

DEL MAR FEATURE RACE OF THE DAY

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Date: 11/6/20

Race 4: Cal-bred \$20K optional-claiming/N1X contested at 5-furlongs on the lawn (rails at 18-ft.)

Post: approx. post 2:32 p.m. PST

OVERVIEW

It's week two of the Bing Crosby season, and it's also Breeders' Cup Friday, so we've got lots of terrific racing action from coast to coast. If you want some of my Breeders' Cup commentary, you can sign up for a special Breeders' Cup package from @OptixEQ, the platform that I use to do most of my handicapping. You get all the data for the two Breeders' Cup days (plus all other tracks) as well as detailed analysis of every Breeders' Cup race by the Optix analysts. More info can be found here: <https://optixeq.com/pricing-plans/>.

Also, remember to tune in on Sunday mornings at 11:00 a.m. PST for my "Best Bet" seminar, where I go over certain sequences and wagering strategies with a special guest. Last week, Leo Vukmanovich gave out some great price horses who fired big. This week, I've got another value-player scheduled: Ciaran Thornton (@CaliforniaPick4), who contributes to the *San Diego Union-Tribune* handicapping page and the *Los Angeles Times* horseracing newsletter. Be sure to mark your calendars!

Now let's get back to business! Today's contest race is a Cal-bred \$20K optional-claiming/N1X contested at 5-furlongs on the lawn with the rails at 18-feet. We've seen what most of these can do, so I don't really trust any of the logical contenders, so I'm going price-shopping.

#1 COALINGA ROAD (5/2) has speed, which is an asset in any race let alone one at 5-furlongs, but he has to break from the rail with other speed outside of him who will push him every step of the way, and that could prove a problem late. Still, this lightly raced 3-year-old has run well in every one of his starts, and you can toss his last race going 5.5-furlongs at Santa Anita where he stumbled badly at the start and needed to be hustled into the race to attend the pace. GRADE: B.

#2 RICKEY B (20/1) did very good work back in the day, but this guy hasn't won in a long time, and his recent races at this level—while on dirt—weren't good enough. He's only raced once on turf in 16 tries, so I'm having a hard time seeing him get the job done today moving to the lawn. GRADE: X.

#3 PERFECT FANNY (20/1) invades from the minor leagues in New Mexico, where he couldn't get the job done against open allowance foes while sprinting on dirt. I don't think the surface switch or the circuit change is going to help him much, but it is interesting to see this 3-year-old add Lasix for the first time today. GRADE: X.

#4 ZIPPER MISCHIEF (5/1) was a top-pick single "A" for me last time at 5/1 in a wide-open race, and he ran too good to lose, opening up in deep stretch only to get leg weary late and run down at the wire in that 5.5-furlong affair at Santa Anita. Well, he gets to shorten up today while retaining a 7-pound weight-break. He's an obvious contender here—and he should get a good stalking trip behind the two speed horses—but last time was the time I needed him at such a good price. I think he'll be shorter than 5/1 today, but if he's not, he's a decent play again right back. GRADE: A.

#5 HIT THE SEAM (4/1) has sharp early speed, so he will be keeping Coalinga Road company throughout the race—then we'll see if those two can just keep going with the rails set at 18-feet. You have to admire this guy's consistency, since he fires every time and is always right there at the wire—but he also has a tendency to settle for the minor awards, so we'll see if he can finally break through at this level today after a few failed attempts. He's obvious, but he offers little value in the contest, since I have a hard time seeing him going off as a high as 4/1. GRADE: B.

#6 MR. BROWNSTONE (8/1) gets the reluctant nod in here as the new face in an exposed crowd. He broke his maiden in sharp fashion going 5-furlongs at Santa Anita way back in May 2019. He then came off a two-month layoff and ran two okay races at this level while running on the dirt. I actually really liked him back on August 17, 2019, when he set the pace and ran a very good second to a next-out winner at 15/1, but something went wrong, and he hasn't been seen since. Puype does good work with comebacks, and I like that he's getting back on turf. If he has matured at all from 3- to 4-years-old, he could certainly have a say in the outcome at a square price—but we are taking a leap of faith here. GRADE: A.

#7 BRIX (3/1) took a while to break his maiden, but once he did, he followed it up with a sharp starter-allowance win at today's distance over this course, tracking the pace and finishing up nicely to win by a neck at 7/2. His two races against this kind of company, however, haven't been good enough to get the job done. He will be out there trying all the way to the wire—and he should get a pace to run at—but I can see him getting a 3-wide tracking trip in here, and that's not where you need to be on this course and at this distance. Also, I'm surprised he's as low as 3/1 on the morning-line. At that price, I'm really not interested. GRADE: C.

~~#8 SUNRISE JOURNEY (4/1) has been a win machine up north, beating up on open claimers and starter foes while acting on both synth and turf. His two recent wins saw him make the lead and never look back—but he's going to have to work for the lead today with speed to his inside. He'll probably end up sitting right outside of Coalinga Road and Hit the Seam, and then we'll see if he's good enough to beat Cal-bred allowance types. It's hard to knock his sharp form and brilliant speed, but he will have to prove himself on this circuit today. GRADE: B.~~

CONCLUSION

I think **#6 MR. BROWNSTONE** is the value play in here. If he's improved at all from last year, he is a major threat against a bunch of horses who have already shown what they are capable of running. Sure, he might not run a step off such a long layoff, but I'm willing to pay to play and find out. If you're not interested in him, **#4 ZIPPER MISCHIEF** is a reasonable alternative, though I suspect he'll go off shorter than his 5/1 morning-line.

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