DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY
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Date: 8/4/2019
Race 6: $40K optional-claiming/N1X contested at 5.5-furlongs on the main track
Post: approx. post 4:47 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

First, some housekeeping business: my Sunday seminar guest is **Paul Cush** (on Twitter **@DelMarkid12**). You might not have heard his name, but believe me when I tell you that he is one of the sharpest horseplayers I know, and I'm really looking forward to picking his brain and analyzing the card. Please come say hi at the Seaside Terrace (at the top of the stretch)—or tune in via my Periscope livestream on Twitter **@ScatoniSureShot** (btw: I got a new microphone, so hopefully the sound quality will be much better!).

As for today's contest race—a $40K optional-claiming/N1X contested at 5.5-furlongs on the main track—I'm hoping Paul will have a strong opinion because I'm flummoxed! I really had a hard time with this race, with knocks on so many of these. Still, let's see what we can conjure up…

#1 ROYAL TRUMP—program scratch.

#2 MORGAN S. (15/1) looked so good in his debut back in 2017, breaking his maiden going 6-furlongs over this track against Cal-breds. It then took him a while to get back on the good foot, which came a few months ago going 5-furlongs on turf, where he set the pace on a speed-favoring turf course and never looked back against Cal-bred N1X types. His first try against open allowance foes saw him bounce to the moon, but maybe he can wake up today getting back on the Del Mar dirt. Also note that his two wins came up on the pace, and he's going to face some pressure today. On the plus side, he gets an **OptixNOTES** *"Improve"* out of that last race, as well as a "B+" *"Razor"* **OptixWORKS** grade—and that's a big push in a field with so many question marks. GRADE: A.

#3 CAMBY (20/1) took a while to break his maiden, and this 4-year-old needed a 5-furlong turf sprint to finally do the business in a race where he contested the pace and held on by a head on a speed-favoring turf course. His dirt races weren't anything special, but maybe the lightbulb went off last time. Win-rider Talamo rightly sides with the Baffert, and the only real plus is that Glatt scratched his other horse (#1 Royal Trump), so maybe this guy is doing really well. GRADE: X.

#4 RAFAL (6/1) has a ton of speed, and he's going to take money because he's a Baffert horse who has a win at today's 5.5-furlongs. Still, I don't like that Baffert tried him turf-sprinting last time—and that's often a negative when Baffert puts them on turf. I also don't like that he was 2/5 in his debut but finished third at a time when Baffert couldn't lose debut races. Lastly, I hate that he's a 3-year-old versus elders. It's tough to ignore Baffert here at Del Mar, but I'm willing to take this one on, though I understand if you don't want to be a hero (and if this horse goes off at 6/1, I'll eat my hat!). GRADE: C.

#5 GRINNING TIGER (15/1) was dominating the minor leagues when he came to SoCal and ran two respectable races at the Cal-bred N1X level, including a win last time at Los Al. He should get a good

stalking trip in here, and the 7-pound weight-break will help his cause, but I think last time was the time to have him at 7/1. GRADE: X.

#6 LANDESKOG (5/1) is a 3-year-old who did nice work for O'Neill while racing back East. Last time, however, he was thrown to the wolves in the Woody Stephens (G1), and he was well-beaten at 21/1. Like another 3-year-old in here—#4 Rafal—this one has a ton of speed, so I can see him getting hooked up in a duel. Obviously, the short distance is a plus for those two horses, but I'm looking elsewhere as this 3-year-old takes on elders for the first time (though it should be noted that O'Neill has been on fire this week). GRADE: C.

#7 HEARTFULLOFSTARS (15/1) should move forward making the second start of his form cycle after weakening in a 7-furlong race here on opening day. Still, he's always been a bit of a grinder, so I'm not sure if today's shorter distance will favor him. Maybe he can pick up a slice if the race falls apart. GRADE: X.

#8 JACK VAN BERG (20/1) is another 3-year-old who likes to do his running in the vanguard, so he could hook up early with his fellow sophomores, who also have speed. On opening day, this guy—who was shipping in from Churchill Downs and had the look of a live long shot—attended the pace and weakened badly going 7-furlongs. I'm guessing the cutback today will help, but he'll need to show more. GRADE: C.

#9 CANDY CORNELL (9/2) has run a mixed bag of races at this N1X level, so we'll see who shows up today—the horse who has run well over this track twice before or the horse who is also capable of running some clunkers. He should get a decent set-up in here, since he has tactical speed and can pass horses—and he gets a 7-pound weight-break, meaning he's carrying less weight than most of the 3-year-olds in here, and that's an advantage for an older runner. He'll be running on late—but is 5.5-furlongs too short for him? GRADE: B.

#10 GETALOADOFTHIS (20/1) is a 4-year-old who has done decent work up north against lesser animals, so we'll see how he does today back on the SoCal circuit—the same circuit where he lost a few races against $20K maiden-claimers. Class is certainly an issue because of that, but there aren't that many true allowance runners in here, so we'll see if Sadler—who takes over for Hollendorfer—can move him up after a few sharp races. The way Sadler has been firing this meet, it makes sense to consider this new acquisition in here at 20/1. GRADE: B.

#11 SHANE ZAIN (6/1) was just headed by Candy Cornell, so he'll need to do better while having to break from a brutal post at this abbreviated sprint distance. He'll also have to show he can beat allowance foes, since there was a reason O'Neill was fine losing him for $50K last year, despite having tried graded-stakes company as a sophomore. I think he'll run okay today, but I can see him getting hooked 4-wide, and that will be a problem. Still, he's usable in your exotics, but 5.5-furlongs might be too short for him. GRADE: B.

#12 DISTINCTIV B (7/2) is the tepid morning-line favorite, and he gets the reluctant nod in here just because he's a professional racehorse who is facing some questionable "allowance" foes. The post is no picnic, and he's likely to be wide around the turn while attending the pace, but he likes this track, and Miller has been going great guns while under less scrutiny here at Del Mar. Oh, and some guy named Prat bothers to ride (and he's the same dude who rode this guy to his last two victories). GRADE: A.

#13 KRSTO SKYE—program scratch.

CONCLUSION
#12 DISTINCTIV B is probably the one to beat, but he's an 8-year-old parked all the way outside with a lot of speed to his inside. He's also not going to offer much value. I'll look at some prices instead: **#2 MORGAN S.** comes into this race with that *"Improve"* **OptixNOTES** and good **OptixWORKS**, and that's enough for me to consider at a huge number; I'll also peep **#10 GETALOADOFTHIS**, now trained by Sadler, so it wouldn't shock me if he ran a career-best today.

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