



THE PICK 4 MATRIX

By Frank R. Scatoni

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NOTE: Because this analysis is posted in advance, always check my Twitter feed [@ScatoniSureShot](#) for real-time updates based on scratches and track conditions—as this analysis is written for surfaces that are fast and firm. Thanks!

INTRO

Forty-one horses are entered to compete in today's challenging Late Pick 4 sequence, which will have a guaranteed \$500K pool, here at the Great Race Place. It begins in Race 6 on this nine-race card, and it features some quality Cal-bred stakes races on this Cal Cup showcase day. First post for this terrific card is 12:30 p.m.

LEG 1 (R6):

We kick off today's Late Pick 4 with a solid renewal of the \$200K Unusual Heat Turf Classic, a 9-furlong turf affair for Cal-bred/Cal-sired runners in a race named after the late great sire who left a lasting impression on California racing. Will a son of Unusual Heat take the money?

#1 WARD 'N JERRY (5/2) is a cool 7-year-old who has run some really good races going long on the turf—and therein lies the rub: his best work has come at 10-furlongs or farther, including a really nice closing third in the Hollywood Turf Cup (G2) last time. For a quality turf horse who has won five races, it's a bit disconcerting that he's winless in three tries at today's distance, with his best finish a third. At his likely short odds, it might make sense to use him more for underneath. GRADE: B.

#2 CONO (15/1) is a horse who toiled at the Cal-bred N1X level before finally going up north to beat open allowance foes last time while racing 8.5-furlongs on the synth. It was a sharp effort, but he didn't beat much of a field. He's also never been this far, so we'll see how he acts in that final half-furlong. He does have tactical speed, however, and surprisingly, he looks pretty good on [OptixPLOT](#); he also has excuses for his recent failures here (slow paces or troubled trips), and his trainer is on fire. Sneaky upset chance? GRADE: A.

#3 ACCOUNTABILITY (15/1) ran third in this race last year, and he also did some decent work against open foes earlier in his career. That said, he was offered for \$40K back in June, where he was a voided-claim before hitting the bench. His comeback race was clearly a leg-stretcher, since 5.5-furlongs is just way too short for him, so he should move forward today, making the second start of his form cycle and stretching out. Still, his 0-for-6 record at today's distance is a big problem. GRADE: X.

#4 THE HUNTED (9/5), a son of Unusual Heat, is capable of firing some big shots, but all four of his wins have come at a mile, while his races beyond that distance have just been *meh*, really lacking the necessary oomph in the lane to get it done—and that's surprising because Baltas can usually get them to run all day. His best race beats this field, but there are questions to answer, especially at 9/5. GRADE: B.

#5 WOUND TIGHT (5/1) is just a hard-trying animal, showing up for business and working hard all the way to the wire. He beat open N1X foes last time after a few near-misses at that level, and if you



go back to his 2018 form, you'll see that he won at today's distance—something only one other horse in this field can say. He's got a good forwardly placed style, so he'll get a great trip as well. GRADE: A.

#6 DESMOND DOSS (8/1) came off a 197-day layoff last time and beat Cal-bred N1X runners going 5.5-furlongs on turf. It was a good effort considering it was just a prep for a longer race—which he gets today. He's also a lightly raced 4-year-old with plenty of upside, but can he step up and beat some more experienced foes today? GRADE: C.

#7 MOBOU (20/1) takes off the blinkers after failing to make any kind of impact versus winners in his last four starts. He finished a few lengths behind Desmond Doss in last year's Snow Chief, so he'll have to do better today while trying to run the best race of his career. GRADE: X.

#8 ASHLEYLUVSSUGAR (7/2) is a total pro: a 9-year-old who has earned more than \$1.4 million in his career. He was favored in this race last year, but he ran second after bobbling at the start. In fact, you have to go all the way back to 2017 to find his last victory (which is the same year he won this race), so it's safe to say that this old boy has lost a step or two. Still, he did manage to finish third in a Grade 3 last year, and this field isn't nearly as good as that one, so maybe there is one more big race in this old man's bones, especially since he's the only runner in the field with multiple wins at today's distance. GRADE: B.

