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
It's a fine Saturday card at the Great Race Place: nine races, first post of 12:30 p.m., two graded-stakes races, and a challenging Late Pick 4. Let's see if we can connect the dots, especially in the competitive Thunder Road (G3), which is Leg 2 of today's sequence. Speaking of the sequence, just as a curiosity, here are the distances of each race: 7-furlongs/8-furlongs/7-furlongs/8-furlongs.

LEG 1 (R6):
The fun begins in Race 6 with an evenly matched field of seven 3-year-old fillies going 7-furlongs on the main track. It's a $40K optional-claiming/SAL for runners who have started for a claiming price of $50K or less and who have never won two races.

    #1 SABINOS PRIDE (4/1) has route speed and is cutting back from a mile to today's 7-furlongs, which is often a solid move. That said, this gal just broke her maiden for $30K in facile front-running fashion as the 3/5 choice. She's probably not fast enough to get the lead today, so she will have to show she can pass horses. At least she retains the 5-pound weight-break. GRADE: C.

    #2 BILLY K (4/1) also has route speed and is cutting back, coming off a solid second-place finish when going a mile at this level. She was 23/1 that day and outran her odds—but she will have to work a little harder early in this sprint race, and that could prove her undoing late in the lane (as her sprint races from back in the day weren't any good). GRADE: C.

    #3 FRENCH ROSE (3/1) is also cutting back after showing decent early speed going a mile at this level, where a wide journey saw her finish third, behind Billy K. The cutback should serve her well, since her one-turn work has been very good, and two back, she was creeping toward the winner when going 6-furlongs at this very same level. Today's distance should hit her right between the eyes. GRADE: A.

    #4 KLEEN KARMA (10/1) regressed last time in her first try versus winners after a nice debut that saw her rally strongly from off the pace after a slow beginning. Last time, she stalked the pace and weakened while going a mile, losing to a few of these, so she'll relish one turn again if her 6-furlong debut victory is indicative of her ability. GRADE: B.

    #5 BLUEGRASS SKY (5/1) beat Cal-bred MSWs in her first SoCal try, and that makes her the "classiest" winner of the group. It was a good effort too, working out a trip from the rail and getting up to win by a head at 6/1. That said, it wasn't a particularly fast race, and it's not like she exploded late, so she will have to do a little better today while avoiding the dreaded bounce in her first try versus winners. GRADE: B.

    #6 TROUVILLE (7/2) has one race that fits nicely against this group, but it should be noted that this gal is still a maiden, so it's quite possible she is just using this as a prep race while coming off an

early December layoff. She'll track the pace and look to power home late, but this seems like an odd spot for a gal who could run in any number of maiden-claiming races on this circuit (unless, of course, Powell likes her so much that he doesn't want to lose her). GRADE: C.

#7 KRISTI'S TIGER (5/1) won her debut at 8/1, rallying nicely in a 5.5-furlong event at Los Al, where she was off slowly from the rail. She followed that up with a decent fourth at this level, grinding away in a 6-furlong event and finishing with interest, which suggests that an extra furlong will do this gal good. GRADE: A.

LEG 2 (R7):

Today's second leg is a really interesting renewal of the Thunder Road (G3), a one-mile turf affair with the rails at zero-feet. Last year's victor is back to defend his title.

#1 RONALD R (6/1) has a very strong late kick, and that will come in handy today in a race that should have a hot pace. That said, after reeling off three wins in a row (after coming off a 434-day layoff), he turned into a pumpkin in the Seabiscuit (G2) in November (albeit on "good" going). He's been freshened since that run, where he failed to show his customary late kick, so we'll see if he comes back in fine fettle today. He should appreciate a return to "firm" turf, and he'll get a pace to run at—but is this former $40K claimer graded-stakes caliber? GRADE: B.

#2 THE HUNTED (8/1) should get a good stalking trip, and I know this Cal-bred will relish the return to 8-furlongs after finding 9-panels a bridge too far last time. In fact, I've always thought he wanted no part of any distance beyond a mile, so he'll have every chance today to improve on his solid 4-for-8 record at today's distance. The question is the same one I asked of Ronald R (Ire): is this guy graded-stakes caliber? GRADE: B.

#3 MAJESTIC EAGLE (5/1) has run some good races against some quality competition, but he's really lacked the eye of the tiger, settling for eight minor awards to three wins in his 21-race career. That said, he should be sitting on a peak effort, making the third start of his form cycle and cutting back after two longer races. He'll be fit and primed, and I love the jock change to Rispoli, who can be a difference-maker today. GRADE: A.

