

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

By Frank R. Scatoni

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Date: 7/28/24

Race 9: \$250K Eddie Read (G2) contested at 9-furlongs on the lawn with the rails at 12-feet

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

OVERVIEW

This year's renewal of the Eddie Read (G2)—a 9-furlong turf affair with the rails at 12-feet—is a terrific one. We have two past winners returning to recapture past glory, while a lightly raced 4-year-old, who has been nothing short of incredible, looks to stamp his name in the record books. Will it be one of these three in here or perhaps another in this nine-horse field.

#1 THERE GOES HARVARD (30/1) should not be this big of a price. The guy is a Grade 1 winner on dirt, but he also knows how to get the job done on the lawn. His comeback race in the Shoemaker Mile (G1) was very useful, so even though he finished behind a few of today's foes, he can easily move forward today second off the bench. Don't sell him too short. GRADE: B.

#2 **MASTER PIECE (CHI) (8/1)** won this race back in 2022, and he enters this year's renewal off a game victory back East where he put up a big fig. I like that Dutrow bothers to ship this 8-year-old back out here, and it looks like this old boy has no signs of slowing down if that last race figure is to be believed. I also like that Dylan Davis, who has been riding so well back East, gave up a day full of live mounts to ride this guy. GRADE: A.

#3 **GOLD PHOENIX (IRE) (6/1)**, the first D'Amato entrant, is incorrectly priced, in my opinion. He loves Del Mar, and he won this race last year. He rarely runs a bad race, and if he's in contention turning for home, he will give it his all to the wire. You don't finish fourth in the Breeders' Cup Turf (G1) unless you are a quality racehorse. He'll need an aggressive ride in this pacesetter race, but Frey handled him perfectly last time in a similar spot. GRADE: A.

#4 EASTER (FR) (4/1), the second D'Amato, has danced some big dances, but I never like to see an equipment change this late in a horse's career. That tells me that the trainer is trying to shake things up in order to get a good horse back to his winning ways. I also don't like the layoff lines. Obviously, his best races are good enough to win this, but I prefer others, especially if he's going to be only 4/1. GRADE: C.

#5 BALNIKHOV (IRE) (12/1), the third D'Amato, has been a frustrating horse for me. I've backed him many times because he has above par come-home times, but he often leaves himself with too much to do. There isn't much pace in here, so I think this guy is better suited to underneath. GRADE: X.

#6 DICEY MO CHARA (GB) (20/1) was right there with two of my top choices back in 2022, but he hasn't won in a while, and his last two races were not very good. If he can turn back the clock, perhaps he can crack the super, but I'm not seeing him as a win candidate today. GRADE: X.

#7 DU JOUR (5/2) is a nice horse who has run some big races, but his best work has come going a mile, so it remains to be seen if he'll have the same punch going an extra furlong. At 5/2, I'm not willing to pay to find out. Yes, I know he's a Grade 1 winner who likes Del Mar, but I think there is better value elsewhere. I'm going to take him on. GRADE: C.

#8 BALLADEER (20/1) is a pace player's dream. He is the only confirmed frontrunner in a race devoid of pace—all of the strong contenders are stretch runners. But is Balladeer good enough to win this? He does have a Grade 2 win at Santa Anita, but we all know that the Santa Anita turf course is way more kind to speed types like this guy, while Del Mar typically favors late finishers. He should be in front turning for home, but I think one of the classier closers runs him down—but you can certainly bet that he'll hold on for a minor award at a big number. GRADE: C.

#9 JOHANNES (2/1) has a world of ability. I've always liked this 4-year-old, and I can tell you that his two races this year were very impressive. He just exudes class, and his turn of foot is exciting to watch. That said, he's never been this far, so we'll see if he has the same punch in here as he does when going a mile, which has been his best distance. Based on his come-home times, I have to think he'll be just fine going this far, and I also like that he is more tactical than his main rivals, so it's pretty much his race to lose. GRADE: A.

CONCLUSION

I'm excited to see how **#9 JOHANNES (2/1)** does today because I've been a fan of his for a while now. That said, 2/1 won't help you out that much in the contest, so perhaps it makes sense to settle on the longer priced of **#3 GOLD PHOENIX (IRE) (6/1)** and **#2 MASTER PIECE (CHI) (8/1)**. If you really want to go out on a limb, I've seen way worse long shots than **#1 THERE GOES HARVARD (30/1)**. He could easily surprise in here.

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