

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

By Frank R. Scatoni

On Twitter @ScatoniSureShot

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Race 5: \$50K starter-allowance for fillies & mares going 8-furlongs on the turf.

Post: 2:30 pm PST

OVERVIEW

Today's contest race is a solid \$50K starter-allowance for fillies & mares going 8-furlongs on the lawn with the rails at 18-feet. This is a pretty competitive affair—like most of these starter races—and there are several places to land here, but with an anticipated hot pace, I'll look for the strongest finishers in the field.

#1 LADY NINJA (8/1), the first Mike McCarthy entrant, has early speed, so Van Dyke will probably want to put her in the race early from this rail position—but that might be a problem, since there are others who also like to race while forwardly placed. She did finish second at this level two-back, but she had every chance to win and was outgamed in the lane. GRADE: C.

#2 QUINN MURPHY (20/1) has no early speed, but that might not be too much of an issue in a race that projects a quick pace. Still, she couldn't beat conditioned-claimers last time, and this is a much tougher group. In fact, the one time she tried this level, she was well-beaten. She could clunk up for a piece, but a win seems a bit beyond her scope at this level. GRADE: X.

#3 AURA ROSE (7/2) won at this very same level over the summer, tracking the pace and showing a nice stretch run to best nine other starter foes, including a few of today's rivals. Toss the last two races against tougher (although one of them was really good), and you're looking at a logical contender—as long as Baze doesn't race too close to a hot pace. GRADE: A.

#4 PARTY HOSTESS (20/1)—scratched.

#5 HER BIG MOMENT (20/1) also has some speed, so I would imagine bug-boy Fuentes will just send hard and hope for the best, since he'll be providing this gal with a 5-pound weight-break. Her two SoCal efforts saw her tire badly when the real running started, so she'll need to do much better today—especially since her two wins at Golden Gate came when she made easy leads, and that won't be the case today. GRADE: X.

#6 MIDNIGHT SWINGER (5/1) has run well at this level, but her two route races against these types saw her in a great spot but unable to outkick a few of today's rivals. She'll get another great trip and should be in stalking position, but then she'll need to show a lot more fight in the lane to fend off the girls who've already gotten the measure of her. That said, she's a good exotics key based on her consistency. GRADE: B.

#7 TINK'S TWIRL (6/1) already has a win at this level, so she should be tough in here, especially since she's likely to get a good tracking trip under Arroyo, who takes over Theriot, who went back to

Louisiana. She's been freshened for this spot by a trainer who does great work off this kind of break.
GRADE: A.

#8 TAMMY'S WINDOW—scratched.

#9 TIZWAY THAT WAY (10/1), the second Hollendorfer runner, was claimed for \$5K out of an Arlington Park synth race. Before that, she had run well but couldn't get the win against conditioned-claimers on the turf, so this seems like a decent class-hike for her first SoCal start. That said, East Coast runners often perk up here in SoCal, and Roman's 5-pound weight-advantage certainly won't hurt—but I'm okay watching one. GRADE: X.

#10 CANDY SWIRLS (9/2) does her best work on the front end, and that's not always a good thing here at Del Mar. She had no trouble wiring a few of these at Santa Anita on a much firmer turf course, but note that she couldn't hold off age-restricted \$50K foes this summer at Del Mar. Stevens will probably try to settle this speedster from this outside post, but the pace should be quick enough to soften her up late.
GRADE: B.

#11 LOOKING AT THELAKE (5/1) has always had a nice late kick for this level, but a combination of slow paces and tough trips have prevented this gal from getting her second win. She'll have to turn the tables on a few who have already beaten her, but she rarely runs a bad race, so she's usable in your exotics. In fact, I'd push her hard for the top spot if not for this tough post because I do think she's got the best stretch run of this lot. GRADE: A.

#12 PROUD 'N'READY (6/1) is a little interesting, since she's making the second start of her form cycle after a very long layoff. She's also stretching out for a trainer who does good work with this move. Unfortunately, the post is brutal, especially with the rails out 18-feet, so everything will need to break just right. At least Prat sticks around. GRADE: B.

#13 DEMIGODDESS (20/1)—scratched.

CONCLUSION

There are plenty of places to land here, so I'll let the board decide where I ultimately end up. If **#11 LOOKING AT THELAKE** were drawn better, she'd be my top choice based on the likely pace scenario—but **#7 TINK'S TWIRL** projects a good trip and could sneak away at a better price, so she gets the nod right now.