

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

By Frank R. Scatoni

On Twitter @ScatoniSureShot

Date: 9/9/22

Race 5: Cal-bred \$20K optional-claiming/N1X for fillies & mares going 6.5F on the main track

Post: approx. post 5:03 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

And now, the end is near...Arrrgh! I can't believe we are in the final week of the summer meet at Del Mar. It's been incredible, and I'm so sad to see it end—but first, let's keep on doing our thing and make some money! Today's contest race is tough with a capital T: a Cal-bred \$20K optional-claiming/N1X for fillies and mares going 6.5-furlongs on the main track. Several of these can win, so just make sure you're getting some value in this competitive full field.

Note: this is one of two contest races today. The other one is Race 8.

#1 ACT OF SERENDIPITY (12/1) was sharp beating open MSWs back in July, but that came at Los Al with a perfect trip and a 7-pound weight-break, which she loses today. She's going to have to gun hard from the rail, and I'm not sure she's fast enough to get good enough position early, and that will make things tricky for her in this full field. GRADE: X.

#2 **BIG BEAUTY (6/1)** will be my pick in here, though I'm not crazy about her! I can just see her getting a very good tracking trip from the inside, which was where you wanted to be the last five racing days (which was in stark contrast to the way the track played most of the meet). She just missed at this level last time (albeit on turf), and I feel like Sadler could have brought her back off the layoff in so many different spots this summer, and yet he chose this one. I don't like that Hernandez is on another, but you lose nothing with Vazquez. GRADE: A.

#3 BIG TREAT (6/1) showed some ability when breaking her maiden at first asking in dominant fashion—but that came in April 2021, and she had to hit the shelf after that. Her comebacker last time in a turf sprint was probably just a leg-stretcher, so she should be poised to run much better today—and you have to like that bullet work she brings to the proceedings. My main concern is that her jock just lost her bug, and therefore, all of her advantage with that weight-break. I can see her attending the pace early, then we'll see about late. GRADE: C.

#4 SATURDAY HEIST (12/1) was bet down to 7/2 last time off an 8/1 morning-line, and I have to say that I was part of that money. I thought she was going to get a perfect tracking trip on the best part of the track—and she did, but she flattened out and was well-beaten against a few of these. Maybe she was a little short, making the second start off a layoff, so perhaps she can do a lot better today third off the bench. It's a positive that Espinoza sticks around, so I'm not ready to give up on this one just yet—but I really expected her to run a lot better last time. GRADE: C.

#5 EMMA'S DANCE (20/1) was 18/1 against a few of these last time, and she was well-beaten. Her best work has come up north against weaker animals, so she looks like a long shot right back. GRADE: X.

#6 SHEZA GIRLY GIRL (6/1) was 22/1 at this level last time, and she rewarded her backers with a very nice victory against a few of these same ladies. She tracked the pace and powered home strongly for the

win. I was mad at myself for not having her that day, since she had spent the better part of last year facing much tougher animals and not disgracing herself. Can she fire big right back? Well, Knapp is risking her for the \$20K tag, so part of me thinks that last time was the time to have her—but then again, she could bounce and still be competitive. GRADE: B.

#7 SHE’S BULLETPROOF (3/1), the first Miller entrant, was the 2/1 favorite at this level last time, but a bad stumble and a bad trip compromised her chances. She still ran well and should be able to improve off that, especially with Prat taking the call. There is upside here, but she lacks early speed and is a 3-year-old facing some honest older horses. GRADE: B.

#8 SPANISH CHANNEL—program scratch.

#9 LAUREL CANYON (7/2), the second Miller runner, has plenty of speed, so at least she will help ensure an honest pace for her stablemate—while also giving herself a pretty good chance to win, since she too has some upside. She’s coming off a June 2021 layoff after running third in a stakes race, so I’m sure we have not seen the best of her yet. I’d like her more if she were drawn inside, however. GRADE: B.

#10 SMILIN EVIE (12/1) has tactical speed, so she’s looking at a 3-wide stalking trip, which was the winning trip all meet except for last week. How will the track play this week? Who knows with all the heat and the possibility of rain! Still, this 3-year-old will need to run a career best, so I’m tempted to watch one today even though she makes her first start for a very hot barn. GRADE: C.

#11 CAUSE SHE’S A LADY (6/1) was claimed for \$50K two back, freshened up, and then came back to run a decent second against starter-allowance foes last time, despite having to break from the bad rail that day. She does face better animals today while moving all the way to the outside, and that means Frey will have to use some of her speed to get good position early. All meet, you wanted a wide stalking trip, but that all changed last week, so we’ll see how the track is playing and adjust accordingly, but I’m tempted to watch this 3-year-old today. GRADE: C.

