THE PICK 4 MATRIX
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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
We close out the four-day race weekend with a tidy eight-race card with a first post of 12:30 p.m. The feature is the $100K Megahertz (G3), a neat one-mile turf affair for fillies and mares that is part of today's Late Pick 4. The sequence begins in Race 5, so let's get to it!

LEG 1 (R5):
We kick things off with a very good $62.5K optional-claiming/N2X contested at 8-furlongs on the lawn with the rails at, unfortunately, 30-feet. I say "unfortunately" because there are some talented deep closers in this field who are going to be compromised by the wide rail setting, thus creating a potentially false result. On the plus side, there are two speed horses who could set a quick pace, so maybe it'll be a wash.

       #1 NEVER EASY (8/1) is one of the aforementioned speed horses, having made the lead in his last two starts, including his duties as the pacesetter in the Mathis Brothers Mile (G2). He faded badly in that tough event, finishing well behind today's foe Originaire (Ire). I'm afraid the same fate awaits with Foray drawn to his outside. GRADE: X.

       #2 GREGORIAN CHANT (GB) (6/1) is a little interesting in here because he spent all of last year running against the best 3-year-old turf horses in California. He didn't beat them, but he wasn't disgraced either, and you have to think he's grown up some since his last race way back in August. Rosario taking the call adds to the appeal—and it wouldn't shock me if this one came rallying late. GRADE: A.

       #3 ACKER (12/1) cuts back after stalking the pace and weakening in the 9-furlong San Gabriel (G2), where he was sent off at 11/1. Before that, he ran evenly at 9-furlongs at this very same level, where he was claimed off Miller. It seems like the cutback should help as he makes his second start off the bench for Neil French, but even when he was running well, he was still being beaten at this level despite perfect trips. He'll get another perfect trip today stalking the pace, but I think someone outkicks him late. GRADE: X.

       #4 ORIGINAIRE (IRE) (5/2), the first Mullins runner, was my top pick in the Mathis Brothers Mile (G2), and he uncorked his usual strong late run but was unable to get to the super-sharp Mo Forza. Unfortunately, it was typical of most of his races here in SoCal—unleash a monster late run only to come up short because he's left himself with too much work to do. That said, I did like the way Rispoli rode him last time, a bit more aggressively than Smith had been, and it led to a good finish; he just lost to a better horse. There are no Mo Forzas in here, so this guy will have every chance to get the nod today—but the rails being out 30-feet do not help his cause nor will his likely short price help us. GRADE: B.

#5 BARRISTAN THE BOLD (GB) (7/2) also showed off a decent stretch run last time in the Mathis Brothers Mile (G2), finishing fourth. That was his first start in the U.S. for Glatt, who doesn't often have them fully cranked for their stateside starts. That said, we must also factor in the potential for the dreaded Euro bounce and the fact that this European invader got "good" turf last time, which I'm sure he adored. He'll get "firm" today, so we'll see how he acts on this footing—but at least Prat shows up to ride. GRADE: B.

#6 MIDNIGHT SWAP (20/1) is coming off a 450-day layoff and facing some really good animals, so this Golden Gate allowance winner seems in way too deep. He does have speed, and Van Dyke bothers to ride—two positives—but I think the "race rust" will show today against this field. GRADE: X.

#7 PLATINUM EQUITY (15/1) has done very good work for Steve Knapp, but his best work has come on the dirt against weaker company. He's 0-for-8 on the turf, and that's hard to swallow against this class of runner. GRADE: X.

#8 FORAY (4/1) is a one-way train, so I'm sure Velez (and his 5-pound weight-break) are going to take it to the rail horse right out of the gate. In fact, I think Velez will take the lead, something this horse has done in all of his best races. He's tried this level twice before, has run well but got tagged late. I'm envisioning the same scenario today. GRADE: X.

#9 SELLWOOD (5/1), the second Mullins entrant, is a little interesting to me just because I think he'll get the perfect tracking trip, just sitting comfortably in the second flight while positioned well to get first jump on the closers (and his stablemate). His one try at this level on this circuit resulted in a good second-place finish to a horse who has competed well in stakes races, so there was no shame there—and I really liked the way he finished up after being too far off a slow pace. I'd like to see Smith be more aggressive today, and if he is, this guy could pull off the upset. GRADE: A.

#10 DUBBY DUBBIE (6/1) (AE) got a perfect trip last time to win at this level, going 8.5-furlongs on the synth at Golden Gate. In fact, he's won at this level a few times before, hence the $62.5K tag. It's hard to knock a horse who has won six races on all kinds of surfaces, but it seems like he prefers a little more ground than a flat mile, since his connections have run him longer repeatedly. Still, he's a pro who can't be dismissed out of hand, especially with Cedillo taking the call. GRADE: C.

LEG 2 (R6):

Today's second leg is a $50K maiden-claimer for 3-year-olds going 8-furlongs on the main track. I always have a tough time with these higher-priced claimers for young horses simply because it's really hard to know which ones are worth $50K and which ones aren't. But let's see what we can sniff out the winner here.

