

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

By Frank R. Scatoni

On Twitter [@ScatoniSureShot](#)

www.FrankScatoni.com

www.OptixEQ.com

Date: 7/27/24

Race 9: \$40K optional-claiming/N1X contested at one mile on the turf (rails at 12-feet)

Post: approx. post 6:08 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

This is a really cool race with some decent entry-level allowance types going one mile on the lawn with the rails at 12-feet. Note that it's the second of two contest races today, so you have some options!

#1 MONGOLIAN ALTAI (30/1) takes a big step up in class after failing to beat starter foes. GRADE: X.

#2 OTTOMAN PRINCE (IRE) (15/1) looks very interesting to me. This horse came off the boat after a long layoff, and D'Amato promptly entered him in a stakes race down the hill. That didn't work out. He was then no match for Faustin going a mile, but he was way out the back yet still came home in proper time. He was freshened and returned to run a useful prep in June, again coming home well and finishing behind his stablemate, who just won on Friday. GRADE: A.

#3 SMART CODE (7/2) had a solid sophomore campaign but hasn't been seen since September. Glatt is very good with layoff horses, but I find it odd that they gelded this horse after trying him in the Del Mar Derby (G2). Any move forward makes him a threat, but I want a better price in such a competitive race. GRADE: B.

#4 LOTTERY PICK (5/1) has solid come-home times but he too has been off a long time. Last summer, he just missed at this level, so he's definitely a fit, even though his best work has come against starter foes. My big concern is that he might be too far back. That said, he should get a pace to run at today; then we'll see if he's good enough. GRADE: B.

#5 HABEAS—program scratch.

#6 HOTROCKET (IRE) (12/1) ran two big figs in Ireland last July, but this 5-year-old is coming off a September layoff while making his first U.S. start. Michael McCarthy does a great job, but he hasn't really had too many imports. I'm tempted to watch one, but it's nice to see Mike Smith take the call. GRADE: C.

#7 HALFWAY LINE (GB) (5/1), the second D'Amato, also looks good to me. He clearly needed his first U.S. race after a long layoff, and note that last time, he had some traffic issues down the hill but came flying late and galloped out really well. It's go-time today. He's my top pick. GRADE: A.

#8 ZIO JO (20/1) was last seen last April when he easily beat starter foes. He comes back a new gelding while stepping up in class. O'Neill is about average with comeback types, so I'm fine watching one for a horse who will need to show a lot of improvement. GRADE: X.

#9 FAUSTIN (5/2) ran too good to lose in his only turf try. He had to gun hard from the outside, and that softened him up just a smidge late. He has a better post today, but he'll still have to use some energy to get over to stalk the pace. He's a fit on form and figures, but 5/2 does us no favors in the contest. Still, he's a major contender. GRADE: A.

#10 **BAD UNCLE BARRY (20/1)**, the second Glatt trainee, just broke his maiden in a turf sprint, so he's facing winners for the first time while also trying two turns for the first time. He seems like only a pace factor to me. GRADE: X.

#11 **GIOVINAZZO (10/1)** is a pretty honest horse, but he's a mid-level claimer/starter type. He also likes to be forwardly placed, and there should be a pretty decent early pace in here. GRADE: X.

#12 **EYE ON RY (30/1)** likes to be on or near the lead, so he'll also be in the vanguard early. The Hawthorne route to the winner's circle at Del Mar is a seldom-traveled one, so if he wins, I lose. GRADE: X.

#13 **FLY THE SKY (20/1)** is a cool 7-year-old, but he hasn't had much success against open foes. He's done his best work against Cal-breds and starter foes. GRADE: X.

#14 **HUDSON RIDGE**—program scratch.

CONCLUSION

I think **#9 FAUSTIN (5/2)** is a deserving favorite, but he's not playable in the contest, since he might go off even shorter than his morning-line. My top pick is **#7 HALFWAY LINE (GB) (5/1)**, and I think 5/1 is a great price. Let's hope Faustin is overbet so we get an even better price on this guy. If you want to try a longshot, the other D'Amato, **#2 OTTOMAN PRINCE (IRE) (15/1)** is a solid contest ply. He's better than he's shown, and he should be sitting on a peak effort second start off a freshening.

Visit www.frankscatoni.com for more content.

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

[SCROLL DOWN FOR SECOND CONTEST RACE]

[SCROLL DOWN FOR SECOND CONTEST RACE]

[SCROLL DOWN FOR SECOND CONTEST RACE]

[SCROLL DOWN FOR SECOND CONTEST RACE]

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: 7/27/24

Race 10: \$400K Bing Crosby (G1) contested at 6-furlongs on the main track

Post: approx. post 6:38 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

It's one of my favorite races of the summer: the \$400K Bing Crosby (G1), a 6-furlong main-track affair for the best sprinters on the West Coast. What a great renewal of this event—and that comes as a surprise because it seems like no one is scared of taking on The Chosen Vron, who is certainly the best Cal-bred in training right now and arguably the best sprinter as well. Can last year's winner be dethroned this year? Well, that depends!

