-07-25_10	Vsbrghh-G2 Forego-G1 AGVndthH-G1	B C B	97 86 95	1 11 4	: WEATHER WIDE : X_FLOW MOVE	1[TG45]	P
9	EMPIRE OF GOLD J. CARROLL DECLAN T. EOFF TERRY	30	36	D	SPR (6f) SPR (6.5f) SSPR(5f)	KEE_2020-10-02_08 RP_2020-09-18_07 RP_2020-08-26_08	Phoenix-G2 Alw 30500b Alw 34000nc	B - -	97 93 82	2 1 1		1[OF3]	EP
10	YALUPON J. ROSARIO JOEL T. ASMUSSEN STEVEN M	3.5	37	D	SPR (6f) SPR (6f) SPR (6f)	PIM_2020-10-01_09 SAR_2020-08-29_07 SAR_2020-07-18_07	ChickLng-G3 Amstsdam-G2 Alw 74000n1x	B+ B+ B+	102 104 99	1 1 1	: DUEL OTHER : BOS GRIT		EP
11	DIAMOND OOPS J. GEROUX FLORENT T. BIANCONI PATRICK L	8	36	D	SPR (6f) SPR (6.5f) RTE (8f)	KEE_2020-10-02_08 CD_2020-09-04_13 GP_2020-06-13_11	Phoenix-G2 TurfSprt-C2 Hcp55000	B+ B B	98 98 99	1 1 2	: SHUFFLE SAVED CLOSE HOT : DUEL	2[TG45.3LO]	PC
12	HOG CREEK HUSTLE J. LANERIE C J T. FOLEY VICKIE L	30	29	D	SPR (7f) SPR (7f) RTE (8f)	KEE_2020-10-09_08 CD_2020-09-05_01 ELP_2020-08-02_07	OCIm 80000n3x OCIm 150000b KDPVTrs1MB100k	B B C	100 90 82	2 2 11	: FREE : OTHER	2[OF3.NT]	PC
13	JASPER PRINCE J. ORTIZ JOSE L T. MORI HIDEYUKI	30	27	D	SPR (7f) SPR (7f) SPR (7f)	TOK_20-10-11_10 CYO_20-09-12_11 TOK_20-02-16_10	Gm Chnl415k Enif S 413k Valentine381k	- - -	- 1 16	- 1 16		1[3LO]	
14	VEKOMA J. CASTELLANO J J T. WEAVER GEORGE	3	126	D	RTE (8f) SPR (7f) SPR (7f)	BEL_2020-07-04_09 BEL_2020-06-06_09 GP_2020-03-28_08	MtrophH-G1 CarterH-G1 SirShktrnB75k	B+ B+ B+	106 109 101	1 1 1	: PRESSED TACTIC+ STRONG : PERFECT BURST	2[RW1.RW2]	EP
15	LASTING LEGACY J. HERNANDEZ B J JR T. HESS R B	30	29	D	SPR (7f) SPR (6.5f) SPR (6f)	KEE_2020-10-09_08 CD_2020-09-04_06 LS_2020-06-10_07	OCIm 80000n3x OCIm 80000n3x ALW39000	B- B -	97 105 92	4 2 2	: SLOG WIDE : NO_LEAD	1[3LO]	PC

Horse-by-Horse Analysis Using OptixPLOT2020

Note: for more detailed trip-note information where applicable, you can go to [OptixGRID](#)—which provides lifetime past-performance data for each horse in the race—and click on the Extended Comments.

#1 ECHO TOWN (20/1), the first Asmussen entrant, doesn't plot well, and that's a big negative to me in a race that has plenty of data. His fastest race out of his last three was a **97 OptixFIG**, which is fine, but it came going 7-furlongs in the Jerkens (G1), which he won against fellow 3-year-olds. He earned a **B+** in that elongated sprint, but just two races later, he earned a **B-** and a sub-par **94 OptixFIG** in the Phoenix (G2), a traditional 6-furlong prep for this race. He's going to need to do much better today, which is probably why Asmussen is adding blinkers to see if he can get this one to run the race of his life on the world's biggest stage.

#2 C Z ROCKET (7/2) has run fast enough and has been in terrific form ever since Peter Miller claimed him for \$40K back in April. He's reeled off five wins in a row, including a game victory in the Santa Anita Sprint Championship (G2), the SoCal prep for this race, where he earned a **B** and paired up a **99 OptixFIG** number. It wasn't flashy, but he did what he had to do to get the victory. He plots as a big square down in Quadrant 3, which isn't the greatest place to be, but that could be a function of the

incredibly slow early splits he's encountered in his last few races. The pace will be faster today, which will help his cause, and he's shown he can level off in the lane and run down horses (hence his big square). He's an obvious contender from a trainer who has won this race before, but there is also a world in which he gets buried down inside in a big, full field, so 7/2 doesn't seem like much value to me.

