

# DEL MAR FEATURE RACE OF THE DAY

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**Date:** 8/21/20

**Race 9:** \$100K Rancho Bernardo Handicap (G3) for fillies & mares going 6.5F on dirt.

**Post:** approx. post 6:07 p.m. PDT

## OVERVIEW

Today's Friday card marks the start of a fantastic weekend of racing at Del Mar, since it's the Pacific Classic on Saturday, along with several other quality stakes races—but first, today's contest race: the \$100K Rancho Bernardo Handicap (G3), a 6.5-furlong main-track affair for some quick fillies and mares. It's a handicap, but there isn't much of a spread between weights, so I'm not too worried about that. One filly, however, does look to have a pace advantage—if she can navigate the 6.5-furlong distance.

#1 GINGHAM (6/1) had been plying her trade around two turns in mediocre fashion, but last time, she looked very good in a 6.5-furlong sprint when she beat her fellow 3-year-olds in the Angels Flight. She broke from the tricky rail, tracked a very slow pace, but easily ran them all down as the 17/10 favorite. She beat a small but decent group of 3-year-olds, but now she has to face older runners for the first time today. There is still plenty of upside here, but the rail draw does her zero favors against these types. GRADE: X.

#2 INTO CHOCOLATE (8/1) is a lightly raced and honest 4-year-old who usually puts forth a grinding run to hit the board. She's coming off a very nice N2X win back East, where she stalked a slow pace and gutted out a victory as the 15/10 favorite. She was coming off a February layoff and only going 6-furlongs, so that race should serve as a fine tune-up for this. She's back West now under Sise, and he got her an N1X win at today's distance last winter, so it should be all systems go today. Is she fast enough, however? We shall see... GRADE: X.

#3 MOTHER OF DRAGONS (12/1) is a 6-year-old mare who has won half of her starts, so she's a professional racehorse—is she in this class, however? Her best work has come up north against modest competition, so she'll need to show she can handle graded-stakes foes today. Luckily, she doesn't catch the strongest group for a Del Mar graded-stakes race, and you have to admire her versatility—but she will need a step forward, and she's going to face heat directly to her outside with Artistic Diva breathing down her neck. GRADE: X.

#4 ARTISTIC DIVA (8/1) is very interesting here—a speed horse who removes the hood today after tuning up in the much-shorter Daisycutter on turf. Before that, she was easily run down by two of today's foes when setting the pace in a Grade 2 at Los Al, so she will need to do better than that—but I'm expecting a career-best, since I think the removal of the hood and a modest pace scenario should help her cause tremendously. And, of course, the price will be right. GRADE: A.

#5 SNEAKING OUT (8/5) is your 123-pound high-weight, and that's not a surprise, since she is a really nice Cal-bred who always shows up for work, especially when racing around one turn. She looked good winning a Grade 2 at Los Al, easily overtaking Artistic Diva and fending off Amuse. She has a tactical stalking style that will come in handy today, since she can just sit comfortably outside Mother of Dragons

and Artistic Diva, waiting to pounce. Plus, her best races are better than the others in this field. She's a deserving favorite. GRADE: A.

#6 AMUSE (5/1) looks like a decent alternative to Sneaking Out, since you know she will be just grinding away to the wire, and maybe a 3-pound weight swing can help her make up the 2-3/4 lengths she lost by two back in that Grade 2 at Los Al. Toss her last race, a 5-furlong turf sprint that was probably just an interim race while waiting for this much more sensible spot. There was a time when there were high expectations for this 5-year-old, so we'll see if she can finally get a graded-stakes win after having to take a year off from April 2019 to June 2020. GRADE: B.

#7 MUCHO AMOR (15/1) is a cool 4-year-old filly who has shown versatility racing on dirt and synth, and while sprinting and routing, so she's a nice horse to own. This, however, seems like a really tough spot for her, since she's been competing against much weaker foes at Emerald and Golden Gate. Curiously, she too exits the Daisycutter, and she finished ahead of Artistic Diva and Amuse, so if you're going by that metric, she's in with a shot (since I give both of them chances). Still, I think a few others are sitting on peak races, while with this gal, what you see is what you get. GRADE: X.

#8 UNIQUE FACTOR (4/1) looked very good coming from the clouds two back in a classified-allowance at Churchill Downs. That was enough for Peter Miller to try her in the Madison (G1) at Keeneland. She was outclassed that day, but she shows up here (shipping in from Monmouth) against much weaker foes, so she'll have every chance to get a win today while tracking from this cushy outside post. Prat, who rode her at Keeneland, stays put—and the only thing to consider here is her price, which will likely be too short for a strong contest play. GRADE: B.

### CONCLUSION

The top two choices of #5 SNEAKING OUT and #8 UNIQUE FACTOR are legit, but I do think #4 ARTISTIC DIVA has a nice pace advantage over them, and she should be a good enough price to make some noise in the contest. You could also consider #6 AMUSE, who has always hinted at ability and isn't too far off the top two.

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