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

Date: 8/13/22
Race 8: $80K optional-claiming/N1X for 3yos going 8-furlongs on turf (rails at 12-feet)
Post: approx. post 5:34 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW
A decent group of sophomores line up to tackle this $80K optional-claiming/N1X contested at 8-furlongs on the turf with the rails at 12-feet. I thought this race looked pretty formful, but there are a few contenders in here that are very hard to separate. Maybe one of them will sneak away at a little bit of a price.

#1 BALLADEER (20/1) looks overmatched against this group, since it took him a while to break his maiden, and then he was no good last time at this level, though he did have some trouble. He goes outside to inside today, which is a big positive—but Espinoza is likely to spend half the race trying to get off the rail, or he'll gun this one on a suicide mission just to get clear. Either way, this one is looking at a disadvantageous trip. That said, ignore Papaprodromou at your own peril. GRADE: X.

#2 SHOW TIME (8/1) will try turf for the first time after two decent dirt races, including his maiden-breaker last time at Los Al where he stalked the pace and won comfortably as the 2/5 favorite. The waters get deeper today, but Mandella must think this one can turf, so who am I to argue? He should also get a good forwardly placed trip—but will it be good enough against proven turfers? GRADE: X.

#3 OPTIMISING (IRE) (5/1) has ability, which is why Michael McCarthy (who's no dummy!) ran him against stakes foes the minute he brought him to the States—and he wasn't disgraced, running respectably, including a decent second over this course in a stakes race on the Breeders' Cup Friday undercard last fall. He's now coming off a November layoff and adding Lasix for the first time. McCarthy is excellent with layoff horses, but I wonder if this is going to be a leg-stretcher for the Del Mar Derby (G2) later in the meet. Hmmm…tough call, but he is worth looking at if he's more than 5/1. GRADE: B.

#4 ANMER HALL (5/2): raise your hand if you had him last time as an "A" at 29/1! [Scatoni raises his hand!] Ooof. That was a tough one, since he ran so well that day, up close on a fast pace against stakes horses in the Oceanside. Granted, he was no match for the winner, but still! So, can he win today? Surely, and I like that Miller removes the hood in an effort to get this guy to be a little more relaxed early. GRADE: A.

#5 NERO TULIP (GB) (12/1) hasn't made things easy for himself since coming to the States, so he'll need to do a lot better after finishing behind a few of these. He does get a better post today and a pretty decent jock upgrade, but others figure to run their best races, while even if this guy runs his, will it be good enough? He's been double-digit odds in each of his two U.S. starts, and he'll probably be that again. GRADE: X.

#6 DEGREE OF RISK (12/1) was 12/1 last time against a few of these, and he was right there before weakening late to finish sixth, checking in a few spots behind Handy Dandy. He should appreciate a slight cutback from 8.5-furlongs to today's mile, and it should be noted that he was running creditably in

graded-stakes races last year, so there is some quality here. Can you trust the trainer and jock? Not really, but this guy will be overlooked because of that, so I think he'll be the value of the race as a pretty decent overlay. GRADE: A.

#7 SYDNEY STREET (GB) (8/1) was 15/1 against a few of these last time, and he ran a blah eighth, though he did have some trouble. He's now making the second start in the States, and he's getting a jock upgrade, so he's eligible to improve, but I prefer others a lot more. GRADE: X.

#8 DANDY WARHOL (IRE) (7/2) ran a much better-than-looked sixth last time in the Oceanside in his first start in the country, so he's eligible to improve while getting a pretty big jock upgrade today. He had a rough trip in the Oceanside while breaking from a tough post, so a clean journey today could make all the difference. That said, as much as I like Mark Glatt as a trainer, turf routers and imports aren't really his jam, so I'm a little lukewarm about this one—but there is ability here, and he could certainly win. GRADE: B.

#9 HANDY DANDY (7/2), the second Miller runner, just lost as the 8/5 favorite at this level, but he ran really well in defeat, so I won't be too harsh on him. Miller removes the hood today, and Hernandez sticks around for this guy's second start of the form cycle. He's a threat right back, since he rarely runs a bad race and is always around the wire, but he will need to show a little more oomph late to get the victory. GRADE: B.

CONCLUSION

Well, I have to make **#4 ANMER HALL (5/2)** my top choice, since I liked him against much tougher in the Oceanside at 29/1, so I have to think he's going to run big today against N1X foes—though I'm getting fifteen times less of a price! That, I don't like! And because of that, he's not a great contest play for me. If you're looking for a horse who will be forgotten and should outrun his odds, **#6 DEGREE OF RISK (12/1)** is right there with the best in his division: he's just burdened with subpar connections. But, hey, that's why he'll be a big price!

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