

DEL MAR FEATURE RACE OF THE DAY

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Race 9: \$40K optional-claiming/N1X contested at 5F on turf (rails at 18-feet)

Post: approx. post 6:10 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

We've got a tricky contest race today, a \$40K optional-claiming/N1X contested at 5-furlongs on turf with the rails at 18-feet. As usual, you want to find someone who is going to be forwardly placed in here, regardless of the pace scenario (which should be quick today), since these turf sprints are won with tactics—especially with the rails out.

#1 SEVEN SCENTS (8/1) has run two solid races in a row while turf-sprinting. Two back, he closed nicely to easily beat restricted \$35K/N3L claimers going 5.5-furlongs at Santa Anita; last time, he came off a freshening to run a valiant third against \$40K claimers over this course and distance, putting in a solid late run to finish third (losing to Nero). He enjoyed good inside-out trips in those races, and he's likely to get that again while breaking from the rail post—but that is also rarely the winning move in 5-furlong turf sprints here at Del Mar. Plus, he faces a tougher field today—and it will be interesting to see if the blinkers-on move takes some starch out of his stretch run. GRADE: C.

#2 NERO (5/1) just beat Seven Scents in a \$40K claiming event with a perfect trip, where he just tracked a few lengths behind the speed and then moved through the lane to win by a head. It was a solid performance, but he's going to need to do better today against tougher animals. You can expect him to get a similar trip today—then we'll see if he's good enough to run down some quick turf-sprinters. GRADE: B.

#3 DEVIL MADE ME DOIT (7/2) had some hype surrounding him last year when he was sent off at 15/10 in his debut, and he delivered the goods, romping to a 9-plus length victory in that December MSW going 6-furlongs on the Santa Anita main-track. He made the lead and just kept widening. It was visually impressive, but he had things his own way—and who was behind him? No one from that race came back to win their next starts, so the quality of that field remains suspect. It's also disconcerting to see him hit the shelf for so long after that maiden romp. He returns here with some good works in tow while shortening up and moving to turf for his comebacker, which means he'll have every chance to get the job done today—but do you want 7/2 on such a big question mark? GRADE: B.

#4 TILTED TOWERS (8/1) made his second start as a 4-year-old a winning one, attending the pace and drawing away to easily best a field of seven other MSWs while going today's distance over this course. It was a nice effort, but he was poised to run a good race second off the bench and coming out of a race where he showed some run despite early trouble. Can he move forward again today? That is the question he will have to answer. GRADE: C.

#5 SILARDI (12/1) is the wise-guy pick in here, since it's not often you get a Peter Miller turf-sprinter at double-digit odds on the morning-line. This guy has tactical speed and two wins turf-sprinting at Santa Anita, so you can just ex-out his last two races: two back, he tried routing and was just a pace factor in the Oceanside, while last time, he was racing on dirt. This 3-year-old gets back to what he likes to do best—

and it should be noted that he's in for the optional tag today because he already cleared this condition, winning an N1X three back against Whooping Jay, who is a decent turf horse. GRADE: A.

#6 BRICKYARD RIDE (9/2) has sharp early speed and rarely runs a bad race, making him a legitimate contender today after exiting a Cal-bred entry-level dirt allowance, where he went too fast early on a closer-friendly surface. Before that, he beat Cal-breds on the turf—and before that, he beat open N1X foes on the dirt, just like he's facing today. Lewis has done a good job taking advantage of the stipulation that says a horse is still eligible for an allowance condition even if he has won at this level before—so long as it's not on the same surface. This guy won an N1X on dirt, so he's eligible for an N1X on turf. His early speed, combined with the presence of Prat, means he's very well-meant today. GRADE: A.

#7 SHAKE N FRIES (20/1) has shown early speed against lesser foes, but he's probably going to end up chasing a hot pace today and wilting, since this is the toughest level he's ever raced at. Last time, he couldn't beat \$16K claimers up north when turf-sprinting for the first time. I'm not sure why he would move forward today off that mediocre effort. GRADE: X.

#8 THANKS MR. EIDSON (6/1) usually puts forth an honest effort, no matter what level, surface, or distance he's racing at. Last time, he picked up a check in the Smiling Tiger stakes on dirt, a race that should set him up nicely for his return to turf today. His previous two turf-sprints saw him run good thirds against some quality turf-sprinters, so he'll have every chance to show his best stuff today. Will it be good enough? He does have a tendency to settle for the minor awards, and I can see him having a little trouble today while chasing a quick pace—but he's usable in your exotics (and could even win).

#9 CRUEL INTENTION (4/1) is a Baffert 4-year-old who is coming off a September layoff and trying turf for the first time—not usually a good sign, especially since this guy showed promise as a 2-year-old while racing on dirt way back in 2018. His 3-year-old campaign wasn't bad, but he couldn't get the job done twice at the N1X level, so Baffert looks to shake things up today with this guy's comeback race. He should take to the lawn, but he's going to have to work hard from out here to either clear (and he's fast enough to do it) or just stalk a quick pace while racing wide (not the best place to be into the turn). It wouldn't shock me if this one ran well today—but it also wouldn't shock me if he was off the board. Regardless, I have to take him on today because the negatives outweigh the positives in my mind—but do watch the tote. If he sneaks away at a good price, you can certainly use him. GRADE: C.

CONCLUSION

There are a few ways to go here, but I'm not going to overcomplicate things when there is a Peter Miller turf-sprinter in here at 12/1 who has some merit: **#5 SILARDI** will be my wise-guy win-bet in this race. But I can't fault anyone for landing somewhere else in this wide-open race. Good luck!

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