

DEL MAR FEATURE RACE OF THE DAY

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Date: 11/14/20

Race 6: \$40K optional-claiming/N1X contested at 8-furlongs on the main track

Post: approx. post 3:00 p.m. PST

OVERVIEW

We've got nine races slated for today's Saturday card with a good mix of both dirt and turf racing. Today's contest race will be on the main track: a neat \$40K optional-claiming/N1X contested at 8-furlongs on the dirt. We've got some interesting 3-year-olds lined up in here, so which one will take the requisite step forward today or will the race be won by an older runner?

Before we dig into the race, just a quick reminder: tune in this Sunday morning at 11:00 a.m. PST for my "Best Bet" seminar, where I go over certain sequences and wagering strategies with a special guest. This week's guest is Christopher Ado (on Twitter @ChristopherAdo), a sharp young player who used to be a Wagering Ambassador at Santa Anita Park and now currently writes his own handicapping/wagering blog where his wagering philosophy is to search for that vulnerable favorite and capitalize on it. Should be a great seminar, so be sure to mark your calendars! It streams on the Del Mar Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube pages, but for more information, click here:

<https://www.dmtc.com/calendar/detail/bestbet>.

#1 BLUE JAYS (15/1) was 42/1 two back against a few of today's foes (and fellow 3-year-olds), and he ran an even fourth. That was way back in January, and he hit the shelf after that not showing up again until October, when he was shipped up north to break his maiden going 5.5-furlongs on the synth. He now makes the second start of his form cycle while having to face winners for the first time, while stretching back out and moving to the main track. He'll need to show marked improvement, but there must be a reason why Rispoli was enticed to ride. GRADE: C.

#2 DARK PRINCE (12/1) is a 4-year-old who doesn't look like much on paper, but he has blazing early speed and an aggressive jock, so he should be out there winging it on the front end. Problem is: he hasn't shown much stamina, and it should be noted that he needed to run for a tag (albeit a \$100K one) to break his maiden while going a mile on turf. Usually when Baffert goes the turf route, it's because they can't run on dirt. His two turf efforts at this level this year saw him set the pace and weaken, so he'll need to do a lot better today while moving to the main track. Note: he races with "goggles off" today. GRADE: X.

#3 DIVINE ARMOR (5/1) is a 3-year-old who traded decisions with morning-line favorite Kiss Today Goodbye earlier in the year, so we'll see which one of those two does better today. This one is coming off a recent maiden-breaker, where he sat comfortably off a very fast pace and then powered home to win easily at 5/1. In his dirt races before that, he showed he could be closer to the pace if need be, which will give Pereira options in this race. It's not easy to step up and beat winners for the first time, but this guy has some ability, and it's not like he's facing any monsters in here (while seeing a few familiar faces). GRADE: A.

#4 OIL CAN KNIGHT (12/1) is a hard-knocking 4-year-old who has done fine work sprinting against weaker foes. In fact, this is his first try around two turns, so we'll see if this stretch-out sprinter can be more than just a pace factor today. His last race was sharp, but he got a perfect trip against five other

\$20K claimers going 6.5-furlongs. This is a different ballgame today. On the plus side, he doesn't have to face any superstars, so if the 3-year-olds don't improve, he could have a say in the outcome, assuming he takes to two turns. Still, I prefer others. GRADE: X.

#5 SECRET TOUCH (3/1) is a 6-year-old who has had a very honest career, always showing up for work when spotted correctly, and that means he's been at his best against claiming company. New trainer Hess, who just took him for \$32K, shows a vote of confidence today by running him in this entry-level allowance race while protecting him. Clearly, this popular claim-box item is in fine fettle, and he has races against weaker foes that are certainly a solid fit in here. The question is: can he be as competitive against protected company? He should trip out, and he's lucky he catches an evenly matched group today, making him an obvious—but class-questionable—contender. GRADE: B.

#6 CANADIAN PRIDE (3/1) is a 3-year-old who stretches out after a very fast sprint win at Santa Anita, where he contested the pace and drew off to win convincingly. It was a good effort, but he did catch a speed-favoring track that day and he will be part of a swift pace today. We'll also see if he can carry his speed around two turns. He's sure to take money based on that gaudy speed-figure from last race, as well as the fact that Prat sticks around, but he has some questions he'll need to answer today (and I don't like that he was risked for a \$75K tag three back when they tried him on turf). He could win, but you can have him at 3/1. GRADE: C.

#7 MYSTERY MAN (6/1) was able to dictate a modest pace in a short four-horse field when he wired that group to break his maiden. It was a decent effort, but he faced no adversity at all that day, while today he's going to have to show he can rate and pass horses—or risk getting caught up in a speed duel. He's facing winners for the first time as well, so there are some hurdles to overcome here. That said, he's cut out to be a nice horse, and he's in fine hands with Mandella, so improvement is certainly possible—though I'm siding with others. GRADE: C.

#8 KISS TODAY GOODBYE (5/2) should benefit from a decent early pace, so you can expect him to come on with his stretch run, especially since he'll be super-fit cutting back from two 9-furlong turf races where he was running against stakes-caliber sophomores. He looks like the horse to beat, but it should be noted that Divine Armor is right there with him and will likely be a better price. Also, this guy is destined for a wide journey with Espinoza doing the steering, since there's very little chance he's going to try to save ground from out here. He looks like the one to beat, especially if he runs back to his Shared Belief performance, but he's no cinch, and he's likely to offer little value as the morning-line favorite. GRADE: B.

CONCLUSION

#3 DIVINE ARMOR seems to be some value in here, since he's not far off the morning-line favorite, and he's shown he can sit off a hot pace and pass horses, something he did to great effect last time when breaking his maiden.

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