

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

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Race 7: \$40K optional-claiming/N1X for fillies and mares going 8-furlongs on the main track.

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OVERVIEW

Well, we've got the first Thursday race day of the meet after two weeks in a row where we just raced Friday through Sunday. So...for the rest of the meet, we'll have Thursday racing, and I'm very happy about that, since that just means more days at Del Mar!

No joy for us in the contest on Sunday when Wound Tight had zero excuse after a good stalking trip, but as you know, I'm thrilled for the connections of Brandothebartender, who happens to be one of my favorite horses in training. I can't remember the last time I was so happy about being wrong and losing money! Hats off to Flawless Racing, Jerry Weseloh, Brian Flanagan, Craig Dollase, et alia, for doing such a great job with this horse.

So, what do we have today? We've got a nice \$40K optional-claiming/N1X for fillies and mares going one mile on the main track. This looks to be a pretty competitive race with several evenly matched ladies.

#1 LUCKY PERIDOT (4/1) is a pretty honest runner who usually runs her race, so it's no surprise that Mulhall plunked down \$25K to claim her two back out of a second-place finish going a mile on the lawn. She was then spotted well in her first start for the new barn, moving to dirt and running a bang-up race against \$25K starter foes—but she did what she was supposed to do as the 4/5 favorite in a five-horse field, stalking the pace and winning easily. The waters get a little deeper today, but there really aren't any world-beaters here at this N1X level, and if the rail is any good, this gal should have every chance to run another solid one. And she's in for the tag because she's already won at this level, so that's another positive. That said, Cedillo sticks with the recent maiden-breaker for Baffert—but this one should be a better price (and Peridot is the gemstone of August, which is right around the corner!). **GRADE: A.**

#2 MISS PEAKY BLINDER (12/1) is named after my favorite TV show, so I'll be sentimentally rooting for her, but I'm not sure this 3-year-old is fast enough to get the job done today—unless, of course, you think she can move forward leaps and bounds while making her first start ever on dirt. Three back, she broke her maiden up north on synth in fine fashion, and it is nice to see that decent fourth in the California Oaks (also on synth), but she will need a career-best today against older foes. On the plus side, she is getting a 5-pound weight-break with Pyfer doing the honors. Like I said, I thought this race was pretty competitive, but this gal looks better suited for underneath, if at all. **GRADE: C.**

#3 LADY MYSTIFY (5/2) made the running and just kept piling it on last time when she beat three other ladies in a one-mile main-track affair for Maiden Special Weights. In other words, that race is kind of a mixed bag. Yes, you have to be pretty good to win by 18-lengths! But she didn't have to beat much, and then she hit the shelf, now coming off a five-month layoff since that race, which also came back on the slow side. That said, Eurton usually brings them back ready to roll, and it's nice to see win-rider Prat stick around—but do you want to take 5/2 on a 3-year-old who is facing elders and winners for the first time? I sure don't. **GRADE: C.**

#4 DID I STUTTER (4/1) runs for the optional tag, since she cleared her N1X hurdle two back when she stalked the pace and won easily against seven other foes in a 7-furlong race at Parx. That was a solid effort as the 17/10 favorite, but she couldn't replicate that performance against N2X foes, also at Parx, so we'll see how she stacks up on this circuit for Mullins, who runs her for \$40K while being eligible for the ship-and-win bonus. She has good tactical speed, so you can expect her to be in the vanguard, and it looks like she'll be ready to run off two decent Del Mar works. She seems like fair value at 4/1 as a new face in the crowd. GRADE: A.

#5 LAST FIRST KISS (6/1) also seems like good value in this race, since she should be sitting on a peak effort, making her third start this year and getting back over a Del Mar track that she really enjoys (with all of her best efforts coming at the seaside oval, including a nice second at this N1X level and distance last year, outrunning her 7/1 odds). I also like that she should get a good stalking position, since she has tactical speed. What I don't like is that her only win came in wire fashion, since she doesn't exactly like to pass horses, settling for the minor awards instead of the W. She seems like a very good exotics key, but she will need to show the eye of the tiger today for the win (but that's not impossible as a lightly raced 4-year-old). GRADE: B.

#6 SHE'S A DIME (5/1) should be in front turning for home, breaking inside the other speed and getting a jock who does his best work on or near the lead. Will this gal have enough oomph to wire them, however? Well, she gave up the ghost in her last two tries at this level, including last time at 4/5—and two back, she also coughed up an early lead despite getting a 5-pound weight-break, which she doesn't have today. So here's the deal: at 5/1, I think she's certainly worth considering, but I have to think she's going to go off at shorter odds (more like 3/1 would be my guess), and if she does, she's not as interesting to me. Still, I won't fault anyone for thinking this gal can wire them. GRADE: B.

#7 GINJA (7/2) is another one who will probably take more money than her morning-line, since she has speed, is drawn outside (which has been the better part of the track), and is trained by Baffert. Oh, and win-rider Cedillo stays put even though he had options in here. Note that Baffert won two races on Sunday, so the short-lived cold streak was nothing—but this gal is a 3-year-old who was a beaten favorite three times before she finally broke her maiden, which she did last time in a 6-furlong sprint at Los Al. She can certainly win, but I feel like I have to take her on in here. GRADE: C.

CONCLUSION

I don't really love anyone, and like I said, I think any one of these ladies can win—but based on the morning-lines, I'm most interested in **#4 DID I STUTTER**, since I think she'll get a favorable trip, and I give her extra credit as the new face in a mediocre crowd—plus, she's eligible for the ship-and-win bonus, so that is something to consider in a race that doesn't have a standout. If she gets overbet, I'll look to **#1 LUCKY PERIDOT** to sneak away at a decent price.

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