

## DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

By Frank R. Scatoni

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**Date:** 8/31/24

**Race 9:** \$150K Green Flash Handicap (G3) contested at 5-furlongs on turf

**Post:** approx. post 5:39 p.m. PDT

### OVERVIEW

What a fine renewal of the \$150K Green Flash Handicap (G3) contested at 5-furlongs on the turf with the rails at zero-feet. It's an important event, since it's a Breeders' Cup Challenge "Win and You're In" race, so the winner gets a spot in the Breeders' Cup Turf Sprint (G1). D'Amato has four runners entered in this full field of 12, and we also have a Wesley Ward invader and a few ladies trying to get the dough. Note: this is the first of two online contest races today, with the other being the Pacific Classic (G1).

#1 FAST BUCK (15/1) should be sitting on a peak effort, making the second start of his form cycle after running behind a few of these last time. He is a graded-stakes winner, so this 6-year-old is capable of running a big race; I just think he's going to have to gun hard from the rail, and that should soften him up late. GRADE: X.

#2 MO GOLD (20/1) has never finished out of the exacta in four career starts, but this 5-year-old has clearly had some physical issues. I liked his comeback race up at Santa Rosa on dirt, but he has solid turf form from back in 2022 to run back to as well. The concern is that he will be going hard from the bell, and that's going to be an issue with a really fast filly outside of him. This is also a big class test for him. GRADE: X.

#3 SASSY NATURE (15/1) ripped the race open right from the jump last time when she wired several of these. It was a very sharp race, and she was overlooked in the betting at 18/1, since she was facing the boys. She faces the boys again, and I have to think she's in a bit deep today. She won't be four lengths clear in this full field; plus, there's a world in which she bounces to the moon after that incredible effort last time. GRADE: X.

#4 DANIEL'S MAGIC (12/1) ran on to finish second last time, checking in behind Sassy Nature but beating a few of these in the process. It was another solid effort for this honest runner, but he's going to need a step forward to win this—and he pretty much runs the same race over and over again. That race isn't fast enough to beat the best in here. GRADE: X.

#5 STAR RACER (20/1) is a very cool 7-year-old who has had a very nice career. He's a steady check-earner, but it's hard to overlook the fact that he's a much better synth horse than he is a turf horse. He has five synth wins as compared to just one turf win. He should be forwardly placed, so he'll get a good trip right off the speedsters—but I'm not sure he's good enough to get the W. GRADE: X.

#6 NOBLE REFLECTION (20/1) has faced off against some really good horses, but I've never really thought of him as a 5-furlong turf horse. He does have tactical speed, so he'll be chasing the early pace, but I'm not sure he'll be good enough to beat the best in here. GRADE: X.

**#7 UNCONQUERABLE KEEN (IRE) (8/1)**, the first of four D’Amato runners, is my top pick in the race. I’m just going to ex-out that last defeat as the favorite against a few of these (including Sassy Nature). I’m sure that was just a prep anyway, and I really think that Berrios had no idea what hit him after the filly cleared early and opened up by four lengths. This horse loves Del Mar; he loves the distance; and he should get a great trip stalking the speedsters in front of him. GRADE: A.

**#8 NO NAY HUDSON (IRE) (6/1)** doesn’t look all that great on paper, but Wesley Ward bothers to ship this one out here and call on Hernandez to ride, so he must like his chances. As always, you have to upgrade East Coast turf form, even if it’s mediocre—but I like our West Coast turf sprinters a bit more in this spot. GRADE: B.

**#9 CONNIE SWINGLE (9/2)**, the second D’Amato, was awesome in her return last time when she crushed in the Daisycutter. She was coming off a ridiculously long layoff, but she came back breathing fire. Can she repeat that performance or will she regress a bit today? She’s a 5-year-old mare, so it’s more likely she’ll bounce a bit than move forward, so because of that, I prefer others for the top spot. GRADE: B.

**#10 MOTORIOUS (7/2)**, the third D’Amato, won this race last year, and I have to think this Grade 3 has been the target all along, so I’m willing to toss out his two blah races from a few months ago. He has a terrific late kick, and there should be enough pace in here to set things up perfectly for him. He will need to avoid a traffic jam, but he’s always been a pretty handy horse, so I’ll trust that things will go his way when the real running starts. GRADE: A.

**#11 JOHNNY PODRES (8/1)** uncorked a ferocious late run last time in an N2X but just ran out of room. That has been an issue for him, especially at this short distance, since he’s always at the mercy of pace and trip—but it’s always fun to see him motoring home. I think he comes up short again today, but I have a lot of respect for this old boy, who has earned more than \$500K the hard way. GRADE: X.

**#12 TURN ON THE JETS (IRE) (5/1)**, the fourth D’Amato, seems a cut below his stablemates. He was no match for Motorious in this race last year, and Unconquerable Keen (Ire) has gotten the measure of him quite a few times. He’s also looking at a tough trip from out here, since he likes to stalk the pace—and that means he’s going to be wide throughout. He’s a very honest horse who always runs his race, but he’ll need a big step forward today to get the W. GRADE: C.

