DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY
By Frank R. Scatoni
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Date: 9/9/23
Race 9: $40K optional-claiming/N1X contested at 8F on turf (rails at 0-feet)
Post: approx. post 5:29 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

Double the fun for Saturday contest players! We've got two really interesting races to sink our teeth into on this 11-race card. Reminder that first post is 1:30 p.m. PDT, so push all your plans back an extra half-hour early! Okay, enough housekeeping: today's first contest race is a nice $40K optional-claiming/N1X contested at 8-furlongs on the turf with the rails at 0-feet. We've got 12 horses scheduled to greet the starter.

#1 BLUE DOG (20/1) is 0-for-2 on turf, and he's probably going to have to be hustled from the rail. I'm not seeing it today, but maybe next time on dirt at Santa. GRADE: X.

#2 SEAL TEAM (GB) (5/2) looked very good beating maidens last time in a 9-furlong turf affair, but the waters get deeper today. He's a 3-year-old who has to face winners for the first time, and he likely won't get such an easy lead. At least he showed he could pass horses in his debut in a 5-furlong turf sprint, and I really liked his come-home time last time, but this is the kind of horse I have to take on from a value-perspective, despite that last race being really nice. GRADE: B.

#3 SEVEN WONDERS (5/1) is still searching for his elusive second win, so it's tough to back him on the win end because he's had so many chances. Rispoli sides with his inside neighbor, and the way Eurton has campaigned this runner, it seems like one mile today might be too short. That said, he makes the third start of his form cycle, and Eurton has been on fire! GRADE: B.

#4 HAKKIMI (CHI) (20/1) takes off the hood after failing to threaten last time at this level going a little farther. I like that Berrios bothers to ride back for a sneaky trainer, and I'm sure this guy will be fit off those last two races, but he'll need a big step forward for the W today. GRADE: C.

#5 BAJ—program scratch.

#6 DOMINANT SOUL (6/1) made me look like a fool last time when he was super-game to beat $32K/N1Y claimers going a mile over this course. I hated the post for him last time, and I thought there was going to be a fast pace. I was wrong about both. He got a perfect stalking trip and did the business at 7/1. This spot, however, is so much tougher than that last race. GRADE: X.

#7 ALIGATO (4/1) gets top honors here. I've always liked this guy, and even though he's a Cal-bred, he's run a few decent races against open foes. I especially like that Glatt has been on fire lately, and look who bothers to ride, Hernandez, so you know this guy will get a good tracking trip. GRADE: A.

#8 YOGI BOY (20/1) is a stretch-out sprinter who seems up against it versus proven routers. I can see Maldonado being aggressive, but this is going to be a hard race to win on the front end or even stalking the pace. GRADE: X.

#9 DANCING RINCA (15/1) ran pretty good last time, showing a decent stretch run but not doing quite enough to get to the winner, whom he has to face again today. He'll need a more aggressive ride in here, but he has form at this level, so it wouldn't shock me if he slid into the tris. GRADE: C.

#10 WODETON (FR) (15/1) was 10/1 in his stateside debut, and he ran half a race in a main-track turf sprint at Santa Anita. Perhaps he needed that start, but he did need some time off after that run, and he now comes back trying to stretch-out. I hate to bet against D'Amato, but I'm fine watching this one today for the W. GRADE: C.

#11 BEAR MOUNTAIN (30/1) likely needed the last start, so I won't be too harsh on him, since he was coming off a year layoff. He should move forward today, but will it be enough for this sophomore, who has to face older horses for the first time…and do it from the tough 11-hole with a jock who doesn't prioritize saving ground? If he wins, I lose. GRADE: X.

#12 EASTERN OCEAN (5/1) won this condition two back, and then he didn't run too badly last time against open $50K claimers, so he's a fit right back. The problem is the post. I'm not sure what kind of trip he's going to get. When he won, he stalked. That's not likely today. He'll have to somehow save ground and make one move. On the plus side, Glatt has heated up, if you're a believer. GRADE: C.

