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Date: 11/15/26
Race 6: Cal-bred $20K optional-claiming/N1X for fillies & mares going 6.5F on dirt
Post: approx. post 3:03 p.m. PST

OVERVIEW

We have a competitive group of Cal-bred fillies and mares going 6.5-furlongs on the main track, and there are several horses in here who have demonstrated enough ability to win at this level. The problem is that most of them have also demonstrated an ability to lose! There should be a pretty honest pace with several runners who like to be involved early, so I'm expecting a fairly run race. May the best gal win!

#1 PAVEL'S ETOILE (12/1) has been knocking around at this level for quite some time without getting the job done, and her best races have actually come on turf. She did run a respectable third here at this distance in September, grinding away from a wide outside post to close the gap but never really threaten. She has a few dirt races that make her competitive, including a good second going a mile at Santa Anita in June, but she's been away since September, and I'm not sure this is her best distance or surface. Is this 1-for-18 gal going to break through today? GRADE: C.

#2 DANZINGWITH MAXINE (4/1) is an interesting new acquisition for Yakteen, who claimed her for $25K out of a turf sprint last time. She had some trouble at the start that day but still managed to finish less than two lengths behind the winner. She's been much better on turf throughout her career (all three wins), but she did run a good second at this level on dirt here last summer. Yakteen is excellent first off the claim, and he brings her back at a sensible level while retaining Mike Smith. She should get a favorable tracking trip. GRADE: A.

#3 LA SILENCIOSA (8/1) has tactical speed, so she'll appreciate a move toward the inside after being banished to the 10- and 11-posts the last two times. In other words, her jock won't have to worry about using her speed or grabbing her early to get position; he can just let her break naturally. She's shown hints of ability at times, but she's failed at this level against her own age group, and the one time she faced an older group like this, she finished seventh at 14/1. Today's extra half-furlong won't make her task any easier methinks. I suspect she'll be doing her best work early. GRADE: C.

#4 SACRED SOUND (7/2) is coming off a sharp turf-sprint victory at Santa Anita, where she overcame a troubled start and rallied strongly to get up in the final strides. That was a career-best effort, and Rispoli stays aboard, so there are certainly reasons to like her chances. The problem is that she's moving from turf to dirt, where her two previous races haven't been nearly as impressive. Granted, one of those was an easy maiden-claiming victory, but she hasn't demonstrated that she can run the same kind of fig on the main track that she just ran on the lawn. Miller does well with this surface switch, but he's also much better in turf sprints. Note that she needed Cal-bred $50K maidens to graduate, and that's a concern against this group at 7/2. GRADE: B.

#5 PETITE TREAT (12/1) is another recent turf winner moving back to the main track, but she's been off since April, and her dirt races before the vacation seem too slow. Puype's numbers with horses returning from lengthy layoffs aren't especially encouraging either. GRADE: X.

#6 STAY IN LINE (5/1) is a tough old mare who has been a consistent performer against these types, and she comes into this race off a game victory at Santa Anita, where she dueled on the lead and refused to let anyone by. She's also 2-for-5 on the Del Mar main track, so we know she likes it here too. The concern is the projected pace. She has a lot of early speed, but so do a few others, and she hasn't always been at her best when forced to work hard through the opening stages. Orantes knows her well, and Knapp has done good work with her, but I suspect she'll have to earn every inch of ground today. GRADE: B.

#7 LADY MENDELSSOHN (5/1) is another horse who has been knocking on the door at this level, and she was a good second here at this distance in September after getting involved in a contentious pace and just getting edged out late (while maybe being a short horse off a long layoff). She came back to finish third behind Stay in Line at Santa Anita, again racing close to the lead before weakening late. She's certainly fast enough to win a race like this, and Jaramillo is an aggressive rider who should have her involved from the start. She doesn't need the lead, but she does need to show some extra oomph late. I think this post should help her relax in a good forward position, leaving her with just enough to seal the deal late (but I've thought that before!). GRADE: A.

#8 SCARY FAST RIDE (6/1) is an old class mare who has been keeping much better company than most of these, and she has back figures that would make her very tough in this spot. She won twice against open $50K optional-claiming company earlier this year, so it's no surprise that she was 6/5 last time when dropping back into this Cal-bred AOC. She was uncharacteristically flat, but her trainer could stop a freight train back then (and still now), so the fact that Ellis took her out of an ice-cold barn is a major upgrade. She is 7-years-old, so there's a chance she might not want to race anymore, but I trust Ellis to make the right call with her. GRADE: A.

#9 BERRY VALLEY (8/1) is a late-running mare who should appreciate the anticipated contentious pace, and she has enough races on her form that make her competitive against these. She finished second at this level here in August after making up ground from well off the pace in a 5.5-furlong affair, and she ran another good second at Los Alamitos in June, again in a 5.5-furlong affair. I don't like that she's been away since August, but if she's fit and ready, she should make her impact felt in that final half-furlong. GRADE: B.

CONCLUSION

There are no standouts in here, so that means you'll have to decide between several evenly matched horses based on the best value. If **#8 SCARY FAST RIDE (6/1)** sneaks away at 6/1,

she's a bet. She's been shorter against much better. **#2 DANZINGWITH MAXINE (4/1)**, who gets a positive trainer change to Yakteen and projects a very good trip sitting just off a contested pace, is probably a more likely winner given her likelihood of taking a big step forward second off the bench and first off the claim (but I'm expecting that to be reflected in a shorter price). I've been chasing **#7 LADY MENDELSSOHN (5/1)** for a while now, and I can't be the only one, as she's been mired at this level for a while. She will win one of these days, but I wouldn't want any shorter than 5/1 when she does (and preferably a bit higher considering her six race losing streak!).

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