

## DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

By Frank R. Scatoni

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**Date:** 12/3/23

**Race 7:** \$300K Matriarch (G1) for fillies & mares going 8F on turf (rails at 0-ft.)

**Post:** approx. post 3:25 p.m. PST

### OVERVIEW

All good things must come to an end, so we say good-bye to the Bing season and look to pick up exactly where we left off next summer on July 20, 2024, so mark your calendars for Opening Day! But let's make the most of our remaining opportunities. We've got two contest races on tap for this Sunday's card, so there are two chances to get the dough. We start off with one of my favorite races of the year: the prestigious \$300K Matriarch (G1), a one-mile turf affair for fillies and mares with the rails at zero-feet. Chad Brown shipped out four horses; D'Amato has three; even Bill Mott wanted to join in on the fun. I love that this race drew a big field, but I'm going to be boring and side with two of the Brown runners. Still, I'm really excited to see this race!

#1 ELOUNDA QUEEN (IRE) (30/1) is a 3-year-old who was 25/1 in her U.S. debut in the QE II (G1) at Keeneland, and she ran to those odds. She's probably better than that, and I like that she was transferred to the D'Amato barn and that he has enough confidence to run her here. Her Group 3 win overseas was really nice, showing a strong late run. At least she'll get a pace to close into, and then we'll see if she's good enough. GRADE: B.

#2 HAMWOOD FLIER (IRE) (12/1), the second D'Amato, only knows one way to go—and that's to the front. I really can't see a world in which she wires this classy field, but she sure will set things up for her stablemate at the rail. GRADE: X.

**#3 SURGE CAPACITY (8/1)**, one of four Chad Brown entrants, is a lightly raced 3-year-old who has plenty of upside. She wasn't expected to win last time in a Grade 3, since all the world was probably thinking it was a prep, but she won anyway. That tells me this gal has class, so I am not counting her out today. Her come-home times are legit, and she should be fully mature this late in the year and making her second start off a layoff. She does face older stakes foes for the first time, but you have to do it sometime. GRADE: A.

#4 GRACELUND GRAY (20/1) is a cool horse, and it makes me want to tip my cap to the late Howie Zucker, who got big runs out of her before he passed away and Eurton took over—but she is a one-way train, and I can't see her doing the dirty work and fending off the stretch runners when the real running starts. I like that Smith takes the call, so maybe he can harness her speed a little, but then her class will get called into question, and she seems very lacking in that department. GRADE: X.

**#5 WHITEBEAM (GB) (3/1)** is the one to beat. She's a lightly raced 4-year-old who looks to be sitting on a big race for Chad Brown, who already got her a Grade 1 win over the summer. Toss her effort in the First Lady (G1), where she came off a layoff and ran around the track. Prat rides back, and I have to think that this was the target all along for this Juddmonte home-bred. GRADE: A.

**#6 BEAUTE CACHEE (FR) (8/1)**, yet another Brown trainee, has never finished out of the exacta in her four U.S. starts, so she always shows up for work. Is she good enough to win here? She's never won a graded race, so she seems like a cut below the best in here, but I can tell you this: Rispoli will do his best to give her the right tracking trip to win this race, if you're a believer. GRADE: C.

**#7 RUBY NELL (8/1)** looks like another pace factor to me. Her best work has come on the lead against her fellow 3-year-olds. If she wins this race, I'll give Richard Mandella a standing ovation. GRADE: X.

**#8 QUEEN GODDESS (4/1)** is a quality 5-year-old mare who should be sitting on a peak effort, making the second start of her form cycle after running second in the Goldikova (G2) at Santa Anita, losing to one of today's foes. She's tactical, so you can expect her to be prominent early, but she doesn't need the lead, so Saez should be able to have her in the second flight with Whitebeam (GB). Is she good enough to outkick that foe? I know she has Grade 1 form and she's capable of running some big races, but I don't think she's as good as Whitebeam (GB). GRADE: C.

