

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

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Race 9: \$150K California Dreamin' for Cal-breds going 8.5F on the lawn (rails at 12-feet)

Post: approx. post 6:06 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

We've got an excellent renewal of the California Dreamin', an 8.5-furlong turf affair for Cal-breds with the rails set at 12-feet. Last year's vanquisher returns to face nine other quality statebreds in what looks like a very competitive race on paper, with the morning-line favorite a tepid 7/2. Let's see if we can suss out the winner, but before we do, here's a reminder: tune in on Del Mar's social media pages to watch Tyler Hoffman and I present the "Best Bet" seminar, where we go over a few select races and give out specific wagering strategies. You can get more info here, as well as watch the live seminar (and an archived version if you happen to miss the 11 a.m. show): [Best Bet \(dmtc.com\)](http://BestBet(dmtc.com)).

#1 DESMOND DOSS (5/1) has turned into a really nice Cal-bred, winning two in a row, including a Cal-bred stakes race at Los Al going a mile on dirt, where he rated kindly and powered home to get the victory. But this guy can also win on turf, so he's versatile, tactical, and should get a very good forwardly placed position while saving all the ground. That said, he did lose to a few of these in this race last year when he was a dead closer. Somehow, Miyadi got this guy to show a lot more early speed, which is probably why he's been so successful this year, winning three races while racing in the vanguard early. There's no denying this guy's ability—and he can certainly win this race considering his sharp recent form—but part of me thinks he's a slightly better dirt horse. GRADE: C.

#2 **WOUND TIGHT (6/1)** is interesting to me, making his second start after a very long layoff. Before he hit the shelf, he did excellent work on the turf, winning the Turf Classic at 9-furlongs in front-running fashion. That speed has been his asset, but he doesn't need the lead. I also like that he has never finished out of the money here at Del Mar, so he likes the surrounding environs. He's lost to a few of these, but he's also beaten a few of these, so he definitely belongs here—but it's really all about price. At 6/1, I think he's very good value since he looks to be sitting on a peak race. GRADE: A.

#3 UNBRIDLED ETHOS (20/1) is a 6-year-old who has only seven starts, two of which came going a mile on turf where he ran okay but lacked the needed oomph to beat Cal-bred N1X foes. In fact, his best work has come sprinting, so this seems like a tough spot for a guy whose wins have come going 5.5-furlongs and 6-furlongs. This one has very good come-home times in those sprint races, and I trust Mullins, so if he thinks this one can navigate two turns successfully, I have to respect that—but there are some quality two-turn animals in here, so I'm fine letting this one beat me. But maybe you can use him as a bomb underneath in your trifectas. GRADE: X.

#4 SECRET CLUB (30/1) has had some traffic issues, so don't be so harsh on his last two races. That said, he was getting 5-pound weight-breaks against open N1X foes, and he gets no such luxury today. He'll also need to run a career-best, since he looks considerably slower than the fastest runners in here, but if you're an optimist, you can point to the fact that this is a lightly raced 4-year-old who still has some upside. If he's going to win today, he'll need an aggressive ride by Baze instead of the passive rides he

got the last two times. I do expect him to run better today, but he'll have to show a lot more against some quality Cal-breds. GRADE: X.

#5 INDIAN PEAK (8/1), who did decent work up north for a spell, now returns to SoCal while joining the Peter Miller barn, so you have to think this 4-year-old—who always hinted at ability—is going to move forward today, especially with Prat taking the call. That said, his turf races from earlier in the year are nothing special, so he will have to show more punch today. Still, if you go back to his 3-year-old campaign, you'll see that he won the Cal-bred Snow Chief going 9-furlongs at Santa Anita, so he is more than capable on the lawn, even though his best race came on the Tapeta up north. You know Prat will have him in a great spot—and the fact that Miller gelded him means they want to keep this guy as a racehorse for a while. Believe me, I won't fault anyone for taking a shot with this guy, but based on his paper form, I prefer others. GRADE: C.

#6 WARD 'N JERRY (8/1) is a cool old boy who has had an excellent career—but his best work has always come going much longer, so it wouldn't shock me if he ran well but finished a good third or fourth while coming on with his late run but running out of room. I'm thinking this is just a condition race for something more suitable (i.e., longer) for him later in the meet. That said, if you're a speed-figure guy or gal, you should consider him because his OptixFIGS are consistently among the best in the field. I just think he's not nearly as effective going a middle distance. GRADE: X.

#7 GALILEAN (4/1) won this race last year, so I'm surprised he's a tepid 4/1 on the morning-line. Maybe it's because he hasn't been seen since November of last year, and sharp morning-line maker John White is thinking punters will be scared away because of that. Well, it's possible this guy is going to need a race, but it's not like Sadler can't have them ready to run a big one off the long layoff, and it should be noted that this guy did win off a shorter layoff earlier in his career, so he can run fresh. But there are some sharp horses with recency whom this guy will have to beat, so I think I'm going to try and take him on today, even though he's going to get a perfect stalking trip in here. GRADE: B.

#8 MARGOT'S BOY (12/1) should be sitting on a peak effort, making the second start of his form cycle after a decent second against open allowance foes on the Los Al dirt. He's a better turf horse, so that race should serve as a useful prep for this spot. That said, even though this horse typically runs an honest race, he hasn't really shown the eye of the tiger the past two years, settling for the minor awards instead of the W. I can see Hernandez just sitting 3-wide in a stalking position, and I'm not sure that trip is going to allow this one to punch home. Also, several of these have him on form. GRADE: X.

#9 BRANDOTHEBARTENDER (4/1) is one of the coolest horses in training, running his race every time and picking up checks. My buddy has a piece of this horse, and he told me that since they claimed Brando, he's cashed checks in 27 out of 28 races. In other words, this guy is a total pro and a personal ATM machine! So can he win today? Like I said, he rarely runs a bad race, and it's nice to see Rispoli stick around (especially since he probably could have ridden Galilean), but I'm not sure this guy is at his best beyond a mile, so we'll see if he can show the same grit and tenacity in the final sixteenth that he's shown in his shorter races. He'll also have to show he can beat Galilean, who got the measure of him a few times last year. Still, I can't say enough positive things about this horse, this ownership group, and Craig Dollase, who has done a masterful job, keeping Brando happy and healthy and campaigning him so well. I'll be rooting with my heart, but my head is telling me to key him in second and third. But I hope I'm wrong! GRADE: B.

#10 NORTH COUNTY GUY (7/2) is as honest as they come, and he's done good work at all manner of distances, so he'll have every chance to get the win today, provided he gets a good trip from this difficult post. He does have tactical speed, so Gutierrez can hustle out and get him over—but is he looking at a 3-wide stalking position? If so, that's not usually the winning trip on turf. Also note that Brandothebartender outfinished him last time going a mile while this guy was the even-money favorite. He's definitely a contender, but as the lukewarm morning-line favorite breaking from a tough post, I'm fine siding with others. GRADE: B.

CONCLUSION

There are definitely a few places to land in here, so you should really take the board into consideration, since it will be interesting to see where the money shows up on some of these conservatively priced morning-line horses. I do think that #2 **WOUND TIGHT** will be around his morning line of 6/1, since I expect the top three choices to take more money than the morning-line indicates. Because of that, WOUND TIGHT will be my top play in here, as I expect him to run a peak effort second off the bench and stretching out.

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