DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY
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Date: 7/25/24
Race 5: Cal-bred $20K optional-claiming/N1X for fillies & mares going 5F on turf (rail: 24-ft.)
Post: approx. post 4:06 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

Opening Weekend is in the books, so let's get back to business as usual after all of the hoopla last week. We kick off this four-day race week with a fine eight-race Thursday card that features the $100K Cougar II (G3), a 12-furlong marathon main-track affair that some are using as a prep for the Pacific Classic (G1). But that's not what we are here to write about. Instead, we'll look to Race 5 as today's contest race: a Cal-bred $20K optional-claiming/N1X for fillies and mares going 5-furlongs on the lawn with the rails at 24-feet. Note that it's the third leg of the Pick 6, which has a $144K+ carryover today—so you might want to think about getting involved.

#1 QUICK KATE (9/2) is a pretty honest sort who should be able to hug the rail and wait for a seam to open up as she tracks from off the pace. I like that some of her best work has come at this abbreviated sprint distance, but I don't like that she lost by a nose in each of those starts. She'll need a little luck to be on the right side of the photo today. GRADE: B.

#2 GIANT KID (5/1), the first Bill McLean entrant, has two wins on dirt and one win on synth, but her lone turf try saw her finish fourth in a one-mile turf affair up north. She ran okay, but she had no excuses. I suppose it's possible that she just lacked the needed punch going a mile, since this gal's best work has come around one turn. She does seem like a bit of a grinder, so she'll have to keep grinding away while hoping the speed backs up. I prefer her stablemate, but I am intrigued that the hot-riding Frey takes the call. GRADE: B.

#3 DORIE MILLER (15/1) got her only win on dirt, so it's a bit of a concern that she's winless in four tries on turf. Three back, she ran an even third at this distance, finishing behind Quick Kate. She'll need to do better, and I don't see anything recently that would signal a big step forward. GRADE: X.

#4 BABY KRISTEN (5/2) is definitely the one to beat, but I have to think she'll be a massive underlay, since she is the speed of the speed, and that style does really well in these turf sprints, especially when the rails are out at 24-feet. She is lightning fast early, and I like that McLean took her for $40K last time, but he protects her today. If she doesn't win, I'm sure McLean is expecting his other gal to run them all down, giving him a solid one-two punch. GRADE: A.

#5 MIRINDA (5/1) hasn't shown much in her last two starts, but she does have a terrific debut race to run back to if she can turn back the clock. Note that this gal has been favored in all three of her starts so far, and that includes two Cal-bred stakes races where the crowd was falling all over themselves to bet her. She disappointed, but now Gary Mandella brings her back off a freshening, putting her on turf for the first time and adding Lasix. I can see her getting a dream trip sitting right off her inside neighbor. GRADE: A.

#6 BOLD CHOICE (30/1) is a 5-year-old mare who is winless in four tries on turf, so she looks like a proper longshot to me. It took forever for her to break her maiden (in start number 16), and her two races at this level haven't been any good. GRADE: X.

#7 O MANDY (10/1) kept weakening late in turf sprints, so Antonio Garcia decided to shake things up last time by moving her to the main track. She responded with a sharp victory at 7/2, where she attended the pace and then drew off to win easily. If she can move forward off that race, she'll have a say in the outcome, but if she runs back to her mediocre turf form, then I have to think that someone will prove better. GRADE: B.

#8 DONITA ROSE (20/1) just broke her maiden at Los Al in her sixth try, so she faces winners for the first time while also moving to the lawn for the first time. I don't like that she was offered for a tag to start her career, and she couldn't win at that Cal-bred $50K claiming level in four tries. One should never overlook a Peter Miller turf sprinter, but this one would need a big step forward today. GRADE: X.

#9 SASSY PRANCELOT (7/2) looked good dusting nine other foes when breaking her maiden as the 19/10 favorite. That race came at 6.5-furlongs, however, so we'll see how she does while shortening up considerably. Certainly, if she moves forward off that nice maiden-breaker, she'll be a major threat—but I can also see her chasing the pace while three- or four-wide, and that's not exactly the winning trip over this course. That said, Mike Pribozie, who guest-hosted for Peter Thomas Fornatale on the In the Money Plus podcast I recently did, made her an "A," and he's a pretty sharp dude! GRADE: B.

#10 SING A HAPPY SONG (20/1) (AE) is a one-way train, so if she gets in, she's going to make the favorite's life miserable. Is she good enough to win the battle and the war, however? One of her slowest races came on turf, and it's pretty clear that her synth form is much better. GRADE: C.

#11 DIAMOND BAR GIRL (6/1) (AE) would look solid if she had a better draw. She broke her maiden over this course last summer when stalking the pace and easily drawing away to beat seven other rivals as the 5/2 favorite. She hasn't been seen since, so she might need one, but she's a lightly raced 4-year-old who has plenty of upside. GRADE: B.

#12 LONG MAYSHE REIGN (15/1) (AE) broke her maiden at first-asking going 6-furlongs on the Santa Anita turf, but she hasn't been back to the winner's circle since then, losing three times

against these types (and once against open company). She's coming off a long layoff, but Glatt is really good with his comebackers, so that doesn't bother me too much. What concerns me is the fact that she hasn't seemed to train on. Can she get back to her winning ways? GRADE: C.

#13 FLAME MCGOON (20/1) (AE), another Glatt trainee, is coming off an October layoff, and she probably needed a freshening because her last three races saw her go off form. She does have races from back in the day that would make her competitive here, but can this 5-year-old mare get back to that form off an October layoff? I'm okay watching one. GRADE: X.

CONCLUSION
I saw this predominantly as a two-horse race with **#4 BABY KRISTEN (5/2)** and **#5 MIRINDA (5/1)** just based on the likely pace scenario where these gals should run one-two around the track. I doubt you'll get anywhere near 5/2 on the chalk, so that makes **#5 MIRINDA** the contest play. Obviously, all bets are off if there are scratches, so if #10 SING A HAPPY SONG (20/1) gets in the race, the pace dynamics switch dramatically, and you want someone to come from off the pace. Therefore, you should consider the "other" McLean, **#2 GIANT KID (5/1)**.

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