

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

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Date: 8/17/2019

Race 10: \$1,000,000 Pacific Classic (G1) contested at 10-furlongs on the main track

Post: approx. post 6:43 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

It's the marquee race of the summer meet: the \$1,000,000 Pacific Classic (G1), a 10-furlong event run over the main track. This year's renewal is a wide-open affair with a full field of ten horses vying for supremacy as the top handicap horse in the country. It's nice to see a few East Coast shippers in here trying to steal the dough. Will one of them take the cake? Let's see... (and if you want analysis of the entire Pacific Classic Day card, with commentary from me, Peter T. Fornatale, Michelle Yu, Tyler Hoffman, Benny Southstreet, Megan Devine, Jonathon Kinchen, and Sean Alvarez, check out the "In the Money Players' Podcast" at this link, you will not be disappointed: <https://bit.ly/2Z1NJ4T>!

#1 WAR STORY (8/1) has earned \$2.8 million, so he always has my respect, especially since he's coming into this race off a game victory in a Grade 3 at Monmouth. That said, he's never been quite good enough to win a Grade 1 race, so I'm not sure today's effort will be any better than the one that saw him run fourth in this race last year (though that race was won by the terrific Gun Runner, and there are no Gun Runners in here). It should also be noted that this guy is 0-for-5 at today's distance, so he'll need to buck that negative trend today. As a 7-year-old warrior, what you see is what you get—but that hasn't been good enough over the years to win this caliber of a race. GRADE: X.

#2 QUIP (9/2) has all the earmarks of a progressive 4-year-old: some quality races from his 3-year-old campaign and steadily improving races as a 4-year-old, including a neck defeat to Seeking the Soul in the Stephen Foster (G2) (which should have never been downgraded to a Grade 2, in my opinion). He has tactical speed, so Geroux can have this East Coast invader wherever he wants him, and if this runner continues to move forward, he should have every say in the outcome. The question, however, is whether he can handle 10-furlongs, and if he can, will it be good enough to outfinish Seeking the Soul, who just ran this guy down going 9-panels? Because of that, he's probably best used underneath, but he is a lightly raced 4-year-old who still has plenty of upside. GRADE: A.

#3 PAVEL (7/2), as I mentioned on the "In the Money Players' Podcast" (<https://bit.ly/2Z1NJ4T>), is still waiting on a breakthrough race, since I've always thought he had ability yet has never really put it together. Yes, he did win the Stephen Foster (G1) back in 2018 when it was still a Grade 1, but it wasn't a "wow" performance. He also ran second in this race last year to the talented Accelerate, so he certainly fits class-wise. He also fits on traditional handicapping—third start of the form cycle, so he should be fit, especially after a wide journey in the Suburban (G2) last time. He's not flashy, but he's blue-collar and should try his best, meaning he's a decent exotics horse but probably not your winner—though I would be interested in him at 6/1 or higher (since I think 7/2 is way too short on the line). GRADE: B.

#4 FOR THE TOP (ARG) (12/1) looks overmatched based on his U.S. form, but he is trained by Baffert, and there must be a reason why they brought this guy from Argentina, so you can't dismiss him out of

hand. He's coming off a third-place finish in the 12-furlong Cougar II (G3), where he set the pace and was no match for Campaign. Also note that Draft Pick has him on form as well. Still, it's quite possible that Baffert had mapped out that two-race campaign to get this South American Grade 1 winner in peak form for this race—and that thought alone means he's usable in your exotics (but less so than some of the others!). GRADE: C.

#5 SEEKING THE SOUL (3/1) is the one to beat based on his amazing consistency and the fact that he's earned more than \$3 million throughout his career. He's also a legitimate Grade 1 animal who has a victory in the Clark (G1) and placings in the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (G1) and Pegasus World Cup Invitational (G1), so you know he's got the class to win this race. That said, he might have distance limitations, since there must have been a reason why they ran him in the Dirt Mile (G1) as opposed to the Classic (G1) in last year's Breeders' Cup, right? He's only raced 10-furlongs once before, and it was a non-effort in the Dubai World Cup (G1), so he'll have to prove he can handle this trip. His grinding running style suggests that the added ground shouldn't be an issue, but you never know, especially when you're dealing with a horse who is going to be a short price. GRADE: A.

#6 HIGHER POWER (8/1), the first of two Sadler entrants, has done good work on all surfaces against lesser foes, but the one time he tried the big boys going 10-furlongs in the Gold Cup (G1), he was well-beaten. He's coming off a near-miss in the one-mile Wickerr on turf, where he went down as the 2/1 favorite, unable to catch the loose leader that day. He now makes his fourth start for Sadler and his third start in blinkers, so maybe he's sitting on a big race, but he's going to need a major step forward to beat some of the East Coast runners. At least leading rider Prat takes the call. GRADE: C.

#7 TENFOLD (8/1) seems like a feast-or-famine type: he either runs a really good race or he stinks up the joint. Still, his connections must be respected, since Asmussen shipped him out here for a reason and somehow got Mike Smith to take the call—so they must like this guy's chances. I don't know what to make of his dud in the Stephen Foster (G2), where he was never involved against a few of today's foes, but I did like the tenacity he showed in the Pimlico Special (G3) before that, when he got up late to win by a neck going today's 10-panels. Unlike most of the others, he actually has a win at today's distance (though his best 10-furlong-ish races have come at Pimlico), so he should be considered based on that fact and the impeccable connections. GRADE: A.

#8 CAMPAIGN (6/1) is the West Coast horse who will take some support, since he has yet to run a bad race since he came to Southern California for John Sadler. That said, he's a total grinder whose best work has come going much farther distances, where he's been able to just plug away and outstay his competition at 12-furlongs. In the 10-furlong Santa Anita Handicap (G1), he did his usual grind-away routine, but he was too far back and could only manage a clunk-up fourth. You can expect him to run his race, but I have to think one of the East Coast horses is just going to be better than him today. GRADE: C.

#9 MONGOLIAN GROOM (20/1) is a blue-collar runner who just keeps plugging away to pick up checks, having finished fourth and third in the Gold Cup (G1) and Santa Anita Handicap (G1), respectively—so you know he'll at least try hard for you. But he seems a cut below some of the better ones in here, making him tough to support on the win-end. Maybe he can grind away for a placing in your supers, but he's going to need a big step forward to get the win today. GRADE: C.

#10 DRAFT PICK (20/1) has some ability, and as a lightly raced 4-year-old, there is still plenty of upside here for a runner who captured the Affirmed (G3) last year as a sophomore. This year, he cleared his N1X hurdle before testing Catalina Cruiser in the San Diego Handicap (G2), where he tried to pressure that foe but weakened and finished third (getting passed for place by Mongolian Groom in the lane). He can continue to improve, and his tactical speed will allow Talamo to place him wherever he wants, so he should be in a good position entering the first turn—but we'll see how this guy does going 10-panels, since he's never been beyond 9-furlongs before. His breeding suggests it won't be an issue (his sire won this race with Julie Krone back in 2003, setting a track record that still stands), and he's in good hands with Peter Eurton—but right now, he does seem like a cut below the East Coast runners, and he will need to improve leaps and bounds today. GRADE: C.

CONCLUSION

I wish I loved someone in this race, but I just don't—and my only opinion is that I'm against our West Coast horses, so I'll look at these East Coast invaders, in this order: **#7 TENFOLD (8/1)**, **#5 SEEKING THE SOUL (3/1)**, and **#2 QUIP (9/2)**. I'll also look at **#3 PAVEL (7/2)** as an exotics key if he's considerably higher than his short morning-line.

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