

DEL MAR FEATURE RACE OF THE DAY

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Race 10: \$150K John C. Mabee (G2) for fillies & mares going 9-furlongs on turf (rails at 12-ft.)

Post: approx. post 6:05 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

What an interesting renewal of the John C. Mabee (G2), a 9-furlong turf affair for fillies and mares. It's a weird race because there isn't much pace on paper, so I'm curious to see how it unfolds. That said, 9-furlongs is usually enough time for a good jock to get his mount in striking range, so I'm okay siding with the strongest finisher in the race (who also happens to have the best jock in the race).

#1 CATCH THE EYE (15/1) has a decent late kick, so she'll sit off the pace and put in her usual late run—but that late run hasn't been good enough to beat lesser foes, so she really has her work cut out for her today, especially since there shouldn't be a quick early pace. At least you know she'll be fit and ready, coming out of two 11-furlong races, including the CTT & TOC, where she ran a really good fourth but couldn't quite get to today's foe Quick (GB). Maybe you can use her in your exotics, but she'll need a career-best and then some to beat some classy animals today. GRADE: X.

#2 LADY PRANCEALOT (IRE) (5/2) is a nice animal, a Grade 1 winner who has a nice late kick. I liked her last time in the Yellow Ribbon (G2), but in retrospect, I think that one-mile race was just a prep for this more logical spot, since she needs more than 8-furlongs to show her best stuff. Well, she gets that today—and look who shows up to ride: only the best turf jock on the West Coast, Rispoli. Because of that, I'm not too worried about the potential slow early pace, because Rispoli knows exactly when to make the winning move. That coupled with the fact that I've always liked this gal means she's the top pick for me. GRADE: A.

#3 DON'T BLAME JUDY (10/1) is a consistent animal—but that's been a blessing and a curse. It's a blessing because she always runs her race, putting in late bids to pick up checks; but it's also a curse because those efforts haven't been good enough to win in a long time. She's a cool horse to own, but she's tough to support on the win-end given that 2-for-24 record. She'll also have to turn the tables on a few who just finished ahead of her in the 11-furlong CTT & TOC. Maybe the shorter distance will help her cause, but she'll need a career-best as a 5-year-old mare, and that kind of marked improvement is tough to accomplish at that age. GRADE: X.

#4 PULPIT RIDER (5/1) was a top pick for us last time when capturing my home-town race, the restricted Solana Beach. She was 11/1 in a five-horse field, and she just kept grinding away like she usually does to get up in the shadow of the wire to win by a nose. It was a good, blue-collar performance, but the waters get much deeper today in this graded-stakes event. Don't get me wrong, she does have come-home times that fit well here, but she doesn't really quicken, and that's going to be an issue in a race that doesn't project a quick early pace. GRADE: X.

#5 ZEE DROP (6/1), the first of two D'Amato/Little Red Feather runners, is the off-the-pace part of the uncoupled entry—and the one who will be overlooked in the wagering. Last time, she ran fourth to her stablemate in a one-mile event, but she was inching toward her in the end, and I've always thought this

one would be better going longer, so she'll have a chance to turn the tables on Raymundo's Secret today. She's also a bit more tactical than the other stretch-runners, so she should get first jump. Then we'll see if this gal is good enough (since she's still eligible for an N2X). That said, she does look a little sneaky in here if her stablemate ends up setting a quick pace. GRADE: B.

#6 MEAL TICKET (15/1) is a 6-year-old mare who has had a nice career and has squared off against some tough cookies (and has not been disgraced). That said, at this point in her career, she just kind of runs around the track. Sometimes that's good enough for a small check, but it's rarely been enough to get the win. I admire her consistency, and I wish the trainer the best (since he'll be retiring soon), but this gal will need to turn back the clock to get a win today, and that seems very unlikely to me with some exciting 4-year-olds on the ascendancy. GRADE: X.

#7 QUICK (GB) (8/1) tried to be quick early last time in the CTT & TOC, and that strategy nearly worked to perfection when she led the whole way but was necked out in the end by a good animal named Maxim Rate. No shame there. The good news is: she'll be super-fit cutting back today, and her jock will have options depending on what Raymundo's Secret does. If that foe goes, this one can suck back and just stalk the pace. If that foe doesn't go, this one could be loping along on an easy lead. Either way, she's going to get a good trip, which makes her a contender in here, despite the fact that she's still eligible for an N2X. GRADE: B.

#8 RAYMUNDO'S SECRET (2/1) was no secret when she destroyed starter foes here last summer, going off at 2/5. She then ran a mixed bag of races after that, which eventually culminated in an October layoff and a trainer change. Her recent comeback—a nice N2X victory—was very professional, showing she could relax a little and gut out a victory, something that will come in handy today. Given her running style—on or near the lead—she could have a pace advantage today if Prat wants to try and walk the dog with no other real speed in the race. Or he could choose to just sit and relax if Quick (GB) decides to make the running. The point is: this gal will have every chance to show her best stuff today. There are, however, two knocks: she's going to take a lot of action as the “now” horse, and it remains to be seen how well she'll do going 9-furlongs given her forwardly placed run style. GRADE :B.

CONCLUSION

#2 LADY PRANCEALOT (IRE) to the hoop for me. I've always liked her; she's a legit graded-stakes animal; and she gets the best turf jock in the colony. Curious to see what price she ends up in here. If you're looking for alternatives, #5 ZEE DROP will be the forgotten horse to her stablemate—and she should move forward off that fine prep last time, especially getting more ground.

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