

# DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

By Frank R. Scatoni  
On Twitter @ScatoniSureShot

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**Date:** 11/30/2019

**Race 8:** \$300K Hollywood Derby (G1) for 3-year-olds going 9-furlongs on turf

**Post:** approx. post 3:33 p.m. PST

## OVERVIEW

What a doozy of a race we have in this year's running of the prestigious \$300K Hollywood Derby (G1), a 9-furlong turf affair for 3-year-olds only. Thirteen horses have been entered, with four East Coast invaders (including two trained by Chad Brown)—and the morning-line favorite is a lukewarm 9/2, so there should be plenty of value to be had on the winner. I happen to think this is one of the best Hollywood Derby (G1) fields we've seen in a long time, and it wouldn't shock me if anyone won this event. I also expect several of these to go on with it next year and become tough customers in the turf division. One thing to note: watch the turf races early in the day and try to gauge the going. I handicapped this race for "firm" turf—but if it looks like there is give in the ground, I might switch up some of my selections based on the footing.

#1 MO FORZA (5/1) was dynamite in victory when capturing the Twilight Derby (G2) on Breeders' Cup Saturday. He stalked the pace, took over turning for home, and never looked back, easily holding sway against several of today's foes. As sharp as that effort was, let's not overlook the fact that the Santa Anita turf course was very kind to his running style, so we'll see if he can replicate that performance today on a more fair turf course. He should get another good forwardly placed trip today, but there are other good forwardly placed types in here, so I expect a faster early pace, which means I prefer the off-the-pace runners. GRADE: C.

#2 KINGLY (20/1) should ensure a good pace, something he's done in all of his starts since hopping on the turf this summer when he wired the field going 8.5-furlongs in the La Jolla (G3). His starts since then haven't been nearly as good, especially at today's 9-panels, so he seems like a pace factor only to me—similar to the race he ran last time in the Twilight Derby (G2), where he made an easy lead with nary a straw in his path yet was still overtaken in the lane. GRADE: X.

#3 UNCLE BULL (20/1) invades from Woodbine for Mark Casse, who has done fine work with his Del Mar shippers over the last several years. That said, this three-time winner has yet to face quality stakes runners up in the great white north, so it remains to be seen how he stacks up against some salty runners—though in his defense, he has been beating older horses at Woodbine. He's never been 9-furlongs before, and his best races have come on or near the lead—and with other quality forwardly placed runners in here, this guy is really going to have to show he can stay the distance while fending off the stretch-runners. GRADE: X.

#4 DIGITAL AGE (IRE) (6/1), the first Chad Brown entrant, won a Grade 2 back in May, but he is winless since, though he has run well in defeat—and his two poor races are excusable, so he should have every chance to make some noise today, especially with his very strong late kick. His come-home times are well above par for this group, and even though he's finished behind a few of today's foes (including

his stablemate), he will get the chance to turn the tables today with a pace to run at and, hopefully, a clean trip. GRADE: A.

#5 NEPTUNE'S STORM (9/2) is your tepid morning-line favorite by dint of his stellar race record and the fact that this guy always shows up for business. His victory in the Hill Prince (G2) two back was nice, but he regressed a little off that in the Twilight Derby (G2) when he just couldn't get to Mo Forza. In order to prevent a similar result, maybe Cedillo will be aggressive with this guy so that his rival doesn't get the jump on him today—and that might soften things up for the both of them as they stalk Kingly around the course. He's a really nice horse, and he is certainly capable of winning, but I want someone to come from off the pace in here, and it should be noted that this guy was run down late by several of these here over the summer. GRADE: C.

#6 NOLDE (6/1) is a terrific turf horse, so you can just ex-out that poor last race when he was never comfortable and just didn't get the best of rides. He won the Del Mar Derby (G2) over the summer, showing a very nice late kick, and he should be right around the wire again today getting back over a course he loves. That said, this race is really going to be about who gets the best clean trip, and it's quite possible this guy will have some issues again in this big full field with a less than remarkable turf rider at the helm. GRADE: B.

