DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

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Date: 8/26/22
Race 5: $20K claimer for fillies and mares going 6-furlongs on the main track
Post: approx. post 5:03 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

Remember that we've got a 3:00 p.m. PDT first post for the remaining Fridays of the meet, so that means one less hour of beach time before the races! Today's contest race is a $20K claimer for fillies and mares going 6-furlongs on the main track. It drew a big field with some evenly matched horses.

#1 ROSES R BLUE (12/1), the first Knapp entrant, will try open claimers for the first time after running against mostly restricted company. This is probably the right level for her, but her hand is going to be forced by the rail draw, and I think that will cause her trouble, since she'll have to use some of her tactical speed to gain position. GRADE: X.

#2 FLAT OUT JOY (10/1) has been a popular claim-box item, but her most recent race wasn't that great. She made the lead and weakened as the tepid 5/2 favorite at a lower level. In her defense, she was going a route of ground while stuck inside, so I won't be too harsh on her, but this is a class hike for a gal who has been squaring off against weaker animals. GRADE: X.

#3 LITTLE RACHEL—program scratch.

#4 MAJESTIC GIGI (8/1) has plenty of speed, so you can expect her to be leading the charge—but will she have enough stamina to stick around? She's 0-for-6 at today's distance, so I'm doubtful. GRADE: X.

#5 JASMINE CHIEFTAIN (20/1) should be fit, cutting back from a route against tougher, but her best work has been up north on the synth against weaker animals. Maybe she can grind away for a slice. GRADE: X.

#6 GAYLES EVENING (20/1) has also been running against weaker foes up north, so we'll see how she stacks up against the ladies on this circuit. I don't like that she couldn't win at this level at Los Al last year when she was facing sophomores only. GRADE: X.

#7 LARIMAR (4/1) makes her first SoCal start for Diodoro, who took her for $40K back East and now runs her for $32K. That's been his move all meet—the backwards buy high and sell low—and yet he only has two wins out of 17 tries to show for it. I'm not a fan of that type of spotting, but if he has owners who are willing to play that game, then more power to him. Anyway…this gal has races back East that are a good fit against these. GRADE: B.

#8 ANNIE GRAHAM (7/2) looks like the one to beat. She was claimed for $20K two back out of a win; last time, she was pitched too high against $40K AOCs, and she wasn't disgraced. She tried hard against better animals despite being on the worst part of the track. She should get a very good stalking trip today. GRADE: A.

#9 FULL OF GRACE (10/1) is a fit at this level, and she figures to run a good one today after bouncing to the moon last time against much tougher animals while stuck down at the rail. Don't sell her too short. GRADE: B.

#10 WARM SUMMER (12/1) has some things going for her: she makes the second start of her form cycle after an October layoff; she gets a 7-pound weight-break; she runs for this tag for the first time; and she gets some class relief. I'm kind of shocked she's so high on the morning-line given those angles, but maybe that's because her speed figs are a bit slow of late. That doesn't bother me. She looks like a contender. GRADE: B.

#11 CHERISHED (6/1) was claimed for $32K back East off Asmussen, and she now shows up here against $20K animals—not the greatest sign in the world. That said, she's drawn favorably, and her races back East would easily put her in the frame against these. GRADE: B.

#12 EQUILOVE (IRE) (12/1), the second Knapp runner, gets wise-guy consideration, moving turf-to-dirt and dropping to this low level after showing very good early speed against tougher company. I think those two things should help her reverse form today at what should be a very good price. GRADE: A.

#13 BUSY PAYNTER (6/1) seems like a good fit at this level, since she won for $20K back in April at Santa Anita. Since then, she's been protected, and she hasn't been disgraced against those decent runners. A return to the claiming ranks should be just what the good doctor ordered, and her tactical speed means she'll get a good stalking trip. That said, her trainer, while very capable, doesn't often show his strongest hand here at Del Mar, so factor that into your decision. GRADE: C.

CONCLUSION
I hate to land on the tepid 7/2 morning-line favorite—**#8 ANNIE GRAHAM**—in such a big, competitive field, but I really think it's her race to lose. If you want a price, there are plenty of places to land (with several "B" contenders at fair morning-line odds), but my wise-guy pick would be **#12 EQUILOVE (IRE)**.

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