

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

By Frank R. Scatoni
On Twitter @ScatoniSureShot

For more information on Optix, visit www.optixeq.com or on Twitter @OptixEQ

Date: 8/22/2019

Race 4: \$20K/N3L claiming event contested at 6-furlongs on the main track

Post: approx. post 3:35 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

We've had some really solid turf races to sink our teeth into the last several contest races, but today's race switches to the main track for an evenly matched \$20K/N3L conditioned-claimer contested at 6-furlongs on the main track. These conditioned-claimers are always a little tricky, but at least this one's a non-winners-of-three-lifetime, so we are dealing with slightly more reliable runners than at the N2L level.

#1 UNION REBEL (4/1) ran too good to lose last time at this condition, pushing the pacesetter the whole way, overtaking that foe only to get run down late by the winner. It was a nice performance for this level, but now this Hanson runner will have to contend with the rail, and that's not really where you want to be in sprint races. I'm also not crazy about the shorter distance, since this guy's two wins came at 8-furlongs and 7-furlongs, so we'll see how he deals with a faster early pace and the tricky rail draw. On the plus side, Ryan Hanson does a really nice job with limited stock, so at least you know this runner is in good hands and well-spotted. GRADE: B.

#2 ROYAL CREED (6/1) has major wire-job potential written all over him, dropping in class after prepping in a 5-furlong turf sprint off a 175-day layoff and getting the services of Maldonado, who is the best speed jock on the circuit. I also like that he gets off the rail after an uncharacteristically slow beginning for a horse who has shown blazing early speed. He's yet to win here in SoCal, but Bonde is going great guns this summer, and it looks like all systems go today for this son of Jimmy Creed. GRADE: A.

#3 LEROY (7/2) runs at the lowest level of his career, so that must be considered, since I've always appreciated this guy's honest stretch run—something he showed off to good form in his races against Cal-breds. Two back, he found better beaten-claimers a little too much for him, especially since it was a paceless race, and this guy likes to have something to run at. Toss his last race against allowance types at Emerald Downs, and focus on his good SoCal form. He'll need some help from a pace-perspective, but you can be assured that he'll be running on through the lane. GRADE: B.

#4 TRAPPER PEAK (12/1) is a re-claim by Shelbe Ruis, who lost him two starts ago for \$16K and then bought him back for \$20K last time. She now runs him at the same \$20K level and cuts him back in distance after he set the pace and weakened for Miyadi. He'll appreciate the return to one-turn, especially since he's a bit of a grinder in sprint races—but there's also the idea that this level might be a smidge too high for him, since he needed \$15K maidens at Turfway Park to graduate and then was all-out to beat \$16K conditioned-claimers two back. He'll need a step forward, but he's another who is in good hands, since the Ruis family does a fine job with their stock. GRADE: C.

#5 TOOTHLESS WONDER (3/1) is going to take money based on the fact that he's running against conditioned-claimers for the first time while going out for the hot connections of Hess and Bejarano. Hess is one of the best at putting horses where they can win, and he's chosen the right spot for this 3-year-old who has already shown he's not good enough to beat allowance foes or upper-level claimers. There won't be any value here for the contest, and even though this sophomore is facing elders for the first time, he's a legitimate contender. GRADE: B.

#6 SMOKIN B (12/1) was 13/1 at this level last time, and he put in a mild late bid to split the field of eight runners. That was at 6.5-furlongs, which gave him some room to play with—he won't have the same luxury today, and it should be noted that Union Rebel has him squarely on form. He looks like a horse who will need the race to completely fall apart for him to get the win—but he could sneak in the exotics at a number if you're so inclined to use him underneath in those pools. GRADE: C.

#7 HANDSOME JOHN (15/1) is a 3-year-old who couldn't beat much weaker restricted \$8K foes last time at Los Al, and that's not a good thing—but he was claimed out of that race by Puype, who shows some confidence by raising the stakes here and spotting him against much tougher animals. He looks like he'll need a major step forward against this group, but it should be noted that he received a solid "B" **OptixWORKS** letter-grade heading into this race, so maybe he's doing much better with the change of scenery. Any time you can make a slight case for a 15/1 shot in a group of mediocre conditioned-claimers, then you're automatically creating some value for yourself. GRADE: B.

#8 VERYNSKY (7/2) ran a hole in the wind two back against age-restricted \$16K claimers, putting up a big number and looking very impressive while doing it. It was his first SoCal start after a career up at Emerald Downs, and he was overlooked in the wagering at 6/1. He couldn't frank that form, however, in his next start against \$35K age-restricted claimers, so he takes a drop today against conditioned-claimers to see if he can recapture that sharp form two back. He'll need to repeat that race, and even though this isn't the toughest group, it is a group filled with older hard-knocking horses, so I'm willing to let this sophomore beat me at 7/2, especially since there's a world in which he still might be recovering from that big effort two back. GRADE: C.

#9 TORPEDO AWAY (20/1) is a 3-year-old who adds blinkers and gets a 7-pound weight break after running evenly against age-restricted \$16K foes last time. He could certainly improve off that effort, second start off the bench, but he looks a decided cut below the best in here, and he's probably looking at a wide journey as the bug-girl tries to chase the pace with the addition of blinkers. GRADE: C.

CONCLUSION

I'd be surprised if #2 ROYAL CREED goes off at 6/1, but if he does, he's a good play for me, since I expect him to run a really good race today. There's nothing wrong with the logical contenders, so you can price-shop among them, but if you're looking for a long shot, why not also consider #7 HANDSOME JOHN (15/1) off the barn change and the sharp **OptixWORKS** "B" grade? (In fact, I might do a double win-bet if the prices are right.)

If you'd like to learn more about **OptixEQ**, visit www.optixeq.com, and for a bonus Del Mar Race of the Day analysis from **OptixEQ**, click here: <https://optixeq.com/2018-optixeq-del-mar-race-of-the-day/>