

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

By Frank R. Scatoni

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Date: 9/2/24

Race 10: \$80K optional-claiming/N1X for 3-year-old fillies going 8-furlongs on turf (rails at 12-ft.)

Post: approx. post 6:02 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

A full field of 3-year-old fillies go postward for this one-mile turf affair contested at the \$80K optional-claiming/N1X level. The rails are at 12-feet.

#1 BLEVYS TIGER (15/1) has three wins to her name, so she knows how to find the wire. That said, all three of her wins have come sprinting on either dirt or synth: She's never been on turf before, and she's never been around two turns. OptixNOTES suggests turf won't be an issue, but this gal will have to go hard from the rail, and I think that will take its toll late on this stretch-out sprinter. GRADE: X.

#2 TAHINI (15/1) is also going sprint to route, and the few times she's routed, she's been on the lead, so she's surely a pace factor in here. I like that she rated and passed horses last time in a turf sprint to get her maiden victory, but she'll have to be aggressively ridden down inside, and I think that will compromise her chances as well. GRADE: X.

#3 IMA JOKER (20/1) looked stylish when breaking her maiden last time against \$62.5K claimers, and O'Neill saw fit to take her out of that race, so he must have seen something he really liked. Before that, this gal was running well against MSWs, so I wouldn't let the drop last time discourage you too much, especially since she showed a nice stretch run to easily win that race. O'Neill is terrific off the claim, so it wouldn't shock me if this one ran well, but she is facing winners for the first time, and that's never easy. GRADE: C.

#4 TIARAQUEEN (GB) (10/1) makes her first U.S. start for Gallagher, who has done well with imports over the years even though the recent record doesn't indicate that. I like that Rispoli takes the call, and he's winning so many turf races these days. I also like that this horse is getting Lasix for the first time, so I'm expecting a peak effort. Will it be enough? Maybe. At the price, I'll pay to find out. GRADE: A.

#5 ESPRIT ENCHANTE (3/1) is the one to beat on paper, but she's had three bites at the apple at this level, and she hasn't been able to get the job done. Granted, she hasn't had the best of trips, so I won't be too harsh, but if this gal doesn't win this today, she might need lesser to shine because this isn't the toughest field for the level. GRADE: A.

#6 HANNAH BUCKLE (IRE) (9/2) was impressive when breaking her maiden a few weeks ago in her first start since April. She was game in victory, surging late and finishing up nicely at nearly 6/1. It's not easy to face winners for the first time after a few maiden races, but there is some quality here, and I'm expecting this one to be running on late to contend for a slice. GRADE: B.

#7 ANTIQUE SILVER (30/1) was 31/1 at this level last time, and she ran to those long odds. I'm not seeing a form reversal here. GRADE: X.

#8 BALTIC FIRE (20/1) came off a layoff last time to beat 11 other maidens to graduate. She took some sneaky money in that race, and she rewarded her backers at 9/1. The waters get deeper today, but she should get a good forwardly placed trip, and if she moves forward she should contend for a slice—but others are more appealing for the top spot. That said, I'm not sure why she's so high on the morning-line. I've seen worse 20/1 shots, if you're a believer. GRADE: C.

#9 KETONIA (FR) (10/1) has won two in a row, but those races came against \$50K maiden-claimers and \$50K starter foes. These gals are much tougher. I'll let her prove she belongs among these. GRADE: X.

#10 HIGHLANDS (20/1) has three wins to her credit, but they were against much weaker company. She was 26/1 at this level two back, and the public got it right. She needs to do much better today. GRADE: X.

#11 WATCHTOWER (7/2) looks pretty good on paper, having won two in a row back East while being trained by Chad Brown. She now makes her first start on the West Coast for Richard Baltas, who is very good with his new trainees—but this is a really tough post with a jock who isn't exactly known for his turf rides. She's an obvious contender, but I'm not too crazy about her at 7/2 all the way out here. GRADE: B.

#12 MISS MEAGHER (IRE) (6/1) makes her U.S. debut for D'Amato, and he is very good with these types. I'm not sure how good those races were at Down Royal and Gowan Park in Ireland, but the owners, Little Red Feather, have good boots on the ground overseas, so this gal must have impressed someone. I'm curious to see how she does, but I'd like her a bit more with a better post. GRADE: B.

CONCLUSION

It's time for #5 **ESPRIT ENCHANTE (3/1)** to finally graduate, but if she falters again today, several of these can win. I'm intrigued by #4 **TIARAQUEEN (GB) (10/1)**, mainly because Rispoli is on board, and I think this gal will come out running with Lasix in her first U.S. start. Plus, the price is right at 10/1.

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