

VFP Skins Pointers

By: Don Higgins www.crewchiefpro.com

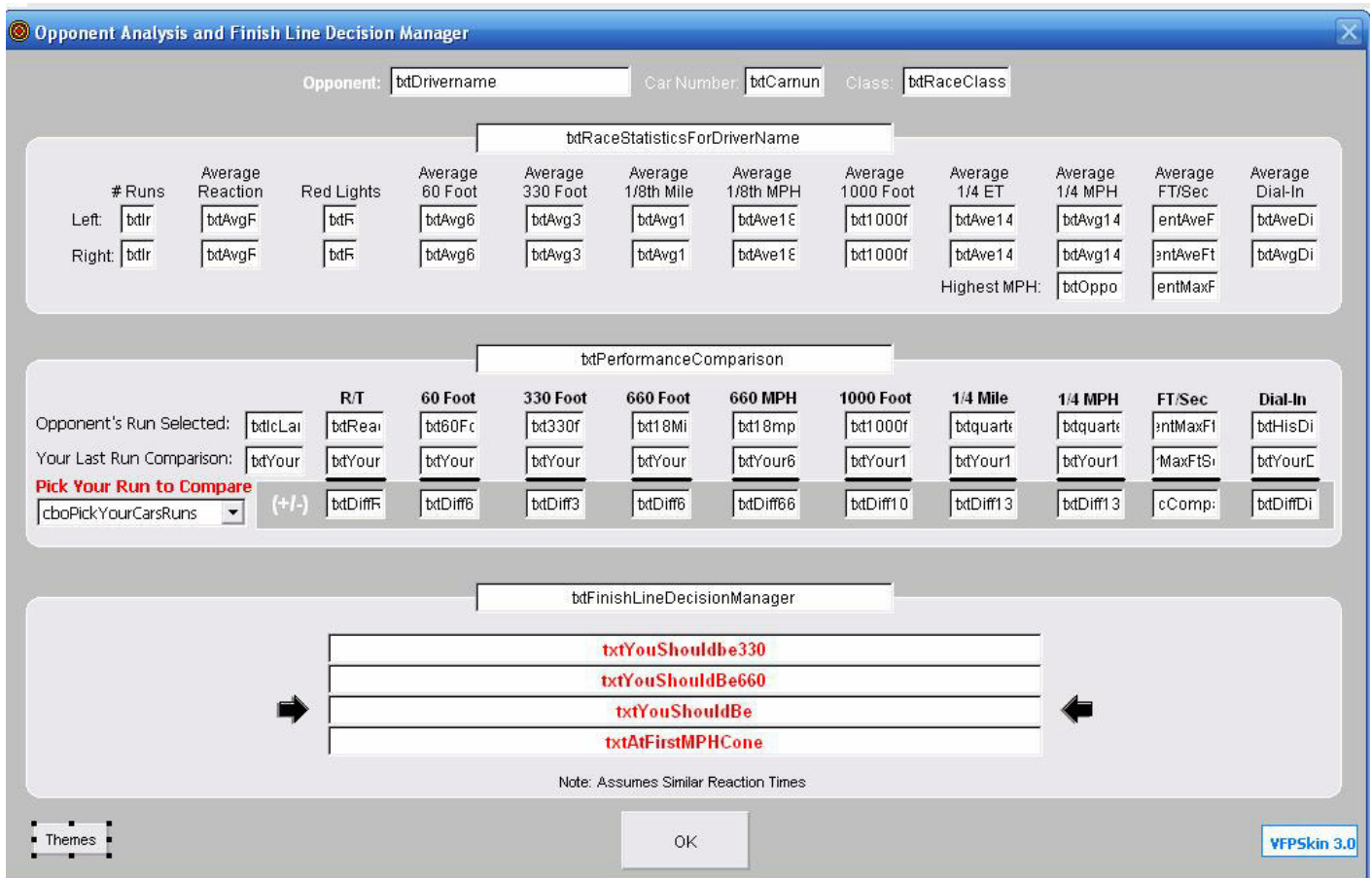
Updated: 1/22/2008

What can you as a developer do to improve the First Impression of your product to a customer? Image is everything. A picture speaks a thousand words, and all you get is a first impression.