#1 MR. NASTY (7/2) goes two sprints to a route while adding blinkers, and that could be what the good doctor ordered for this guy who just ran one-paced around the track last time when going 5.5-furlongs. The aggressive Delgadillo will get this one out of the gate, make the lead, and hope to never look back. GRADE: A.

#2 BIG HOOF DYNAMITE (8/5) is a bit of a grinder who just finished second at this level when racing 6.5-furlongs. The best race of his life came going a mile at Del Mar against tougher $80K foes, where he finished a good second at 5/1. He's super-obvious in here with Prat staying put, but he's not exactly exciting at the price. GRADE: B.

#3 MASTER RECOVERY (4/1) was 24/1 in his debut at Del Mar in November, where he broke from the rail and put in a mild late bid to finish fifth against tougher foes. He's eligible for major improvement here, dropping class and stretching out for a trainer who has always been solid with this move. I can see Flores putting this guy in the race early and seeing if they can hold sway late. GRADE: A.

#4 LANDAA (15/1) didn't show much in his two starts, but they both came against tougher maiden-claimers, so we can't be too harsh. That said, Papaprodromou had wanted this guy on the turf in those first two starts, so it remains to be seen how this one will handle Santa Anita dirt (since his off-the-turf dirt race at Del Mar was no good). He does get class relief, and the fact that Van Dyke sticks around is very interesting, but he's tough to support off those two previous runs. GRADE: C.

#5 KADESH (5/1) definitely has a shot in here, since he's another one dropping in class to this $50K level. He had a horror trip last time breaking from the 10-hole on turf, and before that, he showed good speed on dirt but was hooked ridiculously wide when losing to Big Hoof Dynamite. With a better trip and a good ride, he can be competitive here. GRADE: B.

#6 LINFIELD (4/1) couldn't cut it against MSWs in the Midwest, so Eoin Harty brings him here to SoCal, dropping in class as a new gelding. Cedillo's presence must mean that the horse is live, though it's hard to know where he fits class-wise on this circuit. GRADE: B.

#7 WICKED BLUE (15/1) has mostly been sprinting against Cal-breds and hasn't been able to get the job done in ten tries. He did race once at a mile, finishing an even third at Los Al against MSWs. He'll need to do much better today, and he's probably in for a wide stalking trip. GRADE: X.

LEG 3 (R7):

The feature race comprises Leg 3 in today's Late Pick 4: it's the $100K Megahertz (G3), a one-mile turf affair for fillies and mares with the rails at 30-feet. It's a bummer a graded-stakes race is being run with this rail setting, compromising the off-the-pace runners, but let's see if we can peg the winner.

#1 CARRESSA (5/1) is a talented daughter of Uncle Mo who has looked terrific in two of her three dirt races since stretching out for the first time back in August. That said, she's never been on turf before and she is stepping up in class after clearing her N1X condition in a five-horse field. Maybe she's just "that" good to win this, but I have to side against. GRADE: C.

#2 TAKE THESE CHAINS (IRE) (8/1) invades from the East Coast where this 7-year-old mare just ran second in an overnight stakes race at Gulfstream Park. She is eligible to move forward off that, and it's good to see that she shipped well here last February when running a solid fourth in the Buena Vista (G2), but Streak of Luck did beat her that day, so this gal will need to do better. GRADE: C.

#3 KEEPER OFTHE STARS (7/2) was 13/10 in the age-restricted Lady Shamrock, and she lacked the necessary oomph to get the job done, finishing second to Brill. It was a disappointing effort because she never really showed any tenacity in the lane, but I wonder if the "good" turf course had something to do with it. You can also toss her previous race when she went longer on "good" turf at Del Mar. Before those two races, her form was very good. Can she rebound today? GRADE: B.

#4 TONAHUTU (IRE) (15/1) is still eligible for the N2X condition, so this 6-year-old will have to show she can handle this kind of company after several failures against weaker foes the last five times. That said, there is some speed in here, and this gal does have a very nice stretch run, so you can expect her to be motoring home late, making the second start of her form cycle after prepping in a much shorter sprint. She'll need some luck for the win, but she's eminently usable in your exotics. GRADE: B.

#5 STREAK OF LUCK (15/1) is the wise-guy play in here simply because her form is dirty—she's been racing against much better animals ever since she won a classified allowance here last January. She also has tactical speed, so she can sit a good trip behind the pacesetter while getting first run on the closers. GRADE: A.

#6 BRILL (3/1) was gifted the Lady Shamrock when she made an easy lead and was never challenged at any point in the race. That said, it was her first turf try, so good on her for getting the job done and beating Keeper ofthe Stars in that race. The waters get deeper today, since the pace should be

quicker and she'll have to earn the victory today. She did cost $1 million, so sky's the limit here, but I'd like to see if she can handle some adversity today. GRADE: B.

#7 LA SARDANE (FR) (6/1) looked poised for big things when she came to America, but she couldn't find the winner's circle at all last year, and it's quite possible she's still mentally scarred from crashing into a fallen horse last March. That said, she's in good hands with Drysdale, and it's good to see Prat take the call. She's tactical, so I'm sure Prat will work out a good trip, but I feel like I need to see a return to good form before jumping on her train. GRADE: X.

