DEL MAR FEATURE RACE OF THE DAY

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Date: 8/23/20
Race 9: $150K Del Mar Mile Handicap (G2) contested at 8-furlongs on turf (rails at 0-ft.).
Post: approx. post 6:00 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

This is a neat renewal of the Del Mar Mile Handicap (G2), a prestigious 8-furlong event for horses aged 3-years-old and upward—with the rails at zero-feet. I'm kind of bummed Sharp Samurai opted for yesterday's Pacific Classic (G1) because I thought he had a big shot in here, especially since I think the favorite—while legit—is a little bit vulnerable today. Oh, well, you take what they give you—so let's see if we can come up with an alternative.

#1 THE BLACK ALBUM (FR) (12/1), the first Peter Miller entrant, makes his second start of the form cycle and first for Miller as a new gelding. He's coming off a career-best effort at Indiana Grand, where he stalked the pace and produced a nice stretch run to win easily at 4/1. Miller does good work with new acquisitions, and it's interesting he chooses to run this guy here against his well-regarded stablemate, Mo Forza. There is still upside to this lightly raced 4-year-old, and it's important to see that graded-stakes form from way back in 2019. He will need a step forward, but that's not impossible today. Metallica fans rejoice! GRADE: B.

#2 BOMBARD (10/1) looks to be sitting on a peak effort after a fine tune-up in a too-short 5-furlong turf sprint after coming off a July 2019 layoff. That was clearly a prep for this spot, and you can expect this one to run his best race today for Mandella, who knows how to stretch them out like this. I like that he has tactical speed but doesn't need the lead, and I think the patient Van Dyke will suit this guy well today. This 7-year-old will certainly have to prove he can handle stakes foes today, since his only foray into the graded-stakes ranks saw him stalk the pace before getting overtaken late in the American (G3) last June. Still, he catches a pretty soft group and could upset the apple cart today (even though Prat rightfully sides with the chalk). Note that he beat Higher Power over this course and distance in last year's Wickerr. GRADE: A.

#3 GALILEAN (9/2) has done excellent work against Cal-breds, with stakes wins on both turf and dirt, and at all manner of distances. In other words, he's a very cool and versatile 4-year-old who still has plenty of upside. Last time, he stepped on turf for the first time and responded with a very impressive victory going 8.5-furlongs. He stalked the pace, took over, and held sway against a next-out winner. A repeat of that performance will put him right there again, but do note that win-rider Prat sticks with the favorite (though you do get Rispoli instead). GRADE: B.

#4 MO FORZA (7/2), the second Miller runner, might be 7/2 on the line, but if he goes off at 7/2, then that means he's dead on the board, since he should be 8/5 in this group, even though he is coming off a long layoff. Prat ends up here, and this guy's string of races last year from September to December are better than anyone else's in the field—and that was when he was a 3-year-old. Seemingly, any maturity since then will make him very tough to beat today—and you can certainly toss his poor run at Gulfstream earlier in the year when he was hooked ridiculously wide and had to race without Lasix. All that said, I'm still going to take him on today because he should be a little vulnerable coming off the layoff and taking

the hood off for the first time since his first two career races without them (back when he still had a little hang in him). GRADE: B.

#5 DREAMS OF VALOR (20/1) is a cool horse and a hard tryer, but he seems a little class-compromised today after several near-misses against N1X company. This is a much tougher group than he's ever faced, and I'm not sure he's capable of wiring this field, since the last time he won, he led the whole way going a mile on turf against $50K claimers. GRADE: X.

#6 SHARP SAMURAI—program scratch.

#7 ROYAL SHIP (BRZ) (5/1), the second Mandella runner, is an X-factor: a Brazilian import who has yet to race on firm ground (with all of his wins coming on good or heavy turf in his native Brazil). We also don't know the caliber of horses he's beaten, despite the fact that he's a Group 1 winner in South America. Of course, I trust Mandella implicitly, and it's nice to see Smith take the call in a graded-stakes race, so you have to consider this one as a contender, especially with some snazzy works in tow. GRADE: A.

#8 RESTRAINEDVENGENCE (10/1) is a professional racehorse with wins on dirt, synth, and turf. He rarely runs a bad race, and his versatile running style ensures he can get the right trip and be placed wherever Pereira wants him to be. He's also taken his show on the road, so nothing really fazes him. He'll run his race and should be right there at the end, but I prefer others a little more—especially since Bombard did beat him on the square over this course and distance last year. GRADE: B.

#9 OVERDUE (12/1) did good work in allowance company before finding graded-stakes foes too much for him in his last two starts. That was way back in the winter though, so he should be fresh and ready to show his best stuff today, since D'Amato is good with these types of layoff horses. He'll also have every chance to show off his stretch run, since there figures to be a decent early pace in here. Will he be good enough? I've seen worse 12/1 shots than him, that's for sure, but he will need a big step forward today. GRADE: C.

#10 KIWI'S DREAM (AUS) (8/1) likes to throw down the gauntlet and hope for the best. He set the pace last time and ran a good race but was edged late by Bob and Jackie. Three back, Restrainedvengence ran him down. He'll run his race again, but there should be a decent early clip; he has a tough post; and someone always seems to get the measure of him after this guy does all the dirty work. If he somehow gets away with an easy lead, I suppose he can win, but circumstances are seeming to conspire against him today. GRADE: X.

#11 BOB AND JACKIE (12/1) looked very good stalking the pace and running down Kiwi's Dream (Aus) in the Wickerr last time when coming off a December layoff. It was a very nice run from this lightly raced 4-year-old, so there is still some upside here—but he'll have to deal with a tough post today, and there is a world in which he bounces today, since he had to be fully cranked last time. I can't fault anyone for using him, since he certainly has ability, but I'm not crazy about him in this spot today. GRADE: C.

CONCLUSION

I'm really interested in seeing Mo Forza today, but I don't think he'll offer any value, and there are some questions he has to answer, so…in Mandella, we trust! I'll look at **#2 BOMBARD**, who should get a

great stalking, ground-saving trip, and **#7 ROYAL SHIP (BRZ)**, who is an unknown commodity for great connections.

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