VFP is a great tool to develop applications. It does not do a good job of impressing customers with flashy and stylish forms. The buzz around the industry is new form design, with better graphics. My aim as a developer is to impress my users, pure and simple. I do this by providing each user that logs in a Choice of how they want their computer application to look. Their choice may be different than the person next to them. This Individuality is critical to empowering your users. No two people dress exactly the same, so why should their forms be the same as their coworker?

First of all I must tell you I am not a salesperson for VFPSkins. I just like the product. I receive nothing for this paper, and I doubt the developers even know it exists.

As an example examine the following images, which one looks the best?



A) No skins on sample form. Very Boring. Native VFP Look and feel.

With the Skin class however, a click of the THEMES command button gives my forms a new look and feel, instantly! See below.

Finish Line Decision Manager and Opponent Analysis

Opponent: Car Number: Class:

Race Statistics For Kenny

	# Runs	Average Reaction	Red Lights	Average 60 Foot	Average 330 Foot	Average 1/8th Mile	Average 1/8th MPH	Average 1000 Foot	Average 1/4 ET	Average 1/4 MPH	FT/Sec	Average Dial-In
Left:	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value=".0000"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0.00"/>
Right:	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value=".0183"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="1.773"/>	<input type="text" value="4.346"/>	<input type="text" value="6.135"/>	<input type="text" value="140.28"/>	<input type="text" value="7.631"/>	<input type="text" value="5.943"/>	<input type="text" value="113.66"/>	<input type="text" value="166"/>	<input type="text" value="8.90"/>
Highest MPH:											<input type="text" value="178.24"/>	<input type="text" value="261"/>

Performance Comparison vs. Kenny

Opponent's Run Selected:	R/T	60 Foot	330 Foot	660 Foot	660 MPH	1000 Foot	1/4 Mile	1/4 MPH	Max FT/Sec	Dial-In
Right	<input type="text" value="0.015"/>	<input type="text" value="1.768"/>	<input type="text" value="4.339"/>	<input type="text" value="6.146"/>	<input type="text" value="138.77"/>	<input type="text" value="7.656"/>	<input type="text" value="8.923"/>	<input type="text" value="178.24"/>	<input type="text" value="261"/>	<input type="text" value="8.90"/>
Your Last Run Comparison: Left	<input type="text" value="0.027"/>	<input type="text" value="1.559"/>	<input type="text" value="4.352"/>	<input type="text" value="6.168"/>	<input type="text" value="139.44"/>	<input type="text" value="7.665"/>	<input type="text" value="8.919"/>	<input type="text" value="180.19"/>	<input type="text" value="268"/>	<input type="text" value="8.90"/>
Pick Your Run to Compare	<input type="text" value="(-)"/>	<input type="text" value="0.012"/>	<input type="text" value="-209"/>	<input type="text" value="0.013"/>	<input type="text" value="0.022"/>	<input type="text" value="0.009"/>	<input type="text" value="-0.004"/>	<input type="text" value="1.950"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>

Finish Line Decision Manager

At 330 ft You Should Be 3.3 Feet Behind Your Opponent

At 660 ft You Should Be 4.5 Feet Behind Your Opponent


At 1000 ft You Should Be 2.1 Feet Behind Your Opponent

At MPH Cone You Should Be 0.7 Feet Behind Your Opponent

Note: Assumes Similar Reaction Times

Users Click Here to Change their "style"

Themes:



B) VFPSkin file OFFIX. Bold Borders, nice and easy to read.

