DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY
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Date: 11/16/24
Race 8: Cal-bred $20K optional-claiming/N1X contested at 6-furlongs on the main track
Post: approx. post 4:00 p.m. PST

OVERVIEW

What a solid AOC for Cal-breds going 6-furlongs on the main track. I think this is a great betting race. The two top choices are debut winners who put up solid figs. I live to beat horses like this! But with whom? The rest of the field isn't spectacular, but let's see if we can find someone to upset the apple cart.

#1 BLACK BEARDS GHOST (7/2) won convincingly in his debut. He broke from the two-hole, contested the lead and then drew off to win easily. Hats off to him. Can he move forward off that, breaking from the rail and facing winners for the first time? I have to bet against. He faced four other horses in that race, and he was a bit green, despite the dominating performance. GRADE: C.

#2 AFTERNOON NAP (6/1) looks very interesting to me. This 4-year-old has looked good while racing on turf, but his works suggest that dirt shouldn't be a problem—and Hernandez agrees, since he strings along. The horse is tactical, so I can see him tracking the pace, tipping out, and finishing strongly for the W. GRADE: A.

#3 DISOBEY—program scratch.

#4 GOOD VIBES ONLY (15/1), which is what Del Mar is all about, has speed, with or without the hood, so even though the blinks come off, this guy should be prominent early. He hasn't shown much stamina late, and his last win came going shorter at Los Al. GRADE: X.

#5 TRAVELIN' SHOW (20/1) has raced almost exclusively on turf, and he's been a cut below this level on that surface. Lewis will move him to dirt, which is where he started his career. He ran okay in his dirt debut, but there must be a reason why he's been racing on turf. He can beat me. GRADE: X.

#6 J DUTTON (15/1) has been knocking heads with some decent animals in the minor leagues, so we'll see how he handles his return to the big-boy circuit. His best work has come going longer, but he ran some okay races back in the day around one turn. He should be fit and finishing up nicely, and 15/1 seems like a great price on a graded-stakes placed animal. GRADE: B.

#7 SMILING BEAST (5/2) looked terrific when breaking his maiden at first-asking back in May—but keep in mind that he was the only 4-year-old in that 6-horse field, so he had an advantage. Plus, he was even-money that day, so this Koriner trainee was supposed to win. I expected a bounce in start number-two, but he was laid up after that race, and he now comes back a fresh horse. If he moves forward off that,

he's going to be tough—but if he's a cinch, why does win-rider Hernandez side with another? Hmmm… GRADE: B.

#8 UNBRIDLED VISION (12/1) looks sneaky to me. He has two wins to his name, and those victories came with different run styles, so I like that he's tractable. More importantly, those races were on synth, and with his breeding, he should be much better on dirt. There's a reason he cost $240K. I know he's been off since February, and I'm not sure why he was scratched out of a similar race at Santa Anita, but you don't ship a horse from Pleasanton to Del Mar unless you think you can win. GRADE: A.

#9 BEE EYE GEE (10/1), the second Koriner horse, has upset potential. He's got a good outside post, and he should get a great tracking trip while racing in the clear. Two back, he missed by a neck at this level at 40/1. He won't be that price today, but if the track continues to tilt toward the outside, this guy could easily surprise. GRADE: A.

#10 DEVIL AMONG US (6/1) ran a good second in his first start for O'Neill off the claim. I like that he's protecting him today, but those conditional claiming races aren't as tough as this Cal-bred AOC. Still, I can see him getting a good forwardly placed trip on the best part of the track, and Fresu is riding lights out. GRADE: B.

#11 SPIRITUAL ADVISOR (8/1) is a good exotics horse, since he always seems to fire—but he's 1-for-16 with several defeats at this level. That said, if the track is favoring the outside, this guy could finally break through. He's not a horse I would typically endorse, but if he's ever going to win at this level, today would be the day. GRADE: B.

CONCLUSION

As you can see, there are plenty of places to land in here, if you're as bold as I am by taking on the top two choices. You can let the tote decide, but you also better be sure to play exactas with: **#2 AFTERNOON NAP (6/1)**, **#8 UNBRIDLED VISION (12/1)**, and **#9 BEE EYE GEE (10/1)**.

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