

# DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

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**Date:** 11/2/2017

**Race 7:** \$75K Lure contested at 8-furlongs on turf.

**Post:** 3:30 pm PDT

## OVERVIEW

Today's featured event is a very competitive renewal of the \$75K Lure Stakes contested at a mile on the turf. It's a restricted event for horses who haven't won a sweepstakes since July 1, so we do have some graded-stakes caliber runners entered here—and I have to admit, I had a very tough time with this race. The rails are at 30-feet, so Cistron should have an advantage as the classiest speed horse in the race. Will it be good enough to fend off some solid stretch-runners?

#1 AMPLE SUFFICIENCY (12/1) is a very honest racehorse who has never run a bad race in 11 tries. He's done nothing wrong since immigrating to the U.S., notching his two career victories, including a sharp N1X score last time, closing nicely to beat nine other rivals going a mile at Santa Anita. Three back, he broke his maiden here at Del Mar, so he handles this course as well. As a lightly raced 4-year-old, there is still some upside here, but note that he faces a very tough task today, coming back in just 19-days while having to face some proven stakes runners. GRADE: X.

#2 MOONLIGHT DRIVE (ITY) (5/1) has an abundance of talent, but he's had his share of setbacks, needing a 277-day break to return today after running fifth down the hill in the Clocker's Corner way back in January of this year. Before that, he was running well against age-restricted graded-stakes foes, so class has never been an issue for this guy. He makes only his second start this year as a 4-year-old, but if there is one thing we know about Baffert, it's that he brings his horses back ready to run off long layoffs. Unfortunately, another thing we know about Baffert is that he's not at his best when campaigning turf runners. Still, this guy has plenty of talent, and he should get a good tracking trip behind the early/presser horses. GRADE: A.

#3 FOREVER JUANITO (12/1) never gets any respect, despite the fact that he's as honest as the day is long. He's also versatile, running well both down the hill and here at Del Mar (both routing and sprinting). In fact, last summer, he ran second, losing by a neck, in the restricted Wickerr Stakes under similar conditions as this, so he's perfectly capable of competing with the likes of these. That said, there is usually a horse or two who is just a bit better and classier than he is, so he'll probably get outfinished late, as seems to be his fate. His presence, however, is the key to the race because he's the only one in here who can keep Cistron honest—or he can try to steal the race himself. In other words, the race shape all depends on how he's ridden early. GRADE: X.

#4 DIMENSION (GB) (15/1) is tough to get a read on because he's a 9-year-old who is clearly in the twilight of his career, but he's also an East Coast invader who was good enough to win two Grade Twos last summer at Woodbine. That said, both of those races came around one-turn, while his two-turn tries leave a lot to be desired. Of course, in some of those races, he was facing some very nice horses, so it's tough to say if it's the two turns or the competition that contributed to those poor efforts. You know I like

to upgrade East Coast turf horses out here—and it's really nice to see Castellano take the call—but I have to think someone is going to get the measure of this old warrior today. GRADE: C.

**#5 TWENTYTWENTYVISION (6/1)** has some excellent turf races against some excellent company on his résumé, including a second-place finish in the Eddie Read (G1) way back in July 2015. Since then, he's placed in several Grade Twos and Threes, so he won't be intimidated by anyone in here. While his class can't be questioned, his fitness can, since he's had a spotty 2017 campaign, and he's now coming off a 187-day layoff after running evenly in the Thunder Road (G3) going a mile at Santa Anita. Mandella can certainly have them ready to fire off a break, but I find it odd that he's adding blinkers on this 6-year-old gelding. I'm a little wary of that move, but the works have been very sharp (check out the bullet on September 29 followed by four 6-furlong stamina works), and maybe the addition of blinkers will help keep him engaged earlier in a race that won't have a contentious pace. GRADE: A.

**#6 TEQUILA JOE (10/1)** looked very good beating N2X types two back going 8.5-furlongs over this course. He was loaded the whole way with nowhere to go, but Talamo bulled through a tight seam and got this guy up in time at 7/1. Despite the big price, I thought he was sitting on a peak effort that day for a trainer who is terrific second off the bench, as was the case that day. Before coming to SoCal, this guy ran against some decent Midwest turf horses, so there is some class here as well—but do note that he just lost to Cistron in the Obviously Mile a few weeks ago, so he'll need to turn the tables on that foe. That said, I do think he'll step forward today, and he should get something to run at if Cistron and Forever Juanito push the pace. We have not seen the best of this 4-year-old. GRADE: B.

**#7 CISTRON (9/2)** has plenty of speed, something that has served him well over both turf and dirt. He'll use that speed to dictate the pace today, but I'm hoping he and Forever Juanito will keep each other honest, setting it up for a stretch-runner. This guy did break his maiden in wire fashion over this course, but he got away with a really slow pace that day. He'll have to earn it today on a course that typically doesn't favor speed at a mile. That said, the rails are out, so this guy will have every chance to get the job done with what should be a perfect trip. GRADE: B.

**#8 ECKERSLEY (8/1)** has a very nice late kick, but he's going to need things to go his way today—since he might find himself with too much to do, which was the case last time when he couldn't beat N2X foes while going today's distance here at Del Mar. He's a decent horse who tries hard every time, but he does seem like a cut below the best in here. GRADE: X.

**#9 HE WILL (5/2)** just lost to Cistron, and yet that foe is 9/2 on the morning-line while this guy is the favorite. That's a little confusing to me, especially since this guy hasn't won in a long time, and his best races of late have come against Cal-bred runners. In his defense, he did have some trouble at a critical juncture in that Cistron race, so he might have finished better, but he often runs into trouble given his affinity to get going from off the pace. Don't get me wrong, he's a decent turf horse who is capable of some very strong final quarters, but I think 5/2 seems awfully short against some horses who have actually picked up some black type by winning and/or placing in some tough graded-stakes races. GRADE: B.

**#10 A RED TIE DAY (8/1)** is a 7-year-old who danced some big dances throughout his career, but after a few subpar races for him this year, he was risked for a \$32K tag. Not surprisingly, he crushed that time-restricted group of claimers as the 19/10 chalk, but no one bothered to take him, which makes me wonder if he'll have a hard time today replicating that good performance. On the plus side, he did win this race

last year when it was held at Santa Anita (beating Twentytwentyvision), so he's your defending champ—but can he repeat that performance while having to break from the tricky 10-hole? GRADE: C.

### **CONCLUSION**

I've always liked #2 MOONLIGHT DRIVE (ITY) even though he's a turf horse trained by Baffert. That's okay though because this guy has proven himself on the lawn against some tough customers—and at 5/1 on the morning-line, he seems like good value in here. But so does #5 TWENTYTWENTYVISION at 6/1, since he too brings plenty of class to the proceedings—and both project tracking trips, getting first jump on the closers. I'll let tote and paddock decide where I land.