

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

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Race 7: \$40K optional-claiming/N1X contested at 11-furlongs on turf (rails at 30-feet).

Post: approx. post 7:00 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

What a doozy of a contest race: an 11-furlong turf affair with the rails at 30-feet. This \$40K optional-claiming/N1X drew an oversubscribed field of 11 runners (10 will start), and I thought several of these had a chance, but it's really going to come down to who can take advantage of what seems to be a paceless race.

#1 FARQUHAR (4/1) has been a career nibbler, completely lacking the eye of the tiger in all but one of his 15 starts—but he's not likely to get an easier spot at this level, since he has tactical speed, draws inside, and stretches out while making the second start of his form cycle. He's never been this far, but his come-home times suggest he can just stay on, giving him every chance to get the job done today, assuming he can show a little more oomph in the lane. GRADE: B.

#2 COSMO (15/1), the first Drysdale entrant, took forever to break his maiden, and he had to go to Golden Gate to do it two back. Last time, in his first try versus winners, he came from the clouds to finish fourth but was only beaten 2-lengths in that one-mile N1X also at the Gate. He's never been beyond 9-furlongs, but he certainly acts like a horse who can get the distance—but is this 4-year-old fast enough to win here on this circuit? He sure does look good on **OptixPLOT** though. GRADE: B.

#3 **BIG BUZZ (5/1)** looks to be the horse to beat: he's already cleared this N1X condition (so he's in for the tag); he has tactical speed to sit a good forwardly placed trip; and Prat takes the call on a horse with whom he won going 10-furlongs back in March. I'm kind of surprised he's not the morning-line favorite in here, to be honest, so I doubt that 5/1 line will hold—but if it does... GRADE: A.

#4 LUVLUV (6/1) is a Cal-bred who came from the clouds two back to win his statebred N1X going a mile at 29/1. He was such a big price because he was mostly sprinting after failing multiple times around two turns. I'm not sure where that strong closing performance came from, but it should be noted that he did get a really hot pace to close into, so I'm tempted to let him prove to me that he's a genuine two-turn animal, especially going this far. GRADE: C.

#5 **LIBERAL (IRE) (4/1)** has the best come-home times in the race, but how far back is he going to be in this paceless race? That said, he does get an aggressive jock who will at least try to put this guy in the race a lot sooner than usual. Plus, if those come-home times are any indication of whether or not this one can get the distance, then 11-furlongs should be no problem. Still, there is a slight class concern, since this guy's best work has come against conditional-claimers. Like I've always said, however, you could do worse than just backing the strongest finisher in a turf race. GRADE: A.

#6 LURE HIM IN (7/2), the tepid morning-line favorite, also has really solid come-home times, and he's shown he can handle the distance, although he was 11/1 at this level and distance here last fall and could only manage third. It was a decent race, however, and he did also just miss at this level earlier in the year

going 10-furlongs at Santa Anita—and therein lies the rub: even though this 4-year-old has four wins to his name, he hasn't shown the eye of the tiger of late, and that includes a few races against weaker starter foes. Also note that his trainer has started off the meet ice-cold, so maybe that's another reason to try to beat him. That said, you do have to use him in your exotics. GRADE: B.

#7 SEVEN CHARMS (10/1) just broke his maiden going 9-furlongs at Santa Anita, attending the early pace and drawing off to win easily as the 8/5 favorite against four other \$50K foes. It was a decent race, one upon which he can build—but he loses win-rider Hernandez, and he is facing more experienced foes today. I'm okay watching one in his first try versus winners. GRADE: C.

#8 STIRLING DRIVE (8/1) makes his third SoCal start after an okay career back East where he was facing some decent upper-level allowance runners and claimers. His two starts at Santa Anita, however, weren't anything special, but in his defense, he was facing much tougher animals, so he's getting some class relief today while running for the \$40K tag. That certainly makes him a contender in this spot—but how will he handle the distance? I can see Cedillo putting this guy in the race early and hoping for the best, but I prefer others. GRADE: B.

#9 CAPITAL CALL (12/1), the second Drysdale runner, needed ten tries and Golden Gate foes to finally graduate, which he did last time as the 4/5 favorite in a one-mile affair. He does have a few races beyond a mile, but they weren't anything special, which is probably why Drysdale legs up bug-girl Pyfer and her 5-pound apprentice break to help give this guy a chance late in the lane. He also returns a new gelding for his first try versus winners. I'm not sure those factors are enough for this one to get the W today. GRADE: C.

#10 ENGRAM (30/1) gets a 7-pound weight-break, and that is sure to help when others start to falter late in the race. But is it enough? Well, the connections think this guy is a pure stayer, since he took a shot in the 15-furlong Hasta La Vista at Turf Paradise, where he left himself with way too much to do but still finished an okay fourth in that 11-horse field. And he does have two 13-furlong Ferndale wins on his form, so distance is not an issue. That said, he will need to run the fastest race of his life, and it also seems like he'll need lesser company to really shine. GRADE: X.

#11 RIJEKA (IRE) (5/1) (AE) would look pretty good if he drew in, but as it is now, this ship-and-win runner is on the outside looking in. Back East, he was running against some decent animals at all manner of distances, including a win going 12-furlongs against starter foes, so you know distance won't be an issue at all. He's also making the second start of his form cycle while dropping in for the \$40K tag, so it seems like the connections are looking for a win, a possible claim, and all that bonus money—which makes sense, since he is owned by the shrewd operation of Slam Dunk Racing in partnership with another sharp guy (Mike Nentwig). The only slight knock is that D'Amato is on an uncustomary cold streak (0-for-22 as of this writing)—but you know that's probably just a fluke and likely to change. GRADE: A.

CONCLUSION

This is a tough race, and there are a lot of ways to go. If the morning-line is to be believed, #3 **BIG BUZZ** and #11 **RIJEKA (IRE)** are the value plays, but I expect both of them to take a lot more money. Because of that, I'll also look at #5 **LIBERAL (IRE)** to finish strongly and get the money at a price above his morning-line. As for the others, I know I have a lot of secondary ("B") contenders, but #1 **FARQUHAR** will probably offer the most value of those choices even though he's labeled at an uninspiring 4/1. If you'd like to learn more about **OptixEQ**, visit www.optixeq.com.