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

Date: 9/1/22
Race 7: $80K optional-claiming/N2X contested at 5-furlongs on turf (rails at 30-feet)
Post: approx. post 4:25 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

It's the penultimate week of Del Mar! [Did I just type that? Where did the summer go?] We kick Labor Day weekend off with an 8-race Thursday card and a very interesting $80K optional-claiming/N2X contested at 5-furlongs on the turf with the rails at 30-feet. It's a pretty wide-open race, so I'm going to look for some value here.

#1 HOT BOX (5/1) was coming off a layoff last time and didn't show his customary speed while finishing a well-beaten seventh at a slightly higher level last time. I think Koriner was using that as a prep for the slight drop in class today. He has plenty of speed and now gets a very aggressive jock while breaking from the rail. He's going to face some heat to his outside, but it wouldn't shock me if this guy wired them. GRADE: A.

#2 GYPSY KING (3/1) is coming off a September layoff after beating N1X foes in professional fashion going 6.5-furlongs at Kentucky Downs. That configuration is a lot different than what this runner will see today in his first SoCal start, so I'm tempted to watch one at this short number—but the connections know how to win races, if you're a believer. GRADE: C.

#3 GOOD WITH PEOPLE (7/2) is a cool Cal-bred who has won against open company, but he's been off since May after failing to string together races. He's also 0-for-3 on the turf, so I wouldn't take too short of a number here—though Peter Miller wins a lot of turf sprints, and this guy definitely has some quality to him. GRADE: C.

#4 COMMANDER (FR) (4/1) is a cool old boy who was just claimed at this level and distance after going off at 8/1 and finishing fourth. I've always respected his body of work, and you can expect him to be rolling late, but the rails at 30-feet don't really do him any favors. GRADE: X.

#5 APPRECIATED (6/1) has done good work around two turns, so I have to think this is just a prep race for a one-mile event at some point. He's coming off a March layoff after finishing a well-beaten eighth against some salty customers in Dubai. I suppose he can still win, but I'm going to look for him next time. GRADE: X.

#6 WHOOPING JAY (6/1) has taken a lot of my money, but I'm going to back him again today because he should be sitting on a peak effort. He has sharp early speed and he should be in contention turning for home. Is he good enough to win? Well, Spawr claimed him for $50K two back and is running him at the $80K level two times in a row—and if the great Spawr thinks he can win at this level, then who am I to argue? GRADE: A.

#7 ZOFFARELLI (IRE) (10/1) should be running late, though this seems like a leg-stretcher for something down the road, since this guy has never raced at this extremely short distance. Mullins is

having a good meet, and so is Berrios, so it wouldn't shock me if this one ran well in preparation for his next start, but I prefer him more for underneath. GRADE: B.

#8 SIGILOSO (12/1) makes his first start for Sanchez, who has been very live all meet with his shippers. This one was on the mid-Atlantic circuit and running okay against lesser competition. He's also been doing his best work around two turns, so this seems like a tough spot—but sometimes you have to go with the sneaky trainer, so I will use this runner underneath in my exotics. GRADE: C.

#9 YES HE CAN (5/2) (AE) just ran third at this level and distance at 5/2. He was breaking from the 8-hole that day, and he stalked the pace and lacked the needed punch. I fear the same result awaits if he gets in—and at a short number, I want to look elsewhere. Sure, he can win, but 5/2 from the outside? GRADE: C.

#10 CHASIN MUNNY (6/1) (AE) was 9/1 at this level and distance last time, and he ran fifth. He did have some trouble, but he was drawn inside and will now have to break from all the way out here. He is making the second start of his form cycle after a long layoff, so he's eligible to improve while getting a jock upgrade, but he's looking at a wide stalking trip. GRADE: C.

#11 GIVE ME THE LUTE (7/2) (AE) is a very nice turf-sprinter, so it's a little surprising that Mathis—who is having an excellent meet—would bother risking him for $80K, since he won the Albany in June. Believe me, his best race is certainly good enough, but I don't like that he's in for the tag today. Plus, the post stinks. GRADE: C.

<u>CONCLUSION</u>
Once more unto the breach for me with **#6 WHOOPING JAY (6/1)** as my top pick. I also think **#1 HOT BOX (5/1)** can make some noise in here at a square price in this wide-open race.

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