#4 TRUE VALOUR (IRE) (7/2) won this race last year over a "good" turf course. He then needed some time off, but he came back with a vengeance to run the best race of his life when capturing the City of Hope Mile (G2), also over this course. Toss his two races since then (in the Breeders' Cup and turf-sprinting), and he looks very good to defend his title. That said, he has never really been able to string races together, so we'll see if he can get back to his winning ways today. GRADE: B.

#5 MUGARITZ (8/1) is a win-machine with a 14: 8-1-0 record. That said, his wins have come up north against lesser competition. He does have a Grade 3 win, but that came on synth going 8.5-furlongs. I can forgive his poor run on dirt in the San Antonio (G2), and it's nice to see Mike Smith take the call, but I expect this guy to be part of the early pace while getting softened up for when the real running starts. GRADE: X.

#6 RIVER BOYNE (IRE) (5/1) is a cool horse who dances all the dances and usually runs well enough to pick up a nice fat check—but it should be noted that he's winless since he left the age-restricted ranks back in 2018. Maybe Cedillo—who will be his fifth different jock in as many races—can get him across the wire first, but he's hard to trust for the top slot. GRADE: C.

#7 FRONTIER MARKET (4/1) makes his first SoCal start for Sadler and Hronis, who purchased him for $170K at a November auction (as per *DRF*'s Brad Free). These connections have done good work with horses like this, and even though it took this guy a while to break his maiden while being trained by Chad Brown, he has never run a bad race since facing winners. I've always said that the quality of East

Coast turf racing is far superior than what we have out here, so this runner should be able to make some noise right off the bat. Oh, and he has one of the best closing kicks in the race. GRADE: A.

        #8 CAMINO DEL PARAISO (12/1) is a 7-year-old veteran who has certainly earned his keep, but he seems a decided cut below the best in here, especially since he's lost a few times already to Mugartiz, who seems up against it himself. Also, this guy is a better synth horse, and that 1-for-18 turf record does little to inspire. GRADE: X.

        #9 TAKE THE ONE O ONE (20/1) has plenty of speed, so he'll be part of the early pace, especially since he's likely to be very keen while coming off a 524-day layoff. This 5-year-old does have some good Cal-bred stakes form to build on, but I suspect he's going to need one off the bench, and I'll look for him next time against fellow state-breds. GRADE: X.

        #10 KINGLY (12/1) has blazing speed and re-adds blinkers today while having to break from this tough outside post—but that means everyone knows what this runner is going to do: blast off, angle over, and hope for the best. He will give his backers a thrill turning for home, but I expect a swift pace, and there are some decent stretch-runners in here to reel this guy in. GRADE: X.

LEG 3 (R8):
Today's third leg moves to the main track for a $62.5K optional-claiming/N2X event contested at 7-furlongs on the main track.

        #1 ROUTE SIX SIX (8/1) took my money twice at Del Mar and ran awful races each time—but I have to think he just hated that track because his Santa Anita races are all pretty good. That said, he's coming off an August layoff and his best work has come around two turns, so there is a strong possibility that this elongated sprint is just a prep for a route next time. GRADE: X.

        #2 SPEED PASS (2/1) took some strong money in the Palos Verde (G2), as he was sent off at 13/10. Unfortunately, the field scratched down to four horses, leaving Captain Scotty a lone-F, and that foe made the most of it by setting glacial fractions in a wire victory. In other words, Speed Pass, who likes to stalk and pounce, had zero shot in that race. He'll do much better today, and Baffert sticks with bug-boy Diaz and that 5-pound weight-break. GRADE: A.

        #3 ADENS DREAM (3/1) has speed, and I'm sure Cerapio Figueroa will use it to try and wire this field while going 7-furlongs. That said, I'm not sure this guy—whose best work has come a level or two below this—is quite good enough to beat the best in here. GRADE: X.

        #4 MANHATTAN UP (9/5) is a cool race horse who should be sitting on a peak effort, making the second start of his form cycle after a fine tune-up at this level when going 6.5-furlongs. He closed nicely to just miss, finishing second at 5/1. I don't like that he's pegged at 9/5 today, but he has class and looks like the horse to beat (though offers little value). GRADE: B.

        #5 OLIVER (7/2) has tactical speed and is drawn outside, so he'll have options in this short five-horse field. Still, this Cal-bred has never really wowed, just running his race each time. Sometimes it's good enough to win; sometimes it's good enough to finish second or third. He's a very good exotics key, but I think my two "A's" are just better animals. GRADE: B.

LEG 4 (R9):
We close out the sequence with a wide-open $62.5K maiden-claimer contested at 8-furlongs on the turf with the rails at zero-feet.

