

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

By Frank R. Scatoni

On Twitter @ScatoniSureShot

Date: 7/26/20

Race 10: \$125K California Dreamin' for Cal-breds going 8.5F on turf (rails at 0-feet)

Post: approx. post 6:30 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

What a deep renewal of the \$125K California Dreamin', an 8.5-furlong turf affair for Cal-breds. The rails are at zero-feet, and there should be a decent enough pace in here to make this an honestly run race. I'm torn because the horse I think should offer the best value also drew the worst post, meaning it's all about that contender's price. Will I be compensated because of that lousy post? We shall see. In the meantime, let's look at the whole field.

#1 CAMINO DEL PARAISO (5/2) is your tepid morning-line favorite, and I respect that because he's been nothing but a total pro throughout his seven-year career. He's making the third start of his form cycle after a few races this year against much tougher graded-stakes competition. He'll save all the ground and should get a very good tracking trip from the inside. No knocks here at all, except the price. GRADE: A.

#2 GALILEAN (3/1) cost \$600K back in 2018, so there were high hopes for this son of Uncle Mo. He dominated Cal-breds early in his career, but he couldn't quite gain traction on the Triple Crown trail in 2019, and he had to hit the bench. His 2020 races are perfectly fine, and he comes into this off a very sharp victory in the Cal-bred Soi Phet at Los Al, where he easily handled a bunch of these as the even-money favorite—but, of course, that race was on dirt, and he's never stepped on the lawn before in the afternoons. With so many options at Del Mar, this seems like odd placement for a horse with such quality dirt form. Still, Sadler's no dummy, so he must see something in this guy that tells him turf will be fine—but I'm not willing to pay to find out at his likely short odds. GRADE: B.

#3 BRANDOTHEBARTENDER (15/1) is one of my favorite horses in training—just a professional work horse who shows up every time and runs his race. Unfortunately, his race hasn't been good enough to win against these Cal-bred stakes runners, but it has been good enough to pick up some decent third-place checks. You also have to respect his versatility, since he's been effective at distances ranging from 5-furlongs to a mile—but the problem is: today's race is 8.5-furlongs, and the one time he tried this distance was a disappointing ninth in this race last year. That said, he should be much more fit coming into the race this year, after a few one-mile races (whereas last year, he was coming in off just 5-furlong sprints). He'll be grinding away to the wire and could easily pick up another slice, but I prefer others for the top spot. GRADE: B.

#4 DESMOND DOSS (15/1) isn't the worst 15/1 you'll ever see: a lightly raced 4-year-old who makes his first start for Miyadi off a January layoff. Under D'Amato's care, he ran a mixed-bag of races, but he always hinted at ability, so it's no surprise that his connections tried him a few times against Cal-bred stakes runners. He just ran evenly in those races, so he'll need to do better today—but he still has plenty of upside if you think he can take a move forward under Miyadi's tutelage. I'm inclined to watch one, however. GRADE: C.

#5 GRINNING TIGER (12/1) laughed in my face two back when I “X’d” him in the Crystal Water, but all he did was wire the field at 92/1, grinning all the way to the winner’s circle. I was annoyed that he got away with such a soft early pace, but I was happy for my pal Tyler Hoffman, who pegged this guy as a lone-f and used him to finish first in a very lucrative Xpressbet tournament. Hats off, Tyler! I’ll ask Tyler if he likes this guy today, but I’m guessing probably not, since there should be a decent pace in here, and it remains to be seen if this guy can navigate an extra half-furlong, having never raced this far. GRADE: C.

#6 LOUD MOUTH (20/1) has done decent work at shorter distances against lesser company. In fact, several of these have him squarely on form, and I’m having a hard time seeing him get the better of those rivals today. He’s not my kind of play. GRADE: X.

#7 ULTIMATE BANGO (8/1) is a very honest Cal-bred who has done excellent work up to a mile, but he’s another one who might find 8.5-furlongs just a bit beyond his scope. He finished fifth in this race last year, but he did have to break from the 10-post and had a wide journey, and that was the kiss of death for his stalking style. He’ll get a much better trip today, and it wouldn’t shock me if he was right there at the sixteenth pole—but I suspect someone will come and get him late. Still, I’ve always liked this hard-tryer, and he should definitely take a step forward today after prepping in the Siren Lure. GRADE: B.

#8 THREE AY AM (12/1) was claimed off O’Neill for \$20K two back, and then he ran a dud in his first start for Lerner, where he was eased in the Cal-bred Soi Phet. Maybe he didn’t like the inside at Los Al, so don’t be so harsh on him, but you do have to question his class against the likes of these, since there must be a reason why O’Neill was happy losing him for \$20K. On the plus side, his two recent victories at a mile on the turf were very sharp, and he should get an excellent stalking trip right off the pacesetters—then we’ll see if he’s good enough to reel them in while also fending off the stretch runners. GRADE: C.

#9 WHOOPING JAY (15/1), the first O’Neill entrant, has sprint speed and is stretching out, so he should add some heat to the proceedings, making things difficult for Grinning Tiger while setting things up for the other O’Neill charge (and my top pick), Irish Heatwave. I never discount a Square Eddie offspring on the turf, but this one will need a career best today while successfully navigating two turns after just two sprint wins. GRADE: X.

#10 TAKE THE ONE O ONE (10/1) has tactical speed, so Valdivia will have to use that asset to angle over and gain position—and that should take the starch out of him late. There was also a time when I thought this guy wanted no part of anything beyond a mile, but he went off and won the Snow Chief back in June 2018 at 9-furlongs, so it’s evident that he can be effective at this middle distance with the right set-up. Still, I can see him chasing a hot pace and tiring late. GRADE: C.

#11 IRISH HEATWAVE (6/1) is my top pick in the race. He showed a nice turn of foot last time in an allowance up north when breaking from the 11-hole, so that kind of patient trip from off the pace would serve him well today. His recent form before that wasn’t anything special, but if you go back to 2019, you’ll see that he won the Cal-bred Silky Sullivan up north and then followed that up with a near-miss in the Cal-bred Snow Chief at Santa Anita, while going 9-furlongs, so he should be just fine at today’s trip. He’s coming into this race the right way, and I expect him to run a good run—but he drew the short straw with this terrible post, so demand a good price before hopping on this train. GRADE: A.

CONCLUSION

I do think **#1 CAMINO DEL PARAISO** is the horse to beat: he's classy, has the right tracking style for this pace set-up, and will save all the ground. He's a legitimate favorite to me—but he offers very little value in the contest. Because of that, I'll go with **#11 IRISH HEATWAVE**. I hate the post, but I trust Cedillo to just angle this guy off while racing unhurried from off the pace. He'll need some luck navigating traffic when the real running starts, but there should at least be a quick enough pace to set things up for him. One thing: make sure he's above that 6/1 morning-line given the awful post.