#7 PROUD PEDRO (FR) (30/1) lost a heartbreaker last time when he just couldn't run down Bob and Jackie, who got away with glacial splits in the one-mile Let It Ride. He now makes the second start off the bench and gets more distance to work with—and that's a big plus, since this guy has a very good late kick. I prefer others a little bit more, but believe me when I tell you, I've seen way worse 30/1 shots, so I can't fault anyone for taking a shot with a horse who tries every time and who is in very good hands with Leonard Powell. GRADE: C.

**#8 HENLEY'S JOY (6/1)** is probably a little more effective with more ground, since the best race of his life came when capturing the Belmont Derby (G1) going 10-furlongs over the summer, but he looks like a strong contender, nonetheless. His last two 9-furlong efforts saw him show up and run good races, but he was getting going too late, especially in the Twilight Derby (G2), where he had to idle a bit before getting some room. That said, I do like the jock change to Van Dyke, since he knows this course very well, and maybe he can time this guy's late burst just right today. If the pace is hot, this guy will be the biggest beneficiary. GRADE: A.

**#9 STANDARD DEVIATION (6/1)**, the second Brown runner, just missed in the Hill Prince (G2), as he grinded away to finish third after Neptune's Storm got the jump on him through glacial splits. A fairer pace today means this guy can easily turn the tables on that foe, giving Brown a very strong one-two punch. He should also get a good tracking trip, and he's likely to get the jump on those strong contenders who prefer to come from farther back. No real knocks here. GRADE: A.

#10 MOODY JIM (IRE) (6/1), the first Mullins charge, is a very nice horse with an impressive closing kick, but it should be noted that he was outkicked by a few of these in the Del Mar Derby (G2) over the summer, so maybe he prefers slightly shorter distances? Last time, he looked very impressive when beating older horses going a mile—flying late with a perfectly timed ride by Prat, who stays put. The post is tricky in this big full field, but I've liked this guy since he got off the boat, and I think there is still upside here. That said, I will give the slight nod to the East Coast runners. GRADE: B.

#11 MR DUMAS (30/1) has won two in a row, including a sharp victory in the Commonwealth (G3) at Churchill Downs, going 8.5-furlongs. Before that, he won a 9-furlong allowance race against older horses, also at Churchill. He'll now have to head West to face a salty group of stakes horses, but it's hard to knock a horse who has run six times with three wins and three shows. In other words, he's a pro who shows up for work every time. Still, the post and the quality of this deep field will make things tough for this invader. GRADE: C.

#12 ORIGINAIRE (IRE) (20/1), the second Mullins trainee, also has a strong late kick—in fact, he came home in under 11-seconds last time in the Twilight Derby (G2), which is insanely fast. Granted, he was pretty far back early and had too much to do, so he failed to make an impact, but there is no denying this guy's terrific stretch run. Three back, in the Del Mar Derby (G2), he came flying late to just miss by a neck to Nolde. I don't like the jock switch from Smith to Figueroa, but if this guy gets the right trip, he is more than capable of running them all down with his strong stretch run. GRADE: C.

#13 SUCCEEDANDSURPASS (IRE) (12/1) ran a creditable second in the Twilight Derby (G2) last time, trying hard all the way to the wire but unable to catch the winner, who got the jump on him. It's quite possible he's not as effective at 9-furlongs because he didn't show the same turn of foot as he did in his two prior races, where he came from off the pace to run well going a mile. The post is no picnic, so I'm having a hard time seeing him getting a good ground-saving trip—and in a salty field like this, everything will need to go perfectly. Still, he has ability, and he's another one who is more than capable on his best day. GRADE: C.

### **CONCLUSION**

This is such a good race—so many talented runners who can win. It will come down to who gets the best trip in this full field, and as I said in the intro, no horse would shock me in here. That said, I do give a slight edge to the Brown entrants, **#4 DIGITAL AGE (IRE) (6/1)** and **#9 STANDARD DEVIATION (6/1)**. I also think the unlucky **#8 HENLEY'S JOY (6/1)** is a strong contender after some less than stellar trips. Regardless of what happens, you can be sure that this year's 3-year-old turf division is stacked. Next year should be fun!

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