        #1 FIVESTAR LYNCH (IRE) (9/5) was irresponsibly hammered to 11/10 last time at this level, and he got run down late after doing all the dirty work. Unfortunately, he's going to have to go again today

while breaking from the rail, unless Rispoli can get him to suck back and relax behind horses. His last two races are certainly good enough to win this—if he doesn't get too caught up in a hot pace. GRADE: A.

#2 MUSKOKA (15/1) was 8/1 at this level last time, and he stalked wide and weakened to finish seventh. He moves inside today, which will help, but it should be noted that this guy also lost at the $50K level, so he might be racing a smidge over his head against these. GRADE: C.

#3 CAMPS BAY (6/1), the first Sadler entrant, has been beaten by a few of these, but I think he can possibly turn the tables today. He is a bit of a grinder and now gets a 5-pound weight-break, which should come in handy in a race that is expected to have a swift pace. I know this guy has had his chances, but I'll give him one more chance today as a secondary contender. GRADE: B.

#4 IRISH SPIRIT (8/1) is a 5-year-old who has made only three starts—and those all came from June 2018 to December 2018. In other words, this China doll is coming off a 433-day layoff. He returns a gelding and isn't dropping to the bottom—two positives—but it's hard to know what to do with this guy, since we only have one turf race to draw from, and it was an effort that precipitated a year-plus layoff. GRADE: C.

#5 TROJAN MAGIC (6/1) was claimed for $100K off Baffert in November 2018. He needed an eternity to get back to the races, which he finally did on January 18, and he showed speed and weakened against MSWs going 5.5-furlongs on the synth at Golden Gate. I like that Lerner removes the hood and stretches him out, so he should put forth a much better effort today—but it's hard to know if this guy can relax and carry his speed this far. GRADE: B.

#6 SHARED (50/1) has speed and adds blinkers, but he hasn't been able to get it done at the lowest levels, so this seems like a tough spot for a runner who has had his chances, and he figures to be a pace factor only in here. GRADE: X.

#7 FENGARI (5/2), the second Sadler runner, comes off a 741-day layoff—not a typo! He returns a new gelding, attracts Prat, and drops in class (but not to the very bottom)—so he has those things going for him, which is nice. But 5/2 seems short on a horse who was last seen in January 2018. GRADE: B.

#8 RIGHTFUL (30/1) was 89/1 at this level last time, and he beat home three horses, so he'll need to show more today. He does move in two post positions, so maybe he can save a little ground early by angling over and just waiting to produce a late run under a 5-pound weight-break. Still, he's had his chances. GRADE: X.

#9 FRIENDLY OUTTHEDOOR (5/1) broke from the 11-hole last time at this level at 20/1, and even though Gutierrez did a very good job getting this guy over into good position, I do feel like some early energy expenditure compromised this guy's chances late—because for a minute around the far turn, I thought he might actually win the race; then he flattened out and ran evenly to the wire. I expect him to run a good one today. GRADE: A.

SUGGESTED WAGERS

This is a difficult sequence to play effectively because I do think the logical runners all have strong chances today—and I don't really have anything too clever to add (with my longest-priced "A" at 5/1 on the morning-line). The whole **MATRIX** costs **$93** (which could end up losing money)—so you can quadruple up on your top lines or spend less: **$81** will get you all "A's" with two "B's" (though that's pricey too for a potentially chalky sequence), 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/.

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

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		
✔ All A Entries	1	3,7	3,7	2	1,9	$0.50	$4.00	x2	x3	x4
✔ A's with One B	2	4,5	3,7	2	1,9	$0.50	$4.00	x2	x3	x4
	3	3,7	1,2,4	2	1,9	$0.50	$6.00	x2	x3	x4
	4	3,7	3,7	4,5	1,9	$0.50	$8.00	x2	x3	x4
	5	3,7	3,7	2	3,5,7	$0.50	$6.00	x2	x3	x4
✔ A's with Two ...	6	4,5	1,2,4	2	1,9	$0.50	$6.00	x2	x3	x4
	7	4,5	3,7	4,5	1,9	$0.50	$8.00	x2	x3	x4
	8	4,5	3,7	2	3,5,7	$0.50	$6.00	x2	x3	x4
	9	3,7	1,2,4	4,5	1,9	$0.50	$12.00	x2	x3	x4
	10	3,7	1,2,4	2	3,5,7	$0.50	$9.00	x2	x3	x4
	11	3,7	3,7	4,5	3,5,7	$0.50	$12.00	x2	x3	x4
✔ A's with One C	12	1,2,6	3,7	2	1,9	$0.50	$6.00	x2	x3	x4
	13	3,7	6	2	1,9	$0.50	$2.00	x2	x3	x4
	14	3,7	3,7	2	2,4	$0.50	$4.00	x2	x3	x4
					Total:	**$93.00**				