

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

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Race 3: \$20K optional-claiming/N1X for Cal-breds going 5-furlongs on turf (rail at 12 ft.).

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

OVERVIEW

This is a pretty decent group for a Cal-bred \$20K optional-claiming/N1X contested at 5-furlongs on turf with the rails out 12-feet. Several of these will be in the hunt but only one can win (barring a dead heat!).

#1 FIRST PREZ (6/1), the first O'Neill entrant, has run a mixed bag of races at this level, but his very best is good enough. The problem is the rail draw. Maldonado is going to have to gun hard and hope for the best. Unfortunately for him, there is other speed in here. I'd like him more with a better draw, but there is a world in which he scoots away and hangs on late—and I do like that O'Neill scratched him out of a race on Saturday to run here. **GRADE: A.**

#2 CASTLE (5/2) is the best horse in the race on his best day: but will it be his best day, since Glatt is running him for the \$20K tag? Well, this former stakes winner did just beat open \$25K claimers, and no one took him, so Glatt will run him in a good spot today, and I'm sure he will be just fine if he loses this 8-year-old. I love horses like this, and I expect him to be fully cranked off the freshening. He should also trip out just sitting right behind the speed, waiting for a seam to open. **GRADE: A.**

#3 AUSTIN'S BOY (6/1) showed sharp speed when breaking his maiden way back in February 2020. He's been off since, so who knows if this brother of Richard's Boy will be ready to roll. It's nice to see Rispoli stick around, but I'm tempted to just watch one today, especially with other speed in here. **GRADE: C.**

#4 TOO LATE (5/1), the second O'Neill runner, can stalk the pace in a good position before pouncing in the lane, so he'll have every chance to get the nod. He just missed at this level two back, and he should appreciate a return to turf, even though he has shown good versatility throughout his career. **GRADE: B.**

#5 BENCH JUDGE (3/1) drops in price and goes out for Peter Miller, who wins a boatload of these turf sprints. This guy is in for the \$20K tag because he won at this level before. He is versatile and gets a hot jock. He's a major contender, but I do think Castle is the better horse (if he runs his best race). **GRADE: B.**

#6 ASCOT STORM (6/1) is a 3-year-old facing elders for the first time and trying the lawn for the first time. I respect Sadler, but I have to think this one is going to need a race before showing his best stuff—though he did win his debut. I like that he adds Lasix and was once thought of highly enough to try Cal-bred stakes foes. Tab for next time. **GRADE: C.**

#7 ADMIRABLY (15/1) brings okay Los Al abbreviated-sprint form to the table, so he's likely to be chasing the early pace. I'm not sure turf racing is his calling, however. **GRADE: X.**

#8 TETON VALLEY (12/1) was 15/1 at this level and distance last time with Rispoli, and he failed to threaten after hopping at the start and racing wide. He's capable of better because he does have dirt speed—and I do like that he gets a 7-pound weight-break, but I think he shortens stride late and maybe hangs on for a slice. But I'm not feeling him for the W. GRADE: C.

#9 TIZ A SPEED BOMB (20/1) is appropriately named, bringing very sharp early speed to the proceedings. Will he gun hard and try to clear? If so, he's going to weaken late even with a 7-pound weight-break. If he doesn't make the lead, he'll be hooked wide. Either way, I prefer others to finish ahead of him. GRADE: X.

CONCLUSION

It's hard for me to look beyond **#2 CASTLE** in here, since I think he's the best horse in the race, even at 8-years-old. Then again, you can't really go wrong backing Miller in these events, so give a look to **#5 BENCH JUDGE** as well. Those two are going to be short though, so if you're looking for a price, maybe **#1 FIRST PREZ** can fit that bill.

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