LEG 2 (R7):

Today's second leg is another Cal-bred/Cal-sired stakes race: the \$200K California Cup Derby, an 8.5-furlong main-track affair for 3-year-olds only. We've got a bunch of NorCal invaders here, making it an interesting race to handicap. There also looks to be a lot of speed.

#1 BETTOR TRIP NICK (5/2) has won four of five races, all in front-running fashion, yet he's going to be kept honest in here—and that's going to be a problem for the morning-line favorite, especially since he's never raced beyond a mile nor has he ever raced on dirt. Don't get me wrong: he's quick and is in good form, so you don't have to be a hero like me, but I have to take him on at that price. GRADE: C.

#2 DAPPER (20/1) removes the blinkers after adding them last time, where he saved ground and failed to menace in the lane in the King Glorious going a mile at Los Al. Considering the fact that he's lost lengths in the lane in each of his starts against winners, he seems in tough today racing beyond a mile for the first time. GRADE: X.

#3 SACRED RIDER (12/1) was creeping toward Bettor Trip Nick two back in the Gold Rush, yet he's 12/1 on the morning-line, despite the fact that he looks like he'll get a good stalking trip drawn outside that speedster. His only win came on the turf, and his dirt form isn't anything special, but I just have a feeling he's going to run a good one today with Cedillo hopping aboard. GRADE: A.

#4 SUMMER FIRE (6/1) took a few tries to break his maiden, which he did last time going 5.5-furlongs at Del Mar when the Hess barn was on fire. It's nice to see Smith take the call, but this son of Creative Cause will have to face winners for the first time while also trying two turns for the first time. That seems like a tough ask. GRADE: X.

#5 CLUB ASPEN (3/1) made his first try around two turns on dirt a winning one, stalking the pace and drawing off to win the King Glorious at Los Al fairly easily. Both his sire and his trainer are on fire right now, so that must be considered, but he looks like a few of the others in here, so 3/1 doesn't really excite me. He should get a good stalking trip though. GRADE: B.

#6 ROOKIE MISTAKE (8/1), the first O'Neill runner, is a son of Square Eddie, so it's no surprise he broke his maiden going 5.5-furlongs on turf. He does have one decent dirt race as well, but that too



came sprinting, so we'll have to see if he can buck the Square Eddie distance limitation and carry his tactical speed around two turns. He seems like a pace factor to me. GRADE: X.

#7 INDIAN PEAK (10/1) was 30/1 in the Gold Rush when he was fanned wide and could only manage fourth against a few of today's foes. He was then bet to 3/1 in an N1X and delivered the goods, tracking from off the pace and powering home to win nicely. He owns wins on turf and synth, but he hasn't raced on dirt. We'll see how he does, but I know this: he will be the beneficiary of a quick pace, and at 10/1, he seems like good value in here. GRADE: A.

#8 FAST ENOUGH (6/1) was sent off at 5/2 in his debut back in May, and won easily in that 4.5-furlong race, hinting at good things to come. Unfortunately, he hasn't been seen since—and now he has to show up here, face winners, and try to stay 8.5-furlongs. The works are sharp, and old-school trainer Becerra can have them ready to roll, but he's going to need to beat some in-form, sharp horses. GRADE: X.

#9 BIG RETURNS (5/1) makes his first start for O'Neill, who took over training duties for Mendez after a "win" in the Graduation Stakes at Del Mar, where he was put up via DQ in that 5.5-furlong race. Like his inside neighbor, he has ability, but asking him to go two turns off a layoff against more experienced runners is a tough ask. Fuentes will have to use this guy's speed to angle over and gain position, and that will probably soften him up late as well. GRADE: X.

