

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

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Race 8: \$20K/N3L conditional-claimer contested at 7-furlongs on main track.

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

OVERVIEW

Another big field for today's contest race, with 12 horses entered to greet the starter. This \$20K/N3L conditional-claimer will be contested at 7-furlongs on the main track, and if it's not my top pick, it's anyone's race.

#1 NEXT REVOLT (3/1), the first Hess entrant, was 9/2 at this level last time, and he crossed the wire first in that one-mile event only to be DQ'd for shenanigans in the upper stretch. It was a harsh DQ for a horse who was much the best, but the rules are the rules, and he did cost the horse he fouled a placing. Now he shows up at the same level but cutting back in distance and having to break from the rail. At least Prat strings along—and a repeat of that last race is certainly good enough to win—but he'll need to work out a trip in this big full field. GRADE: B.

#2 AWESOME BEACH—program scratch.

#3 INDY JONES (30/1) is a pretty consistent sort who usually runs his race, but his best work has come against lesser foes, so we'll see how he does at this \$20K level. On the plus side, he is cutting back after a mile turf race, so he should be fit—and note that his best work has come as an elongated sprinter, so it wouldn't shock me if he ran a good one at a big price. That said, I do prefer others—but you could do worse, especially since this one is getting a 7-pound weight-break. GRADE: C.

#4 SCABBARD (7/2) was a top pick for me and everyone else last time at this level, but a rough beginning scuppered his chances, and the best he could do was finish a closing second in a 6-furlong affair. He now gets extra ground and a barn change to Wong, who took this guy for \$20K last time and who has heated up the last two weeks of the meet. I expect this one to make amends today, and 7/2 seems like a pretty fair price if that line holds. GRADE: A.

#5 DARK PRINCE (4/1) destroyed \$16K conditional-claimers last time in wire fashion, going a mile. DeLeon took him off Baffert and now shortens him up a bit. Claiming off Baffert isn't typically the path to riches, but this one could prove useful at the lower levels. Also, this one should be fit off that one-mile race last time—but there's also a world in which he regresses after setting a hot pace and not stopping last time. GRADE: C.

#6 STREET BEHAVIOR—program scratch.

#7 CALIFORNIA STREET (8/1) has been entered and scratched three times since June 12, including last week in the Pat O'Brien (G2). He now shows up at this conditional-claiming level, where he finished second way back in May. He returns with blinkers on and with Rispoli sticking around, so those are positives. His best races are good enough—but who knows what's under the hood these days. Expect him to be running on through the lane. GRADE: B.

#8 STAY GOLDEN (30/1) has speed and is cutting back, so that is always something to consider—but this guy's best work has come at Los Al, and this is a whole new ballgame. He's also eligible for an N2L, so he's racing above condition. Expect him in a good forward position early—but I suspect he'll get overtaken late. GRADE: X.

#9 MOUNTAIN SPIRIT (12/1) should be sitting on a peak effort, making the second start of his form cycle and cutting back after showing speed in a one-mile turf race against much tougher. He should stalk the pace from a good position, and that 7-pound weight-break will certainly help in the final sixteenth. GRADE: B.

#10 TACOFLAVOREDKISSES (6/1) is a 3-year-old who faces older foes for the first time while making his first start for Miller, who just took him for \$20K out of a second-place finish in a mile race. He has tactical speed, so he should get a good trip, and you certainly have to consider the barn change, but this one will need a step forward today. GRADE: C.

#11 EUSTACE (15/1) was 11/1 at this level last time, and he ran an even third. That was his first start for Wong, who took him for \$20K two back. It wasn't a bad effort last time, but he did lose to Scabbard, who had trouble, so will this guy turn the tables on his stablemate today? Unlikely. GRADE: C.

#12 TWIRLING DERBY (15/1) was 2/5 last time against \$16K/N2L conditional-claimers, and he got up by a neck to do the business. He was taken out of that race by Amescua, who is a decent trainer—but is he going to move up a horse off Glatt, who is having a terrific meet? I'm tempted to watch one, especially since this one is looking at a very wide stalking journey. GRADE: C.

#13 PALACE PRINCE (15/1) was 14/1 at this level last time, and he never got untracked after a slow beginning. He's better than that last race shows, but then again, all of his best work has come on turf. It's hard to overlook that 0-for-6 dirt record. GRADE: X.

#14 AFTERNOON HEAT (12/1) was 14/1 at this level last time, and he put in a mild late bid after some trouble to finish fifth under a 5-pound weight-break, which he doesn't have today. Maybe the added distance will help his cause, but he looks to need lesser. GRADE: X.

CONCLUSION

I'm having a hard time seeing past **#4 SCABBARD** in here. If it's not him, then it really could be anyone (but if you made me pick a second and third horse, I'd go with **#9 MOUNTAIN SPIRIT** and **#7 CALIFORNIA STREET**, respectively, especially at their morning-line odds).

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