#8 SUPER PATRIOT (5/2) would look really good in here if the rails were at zero-feet, but as it is, this deep closer is going to need a lot of luck. Still, there should be a pace for her to close into, and Rosario is the best in the business with these types of runners. Baltas is deadly off this kind of layoff, so you can at least expect this gal to be ready to run a big one today. GRADE: A.

LEG 4 (R8):
W close out the race week with a tried-and-true $20K maiden-claimer contested at 8-furlongs on the main track.

#1 STARSHIP CHEWY (15/1) is an 0-for-20 plodder who needs the race to fall apart to get the victory. GRADE: X.

#2 SPEAKEROFTHEHOUSE (2/1) drops to the lowest level after failing to get the job done on turf against tougher foes. This could be the wake-up call he needs, but he lacks early speed, so Fuentes will have to make sure he gets him in the race right quick. He holds a class edge, but he doesn't have to win. GRADE: B.

#3 MUSKOKA (5/2) has shown speed against much better animals, and that is always a big asset when dropping down to this maiden level where horses hate to pass other horses. He's had wide journeys in each of his last two races, so he's poised for a much better run today against this group. GRADE: A.

#4 DERBY STORM (12/1) is 0-for-12 with five minor placings, so he's fine to use underneath, but he's tough to support on top, especially since he's been handled by a few of these already. GRADE: X.

#5 CROSS TOWN (3/1) was 7/1 at this level last time, and he ran a good second, unable to get to the loose-on-the-lead winner. He'll have every chance to get the job done today, stalking the speed horses to his inside—but it should be noted that this guy had plenty of good trips up north and lacked the eye of the tiger to get it done. GRADE: B.

#6 SON OF A QUEEN (30/1) looks overmatched in here, even at this low level. He goes two sprints to a route, but I'm not sure that's a good thing. GRADE: X.

#7 SHARED (8/1) looks a little sneaky in here simply because he seems to be sitting on a peak race, having just prepped in a 5.5-furlong race against slightly better at Los Al. His one two-turn race came against $50K foes on the turf, and it was a pretty good one, showing speed after bobbling at the start, finishing fourth. Wise-guy play with the hustling Maldonado in the irons. GRADE: A.

#8 FORT DODGE (10/1) has dodged the winner's circle in 13 tries, and I don't think today will be any different, even though this guy has run second twice at this level. He's a deep closer with no early speed, so he's completely at the mercy of pace and trip. There is some pace in here, but he'll need the race to collapse to get the win. GRADE: X.

#9 NIL PHET (15/1) is no Soi Phet, and that's really all I can say about a horse who has been beaten double-digits in each one of his starts, including last time when he dropped to this level for the first time and failed to menace. Unless you think the blinkers coming off again is going to help, this one probably needs night racing at Los Al to gain some confidence. GRADE: X.

SUGGESTED WAGERS

I'm pretty happy with the coverage we can get for **$87**, but if you want to spend less, **$81** will get you all "A's" with two "B's" (though you might as well spend the extra $6 to cover everything), while **$28** 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/.

[SCROLL DOWN FOR MATRIX!]

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
5	2 9	4 5		1 3 6 7 8 10
6	1 3	2 5 6	4	7
7	5 8	3 4 6	1 2	7
8	3	2 5		1 4 6 7 8 9

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 5	Race 6	Race 7	Race 8	$ per Bet	Cost of Ticket	Emphasize
✓ All A Entries	1	2,9	1,3	5,8	3	$0.50	$4.00	☐ x2 ☐ x3 ☐ x4
✓ A's with One B	2	4,5	1,3	5,8	3	$0.50	$4.00	☐ x2 ☐ x3 ☐ x4
	3	2,9	2,5,6	5,8	3	$0.50	$6.00	☐ x2 ☐ x3 ☐ x4
	4	2,9	1,3	3,4,6	3	$0.50	$6.00	☐ x2 ☐ x3 ☐ x4
	5	2,9	1,3	5,8	2,5	$0.50	$8.00	☐ x2 ☐ x3 ☐ x4
✓ A's with Two ...	6	4,5	2,5,6	5,8	3	$0.50	$6.00	☐ x2 ☐ x3 ☐ x4
	7	4,5	1,3	3,4,6	3	$0.50	$6.00	☐ x2 ☐ x3 ☐ x4
	8	4,5	1,3	5,8	2,5	$0.50	$8.00	☐ x2 ☐ x3 ☐ x4
	9	2,9	2,5,6	3,4,6	3	$0.50	$9.00	☐ x2 ☐ x3 ☐ x4
	10	2,9	2,5,6	5,8	2,5	$0.50	$12.00	☐ x2 ☐ x3 ☐ x4
	11	2,9	1,3	3,4,6	2,5	$0.50	$12.00	☐ x2 ☐ x3 ☐ x4
✓ A's with One C	12	2,9	4	5,8	3	$0.50	$2.00	☐ x2 ☐ x3 ☐ x4
	13	2,9	1,3	1,2	3	$0.50	$4.00	☐ x2 ☐ x3 ☐ x4
					Total:		$87.00	