

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

By Frank R. Scatoni

On Twitter [@ScatoniSureShot](https://twitter.com/ScatoniSureShot)

www.FrankScatoni.com

www.OptixEQ.com

Date: 11/24/23

Race 7: \$200K Hollywood Turf Cup (G2) contested at 12-furlongs on the turf (rails at 24-ft.)

Post: approx. post 3:28 p.m. PST

OVERVIEW

We've got another fine graded-stakes turf race for today's contest, one of several events that are part of the two-week long turf festival, which will end on closing Sunday, December 3. Today's affair is the \$200K Hollywood Turf Cup (G2), a 12-furlong turf marathon with the rails at 24-feet. The two East Coast invaders look solid to me.

#1 FRANCESCO CLEMENTE (IRE) (3/1) moves up in class after just beating N1X foes back East for Chad Brown, but he looked good doing it with the addition of blinkers. Brown always ships out here with good intent, and if this guy's final splits are to be believed, then he should be motoring home, relishing every bit of today's 12-panels. GRADE: A.

#2 YES THIS TIME (15/1) was claimed for \$80K three back, and new trainer Miller has protected him while running him in stakes races in both of his following starts. Unfortunately, he hasn't exactly shown that this is the level he wants to run at. He was 9/1 in a Grade 2 last time, and he lacked the needed punch to hit the board. GRADE: X.

#3 LUKKA (CHI) (6/1) is an X-factor, since this 4-year-old has yet to race here in the States. He should be acclimated, since he's been here a few months, and his last two races in Chile were pretty darn good, winning Grade 1s on both turf and dirt. Drysdale is no stranger to these types, so it wouldn't shock me if this one ran well, but I'm going to side with others today. GRADE: C.

#4 PLANETARIO (BRZ) (5/1) can run all day, which is why he was so dominant in the 1-3/4 mile San Juan Capistrano (G3) back in June, but he hasn't been nearly as impressive in all of his other races before and after that. I suppose you could say that his 10-furlong and 11-furlong races were just too short and that he'll run a big one today going 12-furlongs, but will it be good enough? We shall see. GRADE: B.

#5 ASTRONAUT (5/1) has run some big races at big prices, but it's hard to know which horse will show up, especially since his last two races back East were pretty blah. He's better than those races, but he's probably not as good as his big win in the Red Smith (G2) before that when he had things all his own way. His West Coast form from 2021 was just okay, but he did manage to win the Del Mar Handicap (G2) here two years ago at 24/1. I guess he's capable on his very best day, but I'm not sure I want to bet on that happening. GRADE: C.

#6 BALLADEER (4/1) was gifted a win in the John Henry Turf (G2) two back when he was allowed to walk the dog all alone on the lead with no one even putting an ounce of pressure on him. He responded by holding sway at 6/1. He'll have every chance to wire the field again today, but I can tell you that this course isn't as kind to speed as Santa Anita is, even with the rails out. I know he's an improving 4-year-old with upside, but I'll let him prove his quality to me today. GRADE: C.

#7 EASTERN OCEAN (15/1) has pretty strong come-home times, so it's interesting that Eurton, who just claimed him for \$50K, is stretching him out and trying him against stakes foes for the first time. It seems extremely ambitious, but those come-home times at a mile suggest he at least deserves a shot here. He's probably not good enough to win, but he might be able to juice up your exotics underneath the two East Coast invaders. GRADE: C.

#8 SPEAKING SCOUT (5/2) came to SoCal last time after a bunch of just okay races back East, and he finished third at 7/1 behind Balladeer. He'll have to try and run that one down again, but I like that he gets two extra furlongs to play with, and do note that he had some trouble in that race, so I'm betting he can turn the tables on Balladeer. Note that he won the Hollywood Derby (G1) here last year, so there he has quality, despite not having won since that race almost a year ago. GRADE: A.

CONCLUSION

I wish I had something clever, but I think the East Coast runners have the race surrounded. **#1 FRANCESCO CLEMENTE (IRE) (3/1)** is the top pick, with **#8 SPEAKING SCOUT (5/2)** not too far behind.

Visit www.frankscatoni.com for more content.

If you'd like to learn more about **OptixEQ**, visit www.optixeq.com.