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: 11/10/2019
Race 6: Cal-bred $20K optional-claiming/N1X contested at 5.5-furlongs on the main track
Post: approx. post 3:03 p.m. PST

OVERVIEW

After two contest races on the lawn, we move to the main track for today's competitive affair: a $20K optional-claiming/N1X for Cal-bred runners going 5.5-furlongs on the dirt. This is a pretty evenly matched field, so I think it's really going to come down to who gets the best trip.

#1 MIDNIGHT SPECIAL (5/1) is a versatile 3-year-old who has won on the dirt and the synth, but all up north. His two tries in SoCal were a mixed-bag: one decent try here at Del Mar but on a wet-fast/sealed track, and one poor effort against stakes runners at Santa Anita. No doubt, this is the right spot for a horse who beat open N1X foes twice earlier this year, but the rail draw is a little tricky for a horse who is more of a tracker, so he could get buried on the inside. I like that he has three wins to his credit and seems eminently capable on his best day, but I'm concerned about his trip. GRADE: B.

#2 I BELONG TO BECKY (6/1) is a 3-year-old who re-adds blinkers after two blah efforts without them, including a fifth-place finish at a similar level last time when going 5.5-furlongs on turf. His dirt races from this summer are good enough to be competitive here, but it should be noted that he couldn't beat N2L foes, and those races are often filled with horses who have no desire to win. He does have decent early speed, and the blinkers-on means Fuentes is probably going to send hard—but there is some heat to his outside, so this guy will have to earn it today. That said, he's trained by Peter Miller, so a big step forward is certainly possible today. GRADE: B.

#3 PRAYER WARRIOR (6/1) has good early speed, so he'll be in the vanguard with a few other early/presser types. He's in very good form for Metz, who saddled him to two wins in a row before a third-place finish while sprinting on the turf at this Cal-bred N1X level. That said, he's run three very good races in a row, so it's quite possible there will be some regression here today (as noted by his **OptixNOTES** comment from two starts ago). He should be in contention turning for home, but I have a sneaking suspicion that someone will be just a tad bit better than this 3-year-old will be today. GRADE: B.

#4 TIGER STRIKE (3/1) is another 3-year-old with good early speed, who tried to duel with the winner last time but was worn down to finish second at a similar level at Santa Anita while going 6-furlongs. Before that, he looked really good breaking his maiden at Los Al going today's distance, so the slight cutback should help his cause. He looks a lot like a bunch of the others in here, so taking 3/1 seems a bit silly in such a wide-open race. GRADE: B.

#5 OCCAM'S RAZOR (6/1) is a fragile 3-year-old who hasn't been able to string races together, so we'll see how he does today coming off a 275-day layoff. Before he hit the shelf, he set a really slow pace going a mile and weakened to finish fourth. His maiden race before that saw him win at fifty cents on the

dollar going 4.5-furlongs at Santa Anita in early June. It's really tough to know what to do with him, since he's shown he can fire fresh (like in his debut), but there must have been a reason why his connections tried stretching him out in start number-two. I think I'll watch one (famous last words!). GRADE: C.

#6 CLAIM OF PASSION (5/1) just broke his maiden at even-money while going 6.5-furlongs. It was a decent race, but it was only against four other animals. Before that, he was easily beaten by Tiger Strike at Los Al, but he was bumped at the break and had a really wide journey, so I can forgive that. I do like that he can stalk the pace and pass horses—something that could come in handy in a race with so many early/presser types. Still, it's never easy to face winners for the first time, so perhaps this 3-year-old is better suited for underneath? GRADE: B.

#7 BOB'S SNIPER (15/1) returns a new gelding off a 198-day layoff…after a win! I hate seeing equipment changes after a win almost as much as I hate seeing a layoff after a win. Before this 3-year-old hit the bench, he broke his maiden against seven other Cal-bred $50K maiden-claimers, so not only will he have to face winners for the first time, but he'll also have to face much better animals. He seems in tough. GRADE: X.

#8 SATANTA (7/2) is the only 4-year-old in the field, so that makes me want to upgrade him right off the bat—but I have mixed feelings about this guy, since his two starts since his excellent maiden-breaker have been duds. I'm particularly concerned about his last start, which saw him go down in flames as the 19/10 favorite, packing it in after running half a race. That said, he was wide on a track that favored the inside lanes, so maybe we can give him another chance to make amends, especially since his debut race here at Del Mar over the summer was very impressive. He was bet down to 15/10 as a first-time starter for a barn that doesn't often have them fully cranked, and he won by 5-1/4 lengths, so there is ability here. GRADE: A.

CONCLUSION
This is a really wide-open race, but I am willing to give **#8 SATANTA** a chance to redeem himself after two races in a row where he disappointed as the favorite. At least we'll get a better price today, and I just think he'll get a very good stalking trip just like he did when he won his debut over this track. If you don't want to take 7/2 on this guy, you have plenty to choose from in the mid-price range, so just look for one of the 6/1 morning-line shots who is an overlay. One of them is bound to be—but if I just had to pick one from that lot, I'd go with **#2 I BELONG TO BECKY**.

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/