# DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY
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**Date:** 8/2/2019
**Race 6:** $62.5K optional-claiming/N2X for fillies &mares going 8.5-furlongs on turf (Rail at 30-ft.)
**Post:** approx. post 6:30 p.m. PDT

## OVERVIEW

We've got a really neat $62.5K optional-claiming/N2X for fillies and mares going 8.5-furlongs on the turf with the rails at 30-feet. There is a potential for a lone-F in here, but I'm hoping one of the other jocks will keep Bejarano honest on #6 Foxtail—let's see if we can figure this race out.

**#1 MEAL TICKET (5/1)** has races on her form that would dominate this field, but is she the same horse that saw her run second to the win-machine Vasilika in the Royal Heroine (G2) on April 6? I didn't think she could lose in her next start after that when racing a flat mile at today's level, but she was a no-show and beaten as the 7/5 favorite. Her two subsequent races were against much better animals, so can she wake up today, getting back over a course she likes and racing at today's 8.5-furlong distance (which is how she won her N1X)? At 5/1, that seems like good value on a gal who is going to save ground and is battle-tested against some really good animals. Then again, she could be a case of "when good mares go bad"! We'll see. GRADE: A.

**#2 ACHIRA (4/1)** broke my heart last time when I pegged her as my contest play of the day at 10/1 in the Osunitas, going today's distance. She sat a perfect trip, ranged up and looked poised for a big stretch run, but Ahimsa, who made the running, found another gear and opened up. Still, this gal finished a very good second, validating her second-place finish in that same race back in 2018. She's obvious based on her Osunitas success, and the class-relief will definitely help, but I think she'll be shorter than 4/1 on the line—but if she's 4/1, she's certainly worthy of a play. GRADE: A.

#3 ANNA PAVLOVA (SAF) (20/1) did fine work in her native South Africa—way back in 2016 and 2017. Her French form wasn't nearly as good, and her two U.S. races have been inconclusive, since she is a deep-closer who had to race over a Santa Anita turf speedway. The pace doesn't figure to be too hot, and with the rails being out 30-feet, that makes things very difficult for her. She's also been handled by a bunch of these gals, so she'll need a career best to turn the tables. As a 6-year-old mare, there doesn't seem to be much upside—but you know she's in good hands with Drysdale, and it wouldn't shock me if this one outran her odds today. Still, she's tough to back on the win-end given her U.S. form. GRADE: C.

#4 MS PEINTOUR (5/1) is a lightly raced 4-year-old who has plenty of room to improve, especially under the red-hot Koriner's tutelage. She also has tactical speed, so Talamo can have her wherever he wants, probably getting the same stalking trip she got last time in an N2X at Santa Anita, where she couldn't quite get to the loose wire-to-wire winner. The big concern, however, is that her two worst races came over this course last year; granted, they were against quality animals, so we can be forgiving, and I have to think that Koriner will have her ready to run off the brief freshening. Her two wins have come at 7.5-furlongs and a mile, so we'll see how the 8.5-furlong distance suits her today. GRADE: B.

#5 CATOCA (15/1) was settling for the minor awards on turf before switching to dirt and clearing her N1X hurdle going a mile at Los Alamitos. It was a nice effort, stalking the pace before drawing away—but she was 7/5 that day and expected to win. She also has tactical speed, and with the aggressive Maldonado in the irons, maybe he can keep Foxtail honest. Then again, that might also take the starch out of this gal, who has been outfinished in the lane in most of her U.S. turf tries. GRADE: C.

#6 FOXTAIL (7/2) is your second-choice in here by dint of her early speed, but let's not lose sight of the fact that she needed starter-allowance foes to notch her second win (in an off-the-turf affair) before capturing an N1X on the dirt in wire fashion at Keeneland. That was a sharp race, but she was 7/5, so it wasn't a surprise to see her run so well. She then tried N2X foes on turf at Santa Anita going 9-furlongs—she set a slow pace and was overtaken late to finish third. Maybe the shorter distance will help—and there is a world in which she'll lope out to an easy lead, but I'm fine taking her on in the contest—but I can't fault anyone for using her given the likely pace scenario and her recent sharp form. GRADE: B.

#7 NONNA GIANNA (IRE) (10/1) had to go up north to win an N1X, and then when she tried N1X foes at Santa Anita, she encountered trouble and never got to show her best stuff. Still, I'm not sure if her best will be good enough against this tougher N2X field, and it should be noted that her races from last summer here at Del Mar against 3-year-olds weren't anything special. That said, she does have tactical speed, so Fuentes can have her in a good spot if you're a believer. GRADE: X.

#8 MIRTH (5/2) is your morning-line favorite off her two recent races at Santa Anita, where she finished second against some decent horses (while finishing ahead of Foxtail two back). That said, she got perfect stalking trips on speed-favoring turf courses, yet someone came from off the pace to pass her. She's going to take money based on her solid recent form, but I expect her to be stalking 3-wide, and that is rarely the winning move on the turf. She could easily win, and she's likely going to run her race, but 5/2 does me no favors. GRADE: B.

#9 MORNING DANCE (15/1) comes off a November layoff after two races at Turf Paradise, where she finished second in an N2X and then was no match in a stakes race due to a slow beginning. In fact, she's been her own worst enemy with slow beginnings, and that's not going to help her chances with the rails out and not a lot of speed signed on. Maybe Pedroza can angle over, save ground, and hope to run on late for a slice, but a win seems like a bit of a stretch, since she couldn't win here last year in an N2X while trained by D'Amato. GRADE: X.

#10 FOOL'S PARADISE—program scratch.

**CONCLUSION**
The first two choices are certainly logical, but they *ain't* a cinch. I'm willing to give **#1 MEAL TICKET** one more chance to show she can get back to her classy ways. **#2 ACHIRA** would be fine at 4/1 as well, but I suspect she'll be a little bit shorter coming out of the Osunitas—and, man, I really could have used her last time!

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