

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

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Race 6: Cal-bred \$20K optional-claiming/N1X for F&Ms going 8F on turf (rail at 30-ft.)

Post: approx. post 4:31 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

No joy yesterday in the contest race as my top pick lagged behind and never really kicked on, losing to a horse who I had pegged as a “C.” We shall endeavor to try again today in this Cal-bred \$20K optional-claiming/N1X contested at one-mile on the lawn with the rails at 30-feet. Like yesterday’s race, **OptixPLOT** doesn’t have this as being a contentious pace (i.e., snowflake), but it should be a quick pace with a “78” *SpeedRate*. That info was valuable yesterday (though I couldn’t capitalize on it), since the favorite was part of a quick early pace and faded to fourth. I’m expecting a middle-move type will win today just like one did yesterday, but which one will it be?

#1 BATTLEGROUND STATE (20/1) cleared her statebred N1X condition back in March of 2018, rallying nicely from off the pace, so because of that, she’s in for the \$20K tag today. In fact, new trainer Greenman just took her off Drysdale for \$20K out of an effort where she put in a mild late bid to split the field and finish fifth. Greenman has done fine work with limited opportunities, but this gal was 19/1 in that last race despite being trained by a Hall of Famer and dropping in from the allowance ranks, where she was facing tougher. She’ll save ground today and look to find a seam late, but she’ll also have to outfinish two gals who just beat her. GRADE: X.

#2 SMILING ANNIE (4/1) takes off the hood and tries two turns for the first time, so we’ll see if this lightly raced 4-year-old can do better than her two recent outings, where she was no match for sprinters (on turf and dirt). Her top side is all sprint, but there is some pedigree on the dam side, so it wouldn’t shock me if this gal ran a much better race today with Van Dyke taking the call for the first time—and while she is a stretch-out sprinter and likely to be part of an early hot pace, Van Dyke always does an excellent job of getting horses to settle. There are definitely some questions here, but she’s a little interesting if the price is right (though 4/1 seems on the short side). GRADE: B.

#3 SHEHASTHERITESTUFF (5/2) has always had a decent stretch run and looks solid on **OptixPLOT**, but this 6-year-old mare looks like she’s lost the eye of the tiger, unable to beat similar types and claimers this spring and summer. In fact, last time, she came running on through the lane but couldn’t quite find that one last surge at the end to beat Sedamar, who held her off by a neck. That said, Sedamar did get a slightly better trip in that race while saving all the ground, so this gal has every right to turn the tables on that foe, but it should also be noted that she had dead aim on the top-two finishers in her last race and didn’t really seem like she wanted to go by. She’s a cool horse who tries every time, and she’s a very good exotics player, but she’ll have to overcome her recent pack-animal tendencies to get the nod today at a short number. GRADE: B.

#4 **SEDAMAR (3/1)** showed a nice kick last year as a 2-year-old, but she has become a bit more tactical this year, so Fuentes can have her in an ideal tracking spot behind the speed horses. She just missed by a

neck last time, losing to an even-money shot who got a perfect trip, but this gal's trip was pretty good too. I did, however, like the tenacity she showed when Shehastheritestuff challenged her late, fending off that foe for second-place, but that could also be because she had a 4-pound weight-advantage over that foe (which she maintains today), since she's a 3-year-old. And therein lies the rub: there is only a neck and some ground-saving factors that separate the top two—but if you think this lightly raced sophomore can continue to progress (which is likely), then she is the horse to beat (despite having had a few chances already at this level). The other positives are her excellent position on **OptixPLOT** and the fact that she has a good **OptixWORK** since her last race (indicating that she's happy), while her main rival hasn't worked back. GRADE: A.

#5 SUPER BUNNY (7/2) is a 3-year-old who should ensure a good pace, since she likes to be on or near the lead—something that came in handy last time in her maiden-breaker, where she created a loose lead for herself and held on to win by a neck. That seemed like a pretty big race for this 3-year-old, and we'll see if she can move forward off that taxing effort. She looks a lot like the Miller favorite who lost the contest race yesterday, so I think you have to take her on at the short 7/2 morning-line, despite the fact that Prat takes the call. I'm looking for Sedamar to run her down. GRADE: C.

#6 ARIES (20/1) should keep Super Bunny honest, and even though she's not nearly as fast as that foe is early, the presence of bug-girl Peterson suggests to me that they are going to send hard and hope for the best—and that should help ensure a swift pace. If you're looking for positives, she is a five-time winner, so she knows where the winner's circle is, but her best work has come up north against weaker claimers and starter foes. She looks like a pace factor only to me. GRADE: X.

#7 LIL BIT DANGEROUS (12/1) is a late runner who should get a pace to run at today but who will probably need one, coming off a November layoff and facing tougher foes than she is accustomed to. In fact, Cassidy only tried her at the Cal-bred N1X level once before putting her into claiming races, where the best she could do was a second down the hill back in May 2018. On the plus side, she does have one decent race at the weaker starter-allowance level, which happened to come at this distance and over this course last summer. Maybe the seaside summer air agrees with her, but Cassidy typically gives them a start or two before they fire, so I'm going to have to watch one—but you can expect her to be running on late. GRADE: C.

#8 ALGORHYTHMIC (8/1) has very sharp sprint speed, which is why it was completely vexing that she wasn't on the lead last time in the Fran's Valentine going a mile at Santa Anita. Maybe those classy gals were just too much for her, so if she wants the lead today, she can certainly get it—since there was a time when this gal was out-sprinting stakes animals down the hill at Santa Anita. Clearly, this 7-year-old mare is in the twilight of her career, but she is facing by far the weakest field she's faced in two years, so it's quite possible she can wake up today. That said, she's spent her whole career mostly sprinting for a reason, so she'll have to show some starch in the lane today—and with the anticipated quick pace, that might be an issue for her. Maybe look for her next time at 5-furlongs—though **OptixWORKS** suggests she's going well off the freshening, and that's enough for me to upgrade her against this group? GRADE: B.

#9 PAPAYA (15/1) is a new face in the crowd, coming into this event after racing against some decent N1X sophomores up north on all surfaces and at all distances—though her best race came at today's flat mile when she beat starter-foes on the turf at Golden Gate in professional fashion. She sat a good forwardly placed trip and responded when asked. Toss her last two races against allowance foes, and she

doesn't look impossible here as a lightly raced 3-year-old with upside. That said, if you are a speed-figure person, you'll see that she'll need to run the race of her life here to match up with some of the others on **OptixFIGS**. Also, Cedillo will have to avoid a 3-wide stalking trip from out here. GRADE: C.

CONCLUSION

It's tough to separate **#3 SHEHASTHERITESTUFF (5/2)** and **#4 SEDAMAR (3/1)**, though I give the slight nod to Sedamar for the reasons mentioned above. Unfortunately, these are the top-two betting choices, and rightfully so. If you're looking for alternatives, you can look at the X-factor **#2 SMILING ANNIE (4/1)**, who could be a different horse today stretching out for the first time, or **#8 ALGORHYTHMIC (8/1)**, who is an old-class horse.

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