DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY
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Date: 8/23/24
Race 8: $25K claimer for fillies and mares going 8.5-furlongs on turf (rails at 24-feet)
Post: approx. post 6:32 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW
Wow. Talk about another difficult turf race. We've got a full field of fillies and mares going 8.5-furlongs in this $25K claiming event. The rails are at 24-feet, but a closer won this race at 24-feet earlier in the meet, and she's back again. Is a repeat in the cards, or will a new face take home the dough?

#1 HARPER'S GALLOP (5/2) hasn't been seen since August of last year when she ran evenly in a Cal-bred stakes race. Before that, she was competitive against some decent horses, so she fits class-wise for sure—but that was then and this is now. She's 8-years-old, so who knows what she has left to give. Fortunately, she's in great hands with Leonard Powell, and Juan Hernandez sees fit to ride, so she must be doing well—but 5/2 in this full field on a gal who has questions to answer doesn't excite me. GRADE: B.

#2 BIG MAMA SUE (7/2) was 7/1 at this level last time, and she came on with her customary stretch run to get the W. She's always had an above-average late kick, but because of that, she's been at the mercy of pace and trip. Last time, Franco did a great job keeping her a lot closer, and this gal responded with a win. Franco is injured, so Ayuso takes over. You can expect this gal to be running on late yet again, and there should be a contentious pace to set things up for her. GRADE: B.

#3 VRONSKY FEINT (30/1) was 21/1 at this level two back, and she ran to those long odds. She had trouble, but I don't think it mattered for a gal who seems a bit outclassed against these. GRADE: X.

#4 MADIHA (5/1) was the 2/1 favorite at this level last time, but she was overtaken in the lane after pressing a modest pace. Belvoir claimed her out of that race, so we'll see if he can get more out of her. She'll be forwardly placed, getting a good stalking trip, so she'll have every chance to do better today, but I'm a little concerned that this mare is starting to head the wrong way, since Papaprodromou was fine losing her for $25K last time despite her solid prior form against better. GRADE: C.

#5 SHE'S A JOKER (8/1) is pretty versatile, and I like the way she finished up last time in a turf sprint against more expensive animals. She has form around two turns, though I do think sprinting is her best game. This is a career low level for her, and it's not insignificant that Rispoli takes the call. That said, I like her more for underneath. GRADE: B.

#6 ZEYARAAT (15/1), the first Cerin entrant, will get my money once again, even though she hasn't been very nice to me the last few races! She was 26/1 at this level last time, and she grinded away to finish fifth behind a few of these. It wasn't a terrible race, since she was wide, and I really like that she gets a little more ground to play with today, since she always comes running on through the lane. I'm not ready to give up on her just yet, especially at this price. GRADE: A.

#7 SAREEHA (IRE) (6/1) will be prominent from the bell, so she should help ensure a good early pace. I'm not sure how long she'll stick around, however. Her NorCal form is fine, but this is a different ballgame. GRADE: X.

#8 INNER BEAUTY (IRE) (10/1) should be right up on the pace alongside her inside neighbor, so that will make things tricky for her, since she couldn't wire them last time at this level. Her best work has come on the lead, and I would like her a lot more if Sareeha (Ire) scratched, but if she doesn't, then the race shape doesn't flatter this one. GRADE: C.

#9 CHASINGSERENDIPITY (15/1), the second Cerin runner, was 17/1 at this level last time, but she had a wide journey and was never a threat. Before that, she was competitive at this level; in fact, she has a win at this level, so she's not completely out of it. She'll also get a great forwardly placed trip behind the two speed horses, so why can't she get the W while getting the first jump on the closers? GRADE: A.

#10 SKY MAKER (10/1) was 8/1 at this level last time, but she was never a threat while breaking from the dreaded 10-hole. I can forgive that race, especially since excellent claiming trainer Knapp just took her. Unfortunately, she's burdened with the 10-hole again, so what kind of trip is she going to get. That said, I love that Frey rides through the claim, so this one has more merit than the board will likely give her, and since this gal knows how to finish, maybe Frey can get her over early, anchor out the back, and make one big run. GRADE: B.

CONCLUSION
I'll be the first to admit: I do not have a strong opinion here. All I know is that I want a price horse in this ridiculously competitive race, and both of the Cerin entrants—**#6 ZEYARAAT (15/1)** and **#9 CHASINGSERENDIPITY (15/1)**—offer more value than their price and paper form suggests, so I'll look at those two to sprint the upset…but this race is wide-open.

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