**#9 ELM DRIVE (20/1)** is a cool horse, but this is a very tough spot for her, especially since she's another one who likes to do her bidding on or near the lead. I'm just having a hard time seeing a path to victory for her, especially from out here. That said, she's another D'Amato runner in here, so if he thinks she fits, then who am I to argue? But that doesn't mean I have to bet on her! GRADE: X.

**#10 FLUFFY SOCKS (5/1)**, the last Brown runner, is a cool 5-year-old mare who has won more than a million bucks, so hats off to her. I also like that Irad Ortiz bothers to make the trip, since she doesn't look as good as the stablemates I picked ahead of her. Don't get me wrong: she can certainly win, but she has lost to a few of these recently, and she was disappointing in her last Grade 1 try out here in California. I don't need to be a hero, so she'll be on some of my tickets, but a move forward from her seems unlikely. That said, perhaps her class will prevail. GRADE: B.

**#11 CLOSING REMARKS (6/1)** is a very cool Cal-bred who has some big wins against open graded-stakes foes—but all here in California. Now she has to face some tough East Coast cookies, and I don't think she's quite up to the challenge. Maybe she can run on late for a small slice, especially with top jock Hernandez sticking around, but I would be surprised if she proved

better than the East Coast runners. If I'm wrong, I'll stand up and applause a great effort while ripping up my tickets! GRADE: X.

#12 WAKANAKA (IRE) (15/1) is a 5-year-old mare who has had a very good career, but what you see is what you get. Yes, I do think she'll be okay stretching out from sprint races, but she's been handled by a few of these before, and this post is pretty tough at a mile. I can't fault Mott for taking a shot, since this gal has danced some big dances, but she'll need a career best to win from out here. GRADE: C.

### **CONCLUSION**

In Chad Brown we trust, all others pay cash. #5 **WHITEBEAM (GB) (3/1)** is the one to beat; #3 **SURGE CAPACITY (8/1)** is the alternate.

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**Date:** 12/3/23

**Race 9:** \$40K optional-claiming/N1X contested at 8.5-furlongs on turf (rails at 0-feet)

**Post:** approx. post 4:25 p.m. PST

### OVERVIEW

Let's look at the nightcap for today's second contest race, a very tough \$40K optional-claiming/N1X contested at 8.5-furlongs on the turf with the rails at zero-feet. It drew a big oversubscribed field of 14 horses, 12 of whom shall greet the starter. It's a great way to end the meet. Good luck to anyone who is still in the hunt for the \$\$\$.

**#1 MIRANDA RIGHTS (6/1)** doesn't look that great on paper, but I always say that even mediocre East Coast form transfers very well out here. The fact that Prat ends up on this one makes me even more interested. This horse has tactical speed and the rail draw, so he'll have every chance to come through with a breakout race today. GRADE: A.

**#2 LEGISLATOR (4/1)** has a pretty nice turn of foot, and he really likes this turf course, so he has a big shot today to clear this N1X level. Note that he actually beat N1X foes four back while still a maiden, but he was DQ'd despite being much the best. Sure, that race and his next one (a good second also at this level) came against 3-year-olds only, but he beat older foes last time to finally break his maiden. Win-rider Prat sticks with the rail horse, but Rosario is an able replacement. GRADE: A.

**#3 LIL NAS (15/1)**, the first Sadler entrant, is a Cal-bred who likes to be on the engine early, as both of his victories came in gate-to-wire fashion. It's nice to see top jock Hernandez take the call, but I'm having a hard time seeing this guy wire this group, especially since he's going to face plenty of heat early. GRADE: X.

**#4 SHORTMAN (20/1)** is a Cal-bred who has a nice stretch run, so he should be running on late. He tried open foes once before, and he ran a decent third on dirt—and it's obvious he's a better turf horse, so he's not without a shot today. He's probably better suited to underneath, since his jock will have to make all of the right moves, but I've seen way worse 20/1 shots than this guy. GRADE: C.

