

DEL MAR FEATURE RACE OF THE DAY

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Race 10: \$150K Pat O'Brien (G2) contested at 7-furlongs on the main track.

Post: approx. post 6:38 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

It's the "other" founding father's eponymous race: the \$150K Pat O'Brien (G2), a 7-furlong main-track affair named in honor of Del Mar's co-founder and Bing Crosby's fellow degenerate horseplayer, actor Pat O'Brien! This year's renewal lacks star power, but it is a pretty interesting race nonetheless.

#1 LAW ABIDIN CITIZEN (5/1) is a very good, very versatile horse who also happens to be a multiple graded-stakes winner. He's also coming off a decent third in the Bing Crosby (G1), where he attended a quick pace before weakening and losing to his stablemate (a very talented 3-year-old named Collusion Illusion). That race should have him tuned up for this, but there are some concerns: first off, he'll have to go hard to flee the tricky rail, and that's going to cause problems late; second, while 6.5-furlongs has hit him right between the eye, 7-furlongs hasn't really flattered his past performances. GRADE: C.

#2 P R RADIO STAR (6/1) was a popular claim back East, where he was sold for \$12.5K, \$16K, \$20K, and \$25K before he came to the West Coast and looked really good beating \$62.5K foes in his first Del Mar start. He did catch a very weak field that day, but the class hike and victory was impressive nonetheless. It's not surprising that he came back to destroy much weaker starter foes in his next start, setting him up for this very tough task. Obviously, he likes Del Mar and is in good form as the "now" horse, so you can't fault the connections for taking a shot here—but is his best race good enough to beat the top few in here? GRADE: C.

#3 MANHATTAN UP (15/1) is an honest sort who returns to the races off a March layoff as a new gelding. Before he hit the bench, he was no match for Flagstaff in the San Carlos (G2), but he did have to break from the rail that day, so you can be a little forgiving. Before that, he looked very good beating N2X foes at today's 7-furlong distance, so at least you know he can navigate this elongated sprint. Trainer Phil Oviedo does a terrific job with limited stock, so I'm sure he's going to have this guy primed and ready off the bench—but is his best race good enough? If he moves forward as a new gelding, maybe, but he'll have his work cut out for him trying to run down Flagstaff and a few others. GRADE: C.

#4 **FLAGSTAFF (5/2)** has always been a horse I've liked. He has tactical speed and is equally as effective at any sprint distance, but I happen to think that 7-furlongs is his best distance. Toss his blah run in the Triple Bend (G2), where he had to break from the rail, and focus on his other efforts before that—a win and two seconds in three graded-stakes races this year. He should trip out—and I'm sure he'll be sitting on a peak effort off the brief freshening. GRADE: A.

#5 C Z ROCKET (4/1), a Miller/Prat production, makes his first SoCal start after blitzing East Coast foes in his first three starts off the claim by Miller, who took him for \$40K off Albert Stall. You don't see too many horses improve this much off a quality horseman, so you have to wonder what Miller saw in him that precipitated such a massive form reversal on a horse who was running a mixed bag of races against upper-level allowance types. We'll see how this guy does in his first SoCal start, but Prat taking the call

lets you know that he is live here—and you have to like the fact that this guy has done good work both sprinting and routing, so today’s distance is right in his sweet spot (having already won twice in five tries at 7-panels). GRADE: B.

#6 VERTICAL THREAT (8/1) is a very nice 3-year-old who is coming off two dominating performances against weaker company: a sharp maiden win at Los Al, and a professional victory in the restricted Smiling Tiger against fellow sophomores. It’s not unheard of for lightly raced 3-year-old sprinters to step up and beat elders around this time of year, but this guy will have to move forward while trying to get an extra furlong today after two sharp victories at 6-panels. I’m excited to see how he progresses, but I do want to watch one today. GRADE: C.

#7 GIANT EXPECTATIONS (7/2), the 2017 winner of this race, also nearly won this race last year; he had the lead in the lane but was edged out by the talented Catalina Cruiser—no shame there, except for the fact that this guy does have a tendency to get outgamed late, so we’ll see if he can do better today while making the first start of his 7-year-old campaign and his first since an ill-fated run in the Breeders’ Cup Dirt Mile (G1), where he was overmatched. Eurton is terrific with these types of comebackers, and I’m sure this guy will be ready to fire a big shot today—but will it be good enough to beat Flagstaff? We shall see. GRADE: B.

#8 BLAMEITONTHELAW (12/1) has finished behind two of today’s foes in upper-level allowance races recently, so he’ll need to do a lot better today (although he does have an excuse for his last race, where he was unprepared at the start). He’s always been a grinder, so you can just expect him to track the pace while in the clear, and then hope the speed starts backing up while this guy starts to lengthen his stride. He has his work cut out for him today, though, since this 7-year-old also seems to have lost a few steps since he was well-beaten by Giant Expectations in this race back in 2017. GRADE: X.

CONCLUSION

I’m a fan of #4 **FLAGSTAFF**, so that’s who I’ll be rooting for. Whether I bet him or not wholly depends on his price!

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