

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

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Race 11: \$25K claimer contested at one mile on the lawn with the rails at 18-feet

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OVERVIEW

Wow. We've really got our work cut out for us today in Race 11, a ridiculously competitive \$25K open claimer contested at one mile on the turf with the rails at 18-feet. It drew an oversubscribed field, and there should be some horses to consider at pretty good prices.

#1 MACKINNON (4/1) was meant to be a good one, but he never trained on after his juvenile campaign, and here he is as a 5-year-old gelding continuing a steady descent down the class ladder. This is the lowest level he's ever run at, so he has to be considered on the class drop. O'Neill removes the hood today, so I'm expecting a good tracking trip from the rail. I've lost a lot of money on this guy, but there's no reason he can't win this. GRADE: A.

#2 MARGOT'S BOY (2/1) looked sharp when winning at this level back in January in his first start for Glatt off the claim. Something must have gone a little wrong after that race because it has taken eight months to get back to the races. Glatt is typically pretty good off these kinds of layoffs, but note that this horse is entered as a protected waiver-claim, so there is a world in which this is just a prep. Still, the only other speed horse in the race is coming out of much cheaper events, so this guy should have a clear pace advantage over the rest of the field. GRADE: A.

#3 SPIRIT MAKER (12/1) has some decent races from back East, and if you go way back, you'll see that he did okay on this circuit as well while running against more expensive animals. His recent form isn't the greatest, but his last two races came against allowance company, and he's now facing a weaker group. Hess and Desormeaux have won a lot of races here over the years, so it wouldn't shock me if this one upset the apple cart today at a decent price. GRADE: A.

#4 VANZZY (15/1), the first Eurton entrant, makes his second start off a long layoff, and he can't run any worse than he did in his comeback race. That said, it was a tougher condition, and this is probably the right spot for this 7-year-old gelding. He has races from back in the day that would make him tough in here, but can he turn back the clock? I can't bet on that based on where he is in his career right now. GRADE: X.

#5 MITICO (20/1) is a low-level claimer trying the turf for the first time. He will likely end up chasing Margot's Boy around the track and then get passed by several of these. Maybe this is a conditioning race off a freshening for a lower level claiming race on the dirt. GRADE: X.

#6 DON'T SWEAR DAVE (8/1) was claimed for \$40K back in May, but his first race for new trainer Hector Palma was a disaster. Granted, he was facing tough allowance types on the dirt, but he got pasted in that race and needed a little freshening. He now drops to his lowest level yet, so it's possible he'll have

a bit of a class edge in here—but you hate to see a smart trainer claim for \$40K and then run for \$25K. I'll pass. GRADE: X.

#7 TABLE FOR TEN (20/1) gets wise-guy consideration. I thought this horse competed very well up north, and you can't overlook that November 12 race where he shipped down here and earned a game victory in a \$16K starter allowance. His recent form is horrendous, but both of those races look like form darkeners to me. His June 9 race was clearly just a leg stretcher off a layoff, since 5-furlongs on turf isn't really his bag. Then he clearly wanted no part of the Pleasanton dirt last time. He's better than those two races, and I think he can win here if he runs back to form. GRADE: A.

#8 LIL RICHARDS BELLO (6/1) drops in for a tag after a steady diet against Cal-bred allowance types. I think it's odd that this 7-year-old has never run this distance on turf before, sticking mainly to sprint races and one-mile dirt races. He has enough speed to get good position and will likely stalk in third, giving him the jump on the stretch-runners, but it's hard to know how he'll handle two turns on the turf. The biggest thing to consider, however, is that leading ride Hernandez takes the call, and that's a pretty good endorsement. GRADE: B.

#9 MAN FRIDAY (10/1) has been pretty honest since returning off a long layoff back in April. He's an off-the-pace runner with a good late kick, and he'll likely be overlooked because his last race doesn't look pretty on paper—but he had to break from the 10-hole, and he was facing better company. This is a good level for him, and I'm expecting him to run well. I prefer the inside horses a bit more simply because of basic physics, but he's another contender in a really competitive race. GRADE: B.

#10 MOODY JIM (IRE) (8/1) is a hard-knocking 8-year-old who is capable of popping up with a big effort every now and again. His last two races are tosses because he was facing better company. He's been competitive against more expensive claimers, and the last time he ran at this level, he won (back in May of last year). He's certainly capable of being competitive in here while dropping to this lower level, but the 10-hole does him no favors. GRADE: C.

#11 GRAPE NUTS WARRIOR (15/1), the second Hess entrant, was 9/2 at this level and distance last October, and he finished seventh with some trouble. He also had to hit the shelf after that race, so clearly something went wrong. I like that Hess has been patient with him, but do note that this guy is racing as a protected waiver-claim, so I'm thinking this will be a prep for next time—but if he runs back to his August race over this course, he's another one who could threaten. That said, I'll watch one. GRADE: X.

#12 EYES ON TARGET (10/1) (AE) looks sneaky to me based on his Florida form against tougher horses. He was protected in all of those races, but Sandino Hernandez drops him in class and runs him for a tag today while bringing him back as a new gelding. He's tactical enough to get good position early, but he'll have to use some energy to do it, and that will make things a bit tough for him from an outside post (if he gets in). Still, he'll be a good price, and I'm expecting him to run well at this new level. GRADE: B.

#13 HURRICANE CLOUD (GB) (AE) will need some luck to draw in, but if he does, he'll have every chance to get the W if he runs back to his January race when he just missed against more expensive claimers at Santa Anita. I don't like that he hasn't been able to string races together, but Baltas wouldn't run this guy if he wasn't ready. Rispoli will have to work some magic from an outside post, but he's been

riding so well this meet, and that makes this guy another contender in a ridiculously contentious race. GRADE: B.

#14 LORD SHELDON (15/1) (AE) has done very good work on the synth while facing some decent animals, but he's 0-for-2 on turf, and it seems like Steve Sherman is perfectly fine losing him for \$25K despite the fact that he was being offered for \$62.5K last time. I'm not feeling it. GRADE: X.

CONCLUSION

I have four "A's" in here and several "B's," and that's not like me. I try to keep my selections tight for the top spot—so that tells you how much of a headscratcher this race is. I think the two inside horses—**#1 MACKINNON (4/1)** and **#2 MARGOT'S BOY (2/1)**—will be too short to use in the contest, but I have two bombs that should outrun their odds: **#3 SPIRIT MAKER (12/1)** and **#7 TABLE FOR TEN (20/1)**. I rarely recommend a double win bet, but if these odds hold, that might be the play in here.

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