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

**Date:** 8/31/20
**Race 8:** $80K optional-claiming/N1X contested at 8.5F on turf (rails at 18-feet)
**Post:** approx. post 5:30 p.m. PDT

**OVERVIEW**
We've got a nice assortment of 3-year-olds competing in today's contest race, an $80K optional-claiming/N1X contested at 8.5-furlongs on the lawn, with the rails at 18-feet. There should be a decent early clip in here, hopefully making this an honestly run race.

#1 EKKLESIA (15/1) removes the hood after finishing third at this level going a mile, where he got a perfect trip but just ran evenly to the wire, despite stalking a slow pace. I can see why Eurton removes the hood today to see if he can get this one to engage and pass horses, but he likes to be forwardly placed in a race that should have a decent early clip, so he'll have to use some of his early speed to gain good position from the rail. He should be in the hunt turning for home, but he'll need to show more oomph in the lane. On the plus side, Eurton is having a very good meet. GRADE: C.

#2 SCARTO (3/1), the first of two Puype/Little Red Feather runners, looked sensational when turf-routing for the first time last time, rating kindly and putting in a decent stretch run to win easily. That's the positive. The negative is that he beat up on a short field of starter foes (albeit older ones). He now faces some quality N1X sophomores, so we'll see where he stacks up—but there's no denying the fact that he's finally putting things together, and a repeat of that last race would make him tough in here. That said, what's his price going to be given that gaudy last speed figure and Rispoli sticking around? GRADE: B.

#3 TRIPOLI (6/1) set a slow pace in the same race Ekklesia comes out of—and while he was game to hold on for second, he had everything go his way and still couldn't get the win while going a mile on the lawn. What kind of stick will he have going an extra half-furlong in a race that should have a quicker pace? Maybe look for him next time, cutting back to 5.5-furlongs at Santa Anita, the circumstances under which he broke his maiden three back. GRADE: C.

#4 GREAT POWER (5/1) was on my Derby radar when he hinted at major potential when breaking his maiden at first-asking last September at Santa Anita. Unfortunately, he had to hit the shelf after that and wasn't seen again until March, where he came off the bench and ran into two very nice horses in Charlatan and Rushie. Another layoff came, and then he was thrown to the wolves in the Los Alamitos Derby (G3), where he set the pace before getting inhaled. I still think there is a lot of potential here, but I'm not sure turf will be his best surface, so maybe Callaghan is using this as a prep for a more suitable race at Santa Anita? Say, a 7-furlong race? It's tough to hang a letter-grade on him today though because I know there is ability here—but I'm not crazy about the move to turf. That said, if he takes to turf, look out! GRADE: C.

#5 BRONN (8/1) has dirt speed, so you can expect him to be part of the early pace, switching to turf for the first time for a trainer who doesn't really excel with the surface-switch move. Typically, when Baffert moves them to turf, it's because they aren't very good (though there have been some exceptions). His

dam hasn't had much success with turf routers, but she did produce a five-time turf-sprinting winner, so at least her progeny can handle the lawn. It wouldn't shock me if this one ran okay, but the pace scenario doesn't really flatter his on-the-lead running style. GRADE: C.

#6 HAMMERING LEMON (15/1) wired Cal-bred maidens at this distance last time, but he faces tougher today and should face more early heat, so another wire job seems unlikely to me. That said, he is in good form right now and has run two decent races over this course, so you know he can at least handle the surface and distance—but like a few others, the race shape doesn't flatter his running style, and he's looking like a pace casualty to me. GRADE: C.

**#7 MECKLENBURG (IRE) (6/1)**, the second Puype/Little Red Feather runner, looks interesting to me. He was very rank off the bench in his first start in the country, wanting to get engaged sooner while being held off a very slow pace and fighting Prat for the first half-mile (out of the same Tripoli/Ekklesia race). He had no chance given the slow pace and speed-favoring course, yet he was creeping toward them at the end. Second off the bench and added ground seems like the perfect recipe for success in here. Oh, and Prat bothers to ride back despite the tug of war between the two of them last time, making this one very attractive at 6/1 on the morning-line. GRADE: A.

#8 AJOURNEYTOFREEDOM (8/1) is the most accomplished runner in the race, so I'm a little confused by the 8/1 morning line, since this guy was a head away from winning the Alcatraz three back at Golden Gate, and then he followed that up with a nice third in the Oceanside here on opening day, with trouble. Toss his run in the La Jolla (G3) against much better animals, and you're looking at a horse who fits very nicely among these, especially since he's already won at the N1X level (and is in for the $80K tag). All that goodness, plus the fact that he's now trained by Miller, who gelds him and removes the blinkers—if he's 8/1, then that must mean he's a finished product, because his body of work is pretty solid relative to this group. The tote will tell. GRADE: B.

**#9 LAST OPPORTUNITY (IRE) (6/1)** has some decent come-home times at a mile, so I'm expecting him to run well with the added ground today. Will he be fit enough coming off a March layoff, however? That is a question he will have to answer—but at 6/1, I'm willing to pay to find out, especially since he's one of the few closers in a race filled with runners who like to be on or near the lead. Prat sticks with Mecklenburg (Ire), which I understand—but Cedillo is a more than capable replacement. I'm hoping he just angles over, saves ground, and looks to produce one late run. GRADE: A.

#10 I'M LEAVING YOU (12/1) has one win, a wire job against $62.5K maiden-claimers. It was a nice effort, but in all of his other races, he tried to come from off the pace and was unable to get the job done. Don't get me wrong, his come-home times are respectable, but others look better. He is reunited with win-rider Espinoza, who is likely to give him an aggressive ride from out here—and that means one of two things: he's either going to gun for the lead and get cooked, or he's going to try and make the lead, not get there, and get hooked four wide. Either way, he seems in tough today. GRADE: C.

**CONCLUSION**
I'm looking for **#7 MECKLENBURG (IRE)** and **#9 LAST OPPORTUNITY (IRE)** to come running on late. You can also consider **#8 AJOURNEYTOFREEDOM**, but I have a hard time seeing him going off at 8/1, so you'll have to decide what your value line is on him. In other words, this is a good race to play the board and look for overlays on the ones you like. Good luck!

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