#13 LURE HIM IN (6/1) is a cool old boy who usually puts forth a nice late run to pick up a piece—but he hasn't won in a long time, and this post doesn't help his cause at all today. Expect him on the scene late, but I'm thinking a minor award will be his ceiling. GRADE: C.

CONCLUSION

I think **#7 ALIGATO (4/1)** is the horse to beat. He's capable of running some really good races and showing a nice late kick—and I like that Glatt has been on fire of late. I wish I had a bigger price for those who need a long shot, but I'm not crazy about anyone else in here, mainly because of the race shape and the post draw.

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Date: 9/9/23
Race 10: $300K Del Mar Debutante (G1) for 2yo fillies going 7-furlongs on the main track
Post: approx. post 5:59 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

Part deux of today's contest! We've got a wide-open running of the $300K Del Mar Debutante (G1), a 7-furlong main-track affair for 2-year-old fillies. In the day's biggest shock: Baffert does not have one entrant in this race! No wonder it drew an 11-horse field. There's no three-headed quadrillion-dollar Baffert entry to take on! When all is said and done, I think I would like that any one of these trainers won this race, a prestigious race—but since only one can win, we have some decisions to make (independent of feelings).

#1 JULIAS DREAM (5/1) was a dominant force in her debut when she won at first-asking at 6/1 for a trainer who is typically patient. She can certainly build off that, but she has no choice but to go from the rail—and what if she breaks into the gap? I have to try and beat her, despite the fact that there is quality here. GRADE: C.

#2 NEXT RIGHT THING (30/1) was 32/1 in her debut in a 5-furlong turf sprint, and while I'm sure that was a useful third-place finish, she's still a maiden and now she has to move to the dirt. GRADE: X.

#3 PRETTY LAYLA (30/1) will benefit if the race falls apart since she's cutting back from a mile on turf—where she ran on late—to today's 7-panels, and that's a good old-school training move. That said, she's still a maiden, so maybe use her more for underneath. GRADE: C.

#4 BENEDETTA (10/1) was favored in the Sorrento (G3) off her impressive win at Los Al, and she ran an okay second, losing to one of today's foes who made the lead and never looked back—and yet here she is at 10/1 on the morning-line today. That makes no sense to me at all because the distance is different; the dynamics are different; and this is a big full field where I'm sure some cowboy is going to take it to the favorite early and make her really earn a frontrunning win today. Or am I just crazy? Anyway…I'm sold at 10/1! I like that she can stalk and pass horses. I like that the blinkers come off. And I like the price. That said: I fear I'm in for a great disappointment when this gal ends up going off closer to 9/2 than anything double digits. Or who knows: maybe I'll be just flat-out wrong. Wouldn't be the first time! Still…GRADE: A.

#5 HOPE ROAD (12/1) was supposed to win last time against maidens, and she didn't. In her defense, she made the lead on a closer-friendly track and got tired late to finish second. She seems to have some quality to her, but she is searching for her first win. GRADE: B.

#6 CHATALAS (5/1) broke her maiden the right way. She stalked the pace and kept grinding to the wire, winning for a trainer who doesn't often have them fully cranked. That same style will be very handy today from this post and at this distance. GRADE: A.

