DEL MAR FEATURE RACE OF THE DAY
By Frank R. Scatoni
On Twitter @ScatoniSureShot

Date: 8/22/20
Race 9: $250K Del Mar Oaks (G1) for 3yo fillies going 9F on turf (rails at 0-ft.).
Post: approx. post 6:06 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

It's Pacific Classic Day—the marquee day of the season. That means five incredible stakes races, a mandatory payout in the Pick 6, and the Pacific Classic Betting Challenge, which can be played online at TVG. But first, let's focus on today's contest race, an excellent renewal of the prestigious $250K Del Mar Oaks (G1), a 9-furlong turf affair for fillies and mares with the rails at zero-feet. There should be a decent clip in here, making this an honestly run race.

#1 CARPE VINUM (15/1) looked sharp when beating a few of these in an N1X going 8.5-furlongs back on July 12. She figured to get a perfect stalking trip, and she did—getting the job done at nearly 7/1. It was a good performance for this lightly raced 3-year-old, but she now has to navigate an extra half-furlong while facing some tougher animals. She's in good hands with D'Amato, and there is some upside here, but she'll need a career-best to get the win today. At least you know she'll get a good forwardly placed ground-saving journey, if you're a believer. Note: win-rider Cedillo rightfully sides with the morning-line favorite. GRADE: X.

#2 CALIFORNIA KOOK (15/1) is the longer priced and the late-running member of the uncoupled Peter Miller entry. This Cal-bred has done fine work on the turf, including a near-miss in the Snow Chief two back against the *boys* while going today's 9-furlong distance. Last time, she went down as the 15/10 chalk when losing to Carpe Vinum, but she was running on late and just came up short in that 8.5-furlong affair. She can easily turn the tables on that foe today—but is she good enough to beat her stablemate and the European invaders as well? She has her work cut out for her, but she should be running on late. GRADE: X.

#3 MISS EXTRA (FR) (9/2), the first of two Mandella runners, is a Group 2 winner overseas, and she has shown an ability to act on all cuts of ground, so there is no question if she can handle firm turf today, since she was able to get a firm win at Deauville back in May. The question is: can she handle the distance, since her best work overseas has come at a mile? Well, Mandella must think so, otherwise he wouldn't be trying her here—and who are we to question the great Mandella? She also has a nice late kick, so that might help her cause with some speedy types in the field. It's curious to me that she is racing without Lasix and that Prat—who typically ends up on Mandella's live runners—sides with another French import. Still, the best turf jock in the colony—Rispoli—takes the call, which means this gal is in it to win it today. GRADE: A.

#4 WARREN'S SHOWTIME (6/1) is a very cool Cal-bred who had too much to do last time in the San Clemente (G2) when racing at a mile. Before that, she looked good winning the Melair at 8.5-furlongs, so you'd have to think an extra half-furlong today shouldn't be too much of an issue for a versatile lady who has a tractable running style (so she shouldn't be too far off the pace like she was last time when Velez seemed a little too passive). Smith takes the call today, and we all know what he's capable of in Grade 1

races. While I admire this gal's consistency, however, I do think she'll need to show she can beat open company, especially the two gals who beat her last time. GRADE: C.

#5 AQUA SEAFORM SHAME (12/1) is a stretch-out sprinter who has tactical speed and an aggressive jock, so you can expect her to take them as fast as she can for as far as she can. I'm not sure that's going to be enough for the win, however, since there are others who should help push the pace, while it remains to be seen if this daughter of Kantharos can stay on for 9-panels. Going from 5-furlongs to 9-panels is a tough ask—though it should be noted that this sophomore beat elders last time when turf-sprinting, so there is certainly some ability here. GRADE: X.

#6 TRICKLE IN—program scratch.

#7 RED LARK (IRE) (12/1) has some upset potential, since her come-home times are strong enough to flatter her in a race that should have a quick early pace. And if Laura's Light gets leg weary late and the Europeans fail to fire, then this gal will have every chance to come running on late to get the victory. She already has a win at 9-furlongs, and last time, she was just getting going when she finished behind two of these in a one-mile N1X. I'll take her out of that race, especially since she's proven her class when finishing second in the Wilshire (G3) against *older* horses two back. Upset special. GRADE: A.

#8 NEIGE BLANCHE (FR) (5/1), the second French import and first Powell charge, is a Group 3 winner overseas who has done good work beyond 9-furlongs thanks to her tactical speed. We'll see how she adapts to the faster paces of American racing, but Prat sees fit to ride, and he is one of the best judges of pace in the world, so you know he'll give her the right tactical journey today. She adds Lasix, so that's a positive as well. The one negative? Her wins overseas have come on synthetic and soft turf, so it remains to be seen how well she can handle our firm green speedway here at Del Mar. That would give me pause at a short price, so watch the board and decide—but you have to consider her simply because of Prat's presence. GRADE: A.

#9 PARKOUR (15/1), the second Mandella trainee, has two wins, and they both came wire-to-wire. Last time, she ran off in the Honeymoon (G3) and predictably weakened badly. It wasn't Smith's best work, but he ends up on another and is replaced by Franco, so maybe that jock can get this gal to relax a little to try and help her stay the distance. Still, part of me thinks she's simply a pace presence to set things up for Mandella's French import. GRADE: X.

#10 LAURA'S LIGHT (3/1), the second Miller charge, is a very nice gal who is a multiple graded-stakes winner at a variety of distances, including today's 9-furlongs. That said, she barely won the Honeymoon (G3) at 9-furlongs, and she would have lost if the jock on the runner-up could have straightened her out sooner. She'll also have to use a little of her tactical speed early to gain forward position from this outside post, and that might soften her up late as well. There's no denying her talent, but her price won't do us any favors, and this seems like the most vulnerable spot of her turf career. GRADE: B.

#11 GUITTY (FR) (8/1), the second of two Powell fillies, has a nice late kick, something she showed off last time when running a very nice second in the San Clemente (G2) while going a mile. She checked in behind Laura's Light, who has handled this gal a few times before, so this one will need to do better to get the measure of that foe. That said, this lady has also had some eventful journeys, so it was no surprise to me that she almost got to Laura's Light last time when she finally got a clean trip. She'll have to navigate the right journey today from a tough post today, but you can expect her to be running on late—and she's a

decent exotics horse if the price is right. It looks like Powell has a solid one-two punch with two different styles of runners. GRADE: B.

CONCLUSION
#7 RED LARK (IRE) should offer the most value in here at double-digit odds, and she'll have every chance to prove she can win a graded-stakes race, since she'll have a pace to run at today. She will need a career-best, however, so demand double digits. I'll also look at the two French invaders, **#3 MISS EXTRA (FR)** and **#8 NEIGE BLANCHE (FR)**. The point being: I think #10 Laura's Light, while very talented, is also very vulnerable today.

If you'd like to learn more about **OptixEQ**, visit www.optixeq.com.