

MORE MATRIX CONTENT FOR DEL MAR!

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Date: 11/14/26
Race 7: $50K optional-claimer/$50K starter-allowance/N2L: 8.5F turf (rails at 12-ft.)
Post: approx. post 3:33 p.m. PST

OVERVIEW

We begin the player-friendly $3 Late P3 with a **$50K optional-claiming/starter-allowance N2L contested at 8.5-furlongs on the lawn with the rails at 12-feet.**

This is an interesting race because there are several horses who have demonstrated enough ability to win at this level, but I'm not sure any of them is especially trustworthy. There is also a potentially contentious pace scenario, with several of these possessing

enough tactical speed to get involved early. That could make things interesting for the runners who prefer to settle and make one run. All that said, we may be looking at a futile exercise if the races come off the turf like they did on Friday.

#1 TRUMP ERA (3/1) was just claimed out of a decent race at this level, where he set the pace and held second behind a quality horse. His M.O. is to be on the lead, and his kind of speed should serve him well from the inside. The problem is that he has a habit of finishing second (despite plenty of favorable set-ups). It's interesting that he was claimed by a trainer who rarely claims horses, and he gets top jock Hernandez to ride. He's a 3-year-old who has shown that he can compete against these, and he has the benefit of taking the shortest trip around the course. The question is whether he can finish the job this time—especially with a few other speed types pushing the pace. GRADE: B.

#2 BACK NINE STAKES (5/1) was only a few lengths behind Trump Era in their most recent meeting, and he didn't have the benefit of being on the lead through really slow splits. He should be fit, and he has enough tactical speed to stay within striking distance. That said, his overall record isn't especially impressive, and his trainer's turf stats and route stats are rather uninspiring. J.J. bails, but maybe the aggressive Jaramillo can change this guy's fortunes. GRADE: C.

#3 MOONLIT SONATA (4/1) just missed by a nose on dirt after setting the pace as the 3/5 favorite at this level, so it's not as if he's coming into this race in poor form (despite several failed attempts at this level and a disheartening overall record of 1-for-18). That said, he's picked up plenty of checks against similar types, and he projects an excellent tracking trip with enough finishing ability to perhaps finally get over the hump today. Rosario jumps ship to my top choice, but Kimura has done decent work with this runner before. I can't believe I'm making a 1-for-18 career nibbler a top-line choice! GRADE: A.

#4 ROSTOVSKY (7/2), speaking of career nibblers, brings a 1-for-15 record into this affair (along with nine placings). He has been a consistent performer on turf, and his last two races suggest that he's going to be heard from late in a race that projects to have a fast pace. He finished third against tougher N1X types when going 10-furlongs last time, and he finished a closing third at this level two back at 9-furlongs. He should be fit off those two races, but it's getting close to now-or-never time for this 5-year-old. Let's see if he can capitalize on a favorable pace scenario today. GRADE: A.

#5 FLAMBOYANT (5/1) is my top pick and a good separator horse. He found his friends two back to graduate in his sixth start but first while in for a tag. His running line last time in his

first try versus winners doesn't look great, but he was way off a glacial pace yet still managed to make up ground late with a very strong finish. Sadler calls on his main man Rosario, and that tells me this guy is ready to take a big step forward today. Single on several tickets. GRADE: A.

#6 LORENZO BERNINI (6/1) tried a different tactic last time when having to break from the 11-hole; Fresu tried to take him off the pace instead of putting him in the race from the rip, as per his M.O. He didn't run half bad, but he broke his maiden here in wire fashion, so I have to think an aggressive ride by the hungry (and recently relocated) Americano is in the cards. I can see him pressing Trump Era every step of the way, softening them both up in the process. GRADE: C.

#7 FAUSTO (8/1) is coming off a maiden-claiming victory on the Santa Anita turf, and he did it with a nice tactical trip, sitting close enough to the pace before finishing the job in his fifteenth attempt to graduate. He's now facing winners for the first time, and he's probably looking at a three-wide trip. Also, he's a 5-year-old, so how much of a move forward can we expect today? GRADE: C.

CONCLUSION

The board will likely determine the contest pick, but based on these morning-line odds, **#5 FLAMBOYANT (5/1)** is good value to me, as compared to my other "A's." His first try versus winners was much better than the paper form suggests, and now Sadler calls on Rosario to get the job done. Yes, my other "A's"—**#3 MOONLIT SONATA (4/1)** and **#4 ROSTOVSKY (7/2)**—have big shots (especially if the pace unfolds as I expect), but they are both shorter on the morning-line, and together, they are a combined 2-for-33. Ouch!

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