Finish Line Decision Manager and Opponent Analysis

Opponent: Car Number: Class:

Race Statistics For Kenny

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Left:	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value=".0000"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0.00"/>
Right:	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value=".0183"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="1.773"/>	<input type="text" value="4.346"/>	<input type="text" value="6.135"/>	<input type="text" value="140.28"/>	<input type="text" value="7.631"/>	<input type="text" value="5.943"/>	<input type="text" value="113.66"/>	<input type="text" value="166"/>	<input type="text" value="8.90"/>
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Opponent's Run Selected:	R/T	60 Foot	330 Foot	660 Foot	660 MPH	1000 Foot	1/4 Mile	1/4 MPH	Max FT/Sec	Dial-In
Right	<input type="text" value="0.015"/>	<input type="text" value="1.768"/>	<input type="text" value="4.339"/>	<input type="text" value="6.146"/>	<input type="text" value="138.77"/>	<input type="text" value="7.656"/>	<input type="text" value="8.923"/>	<input type="text" value="178.24"/>	<input type="text" value="261"/>	<input type="text" value="8.90"/>
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Pick Your Run to Compare	<input type="text" value="0.012"/>	<input type="text" value="-0.209"/>	<input type="text" value="0.013"/>	<input type="text" value="0.022"/>	<input type="text" value="0.670"/>	<input type="text" value="0.009"/>	<input type="text" value="-0.004"/>	<input type="text" value="1.950"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>

Finish Line Decision Manager

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At 660 ft You Should Be 4.5 Feet Behind Your Opponent

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Note: Assumes Similar Reaction Times

Themes 

C) Atlantek skin file. Flashy border, green color with silver boxes that customers seem to like. This skin almost requires silver shapes to break up the monotone color.

Finish Line Decision Manager and Opponent Analysis

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Race Statistics For Kenny

	# Runs	Average Reaction	Red Lights	Average 60 Foot	Average 330 Foot	Average 1/8th Mile	Average 1/8th MPH	Average 1000 Foot	Average 1/4 ET	Average 1/4 MPH	FT/Sec	Average Dial-In
Left:	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value=".0000"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0.00"/>
Right:	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value=".0183"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="1.773"/>	<input type="text" value="4.346"/>	<input type="text" value="6.135"/>	<input type="text" value="140.28"/>	<input type="text" value="7.631"/>	<input type="text" value="5.943"/>	<input type="text" value="113.66"/>	<input type="text" value="166"/>	<input type="text" value="8.90"/>
Highest MPH:											<input type="text" value="178.24"/>	<input type="text" value="261"/>

Performance Comparison .vs. Kenny

	R/T	60 Foot	330 Foot	660 Foot	660 MPH	1000 Foot	1/4 Mile	1/4 MPH	Max FT/Sec	Dial-In
Opponent's Run Selected: <input type="text" value="Right"/>	<input type="text" value="0.015"/>	<input type="text" value="1.768"/>	<input type="text" value="4.339"/>	<input type="text" value="6.146"/>	<input type="text" value="138.77"/>	<input type="text" value="7.656"/>	<input type="text" value="8.923"/>	<input type="text" value="178.24"/>	<input type="text" value="261"/>	<input type="text" value="8.90"/>
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Pick Your Run to Compare	<input type="text" value="(-)"/>	<input type="text" value="0.012"/>	<input type="text" value="-2.09"/>	<input type="text" value="0.013"/>	<input type="text" value="0.022"/>	<input type="text" value="0.009"/>	<input type="text" value="-0.004"/>	<input type="text" value="1.950"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>

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At MPH Cone You Should Be 0.7 Feet Behind Your Opponent

Note: Assumes Similar Reaction Times

Themes



D) Commander Skin File. Flashy border, hard to read unless you include dark shapes..

Finish Line Decision Manager and Opponent Analysis

Opponent: Car Number: Class:

Race Statistics For Kenny

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Left:	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value=".0000"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>	<input type="text" value="0.000"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0.00"/>
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Finish Line Decision Manager


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At 660 ft You Should Be 4.5 Feet Behind Your Opponent

