

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

By Frank R. Scatoni
On Twitter @ScatoniSureShot

Date: 7/31/20

Race 7: Cal-bred \$20K optional-claiming/N1X contested at 6-furlong on main track

Post: approx. post 5:07 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

I'll be the first to admit that I'm a little out of step at the moment—unable to find value horses who are firing. I am undeterred, however, since it usually takes me a week or so to get into the Del Mar groove—and this year is even trickier, since I can't even be on track. Still, maybe a switch to a main-track event will help shake things up. Let's see if I can get on the good foot here in this Cal-bred \$20K optional-claiming/N1X contested at 6-furlongs on the dirt.

#1 TRIBAL WAR CHANT (12/1), a NorCal invader, is 0-for-2 on dirt, but he did just run a career-best **OptixFIG** when racing on the dirt at Pleasanton last time against N1X foes. It was a good second, where he rallied from off the pace, and a repeat of that race would put him in the frame today. Unfortunately, he has to break from the rail, and that means he'll have to work out a good trip in this big field. He does have some tactical speed though, so it wouldn't surprise me if Espinoza was overaggressive early on. Either way, things will need to go right for this 4-year-old. GRADE: C.

#2 RINSE AND REPEAT (12/1) wouldn't be the worst claim for \$20K, since this 6-year-old is a total pro who picks up a lot of checks. He's coming off two decent second-place finishes at this level, but I have to say that those fields were weaker than the one he faces today. He's always been a grinder, and he'll be trying all the way to the wire—but an inside post coupled with the fact that he hasn't gotten the job done at this level after many tries makes him more suitable for underneath. GRADE: C.

#3 BRICKYARD RIDE (5/2) is your morning-line favorite by dint of his two recent fast races, where he sped to the front and never looked back. Last time, he won at this level while racing on turf, so he's allowed to race right back at this same level and not have to run for a tag, since this race is on dirt. The fact that he has already won at this level is a good thing—but he offers little value in here, and I'm going to bet someone will run this 3-year-old down (banking on the fact that speed just hasn't carried that well so far this meet). I'm also looking to beat all of the sophomores in here, hence my harsh letter-grade (but you can feel free to upgrade as you see fit). GRADE: C.

#4 CALI DUDE (4/1) makes his 3-year-old debut after running second in the Golden State Juvenile back in November in just his second career start. The fact that his connections ran him in that race off just a maiden win is encouraging, so you know there must be plenty of upside still here—and you have to love the fact that Prat takes the mount. He should also get a good trip just taking dead aim on Brickyard Ride. Sadler can have them ready to run off this kind of layoff, but I still want to back an older horse in this group. GRADE: C.

#5 MR PAYTIENCE (10/1) is my top pick in the race. In fact, I really like him in here because I think he'll get a good stalking trip on the best (outside) part of the track, and he looks like he's sitting on a peak effort to me after bouncing to the moon last time in his second start after a 421-day layoff. He also broke through the gate that day, so you can totally ex-out that “poor” effort at this level as the 7/5 favorite. Most

top-sheeters will just look at that race and ignore him, but all of his races prior to that (including a Cal-bred stakes-placed third back in 2018) are much better than that one race. He should bounce back today with a solid performance. GRADE: A.

#6 APPRECIATED (15/1) cleared this Cal-bred N1X hurdle on turf, so he doesn't have to run for the tag today while racing on dirt. While that gives him somewhat of an advantage, the fact remains that he's winless in six tries on dirt, and his best work has come on the lawn. I can see him chasing the pace while trying to grind away for a slice. GRADE: C.

#7 SUMMER FIRE (8/1) is a 3-year-old who was just claimed by Miller for \$50K and who was recently gelded. When trained by Hess, this guy ran three times at the Cal-bred N1X level, with his best finish being a fourth in a 5.5-furlong turf-sprint. His dirt form isn't terrible, but he would need a step forward today. That said, Miller is currently 31 percent (according to *DRF*) first off the claim, so improvement is very likely. GRADE: C.

#8 SQUARE DEAL (8/1) is another 3-year-old who was recently gelded, so we'll see if he can get back to the form that saw him cross the wire first in two Cal-bred stakes races here at Del Mar last year when he was a juvenile. Since those wins, he's run three blah races in a row, so it's no surprise that the ultimate equipment change is being tried today. Maybe a return to the seaside oval will do this one some good, and it wouldn't shock me if he ran much better today making his second start after a November layoff. Will it be good enough? GRADE: C.

#9 SILKEN PRINCE (6/1) has a shot, since I know this guy will be running on late—and you have to respect the fact that he's getting class-relief today after squaring off against and not being disgraced by some decent open N1X foes. He's also drawn outside, and that will be an advantage for him. He often leaves himself with too much to do, however, so Franco will need to time everything right—so maybe he's better used as an underneath key (though if the price is right, he's also worthy of a win bet). GRADE: B.

#10 QUICK FINISH (10/1) is another contender in here: he's drawn outside, has races fast enough to win this, and should be sitting on a peak effort third off the bench. He's also cleared this hurdle while racing on turf, so he's already shown he can beat these types. I don't like that he usually weakens late, but if the outside lanes consider to be favorable, that could easily help him get over the hump today. GRADE: A.

CONCLUSION

#5 MR PAYTIENCE is my top choice, and I will bet him accordingly, though I don't think we'll get 8/1. Also, if the outside lanes continue to be good, look for **#10 QUICK FINISH** to have a big say in the outcome as well.

If you'd like to learn more about **OptixEQ**, visit www.optixeq.com.