#1 ANARCHIST (10/1), the first O'Neill entrant, ran too good to lose last year in this race, but he was outgamed by The Chosen Vron and lost by a head. He licked his wounds and came back in the Pat O'Brien later in the meet and did the business, so this is a resilient animal. He hit the shelf after that and came back to prep for this race in Kentucky, and he was no good. I won't hold that against him. Clearly, that was a leg-stretcher for this; plus, he had to break from the rail, and that's always a tricky thing to do. And therein lies the rub: he has to break from the rail again today. He's at his best when he can track and pounce. That's going to be an issue stuck down on the inside, especially if the track is playing toward speed. GRADE: C.

#2 SEE THROUGH IT (30/1) is a 7-year-old who has had a very nice career, but he's never been in this class, and I can't really see a world in which he steps up from starter company to beat some proven graded-stakes foes. GRADE: X.

#3 STRAIGHT NO CHASER (6/1) is a one-way train, so you can expect him to be in the race from the jump. If the track continues to play to speed, then you have to consider this one—but even if it is speed-favoring, is this guy good enough to win? He seemed to put it together this spring when he rattled off two triple-digit BSFs in a row. Whether I believe them or not is a different story. His May race was no good, but he did have to break from the rail, and he did stumble at the start, so he has an excuse. He is the speed of the speed, but he will have some quality animals breathing down his neck. That said, you can upgrade him if the track continues to favor inside speed. GRADE: B.

#4 GIANT GAME (20/1) makes his first SoCal start for Eurton, who promptly shortens him up and runs him in a graded-stakes race. Eurton typically isn't the kind of trainer to do something ridiculous like this, so he must think this guy belongs, despite a few failed attempts against N3X company. Another way to look at it is this: perhaps this is just a prep race for a two-turn event later in the meet, since this guy has spent almost all of his career routing. GRADE: X.

#5 ROLL ON BIG JOE—program scratch.

#6 CLOSETHEGAME SUGAR (5/1) is a lightly raced 4-year-old who is in very good form right now—but he’s never faced this level of competition before, so we’ll see how he handles the class hike. On a fair track, I would upgrade him, since I like that he can just relax, sit a few lengths off the pace, and then pounce—but Del Mar hasn’t played that way so far. And even if it’s a fair track, he has horses outside of him who have similar run styles—and those foes are proven at this level. GRADE: X.

#7 HAPPY JACK (3/1) was my pick to upset The Chosen Vron two back at 18/1. He tried so hard and was so game through the lane, but “Vron” easily repelled his challenge, even though the winning margin was only three-quarters of a length. In other words, this guy was all out to lose. On the plus side, he came out of that race in fine fettle, and he looked terrific when winning the Triple Bend (G2) going 7-furlongs at Santa Anita. He got a big fig, but he made the lead through glacial early splits and drew off to win easily. Don’t get me wrong: he’s a nice horse, but I’m not buying that speed figure. I think I’ll like him a lot more next time in the Pat O’Brien (G2). GRADE: C.

#8 THE CHOSEN VRON (6/5) is a beast. He’s always been terrific, but it seems like he’s even better than ever as a 6-year-old. His four races this year were all laughers, and the only bad race he’s run in several years came in the Breeders’ Cup Sprint (G1), where he didn’t show his best stuff. He has tactical speed, and he always seems to get the perfect trip because of that. One thing I will say: pay attention to the track. The outside lanes have not been good so far this meet, so if “Vron” gets beat, that might be the reason why. GRADE: A.

#9 JACKSTOWN (15/1) will get wiseguy consideration from me, simply because I don’t think Baffert would be running him here unless he thought he belonged. This 4-year-old is undefeated in two starts, and even though he needed to take a long time off after breaking his maiden here back in 2022, he came back breathing fire in an easy prep for this event. I know he’s not battle-tested, but he has plenty of upside, and he has the kind of good early speed that will allow him to sit in a perfect stalking position. That said, his fate will be decided on how the track is playing—but at 15/1, I’m willing to take a shot, especially since we know what all of the other horses are capable of: We have no idea how much more this guy has to give. GRADE: A.

CONCLUSION

My heart wants **#8 THE CHOSEN VRON (6/5)** to win, but if he doesn’t, I certainly don’t want it to be one of the East Coast invaders! I’ll go to war with **#9 JACKSTOWN (15/1)**, who is trained by the best in the world and who seems to be coming into this race sitting on a peak effort.

Visit www.frankscatoni.com for more content.

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