

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: 8/30/2019

Race 5: \$62.5K optional-claiming/N2X for fillies & mares contested at 8F on turf (rail at 18-ft.)

Post: approx. post 5:57 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

What a wide-open contest race today: a \$62.5K optional-claiming/N2X for fillies and mares contested at one mile on the lawn with the rails at 18-feet. **OptixPLOT** has a blazing-fast “**SpeedRate**” of “**80**” with a contentious pace, so it makes sense to look for the off-the-pace runners in here.

#1 SUPER PATRIOT (8/1) certainly fits the bill as an “off-the-pace” runner, since she was 16-lengths back at the first call last time and exploded late to get up and win comfortably against \$40K/N1X types in her first start for Baltas. She had always hinted at some ability for Baffert, but her running style made her at the mercy of pace and trip. She’s now in good hands with Baltas (making her second start for that trainer), and today’s pace should flatter this gal’s stretch run, as Cedillo will save all the ground and look for something to open up late. There is a world in which she bounces against much better competition, but given the anticipated fast pace, she must be considered. GRADE: B.

#2 GREAT RETURN (7/2) showed an ability to rate in her sprint races, but it was no surprise when she attended the pace in her first start around two turns before drawing off to win easily against nine other N1X foes, going off as the lukewarm 5/2 favorite. The waters get deeper today, but there is some quality here, so it wouldn’t surprise me if she ran big right back—especially since she has shown an ability to pass horses, so Van Dyke should be able to have her wherever he wants. GRADE: B.

#3 ANIMOSITY (15/1) likes to be forwardly placed, and with Fuentes taking the call, I’m sure he’ll have this gal on or near the lead while drawn in the 3-hole. There was a time when this gal seemed destined for big things, having faced off against some quality turf ladies last year as a sophomore, but it’s a little disappointing that she went up north to try and clear this N2X hurdle and ended up running a poor fifth. She’s been freshened for this race, and the back-class is there, but I think she’ll be too close to a hot pace, and I’m inclined to let her beat me (though 15/1 is not anything to sneeze at for a gal who ran second in Grade 2 last year). GRADE: C.

#4 **DON’T BLAME JUDY (12/1)** is the wiseguy play in here, since her form is dirty enough after two better-than-looked races against some quality runners. She should drop out the back and make one big run, though I can just see Espinoza becoming impatient at some point and angling this gal out a million wide, since he usually wants no part of being inside at any point during the race. That said, I think this gal is good enough to win this, and she should get the right set-up—though she will need plenty of luck in this full field. GRADE: A.

#5 FOXTAIL (6/1) usually likes to be in the vanguard, but after a slow beginning last time, she at least showed she can pass horses. Because of that, I wonder if it’s intentional that Desormeaux gets the call today, since he is excellent at getting horses to relax and produce their best run late. That said, all four of

this gal's "wins" (which includes one DQ) have been wire-to-wire, so she will either have to earn it today on the front end or show she can win from off the pace, which remains to be seen. GRADE: C.

#6 EXCELLENT SUNSET (IRE) (3/1) made her first SoCal start a "winning" one when she crossed the wire first in the Kathryn Crosby last fall but was DQ'd for drifting in the stretch. It was a questionable DQ, and it was an inauspicious beginning for trainer Anna Meah, who had some very bad luck to start her training career (with lots of seconds). There is definitely talent here, but she is a 5-year-old mare coming off a December layoff and she might have bigger fish to fry. She could win on talent alone, but at the likely price (and 3/1) morning-line, I'm inclined to beat. GRADE: B.

#7 ACHIRA (6/1) has run two very nice races here at her favorite track, including a really good second two back in the Osunitas, where she was our top pick at 10/1. She followed that up with a solid third at nearly 4/1 against some decent N2X runners, so she fits right back at this level while shortening up to a mile. She should also get a very good stalking trip while getting first run on the late runners. She's obvious in here—the only knock is that she has had her chances, and someone else is always just a little bit better than she is. GRADE: B.

#8 A WALK IN THE PARK (8/1) is an early/presser type who should be up on the pace, since she's never been farther back than third in all of her races. She stalked and weakened last time in the Cal-bred Solana Beach, and if you go three back, you'll see that she was easily beaten by Don't Blame Judy (though she was coming off a layoff and probably needed the race). The D'Amato barn has really heated up recently, so I wouldn't dismiss this gal out of hand, but I don't think the pace sets up well for her. GRADE: C.

#9 FICANAS (GB) (6/1) has shown an ability to pass horses as a turf-sprinter, but we'll see how she responds going long, since she'll probably be a lot closer to the pace. Oddly enough, in her two turf routes, she was devoid of early speed, so it wouldn't surprise me if Prat had this stretch-out sprinter in a comfortable spot, allowing her to relax early as a quick pace develops—and then we'll see about late. I do think it's odd that she's been turf-sprinting since her U.S. debut going a mile was a debacle and they didn't bother to try two turns again until now—but Sadler is making all the right moves, and Prat must be riding for a reason. GRADE: B.

#10 MS PEINTOUR (20/1) has a versatile running style, but I would imagine they will look to get her to settle today as the blinkers come off after a pop-and-stop effort last time going 8.5-furlongs over this course while coming off a May layoff. She figures to run much better today, but she's in for a wide journey, and it should be noted that her best work has come over the Santa Anita sod. GRADE: C.

CONCLUSION

There are plenty of places to land in this wide-open race, but I'm going to side with a late runner who I think is better than her last two races showed—and who should get a pace set-up: **#4 DON'T BLAME JUDY (12/1)**. (Though I just know I'm going to complain about the ride after the race is run, since I'd be shocked if any ground-saving occurred—but that's on me!)

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/>