CONCLUSION

This is a tough race, and I wouldn’t argue with anyone who picked any one of these horses! Because of that, I’m just going to plant a flag with a horse who I think will get a good trip on what was the better part of the track all last week (the inside): **#2 BIG BEAUTY (6/1)**.

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Date: 9/9/22

Race 8: \$40K open-claimer contested at 8-furlongs on the turf (rails at 18-feet)

Post: approx. post 6:30 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

We've got another really competitive contest race to kick off the closing weekend of the summer meet, this one being a \$40K open-claiming event contested at one mile on the lawn with the rails at 18-feet. There is enough speed in here to make this a fairly run race.

#1 NEPTUNE'S STORM (5/1) has to be considered off his body of work and the fact that he was just claimed for \$50K by O'Neill off a trainer who is having an uncharacteristically cold meet. This old class horse has tactical speed but also knows how to finish races. Vazquez should just suck back, stalk the pace, and then look to get through turning for home. GRADE: A.

#2 COAST OF ROAN (6/1), the first Mullins runner, just lost to a few of these at 7/1, though he did have a troubled trip. He drops a smidge and has races that are good enough to win at this level; he also gets Prat, so you have to think he's sitting on a big one today making the second start of his form cycle. GRADE: B.

#3 LINCOLN CITY—program scratch.

#4 OPRY (12/1) just lost to one of today's foes last time at the \$25K level when being sent off as the 2/1 favorite in his first SoCal start. He ran well, but it wasn't quite good enough. That said, he was claimed by the sharp Bonde, who now sees fit to raise this guy in class. He'll need to do better, but at least you know he's in good hands out here. GRADE: C.

#5 ONE FAST BRO (15/1) hasn't been able to get his NIX win, so Ruis will drop him in for a tag today to see if that helps his cause. He's a pretty consistent runner who should run his race, and he seems to like Del Mar, so he's not in without a shot—but he'll need to work out the right off-the-pace trip in this big, full field. GRADE: C.

#6 OVERDUE (6/1), the first D'Amato entrant, closed nicely to get up and beat time-restricted claimers while coming off a layoff. I have to think he was fully cranked that day, so we'll see how he does after that nice effort while facing tougher open foes. GRADE: C.

#7 FIRST PREMIO (6/1) gets top honors in here, making the second start of his form cycle after being a waiver-claim last time. He still ran really well, finishing third against a few of these at the \$50K level. I can see him getting a good stalking trip behind the speed horses, and his come-home times are strong enough to get him home. The only knock is the jock: will he try to save ground? Can he outfinish the much stronger jocks late in the lane? GRADE: A.

#8 CREW DRAGON (12/1) has been facing much tougher, so he must be considered on the big drop in class. He hasn't been able to string together races this year, which is a bit of a concern and probably why

he's in for the tag today. His best races will make him very tough, and 12/1 seems like way too high of a price, but there are questions to answer here. GRADE: B.

#9 MAC DADDY TOO (6/1), the second O'Neill entrant, is a stretch-out sprinter who is adding blinkers, so you can imagine what this guy is going to do. I think it will be very tough to wire this field, even for a horse who is dropping in from the allowance ranks. GRADE: X.

#10 MECKLENBURG (IRE) (12/1), the second Mullins runner, did fine work up north, but he was getting perfect forwardly placed trips against NorCal foes, while his work here in SoCal wasn't nearly as good. He has speed, and he's going to have to use it from out here—and to me, that's going to cause issues for him late. GRADE: X.

#11 MOODY JIM (IRE) (6/1) looked terrific beating \$25K claimers last time, breaking from the 10-hole, racing from off the pace, and mowing them all down. He was claimed out of that race by Eurton, who sees fit to move him up the ladder. He could win at this level, but what kind of trip is he going to get today against better animals? I do like that Smith rides through the claim, but I'm tempted to watch this one today (though he seems like a great underneath horse). GRADE: C.

#12 FORT MOULTRIE (7/2) finished second and smoked home last time in under 23-seconds, which is pretty incredible, so that makes me wonder why D'Amato is risking him for a \$40K tag today when he could still run him protected in a starter/N3L. Plus, the post is no picnic, even though I trust Berrios to give this guy the best ride possible. He could easily win, but 7/2 seems a little short in this big full field. GRADE: B.

CONCLUSION

This is such a competitive race. I'm going to make **#7 FIRST PREMIO (6/1)** my top pick, thinking he's going to take a big step forward after running third against tougher when he was a waive-claim. It should be go-time today, but I am concerned about where the jock is going to place him throughout the race (if it's stalking 3- or 4-wide, then he's going to have to be much the best!). But there are also several other places to land, including my other "A": **#1 NEPTUNE'S STORM (5/1)**.

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