DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY
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Date: 8/22/24
Race 6: $80K optional-claiming/N2X contested at 11-furlongs on turf with rails at 24-feet
Post: approx. post 4:37 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

We had some nice selections to close out last week, so let's keep the momentum going! Today's online contest race is a very competitive $80K optional-claiming/N2X contested at 11-furlongs on the turf with the rails at 24-feet. I think there are plenty of places to land, so demand value!

#1 OLD PAL (10/1) is the wise-guy pick. I liked him last time in a Cal-bred stakes race, but he was burdened with the 10-hole and could only manage a late bid to almost split the field. He draws the rail today, so he can save ground until it's time to get motoring. I've always liked his strong late kick, so I'm thinking today's longer distance will help his cause. I just wish Mike Smith would commit to a rail trip instead of angling out a zillion wide when moving into the lane. GRADE: A.

#2 DIVIN PROPOS (FR) (9/2), the first D'Amato entrant, gets top honors from me. He was even-money at this level last time, and he just missed after a wide and eventful journey. He is going to love today's added ground, since he too has a strong late kick, and I'm expecting him to fire a big shot today. GRADE: A.

#3 LIVING LIFE (12/1) is another horse who has solid come-home times, so he's another one who should be flying late. Distance won't be an issue since one of his wins came going 10-furlongs, and he was finishing up nicely in that race. I know he was nearly 12/1 last time at this level, but he's more deserving than that with today's added ground. GRADE: B.

#4 OFFLEE NAUGHTY (5/1) is yet another contender in this ridiculously competitive race. This horse is a multiple graded-stakes winner, and he can run all day. Clearly, his best race makes him a solid fit against these N2X types, but note that he's in for the $80K tag, so perhaps that's a signal that he's not the same horse he used to be, since Michael McCarthy could have probably tried him against better animals this meet before risking him for the tag. GRADE: B.

#5 MALTESE FALCON (IRE) (6/1) always fires, but he also has a tendency to settle for the minor awards. He's been right there with several of these the last two times, but he's finished behind them (granted, with some trouble). The blinkers come back off today, but this horse can run with or without them. He can win; I just prefer others slightly more, since this guy is a case of "what you see is what you get." GRADE: C.

#6 DEAN MARTINI (15/1) has tactical speed and an aggressive jock, so he should be prominent early in a race that doesn't have too many other speed horses. I like that he already has a win at this level, which is why he's in for the tag, but he was outgamed by Calm Sea two back, and this is a tougher group than he was facing that day. GRADE: X.

#7 CITY EXILE (GB) (2/1), the second D'Amato, won decisively at this distance two back when easily beating a group of N1X foes. I know the third-place finisher came back to win his next start, but I can tell you that this group is way tougher than that last one, so this guy will have to earn a victory today. His come-home times are incredibly strong, but so are several of the others. He's a contender, but I'm not sure anyone should be 2/1 in a field with so many evenly matched horses. GRADE: B.

#8 CALM SEA (8/1) will be prominent early, so he and Dean Martini should both be in good spots turning for home. Will either one hang on? I'm not so sure. I know this guy cleared this level two back (with a perfect trip), but this is a much tougher group with some quality stretch-runners who will be accelerating late. Note that he's in for the $80K tag after trying stakes foes last time. GRADE: X.

#9 FEARLESS SOLDIER (10/1), the second Michael McCarthy runner, doesn't look all that great on paper, but I always say that you have to seriously consider even mediocre East Coast form. He has tactical speed, so he'll help make sure that Dean Martini and Calm Sea don't get too far ahead of him, and I think that will benefit the stretch-runners in here more than it will this guy. Also note that he's coming off a November layoff, so I'm wondering if he's going to need one. GRADE: X.

CONCLUSION
I'm expecting **#2 DIVIN PROPOS (FR) (9/2)** to fire a big one today, and if he's as high as 9/2, I would consider that a very good price. I think he'll be shorter. **#1 OLD PAL (10/1)** is a good alternative if you're looking for a higher price, simply because he's better than he's shown in his last two. And even though I like him less than some of the others, **#3 LIVING LIFE (12/1)** could be the value of the race, since he's not too far off the others in here and will likely be overlooked in the wagering.

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