DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY
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Date: 8/18/23
Race 7: $100K CTT & TOC for fillies & mares going 11-furlongs on turf (rails at 30-ft.)
Post: approx. post 6:30 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW
What a fine renewal of the CTT & TOC, an 11-furlong turf affair for fillies and mares with the rails set at 30-feet. This is a nice group of ladies; in fact, we've got the last two winners of this race right back, plus a couple of newer faces who are all on the improve and looking to make their mark on this division. You can talk to nine people at the track, and it wouldn't shock me if each person liked a different horse—that's how competitive and evenly matched this race is. I'll let value decide.

#1 SYMPHONY PERFECT (IRE) (6/1) doesn't have the flashiest U.S. from, but don't sell this gal too short, since they thought enough of her to run her in Group races overseas. First off, toss her last race, where she had to break from the 13-hole, yet still ran good enough to come running on late for a fifth-place finish. Before that, her come-home times going a mile were very strong, so I'm not too fussed that she hasn't been this far, especially since Michael McCarthy is one of the best at getting to the bottom of a horse. GRADE: A.

#2 HAPPY HAPPY (20/1) ran creditably last time in her first try going 11-furlongs, but she is still a maiden, and she couldn't beat entry-level allowance foes then, so what makes us think she'll beat stakes foes today? The only recommendation would be her jock, who seems to boot home more long shot winners than anyone else in the colony. GRADE: X.

#3 OAKHURST (6/1), the first D'Amato runner, was a Spot Play for me in my "Frankly Speaking" column for July 23, and she did the business, winning gamely at 5/1. [By the way, if you're not reading my column for In the Money Media, check out today's column here: https://bit.ly/3QElsf3]. I couldn't believe that price, because her come-home times last year were terrific, and she was coming out of graded-stakes races, but ours is not to reason why. She finished up nicely in that 9-furlong N2X affair, and I see no reason why she won't continue to improve. That said, win-rider Rispoli sticks with the stablemate, so read into that what you will—still, you get Berrios instead, so I'm not too bothered by that! GRADE: A.

#4 QUEEN OFTHE TEMPLE (3/1) is a very cool 5-year-old racemare who has danced a lot of dances, so she must be considered—but she also has a tendency to settle for the minor awards, so I'm more inclined to use her underneath, especially at 3/1. That said, I won't fault anyone for going to war with her, as I've always liked her. GRADE: B.

#5 PARIS PEACOCK (IRE) (12/1) probably needed that last race, so I'm willing to ignore that defeat against Oakhurst, especially when you consider this gal was 3/1 in that race while Oakhurst was 5/1, so someone out there thought she had more ability. Assuming that was a prep race, you have to like her chances today, especially getting more ground for a trainer who has been winning these types of races for

a very long time. I'm sure you all have the same concern as I do—and that's the jock—but I can tell you that the second I say one critical thing about a jock, I put him in the winner's circle, so I'll keep schtum. What I will say is: Tom Proctor and Craig Bernick have to be two of the nicest and most loyal guys in the world, so I'll be rooting for them! GRADE: B.

#6 NEIGE BLANCHE (FR) (5/2) hasn't earned $600K by mistake. This is a quality racemare, as is evidenced by her amazing record of 10 wins in 22 lifetime starts. All she does is show up and try hard to pose for the camera. She had some trouble in this race last year, but two years ago, she won it, very impressively, I might add. I like that she's versatile, and I love the way the white-hot Powell has campaigned this gal. She's a major threat. GRADE: A.

#7 EYLARA (IRE) (5/1), the second D'Amato entrant, was also one of our In the Money Media "Frankly Speaking" Spot Plays, so she owes me nothing, but I wasn't as impressed with her race as I was with her stablemate's, even though this one just won at today's distance. As a 5-year-old, I feel like this one has less upside, but she has a strong late kick, so you can expect her to be running on through the lane. Do note that win-rider Rispoli stays put, and he also won with Oakhurst. Hmmm… GRADE: B.

#8 MYFAVORITEDAUGHTER (15/1) is a pretty honest gal who has a win over the course and a second-place finish at today's distance, so I can't fault the connections for taking a shot here, even though she does look a decided cut below the best. Maybe she can pick up a small slice, but she'll need a career-best for the W. GRADE: X.

#9 SISTER OTOOLE (6/1) won this race last year, so I'm a bit surprised at the 6/1 morning-line, especially since you can ignore her last race at Saratoga, which was clearly a prep for her title defense. Also toss her race here in the fall against much better animals, where she was never really given a fair chance while hooked wide. She'll be motoring home. GRADE: A.

CONCLUSION
Ha! I know I'm doing you no favors by having four "A's" and three "B's" in here, but, man, this is a really tough race. I have to think that **#1 SYMPHONY PERFECT (IRE)**, however, will offer the best value of those four, so she's my top pick. I can see #9 SISTER OTOOLE going off shorter than her 6/1, and #6 NEIGE BLANCHE (FR) will be the favorite, so those probably aren't great contest plays. #3 OAKHURST should be around 6/1, and that's still a good price, but for some reason, I'm feeling #1 SYMPHONY PERFECT (IRE), and I can see her going off at 8/1 or so. Of course, if I'm wrong about the board, you can pivot!!!

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