**#5 MALTESE FALCON (IRE) (4/1)** broke his maiden in the La Jolla (G3) over this course and at this distance back in August. Sure, it was against sophomores only, but he showed a nice stretch run to get the job done. Two back, he was favored at this level against older horses, but he

could only manage fourth, finishing behind a really nice stakes-quality animal named Seal Team. He's another contender in a very tough race, but I'll rate him slightly lower than my top few, mainly because Hernandez—who has ridden him plenty of times before—sides with another, and that's a concern for me. GRADE: B.

#6 LAHAINA FLAVOR (20/1) is another 20/1 shot who doesn't look all that bad in here. He smoked home over this course to break his maiden three back, and even though he's lost twice at this level, those races came at Santa Anita, which is not very kind to stretch-runners. He will need a step forward, but his come-home times are legit, making him a very good exotics candidate. GRADE: B.

#7 HAWKER (12/1), the second Sadler runner, broke his maiden in a turf sprint, so he'll have to show he can beat some proven routers. His two tries at one mile were a mixed bag, so I won't rule out the possibility that he will be just fine at today's distance, but he's likely to be a little too close to a fast pace, coming out of sprint races. GRADE: C.

#8 IRISH PROPHET (12/1) took a while to break his maiden, but he was always right there in defeat. Last time at this level, he drew the 11-hole, so I won't be too harsh on that sixth-place finish. He now makes the second start of his form cycle, and I like that Irad Ortiz takes the call for Drysdale, who still knows how to train a horse. He could surprise, but I like others more. GRADE: C.

#9 X J RASCAL (12/1) exits a sprint, so I expect him to be close to the pace, just like he was in his previous route races. I think that will cause problems for him late—and he's already been outfinished by Legislator twice before, so I'm having a hard time seeing him get the win (though one could argue that he was hindered by that foe in one of those defeats). GRADE: X.

#10 SANTO DIOS (ARG) (7/2) is somehow the 7/2 favorite on the morning-line for reasons I can't begin to comprehend. Maybe he's working lights out. Maybe Mike Smith's presence is going to attract extra money. I really don't know because his South American form isn't anything special, and his first start in the U.S. saw him make an easy lead and get overtaken late. You can have him at 7/2. GRADE: X.

#11 HULA CANDY (8/1) looked good breaking his maiden last time in a 9-furlong affair at Santa Anita. He stalked the pace and finished up nicely, dead-heating for the W. That said, he's going to face a much faster early pace today, and that same stalking trip doesn't work well here at Del Mar. I'm fine watching his first try versus winners. GRADE: X.

#12 DR. SOULFIRE (15/1) came from off the pace to break his maiden in a turf sprint. He'll now have to face winners and try routing on turf for the first time. He did handle a mile on synth up north, so I doubt the distance will be the issue—but note that win-rider Rispoli sides with another. Plus, the post is no picnic. GRADE: X.

#13 LIVING LIFE (8/1) (AE) ran on strongly late last time to finish fourth in a mile race at this level at Santa Anita. He was 35/1 and certainly outran those odds. He's lightly raced and still has room for improvement, so he's not impossible—but he has a tough post and some tough customers to take on today. GRADE: C.

#14 CALI BAY (IRE) (3/1) (AE) put up a big fig last time, but it came against \$25K claimers, so I'll take it with a grain of salt. That said, he did show a very nice stretch run, coming home in proper racehorse time, so perhaps D'Amato has finally figured this guy out, since he failed many times before at this N1X level. I suppose part of it is that he's a better router than sprinter, so that would explain his good races, as does the fact that he's been facing weaker company. We'll see how he does today, but it should be noted that Prat has the call (though I don't know if it's his first call or second call, so take note of who rides if this guy gets in). Put it all in the wash, and I'm not all that excited by him at 3/1. GRADE: C.

### **CONCLUSION**

I like #1 **MIRANDA RIGHTS (6/1)** and #2 **LEGISLATOR (4/1)**, but I tried to give you some options by grading some price horses, so if you need to light up the tote, why not give #6 **LAHAINA FLAVOR (20/1)** a look? He should be finishing up late.

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