

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

By Frank R. Scatoni

On Twitter @ScatoniSureShot

Date: 9/5/22

Race 10: \$80K optional-claiming/N1X for 3-year-olds going 8.5-furlongs on the turf (rails at 18-ft.)

Post: approx. post 5:40 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

Bonus Monday racing before the final week of the meet, so let's just get right to it with today's contest race: an \$80K optional-claiming/N1X for 3-year-olds going 8.5-furlongs on the turf with the rails at 18-ft. We've got a big full field.

#1 BALLY'S CHARM (3/1) has speed and the rail, so you can guess what this one is going to do: blast off and hope for the best. That said, he's a Cal-bred facing open foes, so he'll have to answer a class question today. His best races are fast enough, but I want to see him once against this type of company, especially while coming off a May layoff. GRADE: C.

#2 ANMER HALL (5/1) was my wise-guy play in the Oceanside two back, and he ran a very good second, so I was disappointed when I backed him again at this level last time, and he ran a blah fourth, losing to his stablemate, whom he has to face again today. That said, I'm not ready to give up on him just yet, since I do think he still has plenty of upside, but he will need to do better. GRADE: B.

#3 ALMANERA (IRE) (15/1) hasn't looked the greatest since coming to the States, but his first try was down the hill, and his second try was in a stakes race, so I can be forgiving. He returns a new gelding and gets a major jock upgrade. I have a feeling we have not seen the best of this guy. GRADE: A.

#4 LUCKY BOSS (30/1) was 19/1 at this level and distance last time, and he ran to those long odds. We'll see if he can do better today as a new gelding and adding blinkers, but I'm skeptical since Diodoro is more of a claim and drop kind of trainer than someone who claims and wins at high level, so the claim for \$80K and then keeping him at \$80K twice now doesn't appeal to me. GRADE: X.

#5 HANDY DANDY (5/2), the second Miller entrant, is definitely the one to beat after two near-misses at this level. I have no knocks other than the fact that he's been a beaten favorite a few times before, running well but getting outgamed late. Because of that, I'll make him a "B" considering how short of a price he will be. GRADE: B.

#6 SEVEN WONDERS (15/1) is interesting to me. He looked very good when breaking his maiden last time in his second start, coming home resolutely with a fast finishing time. Also, the horse he beat in that maiden-breaker just ran a very game second in the Del Mar Derby (G2), so it could turn out to be a key race. I don't often like to back recent maiden-breakers, but I mind it less in turf races when you've got a horse with a nice turn of foot. GRADE: A.

#7 IRISH PROPHET (20/1) had trouble last time when losing to Seven Wonders, and in his race before that, he came home nicely in a 9-furlong affair. All that said, he's still a maiden facing winners, and that's never an easy thing to do. He could run on for a slice, but a W would certainly be an upset. GRADE: X.

#8 DEGREE OF RISK—program scratch.

#9 CROSBY BEACH (8/1) has run some nice races, but even at his best moments, he's finished behind Handy Dandy, so he'll need to do better against that foe. He does seem versatile with speed but also able to come from off the pace—and the connections thought enough of him to run him in the Pasadena. He could win, but I prefer others. GRADE: C.

#10 CLUTCH HITTER (4/1) was sharp when breaking his maiden last time going a mile. He stalked the pace, took over, and won pretty convincingly. I think he'll be pushing the pace today, so that means he'll have to be used up a little bit to get over from the outside. He still has room to improve, but I'm not feeling his stalking trip today. GRADE: C.

#11 SMUGGLER'S RUN (10/1) was favored in the Cal-bred Snow Chief back in May, and he ran an even third, losing to Bally's Charm. His best work has come sprinting, but he is versatile with wins on both dirt and turf, and he has an adaptable running style. That said, he's going to have to use some of his tactical speed to gain forward position, and I think that compromises his chances late. GRADE: C.

CONCLUSION

Two bombs in here for me: **#3 ALMANERA (IRE) (15/1)** and **#6 SEVEN WONDERS (15/1)**.

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