At 1000 ft You Should Be 2.1 Feet Behind Your Opponent

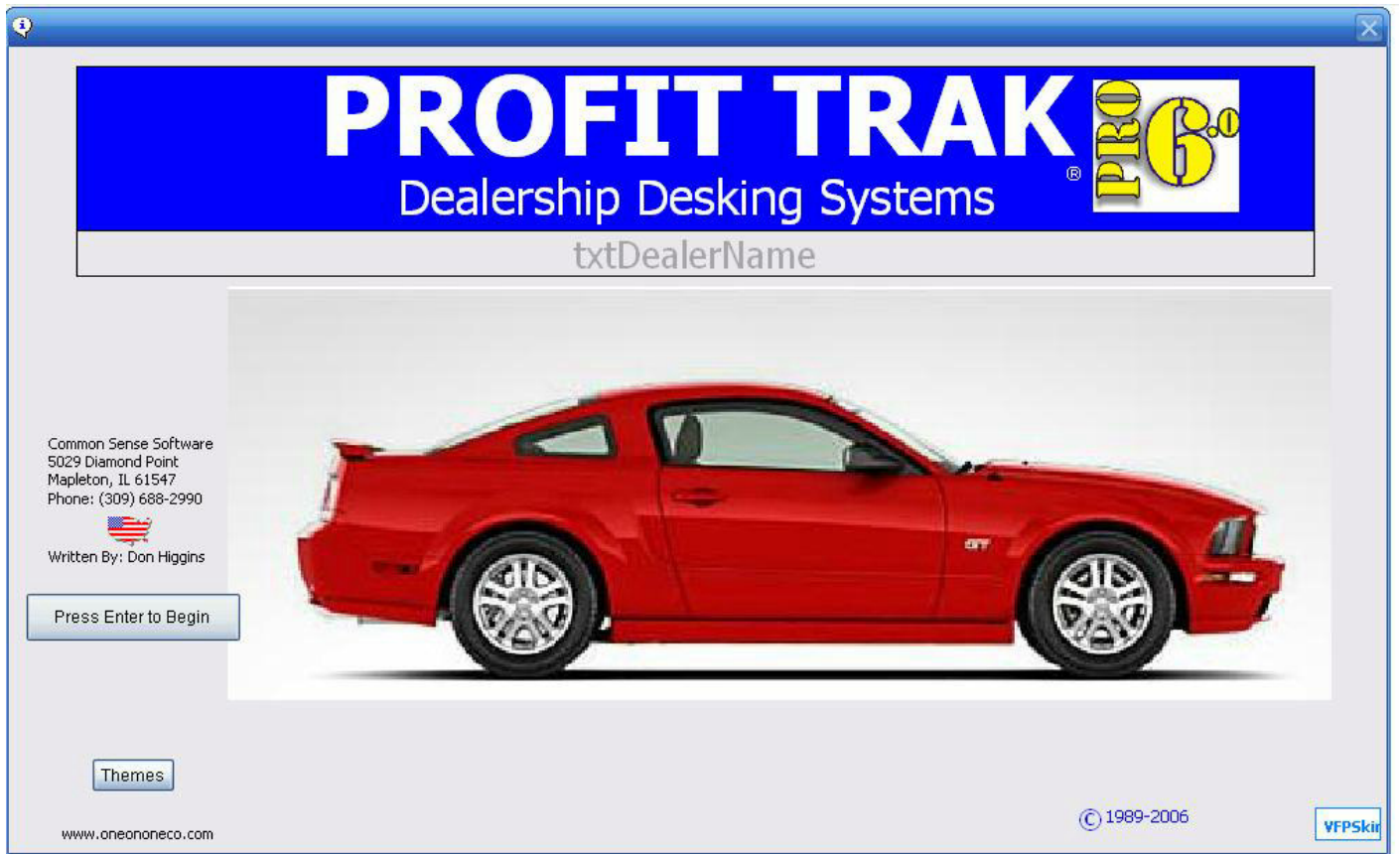
At MPH Cone You Should Be 0.7 Feet Behind Your Opponent

