DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY
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Date: 8/26/2017
Race 9: $200K Pat O'Brien (G2) contested at 7-furlongs on the main track.
Post: 6:09 pm PDT

OVERVIEW
Today's contest race is the heralded $200K Pat O'Brien (G2), a 7-furlong main-track dash for the best sprinters on the West Coast—except Drefong, who took his shoes to the East Coast to run in the $600K Forego (G1) at Saratoga. Because of that, plenty of horses came out of the woodwork to run in here, and in fact, Baffert was sending out stablemate Danzing Candy to get the money, but unfortunately, an injury on Friday scuppered that plan. With Danzing Candy declared from the race, this year's running of the Pat O'Brien (G2) is now a wide-open affair—and a somewhat paceless race!

#1 MOE CANDY (6/1), the first Sadler runner, has done nice work over this track, never finishing out of the money in three tries—but his best work has really come going the shorter 6-furlong distance, with all of his races beyond 6-panels resulting in his weakening late. Victor will have no choice but to gun from the rail—but that might be a good thing without much speed in here. He's been knocking on the graded-stakes door—will it open for him today? I think the 7-furlong distance really hurts his chances, but Sadler has heated up lately, and this guy seems to be working very well for this. GRADE: B.

#2 SOLID WAGER (20/1) is a 7-furlong specialist, with three wins in six tries at today's distance—but most of those races were against weaker company. He also likes to come from way off the pace, so he's up against it from a race-flow perspective. He'll have his work cut out for him, but I can't say anything too harsh about a horse who has earned more than $500K throughout his career. Expect him on the scene late if he's good enough. GRADE: X.

#3 MR. HINX (20/1) just won the Real Good Deal Stakes against fellow Cal-bred 3-year-olds at 9/2. It was a very nice effort, where his tactical speed was used to great effect by Prat, who just stalked the pace before inching away. Van Dyke takes over for the Frenchman, who sides with Kobe's Back, and he'll have to really move this 3-year-old forward against much tougher older horses. I can't fault the connections for taking a shot—especially since Mr. Miyadi has been excellent this meet—but this is a very tough spot. GRADE: X.

#4 SILENT BIRD (5/1) looked like he was on his way to be a major force in the sprint division, but after a fourth-place finish in the Triple Bend (G1), where he was beaten by Denman's Call, he hit the bench. I'm guessing something went amiss in that race, since he was riding a five-race win streak into that event back in March. Normally, I would say this is a very tough spot to make a comeback, but there are two positives: first off, this isn't the toughest field in the world; secondly, Glatt can have them ready to roll off the bench if he wants to. The works looks very promising for this once-promising runner, so if he's the same horse as he was last winter, he could easily win this. GRADE: A.

#5 BLAMEITONTHELAW (12/1), the second Sadler entrant, needed a 5-pound weight-break to finally clear the N2X hurdle, which he did last time over this track. That was a nice win, especially since he had to break from the rail going 6.5-furlongs, but the waters get much deeper today. He's tough to support on the win-end, but do note that he was only beaten 4-1/4 lengths to by Ransom the Moon, who eventually went on to win the Bing Crosby (G1) here earlier in the meet, so this guy could be used underneath in your exotics. GRADE: X.

#6 KOBE'S BACK (6/1), the first Eurton runner, is a little interesting in here just because you have to respect his class, having danced a lot of big dances in the sprint division throughout his career. That said, he's always been his own worst enemy, having a hard time getting out of the gate and spotting the field many lengths before uncorking his strong stretch run. It's too bad he won't have a pace to run at today because I've always enjoyed watching this big gray start his late run—but even still, he could be the forgotten horse just because of his running style. Prat takes the call—might that be the difference today? In a race that is short on class, why can't this guy shine? GRADE: B.

#7 CALCULATOR (6/1), the first Miller entrant, has been very oddly campaigned, since he's tried so many things throughout his career, despite the fact that he's always been his best as an elongated sprinter. Well, he gets to show what he can do at what is arguably his best distance. He's cutting back after a mile turf race, so you know he'll be super-fit, and back in 2016, he traded decisions with Kobe's Back, so he has plenty of "sprinty" back-class to run back to. The barn is having an uncharacteristically weak meet (by their standards), but this runner has always had ability, and he should get first jump on Kobe's Back after getting a good tracking trip. I'm just not crazy about how this horse has been managed. GRADE: C.

#8 DANZING CANDY—scratched.

#9 HOME RUN KITTEN (20/1) re-adds blinkers for his new barn, so we'll see if Miller can shake things up with this old boy after a decent career under Hofmans. He's another horse who has been curiously campaigned—running on dirt and turf while sprinting and routing. I never thought dirt was his best surface, but he didn't disgrace himself last June against the manly Lord Nelson (now retired), who beat him by 2-3/4 lengths in the Triple Bend (G1). I'm okay watching one today, however. GRADE: X.

#10 GIANT EXPECTATIONS (12/1), the second Eurton trainee, is a New York-bred who ran two excellent races in New York before coming back out West (where he began his career) to run second in a $40K optional-claiming/N1X while going a mile. I loved him that day, and he just couldn't get by Gato Del Oro, who ran a huge race and who ends up in the age-restricted Shared Belief earlier on the card—so see how he performs in that race. This guy should be fit after that mile run, and he has enough tactical speed to get the right trip in here. Plus, Stevens curiously sticks with him despite having ridden Kobe's Back plenty of times before. The works have been terrific, but still, a big step forward will be needed today. GRADE: B.

#11 DENMAN'S CALL (12/1) will be my top choice in here for two reasons: first, I think he was just out for a spin last time in the Bing Crosby (G1), prepping for this more logical, easier spot; secondly, 7-furlongs is his best distance, as is evidenced by his awesome win in the Triple Bend (G1) back in March. He's always had ability, so it was nice to see him finally put it all together in that Triple Bend (G1), so I think that form is more indicative of his true ability than his recent poor form (three races for which I can make excuses: three back, he caught a wet-fast Churchill track; two back, he was overmatched in the Grade 1 Met Mile; last time, he had to break from the rail against Grade 1 6-furlong sprinters here at Del

Mar). I think he's sitting on a big race today—and Tyler should give him a good, in-the-clear, tracking trip from this outside post. GRADE: A.

CONCLUSION
With Danzing Candy out of the race, it's anyone's game. I think #4 SILENT BIRD hasn't shown us his very best yet, assuming he comes back ready to run, and if #11 DENMAN'S CALL runs back to his Triple Bend (G1), he can be very tough. I'll look at both of those in exactas with maybe #1 MOE CANDY, #6 KOBE'S BACK, and #10 GIANT EXPECTATIONS underneath if the prices are right.