#3 COLLUSION ILLUSION (20/1) is a very nice 3-year-old who just ran third to C Z ROCKET in the Santa Anita Sprint Championship (G2), earning a **B-** and posting a **96 OptixFIG**. Before that, he was undefeated around one turn, so it all depends on whether you can forgive that last race, since he had to break from the rail, and this grinder really had zero pace to close into that day. You can certainly make the case that he's eligible to improve as a lightly raced 3-year-old who should at least get a quicker pace than last time to close into—but his Plot position isn't that great and he will need to step things up in the **OptixFIG** department.

#4 BON RAISON (30/1) is a big circle on Standard Plot and a decent square on Surface/Distance Plot, but his position remains the same, and that is pretty far off what's looking to be a tepid pace—and that's going to be an issue for a horse who has been pretty exposed at the graded-stakes level. If you are an optimist, you can point out that he just ran a **B** over this track and at this distance, posting a solid **97 OptixFIG** in just his second start for this trainer (who claimed him for \$80K three back). He came on with a strong **CLOSE** in that classified-allowance, so you can expect him to be running on through the lane again today, but I suspect he's going to have too much to do—and can he build off that big race and somehow crack the “100” **OptixFIG** mark that he hit a few times many moons ago when he was racing at the Big A? You could slot him underneath, but he'll really need to earn the win today.

#5 MANNY WAH (30/1) just ran second to BON RAISON in that classified-allowance here at Keeneland, getting run down right on the line. That was his first start since the summer, so he can take a step forward, but he's another whose graded-stakes form is just mediocre, and his Plot position doesn't excite as a circle in Quadrant 2. That said, being in Quadrant 2, he should get a good tracking trip, so he projects a good journey—the question is: is he good enough? He has cracked the “100” **OptixFIG** barrier a few times in the past, but even when he did, someone else always proved faster.

#6 FRANK'S ROCKETTE (10/1) is an interesting entrant: a 3-year-old filly who has sharp early speed and who will get in with a 3-pound weight-allowance, so you know she'll be in contention turning for home—but will she be good enough to win? Drawing inside #10 YAUPON doesn't do her any favors since that foe will be at her throatlatch every step of the way, and he shows better velocity on **OptixPLOT**, sitting above the “Par Line.” It's on record that Mott chose this spot instead of the 7-furlong Filly & Mare Sprint (G1) because he thinks this gal is just sharper going shorter, and he's right. Her best **OptixFIG** of **101** came earlier in the year going 6-panels, so she's certainly fast enough to be competitive here if she can run back to that number. She also enters this in good form with two **B+** races in tow. She'll have to run her guts out to beat the boys, but she is definitely usable in your exotics, especially if she catches a speed-favoring track.

#7 WHITMORE (15/1), win or lose, deserves our respect. This old warrior will make his fourth start in this race. He's never won, but he has finished second and third, so he's never without a shot. That said, this old boy seems a bit up against it this year, entering this race in mediocre form and with a recent defeat in the Phoenix (G2) to several of today's foes earning a **B-** and a **94 OptixFIG** in the process. He did have a little trouble that day (**SHUFFLE**), and he did have to make his typical swing **WIDE** move, but that's likely to happen again here in such a big full field. You know he'll be out there trying all the

way to the wire, like he always does—and he has races from back in the day that are certainly fast enough—but he will need to turn back the clock to get the win. Still, you could use him in your exotics.

#8 FIRENZE FIRE (8/1) plots well as a square near the middle of both Plots. That means he's going to get a good tracking trip while having strong enough finishing ability to be a major threat in the lane. He's coming off a solid **B** performance in the Vosburgh (G2), where he earned a **97 OptixFIG**. Toss his two races before the Vosburgh (G2), where he caught a sloppy/sealed track in the Forego (G1) and then had to race **X_FLOW** in a paceless running of the Vanderbilt (G1), where he finished last behind Whitmore in a four-horse field. I think the Vosburgh (G2) is a better indicator of his overall ability, but it should be noted that he ran fifth in this race last year when trained by John Servis, so how much upside is there here? Also, Whitmore beat him that day as well. Still, I think this 5-year-old is capable of showing up with a solid effort today, and he should be considered based on his Plot position alone and that sharp last race.

#9 EMPIRE OF GOLD (30/1) was 51/1 in the Phoenix (G2) last time, and he nearly shocked the world only to get run down late by DIAMOND OOPS, whom he will have to face again today. He earned a **B** in defeat, posting a solid **97 OptixFIG**. This 3-year-old has early zip, and he should be right up there with FRANK'S ROCKETTE early—but he'll also have to deal with the talented YAUPON, who will be right there as well while drawn to his outside, making things a little tricky for this guy. You can never discount a sharp sophomore, but he had every chance to win last time and still got nailed. He'll need to do better today, but he is right up there near the "Par Line" with YAUPON on the Surface/Distance Plot, and he's going to be ten times the price, so he's not without a shot and can be used in your exotics. I just think YAUPON is a better animal.