LEG 3 (R8):

Today's third leg keeps the Cal-bred/Cal-sired theme going with a full field entered in the \$200K California Cup Oaks, a one-mile turf affair for 3-year-old state-bred fillies. There should be a quick pace in here.

#1 ALMOST A FACTOR (6/1) has one good race on her form: a one-mile turf victory against open MSWs, where she got out of the gate, stalked the pace, and got up for the win. Ex-out her dirt races, where slow beginnings and/or wide journeys compromised her chances, and you're looking at a gal who can contend under Prat, who will save all the ground. GRADE: A.

#2 WISE RACHEL (10/1) has a nice win going a mile on turf against overnight-stakes foes up north. She tracked the pace and rallied late for the win. You can forgive her run in the Jimmy Durante (G3) against much better animals and just focus on that one turf victory. She seems like a contender in a wide-open race. GRADE: B.

#3 BULLETPROOF ONE (8/1), the first Miller entrant, will ensure a quick pace, since this speedy stretch-out sprinter should be keen on winging it early while coming off a freshening. There is some quality here, and her second-place finish in the Speakeasy shows she can handle turf—but I can't help but think someone runs her down late. GRADE: X.

#4 BEEN STUDYING HER (4/1) has won two Cal-bred stakes races, so she fits like a glove class-wise; the question is: can she handle a move to the turf, and more importantly, can she stay two turns, since her two tries around two turns weren't her best? Still, I can forgive those route races; last time, she was hooked wide and predictably weakened; three back, she was facing Grade 1 fillies. GRADE: B.

#5 WARREN'S SHOWTIME (3/1) has won two turf races, including a nice victory in the open Surfer Girl going a mile over this course. She's coming off a freshening, and I have to think she'll be ready to run her best considering this lucrative spot. Still, she's the 3/1 favorite, and it's not like her form towers over this field. GRADE: B.

#6 SMOKIN HOT BOBBIE (20/1) has raced eight times, yet she's never been on turf or around two turns. Her two wins came sprinting on the synth, where she got good trips. She'll need to prove it. GRADE: X.



#7 MIDNIGHT SUNRISE (20/1) just broke her maiden going 5.5-furlongs on the synth up north. There is some turf breeding here, but she's one of a few stretch-out sprinters who seem more likely to contribute to a quick pace than to win the race. GRADE: X.

#8 HOMEHOME (15/1) hasn't looked good in her two tries versus winners, so she's going to need to do a lot better today. She showed promise in her debut, when she won a 6.5-furlong event at first-asking, so it's possible she can run much better today while trying firm turf for the first time (as a daughter of Square Eddie), but she'll need to show more. GRADE: X.

#9 SMILING SHIRLEE (10/1) has never been on turf, and she's run behind a few of these before, but she shows up every time, and it's quite possible she can move up with a switch to the lawn and with Rispoli taking over the steering, especially since this girl has been burdened with wide trips in all of her starts. GRADE: A.

#10 CHOLULA LIPS (6/1) just beat several of these in the Soviet Problem with a perfect trip in that one-mile Los Al affair. Her one turf race was a blah fifth in the open Surfer Girl, where she attended the pace before weakening. She'll get first run on the stretch-out sprinters, but she'll need to show more stamina in the lane. GRADE: X.

#11 CALIFORNIA KOOK (10/1), the second Miller runner, takes off the blinkers after being way too keen last time in the Soviet Problem, where she pulled and weakened to finish a well-beaten eighth. She's capable of better today since Van Dyke should be able to get her settled early (like in the maiden-breaker), but she looks a cut below the best in here. GRADE: X.

#12 WARRIOR'S MOON (6/1) would look a lot more interesting with a better post—but as it is, she's looking at a 3-wide journey while tracking the pace. She has a win over this course and at today's distance, and she just ran a creditable third with a rough trip against a few of these. She has some ability, but she'll need a lot of luck from out here. GRADE: C.

