

# DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

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**Date:** 8/12/21

**Race 8:** \$80K optional-claiming/N1X for 3-year-olds going 8-furlongs on turf (rails at 30-feet)

**Post:** approx. post 5:30 p.m. PDT

## OVERVIEW

We were on quite a roll last week, reeling off all “A” winners at the following prices: 7/1; 5/2; 7/2; and 10/1. Can we keep it going? Why not! Let’s see if we can sniff out the winner of this competitive \$80K optional-claiming/N1X for 3-year-olds only going one-mile on the lawn with the rails at 30-feet. Of course, the race drew an oversubscribed field of 13 runners, but only nine will greet the starter.

#1 HOCKEY DAD (7/2) came off an April layoff last time to set a decent pace in the Oceanside before yielding grudgingly and finishing fourth. It was actually a pretty solid race, all things considered—and today’s rail draw (instead of the 12-hole last time) will help tremendously, but will he be able to fend off one of the foes who just beat him? Maybe. But he was 19/1 last time, and you’re unlikely to get such a good price today. You can use him generously in your exotics, but I prefer others for the win end. GRADE: B.

#2 CREW DRAGON (5/2) rallied strongly to just miss by a head in the Oceanside last time, so I see no reason why he won’t launch another late bid today—and I do find it interesting that Sadler goes to the blinkers today, perhaps thinking that this one lost a little focus late. He makes the second start of his form cycle, and Rispoli sticks around on a horse who certainly has the kind of closing kick that could win this race. I do, however, have two slight knocks: why didn’t Sadler take a shot in the La Jolla (G3) last weekend? How short of a price will this one be? GRADE: B.

#3 NUMERO DIX (GB) (3/1), the second Sadler runner, makes his first U.S. start after running some decent races in his native France. I think it’s odd that this one broke his maiden on turf but was then moved to the synth, though having to race during the cold and wet Paris fall and winter might have had something to do with that! Sadler isn’t typically known for too many big imports, but he can certainly have one ready off the bench—and look who shows up to ride. GRADE: B.

#4 LAKER MAMBA (12/1) was last seen in February at the Fair Grounds, but he now shows up here for Casse as a new gelding. His East Coast form—on both turf and dirt—isn’t bad, but he is a horse who has done much better in the second start of his form cycle than in the first, which is the case today. Still, Casse is more than capable off this kind of layoff, and those two works here at Del Mar aren’t too bad. GRADE: C.

#5 WAR MACHINE (4/1) was game when winning by a nose in his maiden-breaker up at Woodbine, going 7.5-furlongs, so we’ll see how he fares against winners for the first time today. That said, it should be known that he beat older runners up in Canada, so I’m not too worried about the step up against winners, especially since he showed some class in that race. I also think he’ll trip out in here. Assuming the Sadlers both get overbet, this guy looks like he could be a good value bet in here (though I wouldn’t bet him at 4/1). GRADE: B.

#6 BARRAZA (20/1) has run thrice at the N1X level and the best he could do was finish third. He will need to show more, but take note of two things: he is cutting back after two longer races, so he should be super-fit; and Cerin has been hot, especially with Desormeaux. It wouldn't shock me if this one ran better; I just think there are better animals in here. GRADE: X.

#7 SWISS SWOO (IRE) (20/1) was 7/1 in his U.S. debut back in June when he ran last in a six-horse field after breaking slowly in that 6.5-furlong turf sprint at Santa Anita. I can be forgiving of that race, but I don't like that he didn't take much money in that start during a time when D'Amato was winning a lot of turf sprints. I'm fine watching one today even with the removal of blinkers (which is how he ran and won overseas). GRADE: X.

**#8 COTOPAXI (IRE) (8/1)** is coming off a long November layoff, but his come-home times last year as a juvenile are among the best in the field—so how scary can this guy be if he's ready to roll today? Well, Mullins is solid off this kind of layoff, and Red Barons is having an excellent meeting so far. If this guy has matured at all since last year, he could be dangerous, since he has already shown that he has class. The one slight concern is that this might be a prep for the Del Mar Derby (G1). GRADE: A.

**#9 THE HULK (GB) (12/1)** was 16/1 in his U.S. debut, and he ran better-than-looked even though he finished seventh. He had to break from the 10-hole, and yet he still came home in very nice time. He gets another bum post today, but he is shortening up, and Callaghan is really good when his charges make their second starts in the States. He should get ignored on the board, and he could easily blow it up. GRADE: A.

#10 MOHAWK KING (IRE) (5/1) (AE), the second Callaghan trainee, got a perfect forwardly placed trip last time but was tagged late, despite setting modest early fractions. In his defense, he was going two turns for the first time, and he was going an extra half-furlong, so the cutback will help his cause today. The problem is: he'll have to gun hard from out here, and it's not like he has shown the eye of the tiger late in the lane in any of his U.S. starts. GRADE: X.

#11 FUEGO CALIENTE (15/1) (AE) invades from back East off a Gulfstream Park starter win in a race that was washed off the turf. Before that, he couldn't beat starter foes on the lawn while facing weaker competition in Florida. He'll also have to work out a trip from out here if he gets in. GRADE: X.

#12 OPTIMISTIC VALOR (5/1) (AE) was claimed for \$20K two back, and he rewarded his new owners with a very nice win against \$40K claimers of his own age group. It was a career-best, so that's a feather in his cap, but the waters get much deeper today, and it should be noted that Desormeaux sides with another after giving this one a great ride last time. I'll watch one from out here. GRADE: X.

#13 DICEY MO CHARA (GB) (6/1) (AE) has a very strong late kick, something he put to good use when breaking his maiden in sharp fashion last time, coming from off the pace to get up and win going away against eight other maidens that day. He did get a perfect trip, but he also showed a very nice turn of foot. I think he can continue to improve—but he'll need some luck to get in, and he'll need some luck in his journey, moving from inside to outside today. GRADE: C.

## **CONCLUSION**

I think the two Sadler runners—**#2 CREW DRAGON** and **#3 NUMERO DIX (GB)**—are the ones to beat, though I can't imagine either one will be any value in here. Because of that, I'm going to side with a

horse who I know will be value in this interesting field: **#9 THE HULK (GB)**. Unlike some of the others in here who might just be prepping for the Del Mar Derby (G1), I have to think this one is in it to win it, second off the bench—and he must have shown some ability in the mornings to entice Rispoli for that U.S. debut (though it's not a great sign that Rispoli ends up elsewhere today; but, hey, that will just juice our price!). Also, based on these morning-lines, **#8 COTOPAXI (IRE)** at 8/1 would be very good value.

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