DEL MAR FEATURE RACE OF THE DAY

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Date: 11/20/20
Race 6: $20K optional-claiming/N1X for Cal-breds contested at 8-furlongs on turf (rails at 30-feet)
Post: approx. post 3:08 p.m. PST

OVERVIEW

Before I get to today's contest race, just a quick reminder: don't forget to tune in 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 Dylan Donnelly, current leader of the NHC Tour and recent third-place finisher in the Breeders' Cup Betting Challenge, where he won more than $260,000! We'll talk tournament strategy and discuss some of the bets that led him to such a big score. It streams on the Del Mar Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube pages, but for more information, click here:
https://www.dmtc.com/calendar/detail/bestbet.

Okay, let's get to today's race, which kicks off the penultimate week of racing during the Bing meeting. We've got a Cal-bred $20K optional-claiming/N1X event contested at 8-furlongs on the lawn with the rails at 30-feet.

#1 RUSTIC CANYON (5/2) is obvious in here off his recent Santa Anita win at this distance and level. Tamayo doesn't bother to see if he can be competitive against open foes, however, so he runs back here against Cal-breds for the $20K tag, which is a little concerning. He has versatility, but I wonder if Gonzalez will be aggressive from inside with the rails at 30-feet, and if so, will he get caught up in a hot pace. Either way, he's a fit against these, but he'll offer little value, and I'll look elsewhere. GRADE: B.

#2 TROPICAL TERROR (4/1) was 7/1 last time at this level while facing winners as a maiden, yet he did the business and looked really good powering home to win that 10-furlong affair. And therein lies the rub: this guy needed all that extra ground to finally graduate. His races at a mile, while perfectly fine, were always "too little too late." You can expect him to come from the clouds, but everything will need to go right for him today at this shorter distance. GRADE: C.

#3 SEA OF LIBERTY (5/1) was the 7/5 favorite at this level and distance last time at Santa Anita, but a wide journey prevented him from showing the necessary starch in the lane to get things done. Before that, he ran a few good races at this level (and with trouble), but it should be noted that he did need help to get his MSW and starter-allowance wins thanks to a 5-pound apprentice weight-break, which he hasn't had since. He's capable with a clean trip, but it should be noted that the barn is on a bit of a cold streak. GRADE: C.

#4 HANDSOME CAT (8/1) has won two in a row, including a victory at this level two back when he looked sharp beating Cal-bred sprinters. Because that win was on the dirt, he's allowed to run back at this N1X level on turf while still being protected. That's the good news; the bad is: he's 0-for-5 on the turf, and all three of his wins have come around one turn. I can see this as being just a tune-up for a cutback on dirt next time—though there is no denying his recent good form. GRADE: C.

#5 FIRST PREZ (4/1) launched a nice rally to mow them all down last time going 5.5-furlongs on turf, graduating in fine fashion. That said, he stumbled at the start, and that slow beginning worked to his advantage, as he got helped by a blistering early pace, so we'll see if he can show the same late kick while going around two turns today and facing winners. I like that win-rider Rispoli sticks around, but I'm tempted to watch one. GRADE: C.

#6 FLY TO MARS (7/2) was a really fast horse back in the day, but this 6-year-old just isn't the same, so he's running for the $20K tag today while making his fourth start after a very long layoff. He took money in all three of his previous tries, but he disappointed his backers by failing to even hit the board. That said, Prat rides him for the first time in a long time, so I have to think that this old boy is ready to turn back the clock with a much-improved effort today. GRADE: B.

#7 CLAYTON DELANEY (12/1), the first D'Amato entrant, will be the sneaky play in here, since this guy always hinted at ability, and he now gets to stretch out for the first time after smoking home a final quarter last time in a 5.5-furlong sprint that just leaps off the page. He should be well-positioned as a stretch-out sprinter, and Cedillo knows him well. We are taking a leap of faith here, but the price should be right. I can see him just tracking off the pace, and then we'll see if he can show the same oomph while going a route of ground. GRADE: A.

#8 MYSTERIOUS STONES (20/1), the second D'Amato runner, makes his first start for a new barn after running a mixed bag of races up north while showing versatility on turf and synth. He hasn't been seen since March, however, and it should be noted that he did need $20K maidens to graduate after failing to make a dent on this circuit back when he was racing on dirt. Obviously, his turf form is much better, so I'm not surprised D'Amato is running him here. It's just a matter of whether or not this 3-year-old has matured enough to be competitive against the likes of these, since his past form looks a cut below the top few in here. GRADE: C.

CONCLUSION
It's getting close to now-or-never time for #6 FLY TO MARS, but he'll offer little value in here, which is why I'm trying to think outside the box and go with a 3-year-old who has some upside: **#7 CLAYTON DELANEY**. I really like the way he finished up last time going 5.5-furlongs, so if he relishes the two turns today, look out!

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