DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY
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Date: 8/7/22
Race 7: Cal-bred $20K optional-claiming/N1X contested at 8-furlongs on turf (rails at 12-feet)
Post: approx. post 5:07 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

We end week three with…you guessed it…another oversubscribed field of turf horses going a mile on the lawn! This is a very competitive race for the Cal-bred $20K optional-claiming/N1X level. Let's see if we can sniff out the winner!

#1 BUD KNIGHT (6/1) was a bit of a one-paced grinder, picking up lots of minor awards, but two back, Hernandez got aggressive with him, put him on the lead, and he wired $25K beaten-claimers as the 17/10 favorite. He was taken out of that race and then was no good on the dirt as Hernandez did not ride back through the claim. He'll appreciate getting back to turf, but this guy's best races have come against weaker foes, so he'll need a big step forward today. GRADE: X.

#2 BIG HAND (5/1) is a 3-year-old who won his debut smartly, but his two tries against winners at this level were no good—but it's quite possible that Yakteen was using those dirt sprints as conditioning races for today's stretch-out to turf, since this guy is by Mr. Big, who is a solid turf influence. I also like that Hernandez keeps the faith despite those two poor dirt races, another reason to think that this one is poised to run a peak effort while moving to the lawn. GRADE: A.

#3 NEXT FLIGHT (20/1) was 22/1 last time at this level here, and he ran okay in that 5-furlong sprint, coming from way off the pace to split the field. His come-home time was very solid, but this guy has been mostly sprinting back East against claimers, so we'll see how he handles two turns today. I like that Smith rides back, but I think someone collars this stretch-out sprinter late. GRADE: C.

#4 IF ID TOLD YOU (6/1) will re-add blinkers to shake things up after several failed (but competitive) attempts at this level. He'll come from off the pace, so he'll need a little luck with the race shape and the trip, but he's usable underneath, since his only win came going a mile here when an aggressive ride propelled him to wire victory as the favorite that day. GRADE: B.

#5 WORSE READ SANCHEZ (9/2), a new gelding, will take the hood off today in an attempt to get him to show the eye of the tiger after a few hang jobs going today's distance. He's run well enough, so you have to consider him, especially since he has a tactical run style, but he's also had his chances, so he'll need to show more heart today. GRADE: B.

#6 BRIX (15/1) has done his best work as a closing sprinter, so the connections will remove the hood today while trying to stretch him out for the first time in a long time. I respect the connections, since they know what they are doing, but this guy has had his chances at this level, to no avail, so he's really going to need a stronger stretch run while going longer. GRADE: C.

#7 SHOT OF A LIFETIME (6/1) is a cool old boy who has won 14 races, so this guy knows where the wire is. He's also tactical, so he should get a good trip—but where does he fit on this circuit, since his best work has come up north against mostly weaker company? I'm tempted to watch one. GRADE: C.

#8 SQUARE CAT (8/1) was 19/1 at this level and distance last time in his first try versus winners. He didn't run terribly, since he had some trouble, so I won't be too harsh on that sixth-place finish. He has good tactical speed, so he'll get a good forwardly placed trip over a turf course that has been more speed-friendly than in year's past. He's not impossible, but he's not too exciting either. GRADE: C.

#9 LIL NAS (15/1) was 14/1 at this level last time, and he was well-beaten in a turf sprint, which has been his best game, so I'm having a hard time seeing him stretch out here in a race where he'll probably have to be ridden aggressively from out here in the nine-hole. In his one route try, he stalked the pace and then weakened to finish fifth against maidens. He'll need to show more punch today. GRADE: C.

#10 DOC ADAMS (6/1) has one turf route on his form, and he stalked the pace and weakened against starter foes. This is a tougher spot, and he's looking at a wide journey from out here. I can see him pressing the pace and tiring late. GRADE: X.

#11 JOE DON LOONEY (8/1) was just claimed for $20K out of a dirt sprint, which has been his best game. His turf races have been just *meh*, and there must be a reason why he's always running in sprint races. Hess will try to shake things up today by stretching him out, but I'm skeptical—and what kind of trip is he going to get form out here, pushing the pace with a few other speed horses inside of him. GRADE: X.

#12 NOLONGERAHOBBY (8/1) (AE) was 14/1 at this level and distance three back, and he ran second, losing a tough one as he had the lead in deep stretch but was edged out late. He's looking at a similar fate in here, since he'll have to go, stalk the pace while wide, and then probably get tired late. GRADE: X.

#13 BOTTLE OF SMOKE (6/1) (AE) has decent synth form against open foes, but this is a whole new ballgame moving to turf after failing against $32K claimers last time on the dirt. He is running for the $20K tag today, so this can be considered class relief, but in his one turf try, he made the running and tired late. If he goes hard from out here, he's going to be in trouble deep in the lane. GRADE: X.

CONCLUSION
This is a tough race, so I'm going with the best jock in the field on a horse whom I think will improve leaps and bounds getting on the turf and stretching out: **#2 BIG HAND (5/1)**.

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