

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

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Date: 8/28/2019

Race 3: \$40K optional-claiming/N1X contested at 11F on turf (Rail at 30-ft.)

Post: approx. post 3:00 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

It's closing week of the Del Mar summer meet, and that brings me great sadness! But there's still plenty of money to be made and fun to be had, so let's see if we can sniff out a winner in this competitive \$40K optional-claiming/N1X event contested at the marathon distance of 11-furlongs on the lawn (with the rails at 30-feet). Do note that several of these exit the same race at the same level and distance from earlier in the meet, and while that was a good race and all of those runners have a big chance right back, I'll be looking at some new faces at square prices.

#1 REAL MASTER (FR) (10/1) is a 3-year-old who makes his third U.S. start after a couple of even fifth-place finishes against fellow sophomores. I don't like that he's facing elders for the first time, but I do like that he's finally racing beyond 8.5-furlongs, since he was a long-distance specialist overseas who looked like he was just getting started at the sixteenth pole in each of his two U.S. starts. Well, he gets extra ground today, and he should get a great ground-saving trip from this cushy post. This is by no means an easy spot for a 3-year-old, however, but you will be compensated with a square price. GRADE: A.

#2 BIG BUZZ (3/1) was 5/1 at this level and distance last time, and he was very unlucky, as he never had clear sailing in the lane when it mattered most, checking in behind two of today's rivals. It's no surprise he gets a major jock upgrade today to Prat, since he did run well enough to win last time—and I can assure you that Prat will do his best to keep this guy out of trouble as he stalks the pace from a perfect position. He's an obvious contender to turn the tables on his main rivals, but he won't be any price based on that last-out trouble. GRADE: B.

#3 MR. MAGICO (20/1) is in my doghouse, since I backed him three times at Santa Anita against some pretty weak company, yet he couldn't find the winner's circle. Well, last time, I decided to jump off him, and all he did was laugh in my face and win at 33/1 against \$32K/N2L runners. Needless to say, I was furious—but it was my own fault, as he shouldn't have been that big of a price in a race against conditioned-claimers, since he had always exhibited a decent stretch run but never quite showed a will to win (as most N2L types usually do!). That said, I was happy for Leonard Powell, who is a very underrated trainer, but I can't say Mr. Magico will get my support today, since he is facing a much tougher task, and he was lucky to get up by a neck last time against a bunch of career nibblers. This group is full of multiple winners and professional racehorses. That said, this guy has always acted like a horse who would appreciate more ground, if you're a believer...GRADE: C.

#4 WARD 'N JERRY (8/1) is a tough nut to crack because he has races from back in the day that would make him very tough to beat in here—but he's been beset by injuries, and his comeback race last time was just an even effort while running for the \$62.5K tag. That said, he drops to the \$40K level today, and

you know distance won't be an issue, since this guy was at his best running 10-furlongs—so maybe we should just ignore his comebacker (after a 354-day layoff) and accept the fact that he could take a big step forward today against lesser foes. There must be a reason why Van Dyke bothers to ride back, right? Oh, and the price is right! GRADE: A.

#5 RED KING (7/2) ran a very good second with trouble last time at this level and distance, unable to quite get to Unapologetic, who got a perfect trip and ride. This guy will have every chance to turn the tables today, and his recent form is very good, as it was flattered when his stablemate Acclimate came back to win the Del Mar Handicap (G2) after winning the San Juan Capistrano (G3) in a race where this guy finished third. He's obvious, and 7/2 is a fair price on him—but he will have to thwart his nemesis today while outkicking some new faces. GRADE: B.

#6 UNAPOLOGETIC (5/2) is just a total pro, having finished in the money in 13 of his 30 turf starts (with six wins), including a pretty solid victory at this level and distance last time, beating a few of these in the process. While he's a major threat right back, there are a few reasons why it makes sense to take him on today, despite that 1-1/2 length victory last time. First off, he was coming off a May layoff, so I'm sure he was fully cranked while dropping down to the \$40K level after a steady diet of races against tougher. He did what he was supposed to do, but note that he was a voided-claim after that race. Secondly, a few of his main rivals had traffic trouble in that race, so while this guy probably still would have won, the margin of victory might have been a lot closer. Tip your cap if he wins, since he's an old pro, but I have to try and beat him at the windows. GRADE: B.

#7 MORSE CODE (5/1) is a little interesting in here for two reasons: one, he gets major class-relief after facing some graded-stakes winners and some quality N2X foes; two: he should be all alone on an easy lead with the best front-running jock in the colony doing the honors. You have to consider this guy for all the marbles based on those factors alone—plus, throw in the fact that Baltas wins a lot of long-distance turf races and you're looking at a main contender, though I suspect if he's truly live, he'll be a little bit shorter at the off. GRADE: A.

#8 MONGOLIAN EMPIRE (20/1) is a 4-year-old filly who just cleared her starter-allowance condition, beating five other females while racing a mile on dirt. I respect the work that trainer Ganbat does, but this looks like a conditioning race for something more sensible down the line, since this gal's one turf try was no good. On the plus side, she is bred to run all day, and she gets in at a feathery 109-pounds, so maybe you can slot her in fourth in your supers, but a win seems unlikely. GRADE: X.

#9 HARDBOOT (15/1) did fine work last year as a 3-year-old, but he hasn't really progressed in his 4-year-old campaign. In his defense, he is an off-the-pace type who was up against it in all of his Santa Anita races, trying to close over speed-favoring courses. Last time in the California Dreamin' here at Del Mar, he bobbed at the start and left himself with too much to do in that full field. He does have some come-home times that suggest he could be okay going this far, but he is a Cal-bred facing some quality open runners, and I think a small slice is the ceiling for him today—but it wouldn't shock me if he ran a big one (since there has always been some ability here). GRADE: C.

CONCLUSION

I know I have three "A's" in here, but I do want to keep my options open in this race depending on the board, since I think it's a pretty wide-open affair. Right now, I'm leaning toward #4 **WARD 'N JERRY**

(8/1), operating under the assumption that last time was just a prep race and hoping that this old boy can get back on the good foot today while getting some class-relief and going off at a square price.

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