

# DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

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**Date:** 8/24/2019

**Race 10:** \$50K starter-allowance contested at 8F on turf (rail at 12-ft.)

**Post:** approx. post 6:41 p.m. PDT

## **OVERVIEW**

Eleven runners are entered in this competitive \$50K starter-allowance contested at 8-furlongs on the lawn with the rails at 12-feet. The **OptixPLOT** “SpeedRate” is a very fast “84,” so there should be something to run at for the closers.

#1 TARTINI (5/1) is a deep-closer, so this guy will have a chance to show his best stuff, but his inability to get up in time has been the bane of his existence, sporting a 1-for-18 record. Granted, most of those races have come against much tougher company than he faces today—but it should be noted that he did try \$40K beaten-claimers two back and could only manage fourth at 12/1. In his defense, that Santa Anita course was not kind to his running style, so he should have a much better chance today over a more fair racecourse. GRADE: B.

#2 M TOWN GEM (12/1) is a 3-year-old who came through with a breakthrough performance last time when breaking his maiden against \$62.5K foes, coming from off the pace with a nice stretch run to get up by a neck. He was 7/1 that day, so he outran his odds for a good trainer/jock combo in Puype/Van Dyke. The waters get deeper today for this guy, but at least you know that the best race of his life came here at Del Mar, if you’re a believer. GRADE: C.

#3 UNION RIDE (20/1) makes the third start of his form cycle while going two sprints to a route and getting on turf for the first time. Old-school trainer Palma is good in all of the relevant categories, but he’s had a pretty slow Del Mar meeting by his standards. The dam has yet to produce a turf winner, but **OptixNOTES** does have a “Turf” keyword from this guy’s race two back, so it’s quite possible he’ll take to the lawn and run a competitive race. At a huge number, he might be worth a nibble based on that proprietary info, but this 3-year-old gelding will need a step forward today, having just lost at this starter level when being sent off at 25/1 in a 6-furlong sprint. GRADE: C.

#4 COMBAT ZONE (7/2) is a bit of a nibbler, sporting a 1-for-13 record but with seven minor placings, including last time when he lost by a neck against \$32K/N2L conditioned-claimers at 8/1. In fact, he had the lead late but was nailed on the line by a horse who came from behind. This guy does have tactical speed, so he’ll get the right trip in here—especially since he’s being ridden by Prat, who has just been putting on a riding clinic this meet. He’s super-obvious based on his consistent form and the fact that he always shows up for work—but do you really want to take a short number on a horse who is so camera-shy? GRADE: B.

**#5 RIVER GOD (12/1)** is a bit of a grinder who should get a fast pace to grind into—and that 5-pound weight-break will come in handy as this one creeps toward the wire. Last time, he was 11/1 at this level, and he ran a respectable second despite breaking from the far outside post and getting a wide journey.

More importantly, he was good enough to beat \$75K maidens two back—and it should be noted that Cerin runners have been firing big the last week (including a \$70 winner the other day). I would just like to see the bug-boy try and stay inside and save ground, since he has a tendency to do the old swing 4-wide move, and that just hasn't been working for him or his mounts. Still, this guy seems good value at 12/1, especially since Cerin has a forwardly placed horse in here who can keep the pace honest. GRADE: A.

#6 CALL YOU TOMORROW—program scratch.

#7 HOOTIE (8/1) had some trouble last time against \$32K/N2L conditioned-claimers and could only manage fifth. Many players blamed Puglisi for getting the horse in trouble late, but I disagree. First off, Hootie has been his own worst enemy throughout his entire career. He's usually rank early, hates to settle, and then the jock looks bad for fighting the horse every step of the way. Last time, deep in the lane, Hootie did have some traffic, but he also failed to quicken through a hole that was closing—it wasn't Puglisi's fault. I've always said they should just give this horse his head and let him run (like Mike Smith did back on February 17, 2018, when he ran one of his best races ever but found 10-furlongs too far). Unfortunately, if they let Hootie go today, he's going to be chasing some quick stretch-out sprinters, so he's between a rock and a hard place in here. Yes, he's good enough to win this; yes, he did have trouble last time; and yes, he's going to have to behave himself today to get the win. GRADE: B.

#8 STORM THE BASTILLE (FR) (10/1) should take some money today by dint of the “ship-and-win” angle, as this Churchill Downs shipper comes off a May layoff for new trainer Spawr, who is very good with new acquisitions. I also like that they are protecting this one today, running in a starter-allowance after just finishing second in an age-restricted \$50K claimer. There are, however, two knocks: he's facing elders for the first time; and he'll have to show he can pass horses, since his only victory came loose on the lead against \$30K maidens. It wouldn't shock me if he ran a good one today, but he will need a step forward based on form and figures—and I'm not sure the pace sets up all that well for him. GRADE: C.

#9 BORU (9/2), the second Cerin runner, showed a new dimension last time by settling early and powering home to dominate \$50K maidens in try number 10. If Desormeaux can get him the same trip, he'll have every say in the outcome again today, since he's been a very honest runner since joining the Cerin barn—but it should be noted that his victory came at 8.5-furlongs, and those races unfold at a slower clip than these mile races, so there is a chance this one gets a little too eager early as they line up into that first turn. Still, this 4-year-old should be considered as a contender if you believe he learned to settle and rate last time under Desormeaux's deft handling. GRADE: B.

#10 REEDLEY (8/1) has sprint speed and is stretching out for the first time, so he will be a pace factor, especially since Garcia is an aggressive jock who likes to be in the mix from the jump. Old-school trainer Marquez—who does well with his purchases—took this guy off Baffert last time for \$40K, and he promptly stretches him out and moves him to turf, which is interesting because [OptixNOTES](#) gave him a “Turf” keyword two starts ago. So, while it's quite possible this one can move up on the lawn, we shall see if he can excel going two turns after starting his career in three 6-furlong dirt sprints. Maybe watch one because of the anticipated hot pace scenario? GRADE: C.

#11 SOUL BEAM (12/1) was a contender for me and a few others last time when he was sent off at 3/1 against \$32K/N2L conditioned-claimers, but a wide journey took some of the starch out of him, and he finished sixth. Before that, he was running respectably against \$40K types, so we'll see how he handles some tougher company, since the two times he tried \$50K starter foes on this circuit, the best he could do

was fifth. Also note that he was claimed off a cagey barn for \$32K and that Prat—who rode him last time—ends up elsewhere. New trainer Periban removes the hood, which should help flatter this guy’s late kick, but the post is brutal and this 4-year-old has had his chances. GRADE: C.

#12 INTO A HOT SPOT (12/1) makes his first SoCal start for Mullins, who has had a terrific meet and has done well with horses from Kentucky. That said, this guy was exclusively sprinting on dirt back East, so we’ll see if Mullins’ plan to shake things up today works. I’m inclined to watch one, since the presence of Maldonado suggests to me that they are just going to send hard and hope for the best. The outside post, coupled with the fact that there is other speed in the race, makes me think this one is up against it today—though I wouldn’t fault anyone for backing a Mullins runner at this meet. GRADE: C.

### **CONCLUSION**

This is a really competitive race, and there are plenty of places to land. I’ll likely end up on **#5 RIVER GOD (12/1)**, since he’s got a good stretch run, gets a 5-pound allowance, and should have a pace to close into. Oh, and the price is right!

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