Note: Assumes Similar Reaction Times

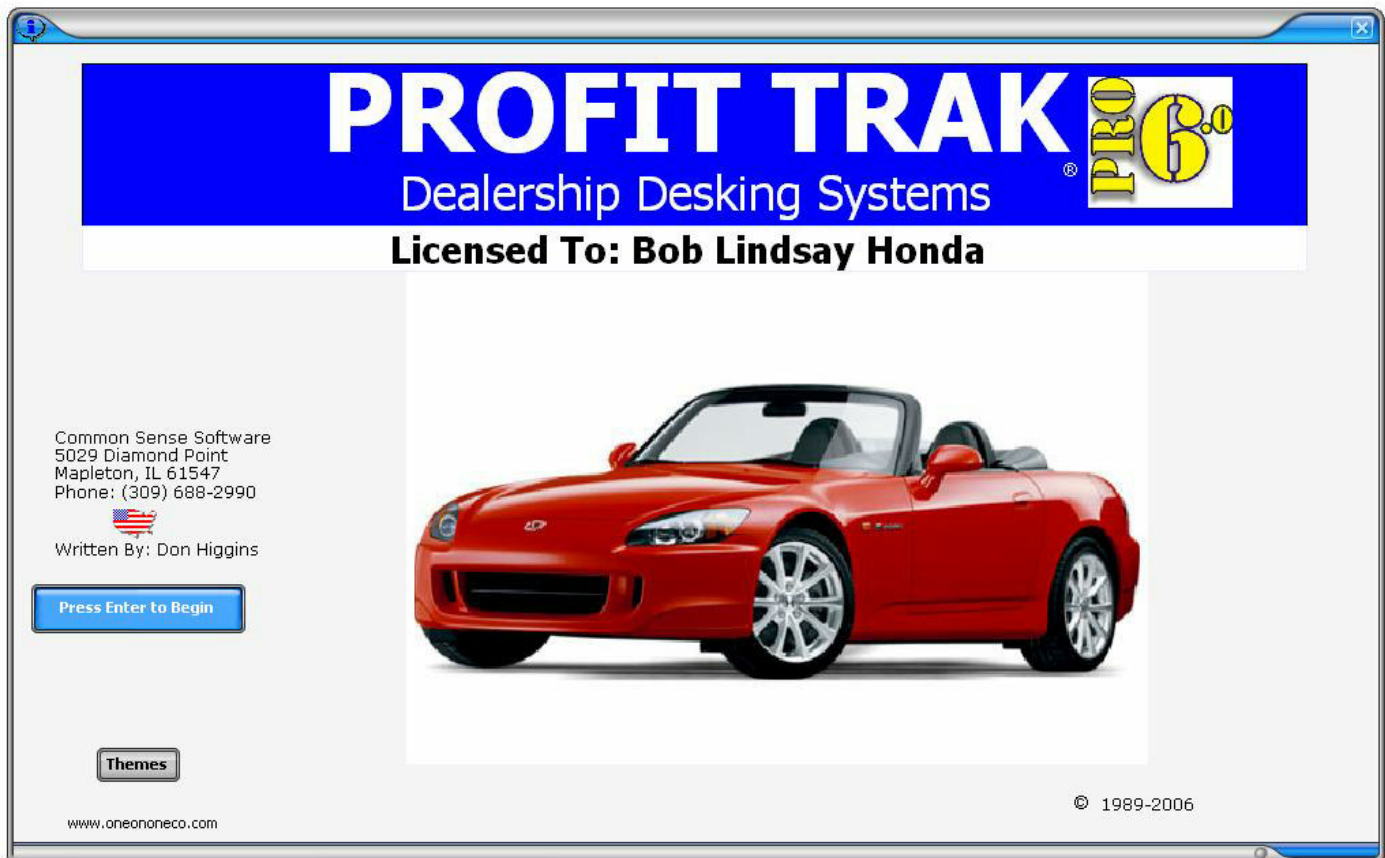
Themes 

BlueLuna file, Very Easy to Read but somewhat boring border. Requires silver shapes to break up the monotone color.

Now consider these Splash Screen images, which one will impress your customers the most?



A) Ugly standard Splash Form. Nothing redeeming about it visually. With the Skins class however a user just needs to Click the Themes button and expose a whole new application. See Below.



B) More stylish Splash Form. The Top Border really stands out on this version. Look Below for other examples.

NOTE: I always give my applications a picture screen as a splash screen, they can double click on the picture and change it to any picture they wish. This is also stored in the log in file to individualize the users experience.

PROFIT TRAK

Dealership Desking Systems



Licensed To: Bob Lindsay Honda

Common Sense Software
5029 Diamond Point
Mapleton, IL 61547
Phone: (309) 688-2990



Written By: Don Higgins

Press Enter to Begin



Themes

www.oneononeco.com

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Notice how the icons on the command buttons really stand out. There are 30 other examples, some weird but then again what is weird to me may not be weird to the end user.

