DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY
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Date: 9/2/2019
Race 10: $80K optional-claiming/N1X for 3-year-old fillies going 8.5F turf (rail at 0-ft.)
Post: approx. post 6:38 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

We close out this fine summer season with an excellent contest race: an $80K optional-claiming/N1X for 3-year-old fillies going 8.5-furlongs on the lawn with the rail settings at zero. We've got a full field of 11 fillies entered in here, so if you're in the hunt in the contest, you'll have an opportunity to make some noise. Expect a decent early pace with several of these content being in the vanguard early.

Before we get to the race, however, I just wanted to say THANKS to everyone for reading and following along—and for attending and watching my Sunday Handicapping Seminars. It was all great fun—and a little bit profitable too. I was lucky to have such a good audience and seven weeks' worth of excellent guests. Hope to see you all at Santa Anita and then again back here in November!

#1 KHARIYA (4/1), the first D'Amato entrant, got a perfect trip in her first SoCal start, beating $50K claimers in the process. She was a voided-claim out of that race, so it's interesting to see her here in this much tougher spot while running for the $80K tag. She should be forwardly placed from the rail, perhaps acting as a bit of a rabbit for her more logical stablemate. GRADE: C.

#2 ZEE DROP (7/2) looks tough in here, forming the tracking part of the D'Amato uncoupled entry. Last time, she was nearly 3/1 in her SoCal debut at this level, and she encountered some trouble while making her run in a one-mile race. The added ground should be just fine, since her come-home time in that mile race was above par for this level. Prat stays up, and wouldn't it just be fitting if he capped off the summer meet with a final victory? GRADE: A.

#3 SEDAMAR (9/2) is a very honest Cal-bred who looked good in both of her races here this summer, including a professional stalk-and-pounce effort against Cal-bred N1X foes last time. It wasn't the best field, however, since the gal she beat is a career-nibbler, so this gal is going to have to earn it today while facing open foes for the first time. She'll run her race, but will it be good enough? GRADE: C.

#4 GALLOVIE (GB) (6/1) is winless at this level since emigrating here from Great Britain. She's run some decent races, but she hasn't been able to break through. Last time at a flat mile, she had a comfortable lead turning for home but was easily run down by the winner. Two back, at this distance, she tracked the pace but really failed to kick on when the real running started. She'll eventually break through one of these days under Baltas' tutelage, but it should be noted that Van Dyke ends up on a horse who looks like an outsider on paper. GRADE: C.

#5 SERANITSA (8/1) is tough to get a form line on because her two races here in SoCal have been against much tougher company—so even though she didn't show all that much, it's hard to know where she fits on this circuit given the level of the competition she's been facing. Obviously, the class-relief will

help, but she likes to be involved early, and there are quite a few runners in here who have a similar style. Still, she's making the third start of her form cycle, and the class-relief cannot be ignored. GRADE: B.

#6 DEVILS DANCE—scratched.

#7 COURTEOUS (15/1) makes the second start of her form cycle and stretches out for Papa Mandella— two things that should have her sitting on a peak effort. Unfortunately, she's another one who likes to be involved early, since she was on the lead in both of her previous route tries. If she's going to be part of the pace early, she's in trouble. Still, you can never discount a Mandella horse stretching out, so there is a chance that this one could stick around a lot longer than some of the other frontrunners, if you are inclined to use. GRADE: C.

#8 PAKHET (8/1) looks very solid in here on traditional handicapping, as she's making her second start over this turf course and distance after facing *older* allowance runners last time in a race where she looked like she was just out for a spin—and note that the winner came right back to beat N2X foes on Friday. The big concern, however, is that trainer Michael McCarthy is having an uncharacteristically quiet meet, so maybe he's just gearing up his horses for Santa Anita. Still, I think there is more than meets the eye here (after all, they entered her in very tough stakes races last year), and I like that she can pass horses in a race with a ton of speed. Plus, the price should be right. Oh, and some dude named Geroux takes the call (and all he does is win when he rides out here!). GRADE: A.

#9 LUCKY PERIDOT (20/1) exits the same race against older allowance foes as Pakhet, and she ran a pretty decent fifth, putting in a late bid to finish ahead of six other horses and losing to a next-out winner. I liked that it was a new running style for her, coming from off the pace instead of attending the pace, which was her M.O. before that race. Still, Prat doesn't bother to ride back for a trainer who wins a lot of races—and she looks a little too slow against the best in here. GRADE: C.

#10 DER LU (6/1) had high hopes last year as a juvenile and was bet down to 2/1 against the talented Bellafina in last year's Chandelier (G1) at Santa Anita. That race was no good nor was her follow-up race two months ago in June. It looks like Baffert is going to try and shake things up by putting this one on turf, and that isn't a bad move for him when he has horses who can dictate the pace. This one can dictate the pace, but she's just another speed horse in a race with a lot of speed. It's nice to see Smith take the call, however, and there clearly was talent here at one point, but I have to watch one today. GRADE: C.

#11 ITALIA (SPA) (15/1) is a tough nut to crack. She's a Spanish-bred named after another Mediterranean country, despite having an Irish dam! But more importantly, it's impossible to know where she stacks up against these, since her two stateside races are tough to get a read on. Last year, she bolted early and never had a chance in the Jimmy Durante (G3) but was sent off at only 5/1. She needed time off after that and then came back to run a better-than-looked fifth at this level while going 9-furlongs back in May. She was up against the course profile that day and had some trouble, yet still came home in respectable time. I don't like that she can't string races together, but Puype is very good off this kind of layoff, and I like that he legs up Van Dyke, which indicates to me that this horse is live today. The post is no picnic, however, so things will have to go perfectly for her—but the price should be right, making her the wiseguy play in here. GRADE: A.

<u>CONCLUSION</u>

With contests, it's often about who you need, *not* who you like! I hope I've given you some options in this race, depending on how far back you are, but my three "A's" all have a shot—it's just a matter of figuring out the price you need. Good luck!

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