

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

By Frank R. Scatoni

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Date: 11/18/23

Race 8: \$100K Cary Grant for Cal-breds going 7-furlongs on the main track

Post: approx. post 3:58 p.m. PST

OVERVIEW

You know it's a fine renewal of the Cary Grant, contested at 7-furlongs on the main track, when you get a nice field of eight Cal-breds showing up, despite the presence of last year's winner, The Chosen Vron, who also happens to be a Grade 1 winner over this track. Can anyone upset this quality Cal-bred?

#1 PRINCIPE CARLO (15/1) is a cool old boy, but he doesn't seem to be the same horse who won this race back in 2021. He's run some solid races since then, but his last two races leave something to be desired. I should know, because I really liked him in each of those races, and he was just flat after showing his customary early speed. He'll have to hustle from the rail, and I think that causes problems for him late. If he wins, I'll applaud, but I don't think I can bet him again. GRADE: C.

#2 TRIP TO SPAIN (20/1) is pretty versatile, but this 4-year-old hasn't exactly lit the world on fire since he needed a year off from July 2022 to August 2023. He now shows up on dirt as a new gelding after three *meh* races on synth and turf up north. This seems like a tough spot for him, but at least you know he's had the ultimate equipment change. GRADE: X.

#3 NONE ABOVE THE LAW (6/1) has solid stakes form from way back in the day, but the best he could manage in this race the last two years was fourth, so he'll need to step things up today. I can't say anything negative about a horse who has earned more than \$500K with wins on dirt, turf, and synth, but he needs a move forward. That said, Prat takes the call, so perhaps this one can make up a few lengths today. I'm still not sure that will be good enough. GRADE: X.

#4 LOVESICK BLUES (12/1), the first Miyadi entrant, is another cool Cal-bred who can act on any surface. He's done fine work as an elongated sprinter, and he should get a good trip just tracking the pace. Is he good enough? He's been facing open foes, so he should fit well here, but do note that Moose Mitchell has him on form, and there isn't much speed to flatter his stretch run. Still, I've always liked this guy. GRADE: B.

#5 FAST DRAW MUNNINGS—program scratch.

#6 BIG CITY LIGHTS (5/2) would be undefeated if it weren't for The Chosen Vron. He won his first three races, and then he ran second behind 'Vron three times in a row, including in this race last year. He will need to make up a neck on that foe, but this guy is a lightly raced 4-year-old who has been off since January, so he could take a huge step forward today with more maturity. He has a chance to turn the tables on his main rival, especially since he has sharp early speed in a race that doesn't have much of it, but he's also second-choice on the morning-line at only 5/2. GRADE: A.

#7 THE CHOSEN VRON (4/5) wins this race if he's the same horse as he was over the summer. He was a little flat in the Breeders' Cup Sprint (G1), but he was wide that day and has some trouble, so I won't be too harsh. Before that, he had won eight in a row, including this race last year, so he's clearly the one to beat. GRADE: A.

#8 MOOSE MITCHELL (12/1) is capable of running some really fast races, but I'm not sure he's as good as his two inside neighbors. I like his versatile run style, so he should get a great trip stalking on the outside—but then we'll see exactly what he's made of against some really nice horses (and not the starter foes he just beat by a head last time). GRADE: B.

#9 DESMOND DOSS (12/1), the second Miyadi runner, is a grinder who hasn't been able to outfinish several of these. I can see this 7-year-old just plodding along, looking to pick up a small slice. A win, however, seems unlikely to me, in my humble opinion. GRADE: X.

CONCLUSION

I wish I had something clever in here, but I don't. **#7 THE CHOSEN VRON (4/5)** is obviously the one to beat, while I think **#6 BIG CITY LIGHTS (5/2)** can pull off the minor upset. I know that doesn't help you for the contest, so if you want a price, maybe look at **#4 LOVESICK BLUES (12/1)** to light up the tote.

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