DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY
By Frank R. Scatoni
On Twitter @ScatoniSureShot

Date: 8/5/22
Race 7: $40K optional-claiming/N1X contested at 11-furlongs on turf (rails at 30-ft.)
Post: approx. post 6:58 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

We've got a tough contest race to sink our teeth into today: a $40K optional-claiming/N1X contested at 11-furlongs on the lawn with the rails at 30-feet. It's an oversubscribed field, as has been the norm so far this meet at Del Mar—and with the rails out 30-feet, it's going to come down to pace and trip, so look to the jocks, especially since every horse seems to have a similar presser/closer running style with no confirmed frontrunner signed on!

#1 WIN THE DAY (12/1) removes the hood and gets back on turf while stretching out to this longer distance for the first time. By all accounts, he looks like a horse who can run all day, but he's a 3-year-old facing elders for the first time, and it remains to be seen how he'll stack up against older allowance foes after failing in stakes races against his fellow sophomores. GRADE: C.

#2 BIG TALKER (15/1) is a Cal-bred who has been well-beaten twice before at this open N1X level. His come-home times going 9-furlongs against state-breds aren't too bad, so you can expect him to be running on late with more ground today, but he'll have to show he belongs against open foes. GRADE: X.

#3 ONCOMING (20/1) is a lightly raced 4-year-old who still has some upside, since you can kind of make excuses for his poor tries at this level, but he's going to need a big step forward today to get the W. He comes back a new gelding, and he should be fine with today's added ground, but he's probably better suited to underneath. GRADE: C.

#4 HONOS MAN (15/1) won a 13-furlong race at Ferndale last summer, so distance won't be an issue for this guy—but how will he stack up against SoCal allowance foes? He's been facing much softer, so I'm fine watching one—but it should be noted that this 6-year-old seems to be in the best form of his life, for what that's worth. GRADE: X.

#5 FLINTMORE (5/1), the first D'Amato entrant, took a while to break his maiden, which he did last time in a 9-furlong affair at Santa Anita, but that was the first time Rispoli rode him, so it's no surprise that he got this guy to the winner's circle after a few decent races before that to build on. I like the way this one ran on through the lane last time going 9-furlongs, so I'll look for him to run another good one right back going longer, even though he is facing winners for the first time. GRADE: A.

#6 KINGMAX (IRE) (5/2) has some nice races to build on from overseas, so I'm curious to see how this 3-year-old does in his U.S. bow. He adds Lasix today, and they thought enough of him to run him in stakes races against his own kind in Great Britain, so there must be some ability here. How will he stack up on this circuit while facing older runners for the first time? He can win, but I'm not interested at his short morning-line. GRADE: C.

#7 AVENUE (3/1) just missed in the 14-furlong San Juan Capistrano (G3), so this guy can run all day, and you know he'll be super-fit cutting back from that marathon affair. He looks to be sitting on a big race after Michael McCarthy brought him along slowly this spring. Plus top rider Hernandez sticks around. GRADE: A.

#8 RIJEKA (IRE) (5/1), the second D'Amato runner, is an old warrior who has always had a very nice late kick, so you know he'll be running on through the lane. He'll need something to close into, however, since he was all-out to get up at this distance last year when facing tougher AOC foes. He was a void-claim that day, and he took a while to get back to the races, but if you ex-out his last race (where he was pulled up), you'll see that he still has that good late kick. He'll need some luck, but he figures. GRADE: B.

#9 MUHAMMAD ALI (PER) (20/1) was 37/1 in his stateside bow, and he just ran around the track. That was probably just a leg-stretcher for a horse who was coming off a very long layoff. This is a more sensible spot for a runner who was facing graded-stakes foes in his native Peru, but it's really hard to know what he's capable of while facing our SoCal turf horses. I would use him in your trifectas as an X-factor, especially since he's adding Lasix and removing the hood today. GRADE: C.

#10 BEE CATCHER (5/1) always seems to run decently, but he also always seems to settle for the minor awards. He was outkicked two back by Rijeka (Ire), and he draws way outside that foe today, which means he's going to need a big step forward in order to turn the tables on that rival. He's probably looking at either a wide stalking trip, or a hustled trip where he wastes a lot of energy early to get forward position from out here. GRADE: X.

#11 KAZAN (IRE) (12/1) (AE) is a cool old boy who has always had a nice closing kick, so I can't fault the connections for trying him in the San Juan Capistrano (G3) last time, even though he's always been his best against mid-level claimers. This is obviously a softer spot, but Avenue just beat him fairly easily, and that foe draws better today. GRADE: X.

#12 TARTINI (8/1) (AE) is an 8-year-old who always seems to be right around the wire, but like his inside neighbor, his best work has always been against mid-level claimers. That said, he did win at this N1X level and at this distance here back in 2020, and his form since then is pretty solid, but he's looking at a wide trip against some horses who just seem a little bit better. GRADE: X.

#13 JEDI MASTER (50/1) (AE) is still a maiden, so he's tough to endorse. The only positive is that Drysdale is running him here because he must think he'll like the longer distance. I'm not sure why, since this guy hasn't shown much stamina at all, but, hey, Drysdale is in the Hall of Fame, and I'm not! Still…I'm having a hard time seeing a W from this guy. GRADE: X.

CONCLUSION

In a race with no pace on paper, I have to think this is going to be a jocks' race, so I'll land on the two best turf jocks in the field, Hernandez and Rispoli. Of their mounts, I'll give Hernandez's **#7 AVENUE** the edge, since he should be pretty tough after that last graded-stakes placing going longer. I doubt he'll be much value, though, which is why I don't mind **#7 FLINTMORE** with Rispoli up, even though it's his first try versus winners.

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