Since everyone is entitled to my opinion, I choose the more stylish looks also. I have incorporated this into every application I have. I would like to share my findings with you, in hopes that you can enjoy it also.

Give Your User Style Options - Save Their Choices to a Database

The best part of this example is if you save the User's screen choices into their log in file or setup database then they will get the look they want, and this will improve their experience with your software. It makes the end user happier, and a happy end user will be willing to pay more for future work.

VFPSkins is a great class for dressing up your FoxPro Forms. Once you understand how to data drive the style and code for font changes the class becomes fantastic.

Only Two Issues:

- 1) This is a big one. There is only one problem that I have never found a fix; I have been unable to use my resizing class with VFPSkins class. They seem to clash. I have not tried other resizing classes or used it with anchors yet.
- 2) The VFPSkin class will disregard the Font and formatting choices you made, so if you do NOT want the skin affect on any control (including labels, command buttons etc.), then you must use NOSKIN in the TAG Property of each control. This is very important!

The screenshot shows a software interface titled "Finish Line Decision Manager and Opponent Analysis". At the top, there are input fields for "Opponent: txtDrivername", "Car Number: txtCarnun", and "Class: txtRaceClass". Below this is a table for "txtRaceStatisticsForDriverName" with columns for "# Runs", "Average Reaction", "Red Lights", "Average 60 Foot", and "Average 330 Foot". The table has rows for "Left:" and "Right:" with corresponding text boxes. Further down, there are sections for "Opponent's Run Selected:" and "Your Last Run Comparison:" with various text boxes and a "Pick Your Run to Compare" dropdown. A green play button is visible in the lower left. On the right side, a "Properties - statistics.scx" window is open, showing a list of properties for the control "txtYourReact". The "Tag" property is highlighted and set to "noskin". A blue callout box points to this property with the text: "If you do not want skin effects on any control change it's TAG Property to 'noskin' as shown here."

# Runs	Average Reaction	Red Lights	Average 60 Foot	Average 330 Foot
Left: txtlr	txtAvgF	txtF	txtAvg6	txtAvg3
Right: txtlr	txtAvgF	txtF		

Property	Value
SaveAsClass	[Default]
Seconds	2 - Default (Default)
SelLength	?
SelStart	?
SelText	?
SelectOnEntry	F. - False (Default)
SelectedBackColor	51,94,168
SelectedForeColor	255,255,255
SetFocus	[Default]
ShowWhatsThis	[Default]
SpecialEffect	0 - 3D
StatusBarText	(None)
StrictDateEntry	1 - Strict (Default)
Style	0 - Normal (Default)
TabIndex	16
TabStop	.T. - True (Default)
Tag	noskin
TerminateRead	F. - False (Default)
Text	?
Themes	.T. - True (Default)
ToolTipText	(None)
Top	286
UIEnable	[Default]
Valid	[User Procedure]
Value	(None)
Visible	.T. - True (Default)
WhatsThisHelpID	-1
When	[Default]
Width	45

Getting Started

First you need to purchase the class, for \$30 US it is a steal. I think it comes with around 30 different screen "skins". Each has its own file name, with VFS file extensions.

There are 6 elements to using the VFPSkins Class.

- 1) Create a sub folder to store the skin files. I use a sub folder called THEMES in all my applications.
- 2) Store the class files in your LIBS or Library folder.
- 3) Create or use a database field to store the user's selection of VFPSkin file. I have a SETUP.DBF file in every application that has several skin file name areas depending on where in the application I need them.

I have one field called skinMain for the splash screen skin choice, skinSave for the save screen, skinFinish for the Finish Line Manager choice etc.

- 4) Create a new form or open an existing form. Now Drop the class on the form.
- 5) In the INIT Event of the Form you will need to call a Form Method. This form method that contains code to lookup which "skin" file the user wanted and store that into a Form Property.
- 6) Create a Form Command Button to allow the user to change the skin file on the fly, and store these choices into the Setup.DBF file.

Now What?