### **CONCLUSION**

It’s D’Amato’s world...we just live in it. I’m betting that **#7 UNCONQUERABLE KEEN (IRE) (8/1)** bounces back with a big race today—and I think he gets the best trip, stalking the pace and getting first run on his stablemate, **#10 MOTORIOUS (GB) (7/2)**, who is a major contender, but he’ll need a little luck from a pace and trip perspective.

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**[SCROLL DOWN FOR SECOND CONTEST RACE ANALYSIS]**

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**Date:** 8/31/24

**Race 10:** \$1 million Pacific Classic (G1) contested at 10-furlongs on the main track

**Post:** approx. post 6:13 p.m. PDT

### OVERVIEW

It's the marquee race of the summer meet, the \$1 million Pacific Classic (G1), a 10-furlong affair contested on the main track. It's a bummer that Adare Manor is going to scratch from the race, because it would have been very cool to see her take on the boys—but that's water under the bridge. Baffert does have another horse in here, so he's still in with a shot—and a few other horses just saw their chances go way up with Adare Manor declaring from the race. Note: this is the second of two contest races today, with the Green Flash (G3) being the other.

#1 IL MIRACOLO (5/1) just ran second at Monmouth two weeks ago, so this seems like an ambitious spot, flying cross-country in such a short period of time. Back East, this horse was running a mixed bag of races against some decent horses, but he never really came through with a breakout race. I like that Smith takes the call, but I'm thinking this one will go from the rail, and I'm having a hard time seeing him wire this field. Also note, he's never been 10-furlongs before. GRADE: C.

#2 THERE GOES HARVARD (15/1) was my wise-guy pick before Adare Manor scratched because I thought she would help push the early pace, thus setting things up for this grinder. I still think the pace will be okay, but now I like this horse's chances a lot less. Note that he is a Grade 1 winner at this distance, so at least he is proven in a spot like this. He's never been able to replicate that victory in the Gold Cup (G1) back in 2022, but if there's a pace collapse, this guy will be picking up the pieces late. GRADE: B.

#3 DR. VENKMAN (5/2) is an ascendant 4-year-old who looked very good last time when winning the prep for this, the San Diego Handicap (G2) in his first try around two turns. I thought he might have distance limitations, but he looked really good when stretching out, so perhaps this guy is starting to blossom at just the right time. Granted, that race was 8.5-furlongs; 10-panels is a completely different ballgame—but his pedigree suggests he'll be just fine. That said, he will be up on the early pace, since that's how he likes to run, so if things get hot up front, that could compromise his chances late. GRADE: A.

#4 REINCARNATE (8/1) was not on my radar when his stablemate, Adare Manor, was still in the race, but with the defection of that foe, this guy's chances went up exponentially. I never thought this horse wanted any part of 10-furlongs, yet Baffert thinks otherwise. Not only has he run him a few times at this distance, he also tried him at 12-furlongs last time in the Cougar II (G3). He ran a well-beaten second, but he surely got a lot out of that marathon, so he should be super-fit for this shorter affair (not unlike Richard's Kid, who took the same route). Note that Hernandez will be riding and not Kimura. I can see JJ just stalking the pace and then waiting to pounce. GRADE: A.

#5 KATONAH (8/1), the first O'Neill runner, came off a very long layoff last time to run a pretty good second in the San Diego (G2) at 20/1. He tried hard all the way to the wire, so that was a useful race for him. He now makes the second start of his form cycle, so a forward move is not out of the question. Can he handle the distance? That, however, is very much the question. The breeding suggests otherwise. GRADE: X.

#6 FULL SERRANO (ARG) (12/1) ran a hole in the wind last time when making his first SoCal start for Sadler. He set a very fast pace on a speed-friendly track and never looked back. The waters get deeper today, but this guy was regarded well enough in Argentina to run in a Grade 1, so perhaps Sadler sees the same thing the previous connections did. Sadler knows how to win this race, but this seems like a very tough spot for this horse. On the plus side, he seemed to handle 10-furlongs with no problem in South America, so perhaps he'll make the lead and not stop today. I'm not willing to bet on that though. GRADE: C.

#7 ADARE MANOR—will be scratched.

#8 NONE ABOVE THE LAW (20/1) is a cool horse who has earned more than \$650K, so I can't say anything negative about this Cal-bred—but he seems to be in a bit over his head today. It would be a major upset if he won this race. GRADE: X.

#9 MIXTO (20/1), the second O'Neill entrant, has run respectably against some good horses, but he hasn't shown the necessary oomph to win a race at this level. He was no match for Reincarnate in the Gold Cup (G2), and I'm having a hard time seeing him turn the tables on that foe, especially since he'll likely be hustled out of the gate to angle over and get forward position in a race that has much faster horses than he is. GRADE: X.

### **CONCLUSION**

I don't have a strong opinion here, but I think **#4 REINCARNATE (8/1)** looks a lot better with his stablemate out of the race. He'll be bet down, however, so if you need a bomb, perhaps consider **#2 THERE GOES HARVARD (15/1)**, who should be grinding along late.

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