

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

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Race 8: \$80K CTT & TOC for fillies and mares going 11-furlongs on turf (rails at 18-feet)

Post: approx. post 5:36 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

This is one of the better renewals of the CTT & TOC stakes, an 11-furlong turf affair for fillies and mares with the rails set at 18-feet. We've got several graded-stakes winners in here, including a Grade 1 winner! Because of that, it's a pretty evenly matched group—and I think the winner is the one who will get the best ride and journey in what looks to be a jockey's race.

#1 NEIGE BLANCHE (FR) (3/1) owes me nothing, since she helped me out a lot two back when she got her nose down at just the right time in the Santa Barbara (G3) at nearly 6/1. I liked her that day because she was finally getting plenty of extra ground in that 12-furlong race. Well, today's distance is just fine as well, so she can easily turn the tables on the gal who just beat her going shorter (and whom this one beat going longer!). I can see Hernandez just hugging the rail until it's time to go. That said, this race is really all about the board since there are several evenly matched runners who have taken turns beating up on each other. She's worthy of an "A," but I'll let price decide. GRADE: B.

#2 CRYSTALLE (15/1) makes her second SoCal start after a mediocre career back East. Last time, she raced well off the pace and put in a mild late bid to finish fourth in that 9-furlong affair. She can certainly improve off that, since she's a long-fused type who will prefer any added ground, since her last win came going 11.5-furlongs. Still, she is facing some tough cookies in here, so she will definitely need a step forward. GRADE: X.

#3 CATCH THE EYE (30/1) has been handled by several of these, so she'll need to run a career best while trying to outfinish some really classy ladies. I do like that this one just missed in this race last year, but I think she's better suited to underneath. And note that Hernandez sides with the rail animal. GRADE: X.

#4 TAPWATER (3/1) should be the controlling speed of the race if she wants to be, but she was the controlling speed of the Santa Barbara (G3) two back, and two of today's gals reeled her in pretty easily. I wonder if distance is a little bit of an issue, since all three of her wins have come going a mile, but if you're a pace player, this gal—who gets Rispoli for the first time—should have every chance to get the job done in a paceless race. GRADE: B.

#5 RIDEFORTHECAUSE (5/2), the first Michael McCarthy runner, has traded decisions with the rail horse, so whose turn is it today? You can expect both of them to run their race, so it's going to come down to who gets the best trip and ride. I like how Mario was a little more aggressive with this one last time, so if he employs the same strategy, this gal will be in a very good spot turning for home—and we already know how good her late kick is. Like the rail horse, she's "A" worthy, but I doubt the price will be there for the contest. GRADE: B.

#6 IPPODAMIA'S GIRL (4/1) has done good work since joining the Baltas barn, and I like that he has been able to get her to relax and produce a strong stretch run, whereas earlier in her career, this gal liked to wing it on the front end. Because of that versatility, she should get a very good trip alongside Tapwater, but is she good enough to beat these kinds of ladies? She won the restricted Osunitas last time going a mile, but this is a whole new ballgame, going longer against some really classy ladies. I respect Baltas, but I'm kind of shocked at the low 4/1 morning-line. GRADE: X.

#7 RED LARK (IRE) (6/1) is a Grade 1 winner, so that is something you need to consider despite the fact that she hasn't been able to win a race since turning four and facing older runners. Still, she has a good stretch run and always tries—she's just going to need a well-timed ride by Smith, since this gal likes to do her best work from off the pace. If she gets overlooked in here, she's definitely worth considering on the win end, but there's also a world in which she's too far back early and runs on late to finish underneath. GRADE: B.

#8 GLOBAL BRAND (12/1) will be the wise-guy play in here, making her first start for McCarthy for the prestigious colors of Glen Hill Farm. Back East, this one didn't really look like much, running shorter against weaker company while trained by the great Tom Proctor. But that only intrigues me more! Why send her all the way out here to face these beasts with just mediocre East Coast form? Well, perhaps they think the distance will suit her just fine, and you don't know until you try, since this gal has never been beyond 8.5-furlongs. She's certainly bred to handle the distance, and her mom was a terrific turf horse who won a few Grade Ones and a 12-furlong race, so there's that as well! I admit she's a bit of a stretch, but no guts, no glory!!! GRADE: A.

CONCLUSION

There are a few places you can land in here, so if one of my "B's" sneaks away at an overlaid price, you can get involved there if you don't agree with my wiseguy play. But I'm going to take a flyer on #8 GLOBAL BRAND here because I do believe there is way more than meets the eye, and I know she'll be a very good price in this competitive field.

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