

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

By Frank R. Scatoni

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Race 9: \$16K/N2L conditional-claimer contested at 8-furlongs on the main track.

Post: approx. post 4:30 p.m. PST

OVERVIEW

We've had such good competitive turf racing to start off the meet, but today we get a competitive dirt race as the contest race. And what a tough one this is: a \$16K/N2L conditional-claimer contested at 8-furlongs on the main track. No one is to be trusted, and for that reason, I'm going to look for a price.

#1 EGOMANIA (8/1) wasn't able to beat lesser \$12.5K/N2X foes up at the Gate, so this is a pretty tough step up for this 3-year-old. GRADE: X.

#2 STATE OF THE UNION (15/1) was 21/1 at this level and distance last time, and he just basically ran around the track to finish fifth. He'll need to pick things up. GRADE: X.

#3 SOCAL RED (15/1) was 6/1 at this level and distance last time, and he ran sixth with a bum trip and a wide journey. Before that, he was facing tougher foes, so perhaps with a better trip while saving ground, this guy can do a little bit better. GRADE: C.

#4 FIREMAN DAN (10/1) was 9/2 at this level last time while sprinting, but he was compromised by a slow start and a wide journey in a 5.5-furlong race. He still finished up nicely despite being well-beaten. So perhaps he can do better today. That said, his best work has come sprinting, so he'll need to show he can stay the course today. GRADE: X.

#5 STAYIN' OUT LATE (6/1) was 10/1 at this level last time, and he too ran poorly thanks to a wide trip in a 5.5-furlong sprint. A few races before that, he ran a close fourth at this level and distance out of a race in which he was claimed. His two starts for the new barn weren't any good, but at least this guy has a few good races to run back to, and he'll appreciate stretching out today. GRADE: B.

#6 FIFTY CENT DOLLARS (10/1) needed \$20K maidens at Los Al to graduate, so we'll see how he handles winners for the first time, especially since he looks a bit slow on paper. GRADE: X.

#7 HOOP DREAM (6/1) gets the wise-guy push, since he's running at this low level for the first time and also getting a 7-pound weight-break. He's run a mixed bag of races against tougher company in his past, so if he puts forth one of his better efforts today, he could easily get the W against the likes of these. GRADE: A.

#8 MIGHTY MATT (15/1) was 9/1 at this level two back, and he ran an okay third going 5.5-furlongs at Los Al. It wasn't a bad effort, but he was getting a 7-pound weight-break, which he doesn't have today. He does add blinkers, but that makes me think he'll be part of a quick early pace—and if you look at his one race around one turn, it wasn't pretty. That said, Vazquez bothers to ride. GRADE: C.

#9 MAYNARD (3/1) was 9/2 at this level and distance last time, and for a second, I thought he was going to win, but he was edged out late thanks to a wide trip. He was claimed out of that race, and even though he's drawn wide again, at least Del Mar is a little more favorable than Santa Anita when it comes to the outside lanes. GRADE: B.

#10 CONSTANT CONFLICT (5/2) drops in half and gets a 10-pound weight-break, so I can see this one breaking on top and looking to get out and wire the field. That's usually a good strategy in races at this level, so I have to think this one is a contender. That said, I can also see him getting a little leg weary late, which was the case the one time he tried two turns, where he set the pace in a turf race and was edged out late. GRADE: B.

#11 SIPPIN N KISSIN (3/1) (AE) was 13/1 at this level and distance last time, and he outran those odds to finish third, but Maynard beat him. Granted, this guy had some trouble, so I won't be too harsh, but note that he loses the weight-break today and has to run at equal weight to most of these. He's also looking at another wide journey if he gets in. GRADE: C.

CONCLUSION

I don't have a super-strong opinion in this race; I'm really just trying to find the lesser of all evils. Because of that, I think **#7 HOOP DREAM (6/1)** merits consideration as a class-dropper who gets a weight-break, goes turf-to-dirt, and has races on his form that fit well here.

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