

## DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

By Frank R. Scatoni

On Twitter [@ScatoniSureShot](https://twitter.com/ScatoniSureShot)

[www.FrankScatoni.com](http://www.FrankScatoni.com)

[www.OptixEQ.com](http://www.OptixEQ.com)

**Date:** 11/29/24

**Race 7:** \$200K Hollywood Turf Cup (G2) contested at 12-furlongs on the lawn

**Post:** approx. post 3:27 p.m. PST

### OVERVIEW

Time to wake up from the turkey coma: we've got the heralded Del Mar Turf Festival starting today on this nippy Friday fall afternoon in November. We've got a nine 9-race Friday card, but all eyes will be on today's contest Race 7, the first of many terrific turf stakes this weekend: the \$200K Hollywood Turf Cup (G2) contested at 12-furlongs on the lawn with the rails at zero-feet.

#1 RIMPROTECTOR—program scratch.

#2 CABO SPIRIT (12/1) pulled off one of the biggest heists in recent memory when he was able to steal an easy lead in the very expensive John Henry (G2) on California Crown day at Santa Anita two back. It was his first win in an eternity, and after so many of us got off him two years ago, his faithful backers were rewarded with a 24/1 price at the off. He'll be prominent again today, but he'll have some company in the first flight, and that will make things tricky for him to repeat that race two back. GRADE: C.

#3 DICEY MO CHARA (GB) (4/1) was supposed to press Cabo Spirit in the John Henry (G2), but he didn't, and that took him out of the mix, finishing fourth. Powell goes to Prat this time, who will make sure that no one gets an easy lead, thus giving this guy his best chance to win. Is he good enough? He has not won in a very long time, but he always seems to be right there at the wire. I've made good money fading this camera-shy runner over the years, but Prat's presence does scare me. That said, why should he be 4/1 in here? He shouldn't (save for the Prat effect). GRADE: C.

#4 DIVIN PROPOS (FR) (5/1), the first D'Amato entrant, was favored against a few of these last time, but he lost all chance when there was no pace and Cabo Spirit was allowed to walk the dog. There should be a decent pace in here, and I can tell you that this horse has a very fast closing kick—and the added ground should be no trouble. He's a 4-year-old who still has plenty of upside, and I'm expecting him to run a monster race today. GRADE: A.

#5 ROCKEMPEROR (IRE) (10/1), the second D'Amato runner, has lost to several of these before, and it's a bit concerning that he has yet to win a race on this circuit since joining the D'Amato barn earlier in the year. If this 8-year-old wins, I'll tip my cap and applaud. GRADE: X.

#6 FEARLESS SOLDIER (20/1) was just claimed for \$50K, so you have to admire the confidence Saavedra is showing by entering this guy in a stakes race and trying to move up a horse off Michael McCarthy, one

of the best stamina trainers on the circuit. This horse does have a win going 10.5-furlongs and a recent win going 10-furlongs, so perhaps the new trainer thinks he can carry his speed this far. I'm skeptical. He looks like a pace factor only. GRADE: X.

#7 NONE ABOVE THE LAW (20/1) is a cool horse who never backs down from a challenge, but this particular spot—for a horse who has shown he can do most anything—seems a bit of a reach. Granted, he did win the Del Mar Derby (G2) at 9-furlongs way back in the day, but it's been a long time since he's been in the winner's circle, and it's a tall ask to go from two sprints to this marathon distance. GRADE: X.

#8 NINEEVENTURBO (8/1) can handle the distance. Can he handle the class? He has okay stakes form, but he hasn't been good enough to beat this caliber of horses. He's done his best work on or near the lead, and that could pose a problem with better horses having a similar run style. I'm not sold. GRADE: X.

#9 BALNIKHOV (IRE) (6/1), the third D'Amato, has won a million dollars in his career, so I can't say anything bad about him. That said, he's been a frustrating horse to bet on because of his run style. He's always so far back—and oftentimes, he's at the mercy of pace and trip. This 5-year-old also hasn't won here in SoCal since his 3-year-old campaign. When he was younger, I thought he would excel at longer distances, yet he's never tried 12-furlongs before. We'll see if his late kick is as effective going this far. I think it might just be. GRADE: B.

#10 GOLDENEYE (12/1) has won two in a row since going to Kentucky and trying 12-furlongs—and he's looked good doing it. Granted, those were allowance races, but I do like the versatility he showed: one win came on the engine; the other came from off the pace. That said, the common denominator in those races was Prat. Prat doesn't ride back. That concerns me. GRADE: X.

#11 **TRULY QUALITY (5/2)** has really lived up to his name. He's been on an absolute tear of late, having won three of his last four races—all at different tracks—and his one loss was a neck defeat. He's clearly the one to beat. GRADE: A.

## **CONCLUSION**

You don't need me to tell you that **#11 TRULY QUALITY (5/2)** is the horse to beat—and I doubt he'll be as high as 5/2. On the flip side, I'm surprised **#5 DIVIN PROPOS (FR) (5/1)** is as short as 5/1 on the morning-line—but even at that price, he's my top pick in the race. Not to denigrate this field, but it's not the classiest Grade 2 I've ever seen, so the race is ripe for a horse like this to take a big step forward and announce himself as next year's boss man in the long-distance turf division.

-----  
Visit [www.frankscatoni.com](http://www.frankscatoni.com) for more content.

If you'd like to learn more about **OptixEQ**, visit [www.optixeq.com](http://www.optixeq.com).