#10 YAUPON (7/2) is a very fast 3-year-old and the "speed of the speed" who will also have options while breaking from this outside post. He's earned **B+** grades in every one of his starts, and he's cracked the **100 OptixFIG** barrier twice. It should be noted that Asmussen could have entered his other fast 3-year-old Nashville in this race, but he opted for an easier spot for that runner instead, probably thinking that he held the nuts in this race with YAUPON. We'll see how this 3-year-old acts against quality older competition today, but he's lightly raced and has done nothing wrong in his four starts. He's also the only horse who is up on the "Par Line" on both Plots, so even though he's a big circle relative to the rest of the field, he might have enough separation turning for home that it won't matter. I can see him putting away the filly FRANK'S ROCKETTE and also EMPIRE OF GOLD while looking to hold sway late as a few others try to run him down. I also really love the **GRIT** comment he earned three back, where the **Optix** expert said, "This guy appears to like a fight." Bring it on!

#11 DIAMOND OOPS (8/1) will be one of those horses trying to run down YAUPON, and based on his favorable Plot position as a big square in Quadrant 2, he'll have every chance to do that. Last time, he tracked from off the pace in the Phoenix (G2), leveled out nicely, and ran down EMPIRE OF GOLD a few jumps from the wire. That's the kind of run you can expect again today for a horse who has been very consistent around one turn. He makes the third start of his form cycle, has run two solid **98 OptixFIGS** in a row, and has a prep race over the track. He also showed versatility and the ability to overcome trouble when he closed from the clouds in a 5.5-furlong turf sprint two back. That's the kind of tenacity you like to see in a big, full field. He's an obvious contender, and I expect he'll be closer to 5/1 than 8/1.

#12 HOG CREEK HUSTLE (30/1) is a deep closer who will need a lot of help up front, and given the tepid **Contention** rating and slow **SpeedRate**, I'm not sure he's going to get the help he needs. Plus, his

best races have come going 7-furlongs, which would explain why he's a small circle and not a big square on the Surface/Distance Plot. While I don't think the distance or race shape is beneficial to him, he did just run a **100 OptixFIG**, so he at least fits with these on that metric, if you think he can run them all down late. I'm skeptical.

#13 JASPER PRINCE (30/1) is a Japanese invader who has won more than \$680K the hard way, running in listed stakes in Japan. He hated a muddy track last time, while before that, he held sway on a "good" track going 7-furlongs as a 10/1 shot. He does have 6-furlong wins on fast dirt, but I can just see him chasing the pace and weakening while facing U.S. sprinters for the first time. He did work October 31 at Keeneland, going 3-furlongs in 37-flat. I watched it on XBTV and wasn't overly impressed, but it's hard to know off that short spin. He's an X-factor, but it's not like his Japanese form is all that great.

#14 VEKOMA (3/1) is definitely the fastest and most accomplished horse in the field, having won two Grade 1 races with **B+** letter-grades and some monster **OptixFIGS**. That said, he hasn't been seen since July 4, and he's excelled at 7- and 8-furlongs, so one could argue that he won't be at his best today going 6-panels (though he did win at first asking going this short). He's coming off a minor injury and has been training up to the race, so it's always a question as to whether he'll be the same horse he was before he took a break. He's a giant square straddling Quadrant 1 and 3, which means he'll be in striking range with his tactical route speed cutting back—and if he levels out for his run, he's the strongest finisher in the field. If he runs his best race, everyone else is running for second, but there are enough questions here to take him on as the morning-line favorite, especially if the outside lanes aren't so great this day (something to pay attention to earlier in the card). *NOTE: He is likely to scratch due to a fever.*

#15 LASTING LEGACY (30/1) (AE) will need a scratch to draw in (and with VEKOMA scheduled to scratch because of a fever, he might just get lucky), but even if he does get in, can this recent \$80K claim beat the likes of these? Well, he's a big square on both Plots, so that means he has the finishing ability to be competitive in here—but he's not likely to get the pace he's going to need. His recent form isn't too bad. In fact, two back, he earned a **B** letter-grade and a really fast **105 OptixFIG** when winning an N3X, which would certainly put him in the frame here—and he does have other 100+ races from back in the day. I can't fault the connections for taking a shot, but he's going to need a lot of things to go right for him to get the "W."

CONCLUSION

I think **#10 YAUPON** is a legitimately fast racehorse who has the speed to control a sprint where there isn't much other quality speed around him. I don't like his big circle, but if he gets enough separation after putting away the two other speed horses, he should have just enough to fend off the likes of **#2 C Z ROCKET**, **#8 FIRENZE FIRE**, and **#11 DIAMOND OOPS**, who will all be taking dead aim on him. With the likely scratch of VEKOMA, I would also look to include **#7 WHITMORE**, since that old boy always tries, and he should look better on the Plot with VEKOMA declared from the race.