Date: 11/9/24
Race 7: $40K optional-claiming/N1X for fillies & mares going 8.5-furlongs on turf (Rails at 18-ft.)
Post: approx. post 3:33 p.m. PST

OVERVIEW

We've got two contest races to choose from today, so the choice is yours. The first one is this $40K optional-claiming/N1X event for fillies and mares going 8.5-furlongs on the lawn with the rails at 18-feet. I'm expecting a fairly quick pace.

#1 VENGANZA (8/1), the first Baltas, has been a bit of a China doll, so even though she was thought of highly enough to be a part of last year's Santa Anita Oaks (G2), we haven't really seen what she's capable of due to so many fits and starts. I can't abide this 4-year-old on paper, but Rispoli bothers to stick around, so he must think she has more to give. She requires a leap of faith, even at 8/1, but stranger prayers have been answered—and there are no world-beaters in here. GRADE: A.

#2 MOMENT'S PLEASURE (3/1) is a cool 3-year-old Cal-bred who has tactical speed and some solid races over this course to make her a legit contender. That said, she faces open foes today, and do note that Berrios—arguably the best turf jock in the colony—ends up elsewhere. GRADE: B.

#3 LADY CLAYPOOLE (IRE) (12/1), the second Baltas, has one good race at this level, but the best she could manage was third, so she's going to need a step forward to get the W today— but maybe watch the tote to see if she takes any sneaky action, since she's been double-digits the last four times. GRADE: X.

#4 ULTIMATE HY (4/1) is a cool old gal who has earned her keep. She ran a good second at a similar level last time, but she had a good trip and still lost. That was at a mile; now she has to go an extra half-furlong. If she wins, I'll applaud. GRADE: X.

#5 BALTIC FIRE (15/1) has been unable to beat fellow 3-year-olds, so she's up against it today against a salty group of older females. At least she gets in light with a 5-pound bug-boy taking the call. I can see her being prominent early; I'm not so sure about late. GRADE: X.

#6 MS BRIGHTSIDE (IRE) (8/1) was 13/1 at this level last time, and she had some trouble, so I won't hold that fifth-place finish against her. She's a steadily improving sophomore who can take another step forward today, but do note that Rispoli sides with the rail horse, and that's a bit of a concern for me. GRADE: B.

#7 SHOCKING GREY (7/2) has lost a few times at this level already, but she's had some excuses, so I'm expecting her to get over the hump today with Berrios taking the call, since her come-home times stack up well against this field. GRADE: A.

#8 MONTJICA (FR) (9/2) ran second at a similar level last time. She was sent from the rail but was overtaken. I think she'll have to go again from out here, and that doesn't bode well for a horse who likes to be prominent. I do like the jock change, but I can see this one too close to a hot pace, especially with a speed horse outside of her. GRADE: B.

#9 LAMPORGHINI (15/1) takes off the hood, but she only knows one way to go—and she'll have no choice but to go from out here. She looks like a pace casualty to me. GRADE: X.

CONCLUSION

I think **#7 SHOCKING GREY (7/2)** gets the right pace set-up and jock switch to finally get the job done today, but I can't fault anyone for trying to beat her, since she's 0-for-5 here at Del Mar. As mentioned, **#1 VENGANZA (8/1)** requires a leap of faith, and I'd actually want more than 8/1 on her, but I'm going to trust Rispoli more than the paper form.

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DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY
By Frank R. Scatoni
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Date: 11/9/24
Race 9: $20K optional-claiming/N1X for Cal-breds going 8-furlongs on turf (Rails at 18-ft.)
Post: approx. post 4:30 p.m. PST

OVERVIEW

Today's second contest race is also a competitive turf affair, this one being a $20K optional-claiming/N1X for Cal-breds going 8-furlongs on the turf with the rails at 18-feet. I had a very hard time with this race—so many of these horses are evenly matched.

#1 FLY THE SKY (15/1) is a cool old pro who is a total throwback. He likes to run; he likes to work; and he knows how to earn his keep. That said, this 7-year-old hasn't won in a long time, so he'll need to show a bit more oomph in here—but it should be noted that his best recent work has come at this level. Expect him to be rolling late…but will it be too late? GRADE: C.

#2 BIG GEORGE (9/2) has run a mixed bag of races at this level, but he hasn't been able to break through. Granted, he's had some trouble, and I like that Berrios still keeps the faith—but he's a deep closer, so that means he's always at the mercy of pace and trip. Luckily for him, he should get a pace to close into today if he can negotiate a clean trip. GRADE: B.

#3 I'LLHAVEANOTHERWON (8/1) looked great breaking his maiden last time, but soon after that victory, his connections gelded him? That seems odd to me. Regardless, he's a lightly raced 4-year-old who can still improve, but he faces winners for the first time, and if you believe that last speed fig, he will have to improve a lot. GRADE: X.

#4 DON'T FIGHT THE FED (4/1) has run too good to lose a few times before at this level, so you have to consider him—but then again, can you trust a horse who has come up on the wrong end of the photo a few times? In a contest, and at 4/1, the answer is: no. GRADE: B.

#5 ENJOY IT STRAIT (5/1) gets some class relief after trying to wire open $40K types last time. The hood comes off, and Rispoli sticks around after that sixth-place finish. He has a win at this level, and 5/1 seems like good value on a horse who should get a great trip. GRADE: A.

#6 KERRY GOLD (20/1), the first Azcarate entrant, ran creditably against tougher last time, and you can draw a line through all of his previous races until you get to that solid second-place finish at this level when he was claimed by shrewd connections. His turf route figs stack up well against most of these, and you're getting a way better price than so many of the others. Upset special? GRADE: A.

#7 TAKES THREE (7/2) has never run a bad race at this level—and therein lies the rub! He's run several good races, but he hasn't won. Sure, this 3-year-old still has room to improve, but this is a solid group, and 7/2 does us no favors in the contest. GRADE: B.

#8 JACK SIXPACK (5/1) will try to stretch out after two troubled trips sprinting from wide posts. Normally, I'd say that's sneaky, but this guy has been sprinting for a while, so I wonder if there is some kind of issue going on. Regardless, I trust D'Amato, so I won't read too much into that. Still, I am a little confused by the lack of route attempts the past two years. GRADE: C.

#9 DAZZLE THE COMMAND (20/1) goes inside to outside, and that's not a good thing on turf, especially when you've already been beaten several times at this level. GRADE: X.

#10 BRAZENLY (12/1), the second Azcarate runner, ran a monster race on dirt here over the summer when crushing at this level. He tried this level on turf last time, and he flattened out after a wide trip. Unfortunately, he's looking at a wide trip again today, but I can also see Maldonado just gunning hard and hoping for the best. Either way, his trip is going to compromise his chances. That said, he stacks up nicely on figures, if you're a believer. GRADE: C.

CONCLUSION

This is a really tough race. I don't have a top pick in here, nor can I tell you who I think the most likely winner is, but I can tell you that **#6 KERRY GOLD (20/1)** should outrun his 20/1 odds. That might mean a fourth-place finish, but if he manages to win, wouldn't you rather have him in the contest than not?!?!?!

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