

DEL MAR FEATURE RACE OF THE DAY

By Frank R. Scatoni

On Twitter @ScatoniSureShot

Date: 11/28/2020

Race 9: \$300K Hollywood Derby (G1) for 3-year-olds going 9-furlongs on turf (rails at 0-feet)

Post: approx. post 4:25 p.m. PST

OVERVIEW

What a spectacular Saturday card we have on tap for the penultimate day of the Bing season: 9 races and three graded-stakes, concluding with the \$300K Hollywood Derby (G1), which is also today's contest race. This 9-furlong turf affair for 3-year-olds only drew a big field with some really good East Coast invaders, and I can't wait to see how it all shakes out.

But before we dig in, just a quick reminder: don't forget to tune in at 11:00 a.m. PST for my "Best Bet" seminar, where I go over certain sequences and wagering strategies with a special guest. Sunday's guest will be Dean Keppler, former Director of DRF Press and author of *Trainer Angles*. It streams live (and is archived) on the Del Mar Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube pages, but for more information, click here: <https://www.dmtc.com/calendar/detail/bestbet>.

#1 KANDEREL (30/1) ran in all three races of the turf series races at Del Mar over the summer, but he wasn't good enough to win any of them. He ran okay, but he showed he wasn't really in the class of the top turfers out here—so now the great Richard Mandella brings back this son of Candy Ride (Arg) as a new gelding, hoping to get some more out of a horse whose best race came up north winning the Alcatraz while going a mile. He'll need a career-best today, but his come-home times are pretty solid, so you can think about using him in your exotics at a big number. GRADE: C.

#2 SMOOTH LIKE STRAIT (7/2) has run some bangers, including a terrific win in the always competitive Twilight Derby (G2), where he was sent off as the 17/10 favorite and did not disappoint. I was against him that day because I didn't think he'd be at his best going 9-furlongs, but he just laughed in my face. His tactical speed always allows him to get a perfect forwardly placed trip, and today will be no different—except he'll have some better horses taking dead aim on him. He represents SoCal's best chance at Grade 1 glory. GRADE: B.

#3 SCARTO (10/1) outran his odds last time to finish second to Smooth Like Strait in the Twilight Derby (G2), showing a nice stretch run after some minor trouble along the backstretch. It was another good effort for a horse who showed good form here at Del Mar over the summer. You have to love his 2-for-3 record over this course, but can he take another step forward today to beat Smooth Like Strait *and* some other solid animals? As a lightly raced 3-year-old, improvement isn't out of the question, but I'm a little skeptical today. GRADE: C.

#4 TAISHAN (12/1) has speed but doesn't need the lead, so Gutierrez will have some options with this guy—and he should really appreciate getting back on firm turf after failing to fire his best shot on a "good" Keeneland course last time. Before that, he ran a good second in the American Turf (G2) at Churchill over "firm" ground. He makes the second start of his form cycle and is eligible for a step forward, but it should be noted that this guy's two wins have come on dirt, so we'll see how he handles the Del Mar turf course for the first time while facing some legitimate turf monsters. GRADE: C.

#5 STORM THE COURT (8/1) also has two dirt wins and no turf wins, so this 2019 Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1) winner will have to show he can compete with quality turf animals here today. Two back, in his only turf try, he ran an even second to Smooth Like Strait going 8.5-furlongs over this course. He stalked the pace and ran on evenly to the wire to maintain second. It wasn't a bad effort, but it wasn't anything special either...nor was it an effort that said "this guy will continue to improve on turf!" Granted, there is class here, so anything is possible, but I can see him getting a stalking trip in here and then failing to kick on when the real running starts. GRADE: C.

#6 CALIFORNIA KOOK (20/1) is a 3-year-old filly who just ran in the Red Carpet (G3) on Thursday and should be scratched from this race. GRADE: X.

#7 STRONGCONSTITUTION (20/1) went two turns on turf for the first time last time in the Let It Ride, and he responded with a game victory. It was a nice performance for a horse who always hinted at ability but couldn't flash the eye of the tiger when racing on dirt—so maybe he's found his calling. That said, the waters get much deeper today, so he'll have to prove he can move forward and be competitive with some quality turf animals. GRADE: X.

#8 DOMESTIC SPENDING (GB) (5/1) hasn't been seen since August, and he was scratched out of the 10-furlong Belmont Derby (G1) in October, since I'm guessing Brown wanted a fresh horse for this shorter spot. This lightly raced 3-year-old has plenty of upside, having raced only four times so far, with three wins, so would it shock you at all if he's matured some since his summer races? If he has, look out! That said, his one defeat did come in the Hall of Fame (G2), where this guy lost to a few of these. Granted, he was off slowly and had way too much to do, so he can easily turn the tables on those foes, especially since he's got a better post than they do today. GRADE: A.

#9 GET SMOKIN (12/1) invades from New York after a sharp wire-to-wire victory in the Hill Prince (G2), where he rewarded his backers at 7/1. Before that, however, this speedster was on the losing end of several races against a few of today's foes, so he'll need to do better in this spot—and I'm not sure the firm footing will help his cause, since his Hill Prince (G2) wire job was on yielding. He'll be in contention turning for home, but I think he gets inhaled at the eighth pole. GRADE: X.

#10 DECORATED INVADER (3/1), the first Clement invader, was 45-cents on the dollar in the Hill Prince (G2), but he had too much to do over a yielding course and had to settle for second (losing by a head). Before that, he was 4/5 in the Saratoga Derby, where he was right there on the line but ended up finishing fifth in a close finish. That defeat ended his three-race win streak, where he was favored in each of those races and where he beat a few of today's foes. There's no denying this one's ability, and he can easily turn the tables on Get Smokin over a firm course, making him a major threat in here. GRADE: A.

#11 EVER DANGEROUS—program scratch.

#12 LANE WAY (20/1), the second Mandella charge, has picked up a lot of checks, but this guy hasn't really shown the eye of the tiger, often settling more for the minor awards than for the top prize. He's in good hands with Mandella, but you can't train "heart," so this one is going to have to dig deep and summon some extra courage in the lane in order to fend off some quality stretch-runners. GRADE: X.

#13 GUFO (4/1), the second Clement entrant, drew the short straw with this terrible post, but there is no denying the fact that there is plenty of talent on display here. This guy has never finished out of the money in seven starts, and his come-home times in all of his races are ridiculously fast. He's coming off an impressive win in the Belmont Derby (G1), where he was 7/5, and if not for a heartbreaking head defeat to Domestic Spending (GB) in the Saratoga Derby Invitational and a tough post (11-hole) in his debut race, he might be undefeated. Unfortunately, this guy has to break from the 13-hole today, and that's going to compromise his chances—but if he sneaks away at a good price, he's worth a flutter given his quality and class. GRADE: A.

CONCLUSION

Not unexpected, the East Coast runners just look much better than our lot out here (with the possible exception of Smooth Like Strait, who is a really nice horse). My top pick is **#8 DOMESTIC SPENDING (GB)**, followed by **#10 DECORATED INVADER**, but I can't imagine either of them will be value (though if Domestic Spending [GB] is anywhere near 5/1, lock it up!). I'll check the board, expecting those two to be overbet, so I'll likely end up on **#13 GUFO**, who is every bit as talented as they are—he just drew a lousy post, but perhaps we'll be compensated with an overlaid price!

If you'd like to learn more about **OptixEQ**, visit www.optixeq.com.