

## DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

By Frank R. Scatoni

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**Date:** 9/2/23

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

**Post:** approx. post 6:13 p.m. PDT

### OVERVIEW

What a day of racing today: not only is it the Pacific Classic (G1), but we've got a stacked 11-race card with five total graded-stakes to build our day around. We've also got a mandatory payout in the Pick 6, as well as the Pacific Classic Betting Challenge. It's an embarrassment of riches on this biggest day of the meet! Of course, today's contest race is Race 10, the big one, the \$1 million Pacific Classic (G1) contested at 10-furlongs on the main track. We've got three 3-year-olds; two Bafferts; a former winner of this race; and a few coming out of the local prep. Who takes the \$\$\$?

#1 GEAUX ROCKET RIDE (5/2) is an ascendant 3-year-old who is trained by the great Richard Mandella, so who am I to argue whether or not this guy is good enough to beat older company? That said, I've said this many times before, I am typically against sophomores versus elders even this late in the year when they are short prices, so I'm hesitant to play this one on top, even though he looked very impressive when winning the Haskell (G1)—but there's no denying the talent and upside here. GRADE: B.

#2 KATONAH (20/1) has been reported to be scratched.

#3 STILLETTO BOY (8/1) is a cool horse who has won almost \$2 million, so how can I say anything bad about him? I wished I owned him! That said, I'm a little skeptical of his winning for two reasons: first off, he's 0-for-4 at Del Mar, so maybe this isn't his best surface. Secondly, even though he won the Santa Anita Handicap (G1) at 10-furlongs, I really don't think this is his best distance. He got a perfect trip that day and still just won by a neck. GRADE: C.

#4 TRIPOLI (20/1), believe it or not, won this race in 2021. How? I still don't know! He hasn't been able to repeat that form ever since, and he actually had to go up to Golden Gate for a confidence builder against allowance foes on Tapeta to get his last win. That said, he is a grinder who will just rattle off his fractions and hope the race falls apart in front of him. GRADE: C.

#5 DEFUNDED (4/1) has races on his form that would bury most of this field—but he's also run some real clunkers. In fact, his worst races recently have come over this track during the summer meet. It's strange, because he was dominant in the Native Diver (G3) here last year, and his Santa Anita form after that is rock solid—but I can't really explain his dud in the San Diego (G2)

a few weeks ago. Regardless, even if he's at the top of his game, I've always thought he was a little vulnerable at today's distance (despite having won once before). GRADE: B.

#6 ORDER AND LAW (30/1) looked good winning the Cougar II (G3) going 12-furlongs over this track, but he just showed that he could run all day. He's going to need a big step up today to face this kind of company. GRADE: X.

**#7 SLOW DOWN ANDY (8/1)** is my top pick. I thought his second-place finish in the San Diego (G2) was extremely useful. He was forwardly placed through a fast early pace, and he was on the worst part of the track, so it doesn't bother me that he got passed late by one of today's foes. This is a very cool, very versatile 4-year-old who still has some upside. He looks like a solid play to me at 8/1. GRADE: A.

#8 SENOR BUSCADOR (10/1) ran a really nice race when winning the San Diego (G2) here as a prep for this, beating Slow Down Andy in the process—but I'm going to take that race with a grain of salt. First off, this guy got a very favorable race flow, flattering his late run. Secondly, the track favored closers that day, so he was flattered even more. It's no surprise that his figure from that race is an outlier. I suppose there's a world in which he gets another favorable set-up today, but I'm not really feeling it. GRADE: C.

#9 ARABIAN KNIGHT (3/1) must be working up a storm, because I have no idea why this 3-year-old for Bob Baffert is as short as 3/1. Morning-line maker John White is as sharp as they come, but this horse has two wins, and they both came on the lead, so he's going to look to wire them yet again. I can't see anyone going with him up front, but Geaux Rocket Ride and Stilleto Boy both have enough speed to keep this one honest leaving the backstretch. Don't get me wrong, I think this is a nice horse who can certainly win, second off the bench for Baffert and Prat, but 3/1 seems awfully short for a 3-year-old facing elders for the first time. GRADE: B.

#10 PIROLI (20/1) ran a good second in the Gold Cup (G1), and I have to think that his race last time was just a prep for this, when he ran on late to finish fourth against second-level allowance foes. He should get something out of that, and I do think that Michael McCarthy is one of the best when getting to the bottom of the horse from a stamina perspective. Still, this guy will need a big step up today. GRADE: C.

#11 SKINNER (10/1) gets some consideration from me, simply because I loved the way he finished up the Santa Anita Derby (G1), and I was bummed when this 3-year-old had to scratch out of the Kentucky Derby (G1), because I thought he would relish 10-furlongs. Fortunately, he's in good hands with Shirreffs, who knows how to get them to run this far. I thought his comebacker in the Los Al Derby was pretty solid, setting him up for a nice run here. That said, he's a 3-year-old facing elders for the first time, and he'll need an aggressive ride to make sure he's not too far back. GRADE: B.

## **CONCLUSION**

If one of the sophomores win, I'll tip my hat and live to fight another day. At the morning-lines, I'd take **#11 SKINNER (10/1)** among that group—but my top pick is a horse whom I think is coming into the race the right way, and that's **#7 SLOW DOWN ANDY (8/1)**. I just think he got way more out of the San Diego (G2) than the paper form suggests. He's the pick!

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