LEG 4 (R9):

We close out the proceedings with the only non-stakes race in the sequence, but it's still a really good race: a \$20K optional-claiming/N1X for Cal-bred/Cal-sired runners going 6.5-furlongs on the main track.

#1 TIGRE DI SLUGO (7/2) is a 5-year-old with only one career start—and that's a red flag, even if he did make that start a winning one, looking very good when beating eight other rivals at Del Mar, despite a troubled trip. He enters this off a freshening and with some solid works, but the rail draw is no bargain. GRADE: B.

#2 LOAFERS BOY (4/1) will be super-fit, cutting back from a mile stakes race on the turf, where he was probably just entered to get some fitness, since his two previous races were at 5.5-furlongs. We'll see how he handles a fast-dirt track, since his maiden-breaker came on a good Los Al track, but he looks interesting to me. GRADE: A.

#3 AFTERNOON HEAT (5/1) just broke his maiden going 6.5-furlongs despite having to break from the tricky rail last time. That victory actually franked the form of both Loafers Boy and Tigre di Slugo, who won their respective races against him. Can he turn the tables on those foes? Possibly. GRADE: C.

#4 CLEM LABINE (12/1) ran well enough to pick up some minor awards at this level when he was trained by Miyadi, who was happy to lose this one for \$20K two back. New trainer Mathis then protected him in a starter-allowance, which he won on the synth up north. He'll try the dirt in SoCal yet again, and he should be grinding along late, making him a contender if the race falls apart. GRADE: B.

#5 RICKEY B (15/1) was a win-machine early in his career, but it's been slim pickings for him of late, having lost five in a row. He now runs for the lowest tag of his career while making his first start for



Ortiz, who wins a lot of races up north. I suppose if this guy can turn back the clock, he could win, but I'm willing to watch one today. GRADE: X.

#6 SHORT OF EZ (15/1) has speed, but there are others who also have speed, and that will make things difficult for a runner whose best work has come in the lower claiming ranks. GRADE: X.

#7 POSTERIZE (8/1) has a ton of speed and adds blinkers. I normally like that move, but this race has plenty of other speed, and that will likely soften up this runner, whose two wins—including one at this level—came loose on the lead. At least the apprentice weight-break can't hurt. GRADE: X.

#8 PERFECT WAGER (8/1) is a bit of a grinder who needs things to go his way, but he should get plenty to run at today against this field. I know he's been stuck at this level for a while, but he's lost a few tough ones. He'll be fit on the cutback, and the race shape favors his run style. GRADE: A.

#9 CLAIM OF PASSION (12/1) has lost twice at this level, but he has excuses: last time he pressed the pace going a mile on turf; while two back, he had a wide journey at 5.5-furlongs. He's capable of better today, but he will need a step forward. GRADE: C.

#10 BOB'S SNIPER (20/1) ran second at this level three back while going 5.5-furlongs. It was a decent effort off the bench, but I don't like that he couldn't step up off that race and beat starter foes. He ran okay, tracking the pace inside but lacked some kick in that Los AL affair. Maybe he didn't like the inside that day, the same way he didn't like the turf last time. He should be tracking the pace and waiting for that 5-pound weight-break to kick in. GRADE: X.

#11 RICK'S DREAM (20/1) has speed, and he'll have to use it from this outside post, and that should prove his undoing late. Do note that he won at a similar level back in October, which is why he's in for the tag today—but he's the kind of horse who needs things to go his way to win. GRADE: X.

#12 PRINCIPE CARLO (6/1) has four wins, so he knows how to get the job done, including a win at this Cal-bred N1X level, hence the \$20K tag today. His best races are good enough, but I don't like that he was a void-claim back in August, hit the bench, came back in October to run well but then had to hit the bench again. GRADE: X.

