

DEL MAR FEATURE RACE OF THE DAY

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Race 10: \$200K Del Mar Derby (G2) for 3yos only going 9F on turf (rails at 0-feet)

Post: approx. post 5:40 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

A big full field of 12 runners, including a few fillies, are entered to contest the \$200K purse of the always interesting Del Mar Derby (G2), a 9-furlong turf affair for 3-year-olds only. The rails are at zero-feet, and there should be a hot pace. I like a late runner in here, but I'm annoyed that he drew the 12-hole. Still...

#1 AMERICAN FARMER (20/1) has been plying his trade up north, so we'll see how he ships down to SoCal to take on graded-stakes foes after a nice victory in an overnight stakes up at the Gate when going 8.5-furlongs on turf. Three back, he ran second in the El Camino Real Derby going 9-furlongs on synth, so he can handle both the surface and distance. Can he handle this kind of competition, however? He'll need a big step forward today, but at least you know he'll save ground every step of the way. GRADE: X.

#2 CALIFORNIA KOOK (5/1), one of three fillies entered against the boys, has a very nice closing kick—something she showed off to great effect in the Del Mar Oaks (G1) when she rallied from way off the pace to finish second while going today's 9-panels. It was a strong performance, but it still wasn't enough to get the job done against her own sex—now she has to face boys. On the plus side, she did run second against the boys in the Cal-bred Snow Chief three back, so she's not completely without a shot—and she will get a hot pace to close into—but I like her more for underneath. GRADE: C.

#3 GUITTY (FR) (8/1), another filly, drew the 10-hole in the Del Mar Oaks (G1) and was never a factor, which is disappointing, since she looked poised for a big run after a tough-beat second-place finish in the San Clemente (G2) when going a mile when she finally got a decent trip after several eventful journeys. Unfortunately, she's a filly who seems to make trouble for herself, and it remains to be seen if she can handle 9-panels, since her two tries at this distance were among her worst, which is odd, since her come-home times at a mile are very solid. Maybe look for her next time against her own kind. GRADE: C.

#4 **PIXELATE (3/1)** is an East Coast invader who gets the services of Rispoli, the circuit's best turf rider. Even without that jock's presence, this guy would look tough, so you have to upgrade him even more, since Rispoli has just been incredible this meet on the lawn. I like that Stidham shipped this one out here after a solid second-place finish in the 9-furlong Kent (G3) back in July, and you have to like the fact that he should get a great tracking trip sitting comfortably off the speed horses. His East Coast form doesn't really "wow," but how often have we seen modest turf runners from back East explode out here on the West Coast? GRADE: A.

#5 NO SLO MO (30/1) is still a maiden, so this is a really ambitious spot for a trainer who doesn't often over-spot his horses, so he must think this one has a lot of ability. He didn't show much in his first two starts, but his third start was a good second going 8.5-furlongs on turf, where he was closing nicely, posting a respectable come-home time. That suggests he can move forward today at this 9-furlong distance, but he will need a monster effort, since he not only faces the horse who beat him last time but

also some proven winners. I respect Glatt (and his horses have always been good to me), but this one seems in deep today—though you could throw him in for a penny underneath at a monster price. GRADE: X.

#6 KANDEREL (12/1) ran a good second in the Oceanside at 17/1, but he couldn't improve on that performance in the 8.5-furlong La Jolla (G3), where he just ran evenly and was outkicked by K P All Systems Go, whom he has to face again today. I do think it's interesting that Mandella is running him back here, since he'll be one of only two horses to compete in all three of the 3-year-old turf series races—so maybe this has been the target all along? I trust Mandella, and this guy will put forth a solid effort—I'm just not sure it will be good enough to beat the top two. GRADE: B.

#7 WARREN'S SHOWTIME (6/1), the third filly in the race and one of two Craig Lewis trainees, looked like the winner turning for home in the Del Mar Oaks (G1), and then she hit a wall and was inhaled by the top-two finishers, including California Kook, whom she has to face again today. It's possible she has distance limitations, which is a bit of a concern at today's 9-furlongs against the boys, but she is tactical, so she should get a very good stalking trip. She'll get the jump on the stretch-runners, but she'll need to show a lot more oomph in the lane to get the job done today. GRADE: C.

#8 KISS TODAY GOODBYE (8/1) earned a gaudy speed figure when finishing third (in a four-horse field) in the Shared Belief, losing to two Kentucky Derby competitors, but can he transfer that form to the turf? He started his career on turf, and even though the races aren't anything special, he did show some late interest, so maybe he will do okay hopping on the lawn today. He is bred for it, and Kruljac does well with the dirt-to-turf move, but there are two questions: why did Rispoli jump ship, and do you really trust that big Beyer Speed Figure? That said, he'll get a good stalking trip—then we'll see what kind of finish he has on the lawn. GRADE: C.

#9 DOMINANT SOUL (20/1) broke his maiden in wire fashion last time, but if he tries to do that today, he's in for a rude awakening when the real running starts. A few of these beat him in the Cinema, where he set a loose lead and got run down in the lane. If he wins, I lose. GRADE: X.

#10 HEYWOODS BEACH (12/1) has tactical speed, so he will need to use it to angle over and track the pacesetters from this outside post—so he's looking at a 3-wide stalking journey, which we all know is the kiss of death on the turf. That's too bad, because this one has some ability, and he has a few good races at today's distance, but the post, the race shape, and the fact that win-rider Rispoli bails makes him tough to support on top. GRADE: C.

#11 MARGOT'S BOY (12/1), the second Lewis charge, removes the hood but will still have plenty of early zip, since he's been on or near the lead in every one of his starts. Plus, the outside post is going to force his hand—which means he's either going to be a pace casualty or he's going to get hooked wide. Then there is the fact that he's a Cal-bred facing open—and that he'll need to avenge his defeat to the filly California Kook, who got the measure of him in the Snow Chief at today's distance. GRADE: X.

#12 K P ALL SYSTEMS GO (6/1) has always had a solid late kick, and he exhibited an eye-popping move last time from the eighth pole to the sixteenth pole, making up a ton of ground in the La Jolla (G3) but ultimately running out of room in that 8.5-furlong race. He now gets extra ground to play with, and he should have a pace to run at. I'm so annoyed that he drew the 12-hole, however, since I've had him pegged as the Del Mar Derby (G2) winner since the Oceanside. Cedillo will have to work out a trip ,but I

can assure you this guy will be flying late—and honestly, he should be 3/1 in this field, so if you get 6/1, then fire away because that’s a great price, even from this difficult post.

CONCLUSION

This really looks like a two-horse race to me (famous last words) between the invader, **#4 PIXELATE**, and my boy **#12 K P ALL SYSTEMS GO**, whom I’ve backed many times before. I’d be shocked if the latter went off at 6/1, so you’ll just have to watch the board and make a determination based on value—but those are the two I like best.

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