DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

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Date: 11/11/2017
Race 6: $32K/N1Y contested at 9-furlongs turf.
Post: 3:04 pm PST

OVERVIEW

Today's contest race is a time-restricted $32K claimer for horses who haven't won a race in 2017—so we're dealing with some camera-shy animals. The rails are at 24-feet in this 9-furlong turf affair, and there doesn't seem to be much pace entered here, so it will be very interesting to see which jocks take advantage in a race that definitely lacks a clear pacesetter.

#1 CROWN THE KITTEN (7/2) is a great horse to own but a frustrating one to bet on, since he really has a habit of settling for the minor awards—with 14 placings compared to four wins. He does have a little tactical speed, and he's coming out of mile races, so Stevens should be aggressive from the rail in this paceless race. He's always right there, making him a contender, but he's tough to pick for the top spot, since his last win came all the way back in the Obama Administration. GRADE: B.

#2 ALASKAN SON (IRE) (8/1) was 15/1 at this level three-back, where he finished fifth in a blanket finish with several of today's foes when going a mile—but he had some trouble in that race, and he was finishing very nicely. You can toss his next two races against much tougher runners and just focus on his come-home times in each of those 9-furlong races. They are good enough to win this—but it's a shame that he won't have a pace to close into. Still, his late pace makes him a contender at a square price. GRADE: A.

#3 ATOMIC RULE (15/1) has tactical speed, so it would behoove Arias to use that early foot to either dictate the pace or sit off Crown the Kitten should Stevens decide to gun from the rail. There was a time when this guy would have toyed with this field, but his last two races have shown a marked decline in this 7-year-old's form, losing twice at today's level. That said, those races were at a mile, while today he gets to run 9-panels, which was always a good distance for him—but he will need a form-reversal today. GRADE: C.

#4 ROYAL ALBERT HALL (GB) (5/2) makes his first start for Baltas, who promptly runs this guy in a career soft spot. He brings a major class edge to the table, having run well enough to place against some very good turf runners, but he always seemed to lack that added oomph in the lane. Granted, he's now facing a field of runners who also lack the eye of the tiger, so he'll have every chance to get the win under the best turf rider on the circuit, Kent Desormeaux, who should have him in a good tracking spot if the pace is too slow. GRADE: A.

#5 PLAY HARD TO GET (5/1) has always had a decent late kick against better horses, so he too must be considered while dropping in class today after failing to cash a check against N2X types. In fact, this guy hasn't won in a very long time, so he'll have to shirk off some very bad habits while making his move

from off the pace. He's capable on his very best day, but note that Buymeabond has him on form. GRADE: C.

#6 EXCESSIVE KID (8/1), the second Baltas runner, has tried this condition three times to no avail, though he did run a close second three-back when trained by O'Neill. Baltas took him soon after and tried him against much tougher $40K foes, but a slow start compromised his chances. He'll appreciate being back in amongst his friends, but he does his best work from off the pace, and I'm not sure he'll get the right pace set-up today. That said, Frey is a pretty aggressive jockey, so maybe he'll have this guy in a better tactical position today—but he'll still have several lengths to make up on Royal Albert Hall (GB). GRADE: C.

#7 BUYMEABOND (5/1) is a cool, old warrior who always comes on for a late run, trying his best to get to that wire—but that running style is partly the reason why he hasn't won in a while. He's always at the mercy of trip and pace. He enters this off two sub-par races for him, however, so he's going to need to do better—especially since he had no real excuses last time (while two back, he at least had an excuse breaking from the 10-hole). He's usable in your exotics, but he'll need everything to go right for him to get the win. GRADE: C.

#8 LORD OF CHAOS (5/1) has run respectably at this level, but he's had three tries to get the job done, yet someone always seems to get the measure of him. On the plus side, he does love Del Mar, never having run a bad race here. On the down side, he's a 5-year-old who has never been this far, so he'll have to prove he can outkick a few runners who have done good work at 9-furlongs. GRADE: C.

CONCLUSION
#4 ROYAL ALBERT HALL (GB) towers over the field class-wise, but he'll be the deserving favorite and offer little value in the contest. **#2 ALASKAN SON (IRE)**, however, should be the right price, and his one race at this level showed that he could easily compete against the rest of these should the favorite fail to fire.