SUGGESTED WAGERS

Wow, this is a really tough sequence. As you can see, I'm a bit over-budget at **\$122**, but I have some prices as "A's," so I don't mind spending the money here to really try to hit a home run. In fact, I could have spent a lot more, but in the end, some tough decisions needed to be made in these wide-open races. On the plus side, if we are right, we will get paid! If you want to spend less, **\$102** will get you all "A's" with two "B's," while **\$44** will get you all "A's" with one "B." Remember: whatever you choose to do: only play what you're comfortable spending or create your own Ticketmaker play here: <https://ticketmaker.drf.com/>. For more info about **OptixEQ**, please visit and register at <https://www.optixeq.com/>.

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Keep in mind: I don't add "Also Eligibles" to the matrix, so if they draw in, be sure to include them on all of your tickets!

Race #	A	B	C	X
6	2 5	1 4 8	6	3 7
7	3 7	5	1	2 4 6 8 9
8	1 9	2 4 5	12	3 6 7 8 10 11
9	2 8	1 4	3 9	5 6 7 10 11 12

Below are your tickets based on your horse and budget selections above.
 You can continue to add, remove, or re-categorize horses and your tickets below will automatically adjust.

Bet Type	Ticket	Race 6	Race 7	Race 8	Race 9	\$ per Bet	Cost of Ticket	Emphasize
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All A Entries	1	2,5	3,7	1,9	2,8	\$0.50	\$8.00	<input type="checkbox"/> x2 <input type="checkbox"/> x3 <input type="checkbox"/> x4
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A's with One B	2	1,4,8	3,7	1,9	2,8	\$0.50	\$12.00	<input type="checkbox"/> x2 <input type="checkbox"/> x3 <input type="checkbox"/> x4
	3	2,5	5	1,9	2,8	\$0.50	\$4.00	<input type="checkbox"/> x2 <input type="checkbox"/> x3 <input type="checkbox"/> x4
	4	2,5	3,7	2,4,5	2,8	\$0.50	\$12.00	<input type="checkbox"/> x2 <input type="checkbox"/> x3 <input type="checkbox"/> x4
	5	2,5	3,7	1,9	1,4	\$0.50	\$8.00	<input type="checkbox"/> x2 <input type="checkbox"/> x3 <input type="checkbox"/> x4
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A's with Two ...	6	1,4,8	5	1,9	2,8	\$0.50	\$6.00	<input type="checkbox"/> x2 <input type="checkbox"/> x3 <input type="checkbox"/> x4
	7	1,4,8	3,7	2,4,5	2,8	\$0.50	\$18.00	<input type="checkbox"/> x2 <input type="checkbox"/> x3 <input type="checkbox"/> x4
	8	1,4,8	3,7	1,9	1,4	\$0.50	\$12.00	<input type="checkbox"/> x2 <input type="checkbox"/> x3 <input type="checkbox"/> x4
	9	2,5	5	2,4,5	2,8	\$0.50	\$6.00	<input type="checkbox"/> x2 <input type="checkbox"/> x3 <input type="checkbox"/> x4
	10	2,5	5	1,9	1,4	\$0.50	\$4.00	<input type="checkbox"/> x2 <input type="checkbox"/> x3 <input type="checkbox"/> x4
	11	2,5	3,7	2,4,5	1,4	\$0.50	\$12.00	<input type="checkbox"/> x2 <input type="checkbox"/> x3 <input type="checkbox"/> x4
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A's with One C	12	6	3,7	1,9	2,8	\$0.50	\$4.00	<input type="checkbox"/> x2 <input type="checkbox"/> x3 <input type="checkbox"/> x4
	13	2,5	1	1,9	2,8	\$0.50	\$4.00	<input type="checkbox"/> x2 <input type="checkbox"/> x3 <input type="checkbox"/> x4
	14	2,5	3,7	12	2,8	\$0.50	\$4.00	<input type="checkbox"/> x2 <input type="checkbox"/> x3 <input type="checkbox"/> x4
	15	2,5	3,7	1,9	3,9	\$0.50	\$8.00	<input type="checkbox"/> x2 <input type="checkbox"/> x3 <input type="checkbox"/> x4
Total:							\$122.00	