

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

By Frank R. Scatoni

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Date: 9/4/23

Race 9: \$80K optional-claiming/N1X for 3yos going 8.5-furlongs on turf (rails at 18-ft.)

Post: approx. post 5:40 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

What a fine contest race we have today: an \$80K optional-claiming/N1X for 3-year-olds going 8.5-furlongs on the turf with the rails at 18-feet. I think a few of these have a shot.

#1 EL ORO (FR) (10/1) was pitched way too high in the Oceanside, but he didn't run horribly for a horse who was stepping way up in class. His come home time was respectable, and he gets a positive jock change today, but he will need to run the best race of his life to beat this group. At least you get Kent to save ground at the rail, if you're a believer. GRADE: X.

#2 HORACE MANN (5/1), the first D'Amato, removes the hood after encountering some trouble last time at this level and distance when sent off at 3/1 in a big full field. He can do better today with a cleaner trip, but he does like to be forwardly placed, and I think there will be an honest pace in here, so I'm looking for someone to come rolling home late. GRADE: X.

#3 X J RASCAL (IRE) (7/2) was 5/2 at this level last time, and he looked like he was in with a big shot, but he was body-slammed by one of today's foes, and he offered nothing after that, finishing sixth. He can do better today, but he is probably going to be stalking the pace today, so that means he'll have to show a lot more oomph when the real running starts. GRADE: B.

#4 **WATSONVILLE (6/1)** just broke his maiden, so this is his first try versus winners, but I don't mind that so much in turf races, because I'm all about the final quarter-mile times, and this guy absolutely flew home late despite there being just a modest pace. He's got an upset shot in here. GRADE: A.

#5 EL PERFECTO (20/1) put in a mild rally last time at this level and distance to finish fourth. It wasn't a bad effort for a 35/1 shot, but he'll need to run a lot faster today. GRADE: X.

#6 **FOR A LAUGH (IRE) (6/1)** was 16/1 at this level last time, and he ran a respectable fourth despite having traffic trouble after having to break from the tough 10-hole. He was also coming off a long layoff, so he figures to move forward big-time today. GRADE: A.

#7 **ACT THREE (12/1)** is another solid looking runner at a nice price in this competitive field. He sports an angle I've always liked. He came off the bench and ran a pretty decent comebacker

against older horses, finishing fourth and putting forth a mild late bid. I like that he now drops in against fellow 3-year-olds while also getting some extra ground for the second start of his form cycle. GRADE: A.

#8 LEGISLATOR (5/2) is the one to beat if he runs the same way he did last time. He was 10/1 at this level, but he looked like he should have been an 8/5 shot. He was absolutely loaded with nowhere to go entering the lane, so he tipped out and bulled his way through, fouling a couple of other horses in the process. Despite winning easily, he was rightfully DQ'd. A repeat of that race wins this, but do note that he was way off a very fast pace that day, so perhaps that effort was a bit flattered by the race shape. GRADE: B.

#9 RUTHERFORD (6/1), the second D'Amato, makes his first SoCal start after running in turf sprints back East. D'Amato promptly stretches him out while legging up Hernandez, so that has to be considered. He will need a big step forward, but that is certainly possible with D'Amato calling the shots. GRADE: B.

CONCLUSION

This is such a great contest race because there are several horses at good prices who are in with big shots. You will have to play the horse that you need price-wise, but my order of preference would be: **#6 FOR A LAUGH (IRE) (6/1); #7 ACT THREE (12/1); #4 WATSONVILLE (6/1).**

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