Most of you will understand the First 4 elements listed. If not send me a message, I will try to explain it.

The Elements I need to expand on begin with **Number 5**. This deals with the code in the INIT event of the Form, or having a Form Method that is called in the INIT() Event. Secondly we will deal with the ChangeLook Form Method.

Here is the code I use for the first Method:

INIT EVENT Code or SkinLookup Method:

```
LOCAL lcOldSelect, lcSkinName
```

```
lcOldSelect = DBF()
```

```
* function to open Log In Database or Setup Database to retrieve user choices automatically  
DO openit IN MAIN WITH "tables\setup.dbf"  
    SELECT setup
```

```

*pull skin name from setup.dbf field called StatSkin (for Statistics Skin Name)
ThisForm.SkinName = ALLTRIM(statskin)
IF EMPTY(ThisForm.SkinName)
    * nothing there, assign default skin that looks decent
    ThisForm.SkinName = "themes\blueluna.vfs"
ENDIF

* transfer ThisForm.SkinName to local var also to check existence
LcSkinName = ThisForm.SkinName

* does this skin actually exist?
* if so then make it the skin
* otherwise make it the default "blueluna.vfs"
llexist = .F.
DO findfile IN MAIN WITH (lcSkinName)
IF llexist = .T.
    THIS.VFPSkin1.SetSkinName((lcSkinName))
ELSE
    * alert user that there is an error and no skin is found
    * set default skin
    THIS.VFPSkin1.SetSkinName((lcSkinName))
ENDIF

* select previous dbf again
SELECT (lcOldSelect)

*****
* End of LookUp Method
*****

```

Element Number 6

Create a command button called **“Themes”** and place the following code (with revisions for your needs) in the Click Event.

```

Local lcDefaultDirectory
* save current folder
LcDefaultDirectory = sys(2003)

* I set the default to the THEMES FOLDER first.
set default to themes

* First call the VFPSkin internal method to display skin choices
ThisForm.Vfpskin1.setskinname()

* Second, apply the skin changes via internal class method
ThisForm.Vfpskin1.changeskin()

Set default to &lcDefaultDirectory

```

```
LOCAL lcOldSelect  
lcOldselect=alias()
```

```
*** now open SETUP and replace the field with the choice the user made  
DO openit in main with "tables\setup.dbf"  
Select Setup
```

```
REPLACE statskin WITH Thisform.VFPSkin1.cskinname  
lcwhatskin=ALLTRIM(setup.statskin)
```

```
***  
SELECT (lcOldselect)  
Return  
*****  
* End of Click Event  
*****
```

Changing/Renaming Command Buttons

If you have a command button that you want to DISABLE when using the vfpskin class here is the answer.

To fix this is very simple. For Example: If I have a command button on the screen and it is named "cmdBegin" then to disable it I would put this code somewhere that executes.

```
thisform.SBcmdBegin.setenabled(.f.)
```

NOTICE: the SB in front of the cmdBegin section. That refers to the VFPSkinned buttons only.

When VFPSkin inits, puts invisible (Visible property with .F. value) all CommandButtons and adds VFPSkinButtons; the skinned button have the same name that native CommandButton with "SB" before.

Example: if you have a CommandButton named cmdClose, after VFPSkin inits, you'll have a VFPSkinButton named SBcmdClose.

In order to change their properties, you must use Set methods of VFPSkinButton.
Example:

```
ThisForm.SBcmdClose.SetCaption("Delete")  
ThisForm.SBcmdClose.SetFontName("Tahoma")  
ThisForm.SBcmdClose.SetFontSize(8)  
ThisForm.SBcmdClose.SetEnabled(.F.)
```

ThisForm.SBcmdClose.Visible = .F.

NOTE: This only works if you have a command button that you want to be skinned and does NOT have the TAG Property set to NOSKIN.

As you can see the code is not difficult, and the result is well worth it. I know the style gave me an edge recently when my dealership software was up against a competitor who used dot.net. The customer had complained that my old version was ugly, but not anymore. Without the skin look I would have lost the account simply because the look was old and outdated.

Don Higgins



Lastly, here is Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft, looking at my software....

