DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY
By Frank R. Scatoni
On Twitter @ScatoniSureShot
www.FrankScatoni.com
www.OptixEQ.com

Date: 8/16/24
Race 8: $16K claimer contested at 6.5-furlongs on the main track
Post: approx. post 6:32 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

A full field of hard-knocking $16K claimers contest this 6.5-furlong main-track affair. I thought this was a competitive group, and I can make a case for several of them—but a lot will come down to how the track is playing. On Thursday, the inside wasn't as good as it has been, so a few horses were able to rally wide after stalking the pace. Perhaps we'll see more honest dirt racing going forward.

#1 TRUSTY RUSTY (20/1) was 22/1 against tougher foes last time, and he ran a decent third while racing against the bias. Because of that, he should not be 20/1, especially since he's dropping in class and can handle 6.5-furlongs. That said, I'm feeling him more for underneath, but if he's really this big of a price, I might change my mind! GRADE: B.

#2 LANSDOWNE (GB) (10/1) was up on the pace last time dueling between horses, and he weakened against $20K foes, finishing behind Trusty Rusty. Sweezey took him out of that race and now drops him in for $16K. I'm not crazy about that move, but I do like that he has tactical speed and has been competitive against tougher. GRADE: B.

#3 SUNRISE JOURNEY (7/2) was sharp in defeat at the $10K level, losing as the 5/2 favorite, but this horse has now run two solid races in a row, so why not take a shot against tougher animals? He should be prominent early, but I'm concerned about his staying power at this elongated distance. He certainly figures, but 7/2 is no bargain in this tough field. GRADE: C.

#4 PLAYING HARDBALL (10/1) was pitched too high last time in his first start off a layoff. He ran half a race, but I won't be too harsh on him. I like that he has speed, and he should be much more fit second off the bench. He has races from up north from last year that are a very good fit here, but can he get back to those days? GRADE: C.

#5 SOLOMONS GOLD (12/1) is pretty consistent and typically runs his race, but he's been plying his trade against lesser back East. This is the toughest group he's seen, so we'll see how he handles the $16K level on our SoCal circuit. That said, I do like that Sandino Hernandez took him for $12.5K and is now raising him in class. He could have run him for a cheaper tag, so maybe this horse is thriving out here. I also really like that he is pretty solid at the elongated sprint distances. Upset special? GRADE: A.

#6 STONEVICIOUS (12/1) was 25/1 at this level last time when going a mile. He just ran around the track in a race that was surely just a prep with a bug-boy legged up. He should be fit off that last race, so maybe he can grind away for a small slice, but he seems a bit slow as compared to the rest of these. GRADE: X.

#7 SHASHASHAKEMEUP (6/1) has races from back in the day that would destroy this field. Unfortunately, this 7-year-old hasn't been seen since August 2021, so who knows what's under the hood. He returns a new gelding while running for this low tag. The works suggest he's ready to go, and while I'm typically against running old warriors under these circumstances, I do trust Peter Eurton to do right by the horse. The works are terrific, so if this guy is right, he should win this. GRADE: A.

#8 RIVOLI (8/1) just finished behind a few of these last time at the $10K level, but he ran respectably while making his first start on this circuit. Papaprodromou saw fit to claim him, and he must feel good about things because he's running this guy up in class for $16K. The horse is tactical, so he should get a good trip. I just think others have a slight edge over him. GRADE: C.

#9 PIPER'S CAUSEWAY (8/1) has speed and an aggressive jock, so he should be prominent from the jump. Can he stick around? He's been plying his trade at much shorter distances, so I'm a little skeptical. I'd like him a lot more if this race were shorter. GRADE: X.

#10 CLAMPETT (9/2) was a top pick for me when he was entered against more expensive animals on Sunday. He scratched out of that race for this seemingly easier spot. He returns off a long layoff as a new gelding, and I've told everyone countless times how I always play Glatt horses coming back in sprint races off long layoffs! GRADE: A.

#11 EL DIABLO ROJO (5/1) has been a very useful horse, always showing up for work and earning his keep. I love hard-knockers like this guy, but I wonder if this level is just a little too much for him right now. His last win came against $10K foes, and a few of these have him on form. That said, he's a grinder, so you can expect him to be running on through the lane—and if the outside paths are good, he could surprise, but that's a big *if*. GRADE: C.

CONCLUSION
This is a grab-bag of a race, and quite frankly, I think you should let the board decide where you wind up. If I had to make a contest play at these prices, it would be **#5 SOLOMONS GOLD (12/1)** simply because he's a 4-year-old who is pretty consistent, and now his new trainer is moving him up in class. **#10 CLAMPETT (9/2)** and **#7 SHASHASHAKEMEUP (6/1)**, on the other hand, are not what they used to be, and their connections are hoping that these old boys can still deliver a win while racing at their lowest level ever.

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