

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

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Date: 8/21/2019

Race 7: \$80K optional-claiming/N1X for 3-year-olds only contested at 5F on turf (Rail at 30-ft.)

Post: approx. post 5:00 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

I can't believe there are only 11-race days left in the meet, so let's make hay while the sun shines. Today's contest race is a competitive \$80K optional-claiming/N1X event for 3-year-olds *only* going 5-furlongs on the lawn with the rails at 30-feet. It's very difficult to come from off the pace in these abbreviated sprints with the rails out, but **OptixPLOT** has this as being a contentious pace, so I'm hoping enough of these runners duke it out early to set things up for a stretch-runner at a good price.

#1 CAPTURE THE SEA (6/1) returns in just 10-days after attending the pace and weakening going a mile. That's a toss race for me, since this guy is a sprinter, and I have to think Dollase was just using that as a conditioning race for this more logical spot. Two back, he was 18/1 at this level, but he had an eventful journey as per **OptixNOTES**, yet was still only beaten by 2-lengths, so he's capable of running much better today with Van Dyke taking over the steering duties. Also note, there was a time when Craig Dollase was lethal in these turf sprints at Del Mar (I did an article on 5F turf sprints for *The HorsePlayer Magazine* many moons ago), so don't dismiss this runner at a square price. That said, he'll need things to go his way in here, breaking from the rail and coming from off the pace. GRADE: A.

#2 ORDER AND LAW (5/1) has been running well around two turns here in SoCal, but he hasn't been able to get the job done at this N1X level. In his defense, he's had some tough trips—either being wide or encountering traffic issues and running against some quality animals like Nolde, Jasikan, and Rijeka. He now cuts back to this short distance—and that might be okay, since he broke his maiden back East in the Laurel Futurity going 6-furlongs on the turf. He came from the clouds in that race and mowed them all down. That said, he's a deep closer who will need everything to set up perfectly for him—and even if it does, 5-furlongs might still be too short for this stretch-runner. GRADE: B.

#3 PRODIGAL SON (3/1) has raced twice over the 5-furlong distance, and he's run well each time. Back on May 17, he just missed, finishing third against some decent Cal-bred turf sprinters, and on June 7, he had a troubled trip but still galloped out well (**OptixNOTES**). He eventually cleared his Cal-bred N1X condition at Los Al, but it should be noted that he beat older horses that day. His recent effort in the Real Good Deal was no good, but that was a quality race. The winner is a very nice animal, and the horse who ran second (this guy's stablemate Oliver) came back to win in dominant fashion on Saturday. O'Neill has done very well with turf-sprinters lately, and offspring of Square Eddie always take to this course like a duck takes to water. GRADE: B.

#4 HARTEL (4/1) is a tough nut to crack, because the connections of Miller and Prat scream "Run to the windows and unload!"—but this guy's form says, "Not so fast!" He does have a win over this course (his maiden-breaker), but his 2019 form is pretty blah, including that last race at Ellis Park, where he got a perfect trip but failed to show enough starch in the lane to hit the board. That said, that race was against

older horses and at 5.5-furlongs, so maybe he can do better today at this shorter distance. There's no denying his sharp early speed, and we all know that Prat will give him a perfect trip and that Miller wins a boatload of turf sprints, making this guy an interesting contender at the 4/1 morning-line. Tab the tote action as well, since if this guy's live, the money will show up. GRADE: A.

#5 BOA NOVA (IRE) (7/2) looked very sharp when beating age-restricted \$40K claimers last time over this course and distance, where he made an easy lead (opened up by 3-lengths early) and never looked back. It was a dominating performance, but now he'll have to back it up while facing tougher allowance runners. Two back, he tried this level, got another easy lead, yet was overtaken in the lane despite a 7-pound weight-break. You can't dismiss his early speed, but I think he gets run down today. GRADE: C.

#6 PRINCE PIERCE (15/1) has never run 5-furlongs on turf; his best work has come sprinting on the main track in the minor leagues. He likes to be forwardly placed, but he's going to have a hard time trying to keep up with horses who are faster early. I have to let him prove he belongs on this circuit, since it's not often we see Albuquerque shippers end up in the winner's circle at Del Mar. GRADE: X.

#7 OIL CAN KNIGHT (4/1), the second O'Neill entrant, brings sharp speed to the proceedings, so you can expect him to be in the vanguard early, attending the pace. He's also facing his toughest task yet, since he needed Los Al MSWs to graduate (on dirt) and then starter-foes (on dirt) to get a Del Mar win. Three back, he ran a decent second going 5-furlongs on turf at Santa Anita, where he was off slowly before contesting the pace, but it was against \$75K maidens. I can't fault anyone for using an the "other" O'Neill, but I like the stablemate better, since he should get a perfect stalking trip while this guy is going to be part of a contentious early pace. GRADE: C.

#8 TAP THE WIRE (20/1) seems to be showing up in odd spots this year as the connections try to figure out what this former Graduation Stakes winner wants to do as a 3-year-old. His campaign hasn't been pretty, and his one try at this 5-furlong distance saw him lose badly to older N1X foes. He's now gelded and back in with sophomores, but he looks like a pace factor only to me, since he does have good early speed. GRADE: X.

#9 DEVILS DANCE—program scratch.

#10 NO BANG NO BOOM (IRE) (5/2) (AE) will need a defection to get in, but if he does, he's going to take action since he's trained by Wesley Ward, who wins a ton of turf-sprint races all over the world. That said, this one's paper form isn't anything special. He needed \$50K maidens at Gulfstream Park to graduate—and even though his last race was pretty solid (he cleared his N1X hurdle going 6-furlongs at Belmont Park after setting a blazing pace and holding sway), why is Ward running him for a tag here? It's also odd that he was working at Saratoga up until August 11—maybe there aren't any more races for him there? All that said, he's obvious based on the connections and his last race, but there's also a chance where he gets hooked wide if he doesn't clear early, and at 5/2 on the line, I'm looking elsewhere for the contest winner. GRADE: B.

CONCLUSION

I know the form isn't great and he's an off-the-pace type who will be against the course profile with the rails at 30-feet, but I think **#1 CAPTURE THE SEA (6/1)** is going to run a good race today, and I'm pretty confident he'll sneak away at a good price—unlike **#4 HARTEL (4/1)**, who will take a lot of money if he's truly live in this spot.

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