

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

By Frank R. Scatoni
On Twitter @ScatoniSureShot

Date: 8/13/21

Race 6: \$20K/N3L conditional-claimer contested at 6-furlongs on the main track

Post: approx. post 6:30 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

After dealing with plenty of quality races all meet long in the daily contest race, we are stuck with a less classier group of animals in this \$20K/N3L conditional-claimer contested at 6-furlongs on the main track. That said, if one of the top two choices doesn't win this race, then it's completely up for grabs with anyone capable of getting the job done—though I do think it's a two-horse race (even at this unreliable condition!) Famous last words!

#1 EUSTACE (12/1), the first Wong entrant, was claimed last time out of a troubled seventh-place finish at this exact same level. He went off at 8/1 and never really threatened in that 6.5-furlong affair. The slight cutback should help, but I'm not sure the rail draw will, since the one-hole has been awful all meet in sprints, and it's not like this one has the kind of early speed that would give him any advantage. GRADE: C.

#2 PALACE PRINCE (15/1) makes the third start of his form cycle after two mediocre races against better foes, so this is some class relief here for a horse who also goes turf-to-dirt and route-to-sprint—both positives. But it should be noted that this guy is winless in five dirt starts, and there must be a reason why he's been mostly routing throughout his whole career. Maybe you can expect him to be running on through the lane if the race starts to fall apart. GRADE: C.

#3 SCABBARD (5/2) is an obvious selection, since he was just claimed for \$30K back East and is eligible for the ship-and-win bonus. He just finished second against better beaten-claimers in that 6-furlong affair, running a solid race against the bias over at Churchill Downs, so I have to think he's going to fire a big shot today, especially since Prat bothers to ride. The only issue is price. GRADE: A.

#4 FAST AS CASS (15/1) is coming off a March 2020 layoff and looks to be using this sprint as a prep race for a two-turn event against weaker animals, since his best work has come around two turns and against cheaper foes. Look for him next time. GRADE: X.

#5 AFTERNOON HEAT (12/1) was 20/1 against \$8K claimers last time, and he ran a decent second, rallying nicely from off the pace. That said, he did get a perfect set-up that day while getting to race over a closer-friendly surface. The 5-pound weight-break will help, but he now has to face more expensive animals, so I'm thinking the exotics are the ceiling. GRADE: X.

#6 HIT THE SEAM (5/1), the second Wong runner, was claimed for \$16K out of a Golden Gate race where he ran evenly to finish third in a six-horse field. The barn change and blinkers back on could certainly help, but it's hard to overlook that 0-for-9 dirt record. I'm kind of surprised this one isn't running back in a turf sprint, since if you go back to February 26 at this same level and distance on dirt, you'll see that this one was 11/1 when running fourth to Rebel War. That said, this one did have some run in him back in the day, so it wouldn't shock me if he ran okay. GRADE: B.

#7 REBEL WAR (15/1) is the tiniest bit sneaky in here, since he was stuck down at the rail at this level last time when running sixth at 9/1. Toss that race, since the rail was dead that day. Still, this one has had his chances at this level, and he's a 7-year-old who doesn't figure to improve today. Is his best race good enough? For the exotics, sure. For the win? Maybe if the top two falter. GRADE: B.

#8 ROUSING SLAMMER (8/1) is a 3-year-old who just lost as the 19/10 favorite to \$25K age-restricted claimers up at Pleasanton when trained by Specht. He now makes his first start for Puype, who is excellent with new acquisitions—but can Puype get this guy his first dirt win? Well, the barn has been a little chilly to start the meet, but maybe some new blood can help get them off the *schneid*. Still, this one will need a leap forward today. GRADE: C.

#9 BOX OF CHOCOLATES (3/1) looks pretty tough in here, dropping in class after just running fourth against much tougher N1X foes. Before that, this guy looked good beating starter foes, tracking from off the pace. He should get the same trip in here, and he has races on his form that would make him very tough against this lot. One thing I don't like: Prat rode this guy to victory two back but ends up on the ship-and-win runner. GRADE: A.

#10 ALLEVA (5/1) had the services of Prat last time, but he bails despite this one just running second at this level. He attended a fast pace and held second, losing to a better animal. He now cuts back a half-furlong, so he should be fit and ready to run another decent one second off the bench. But it's hard to overlook the fact that Prat defects. GRADE: B.

CONCLUSION

I'm having a hard time looking past **#3 SCABBARD**, who invades from back East, and **#9 BOX OF CHOCOLATES**, who should be finishing up strongly. If you want a wiseguy alternative, **#7 REBEL WAR** ran against the bias last time and should outrun his odds today.

If you'd like to learn more about **OptixEQ**, visit www.optixeq.com.