

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

By Frank R. Scatoni

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Date: 8/26/23

Race 10: \$250K Pat O'Brien (G2) contested at 7-furlongs on the main track

Post: approx. post 6:31 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

What a terrific renewal of the \$250K Pat O'Brien (G2), a 7-furlong main-track affair that drew a nice full field and some really cool horses. This race is also a "Win and You're In" Breeders' Cup race, so the winner gets to compete in the Dirt Mile (G1) the first Saturday in November. So who gets the glory?

#1 MOOSE MITCHELL (5/1) is in terrific form, having won three in a row, all impressively—using his tactical speed to stalk the pace and then turning it on when the real running started. That said, he's been facing far inferior foes then he will face today. I know this Cal-bred just beat open N2X types, but that race was not very good, and he was on the best part of the track. He's now stuck down on the inside going 7-furlongs against proper stakes animals. I have so much respect for the morning-line maker, but I'm so confused by how short this guy is at 5/1. You can have him all day at that price. I'd even be reluctant to bet him at 15/1 in here! Prove me wrong. GRADE: X.

#2 GO JOE WON (50/1) was no match for Moose Mitchell last time, but he was coming off a long layoff, so he likely needed the race. That said, he likes to do his bidding on the lead, so that means he's probably going to find himself taking some heat while buried on the rail. That's not where you want to be, even if you are a lightly raced 4-year-old who likes Del Mar and figures to run much better today. GRADE: X.

#3 HOIST THE GOLD (12/1) had no chance in the Bing Crosby (G1) once he drew the rail, so you can ex-out that race. His East Coast form is pretty solid, but he's another who likes to be forwardly placed, and he's going to face some pressure to his outside. Plus, California speed is not East Coast speed, so he's probably going to have to run so hard to keep up that he's likely to get cooked. GRADE: X.

#4 SIR ATTICUS (5/1) has won two in a row stylishly, including a sharp win over this track where he attended the pace and drew off to win at nearly 4/1 on Opening Day. As much as I liked that performance, he was on the best part of the track—and he now has to face stakes foes after just beating entry-level allowance winners. For what it's worth, my man Pete Fornatale said he liked him on the In the Money Plus podcast we did together, so out of deference to him, I won't give him the dreaded "X"! GRADE: C.

#5 C Z ROCKET (8/1) is a cool old boy who has danced a lot of dances, and he's faced the toughest competition, so it wouldn't shock me if he picked up a slice of the pie today. Sure, this 9-year-old isn't nearly as fast as he used to be, but he's still a grinder, and if there's a total pace meltdown, he could be the beneficiary. It's interesting that Miller re-adds blinkers today, and this guy won a race here from off the pace wearing blinkers before. Don't sell too short. GRADE: B.

#6 **BRICKYARD RIDE (5/1)** is a very cool Cal-bred who is the speed of the speed. Last time, I was so confused that he ran in the San Diego Handicap (G2) going 8.5-furlongs, especially since the Bing Crosby (G1) was the same day at 6-furlongs (which, coincidentally, was won by a Cal-bred)—but now I understand. Old-school trainer Craig Lewis was simply using that race as a stamina-builder for this. I love a man with a plan, so I will give him extra credit. He might go too fast early and get tired in the final furlong, but I've always liked him, and I really want to see Lewis' plan pay off. Plus, how can this accomplished sprinter be the same morning-line as both Moose Mitchell and Sir Atticus? That's crazy to me! GRADE: A.

#7 **SPIRIT OF MAKENA (4/1)** has had some physical issues, but man, when this guy shows up, he shows up! Before the Bing Crosby (G1), he was a head away from being undefeated in five starts, with impressive wins in graded-stakes races. Just toss out the Bing Crosby (G1). He had such an eventful journey that he never got to show his best stuff. He should trip out today from a good stalking position outside—and I think he's the one to beat. GRADE: A.

#8 VISITANT (8/1), the second Miller entrant, is tough to get a read on because he's 0-for-4 on dirt, but he's run okay in defeat, putting up some big figures. He's also put up some very big figures on synthetic, so can he transfer that recent synth form to Del Mar while making his first start for a new barn? Miller does okay with these types, and I think it's telling that he runs this one in a stakes race right away, but I really have no idea what this one is capable of in a race like this. Obviously, if he runs one of his big figs, he's going to be a strong contender—but that's a big *if*! GRADE: B.

#9 **ANARCHIST (7/2)** ran too good to lose last time in the Bing Crosby (G1), losing a heartbreaker to a really nice Cal-bred called The Chosen Vron, who isn't entered here. I see no reason why he won't run another good one. He drew a good outside post, and he always seems to fire. The only knock is that he's a little camera-shy, so Vazquez will need to really carry this guy home to get the W. Still, I can't really knock a horse who has finished first or second nine out of 11 times. Though I suppose if I say that he has only two wins to seven placings, then you might want to knock him! GRADE: A.

#10 VIVIR CON ALEGRIA (CHI) (20/1) looks in deep today, but I have to mention the sneaky combo of Amador Sanchez and Hector Berrios. These guys know each other from Florida, so when Berrios takes a call on a Sanchez horse out here, I pay attention. Still, I'm having a hard time seeing the path to victory for this guy, since he was intent on making the lead in both of his

Gulfstream starts, and he weakened both times against lesser foes. Maybe for your trifectas?
GRADE: C.

#11 BYE BYE BOBBY (20/1) will certainly be fit and running on through the lane, that's for darn sure. He's making the second start of his form cycle after running third in a 12-furlong race, so if that doesn't have him fit, I don't know what will. I like that he's versatile with several wins sprinting, but those victories came in the minor leagues, so we'll see how he does against some big-time sprinters. Maybe he can pick up a piece. GRADE: C.

CONCLUSION

If you whacked a #7 SPIRIT OF MAKENA (4/1) and #9 ANARCHIST (7/2) exacta, I wouldn't be mad. I think one of those two is the likely winner of the race. That said, I think #6 **BRICKYARD RIDE (5/1)** is interesting on the cutback. I have a feeling he'll probably get leg-weary late, but he's the sentimental choice and seems to be the best value as of now. If I could only pick one horse in here, however, I'd take #7 **SPIRIT OF MAKENA (4/1)**.

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