#7 DREAMFYRE (4/1) was breathing fire in the Sorrento (G3), and I was so impressed with her performance. She set a very fast early pace and she didn't stop. We'll see how she handles an extra furlong through some quick early splits, but if she wins, I won't be surprised. Still, I'll try to beat her for the W. NOTE: Back to what I said about Benedetta, which was never a reflection of this super-fast and talented horse. My point in picking a 10/1 is that I expect her to get a more favorable set-up than she did last time, while I expect this one to get a more challenging set-up. It might not matter—maybe Dreamfyre is that damn good and can still win—and I will be the first to tip my hat, because I genuinely loved her win in the Sorrento (G3). Wow! Wow! Wow! She left behind a pretty decent group. That said, this race sets up very differently, and I'm having a hard time seeing anyone wire this field, even the super-talented Dreamfyre. If I'm wrong, I'll be the first to congratulate O. J.! And I might buy him an O. J. too (with some bubbly in it)! One more thing: If I write this much about a horse, it means I really like the horse in some way; I think your horse is the bomb; but I have to write a meandering argument as to why I'm trying to beat her. Maybe it makes sense to me; maybe it doesn't to you—but I can't have her at 4/1 when so many other people will have her as well. I'll applaud if she wins…and then I'll check my back-up combos, since I'll make her a reluctant "B"!

#8 PUSHINESS (8/1) is an undefeated Cal-bred who deserves to try open company, since she's been awesome in both of her races, including a dominating victory last time against Crazy Hot, who came back to destroy Cal-bred stakes foes this past weekend on turf. That said, she's been on the lead in all of her starts, and there is going to be a fast pace in here—along with some tougher ladies. Can she keep up with her inside foe? Probably not. GRADE: C.

#9 TAMARA (7/2) was a horse I tried to beat last time, and she laughed in my face. I thought she'd be over-bet as a Beholder baby making her first start, but she overcame a rail draw, tracked the pace, and won so easily and so professionally that I had to tip my hat. This gal can be any kind, and she's drawn favorably today. Someone posted on Twitter—it might have been the great Gary Stevens, who knew Beholder so well—a picture of the front of mother and daughter side by side. They both looked so good, but believe it or not, Tamara was actually bigger and broader…and that's as a 2-year-old. If this gal continues to mature under the Great Mandella's tutelage, we might have a champion in the making. GRADE: A.

#10 WHERE'S MY RING (15/1) came from off the pace last time in her debut to just miss in a 5.5-furlong affair. Seemingly, she should appreciate extra ground, but do note that she got a very closer-friendly track that day yet still couldn't win. GRADE: X.

#11 MOTET (50/1) was 54/1 in her debut in the Sorrento (G3), and she ran an okay fourth but was well-beaten. She can do better to6day, but not with my money. GRADE: X.

#12 GATE TO PARADISE (20/1) is very sneaky to me. I know she just lost to one of today's foes, but she was sent off at 3/1 in her debut for Shirreffs, and he rarely has them fully cranked, so this gal must have shown ability. She was also down at the rail, which was no good that day, yet she tried all the way to the wire to finish second to one of the obvious ones in here. Upset special in start number two! GRADE: A.

#13 LAURENT (6/1) was visually impressive in her maiden-breaker, coming from the clouds to get up and win by a nose in that 5.5-furlong affair. Seemingly, she'll appreciate 7-panels today, but do note that she got a great pace set-up on an extremely closer friendly track. Also note that win-rider Hernandez bails. I'll make this gal prove it to me twice! GRADE: C.

#14 CHEEKY GAL (30/1) got hammered in her debut, going off at 7/5 from a 6/1 morning-line, so the word was out. She did what she had to do in her debut, so hats off to her and her connections—but the race came back pretty slow, if you're a speed-figure proponent, so she's really going to have to step things up today. Let's see what kind of money she takes against some potential monsters. GRADE: X.

<u>CONCLUSION</u>
Well, as you can see, the bomb is **#12 GATE TO PARADISE (20/1)**, so if you need a Hail Mary in the contest, she's your ticket to paradise! But I also expect **#4 BENEDETTA (10/1)** to move forward in a big way today, and she requires less of a leap of faith. As for my two other "A's"—both **#6 CHATALAS (5/1)** and **#9 TAMARA (7/2)** are very logical, but they will probably be too short to play unless you need to jockey for a tight position heading into the last day. Regardless, I can't wait to see how the baby Beholder (#9 TAMARA) does today after a very impressive maiden win.

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