

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

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Race 8: Cal-bred \$20K optional-claiming/N1X for fillies & mares going 8-furlongs on turf (rails at 18-ft.)

Post: approx. post 5:48 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

We've got 14 horses entered in this oversubscribed Cal-bred \$20K optional-claiming/N1X for fillies and mares going 8-furlongs on the turf with the rails out 18-feet—but only 11 will greet the starter. Several of these enter the same common race where you could have thrown a blanket over the top five finishers. Maybe we should look elsewhere for the winner today.

#1 BIG CLARE (7/2), the first D'Amato charge, was right there in the aforementioned blanket race, losing by a nose to our top selection that day, Kleen Karma, who won for us at 7/1. This gal now moves in a few slots and draws the cushy rail post, so she can save all the ground and come on with a decent late run. Prat sticks around, making this gal an obvious contender—but not much separates this field, and this gal is likely to take a good share of action (and rightfully so). GRADE: B.

#2 KEEP DANCING (4/1) was burdened by a wide post in that blanket race, yet she still came on with a powerful late run to just miss by a head. She moves inward to a much more favorable post, and her recent form is just too good to ignore. You can expect her to be flying late—but she will need some luck working out a traffic-free trip in this big field. That said, she's certainly good enough to win this. GRADE: B.

#3 SUNSHINE BABE (30/1) was 24/1 in that blanket race, but she wasn't near the top few on the wire. She stalked the pace and weakened to finish eighth. She can do a little bit better making the second start of her form cycle, but this 3-year-old will need a major step forward today to beat the gals who just bested her. GRADE: X.

#4 WARRENS CANDY GIRL (6/1) finally broke her maiden after knocking on the door several times. She tracked from off the pace and powered home to win fairly easily as the 5/2 favorite, beating nine other gals. She'll have to do a little bit better today to be competitive in here, but that's not out of the question for a gal who once ran second in the California Cup Oaks earlier in the year while still a maiden. That said, she is a 3-year-old facing older winners for the first time. GRADE: C.

#5 ROSE'S CRYSTAL (8/1), the first Gaines entrant, is a new face in the crowd, coming off a January layoff after running third at this level in her first try against winners. She is a deep closer, so Hernandez will need some help up front, but I do like that this one ran some decent races last year and she now makes her second start as a 4-year-old, so she should show some marked improvement. Will it be enough off the long layoff? I'm not sure, but at her price, I'll pay to find out. GRADE: A.

#6 LENA'S BIG DAY (12/1), the second Gaines runner, was 7/5 last time against maidens, and she did what the public asked of her and won the race. It was a nice-looking effort, but it wasn't exceptionally fast, and she was facing all 3-year-olds (even though older horses were eligible to run that day). Also note

that win-rider Prat sticks with the rail horse (though you get Rispoli instead). I do think this sophomore has some ability, but I'm okay letting her beat me today. GRADE: C.

#7 BELLA D (5/1) was 7/2 in the blanket race, and she was only beaten a half-length at the wire, so she's right there with all the other gals who exit that race. Her form is pretty consistent, so I'm sure she'll show up with another solid run, but it should be noted that she has had quite a few tries at this level, so if you bet her, make sure you get compensated in the odds because she's no cinch. GRADE: B.

#8 SHE'S A DIME (8/1), like my other top choice, is a new face in the crowd, and that makes her look pretty against the likes of these. She also has sharp dirt speed, so Cedillo can do whatever he wants with her—in a race that doesn't have a lot of gas (unless the AEs get in). She's already won at this level on dirt, and she gets some class relief after running against open NIX types. The only concern is the surface. She's only been on turf once before, and that was a long time ago. Still, I'll pay to find out what she can do here. GRADE: A.

#9 BIG STRETCH (8/1), the second D'Amato trainee, is a 3-year-old facing elders for the first time while coming off a freshening and stretching back out after running fifth in a 6.5-furlong sprint. Before that, she just missed going a mile, so she'll like getting back around two turns—but she will need to run much faster against older horses today. She seems to fire every time, but I'm tempted to watch one today. GRADE: C.

#10 WARRIOR'S MOON (12/1) was a good play last time at 11/1 when she finally drew an inside post position and was able to save ground—but she was outfinished by a few others in that same blanket race so many of these exit. Unfortunately for her, she gets to move all the way outside today, and that's not going to help her get over the hump, since she's been stuck at this level for a while now. She'll break through one of these days, but circumstances are stacked against her today. GRADE: C.

#11 BIG MAMA SUE (15/1) was 19/1 at this level and distance last time, and she came on late to finish seventh while breaking from an outside post. She's stuck outside again, so a similar fate seems likely. On the plus side, she does get a 5-pound weight-break if you think that will help mitigate the fact that she's looking at a wide journey. GRADE: C.

#12 SUPER GAME (8/1) (AE) is a 3-year-old who makes the second start of her form cycle while stretching out. She did break her maiden in wire fashion going a mile on turf, but all of her races against winners saw her cough up the lead late. Pyfer will send hard and hope the weight-break kicks in, but I don't think that will be enough if she gets in. GRADE: C.

#13 GOTTA BE LUCKY (20/1) (AE) will need to be a little lucky to get in—and very lucky to win, since she just lost at this level at 16/1 while racing on her preferred surface: dirt. She has speed, and she'll need to use it from out here, which will likely soften her up late, even with the 7-pound weight-break. GRADE: X.

#14 NICE ICE (5/1) (AE) was the 5/2 favorite at this level and distance last time, but she set the pace and weakened to finish sixth in that same blanket race as most of the others in here. That was an uncharacteristically bad performance for a gal who has been pretty consistent and who has won before at this level. Miller took her, so we'll see if she can bounce back—but the post forces her hand greatly. GRADE: C.

CONCLUSION

I like two new faces: **#8 SHE'S A DIME** from up on the pace and **#5 ROSE'S CRYSTAL** from way off. If you want to take someone from that common blanket race, I'd go with **#2 KEEP DANCING** and **#1 BIG CLARE**, in that order.

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