

# DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

By Frank R. Scatoni

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**Date:** 8/15/21

**Race 9:** \$50K starter-allowance (N3L) contested at 8-furlongs on turf (rails at 18-feet)

**Post:** approx. post 6:20 p.m. PDT

## OVERVIEW

This is a really good contest race and a very competitive race for the level: a \$50K starter-allowance for horses aged 3-years-old and upward who have started for a claiming price of \$50K or less and who have never won three races. The distance is 8-furlongs and the rails are set at 18-feet. I thought there were a few places to land here.

**#1 VANTASTIC (4/1)** won a starter two back at today's distance, grinding away to get up by a head. He then followed that up with a solid fifth against tougher N1X foes, where he had to break from the 11-hole. Well, he'll get to save ground today, and note that the dude who won with him two back shows up to ride: Prat! GRADE: A.

**#2 TWILIGHT RIDER (30/1)** was just claimed for \$20K off Wong out of a race where he was eased. Interestingly enough, there were four claims in for him that day, and Metz was the lucky one. He now moves him to the lawn, which seems to be his best surface, but this 3-year-old will have to show he can run a big race against this kind of competition. GRADE: X.

**#3 FOOTHILL (12/1)** was 7/2 at this level and distance two back, and he somehow got a very wide journey in a six-horse field, so you can draw a line through it. Last time, a runaway strung out the field, so he had to come from way off and had too much to do. He's more tactical and should get a much better trip today. He's not impossible with a good stalking trip, but I do think there are better animals in here than he is. GRADE: C.

**#4 NERVES OF STEEL (8/1)** was claimed off Miller for \$100K two back, but after a brief lay up, this one came back to run against \$80K/N1X types and was nowhere after tracking the pace while wide. Maybe he needed the race against those decent animals, but do note that even though he is running at a weaker condition, he is facing older winners for the first time. I'll watch one. GRADE: X.

**#5 EAST RAND (12/1)** has always had an excellent late kick for this level, so you can fully expect him to be running on strongly late, especially since he gets a major barn upgrade today, now being trained by Leonard Powell. I don't like that this one is coming off an August 2020 layoff, but Powell can have one ready to run, and this guy was always very honest back in the day. GRADE: A.

**#6 SEEKING REFUGE (4/1)** was 3/1 at this level and distance last time at Santa Anita, and he just missed, but do note that it was only a six-horse field. It's nice to see Rispoli stick around, but that also means this one is going to take money in a wide-open race, and I actually like a few others more. Still, his best race is good enough. GRADE: B.

**#7 FUEGO CALIENTE (15/1)** invades from back East after just beating \$35K types in a one-mile race at Gulfstream Park that was washed off the turf. Before that, his turf form at that level was decent, but he

wasn't able to get a win. He now has to face better animals as a 3-year-old going against elders for the first time. I'll let him beat me. GRADE: X.

#8 BEST CHANCE (15/1) should get a great trip, kind of like the trips he got the two times he ran well going a mile last winter. Since then, he's been sprinting, but distance shouldn't be an issue, which is why I am absolutely confounded as to why he is 15/1 on the morning-line, especially since he was just 7/2 at this level last time when he got a blah ride in a four-horse field. At 15/1, he should be on your radar, but I do like others for the "A" slots. GRADE: B.

#9 LIAR LIAR (IRE) (7/2) rarely runs a bad race, and he almost shocked the world last time when just missing against N1X foes at 17/1. Before that, he ran his race against starter types, including a win at the \$50K level three back when he was claimed off Baltas for Miller. He's an obvious contender and a likely winner, but his price won't do us any favors in the contest. GRADE: B.

#10 ONENIGHTSTANDARDS—program scratch.

#11 SEA OF LIBERTY (10/1), the second Miller runner, was claimed off Sadler two back for \$35K and then ran a better-than-looked fourth against Cal-bred allowance types, where he had trouble early but still finished up with run. His best races are a fit, and a clean trip would have him right in the hunt—but what kind of trip can we expect from all the way out here? Still, he's worth considering at 10/1, especially since if he had a better post, he would be 5/1 or less in here. GRADE: B.

#12 C FALLS (8/1) was the 5/2 favorite at this level last time but lacked punch in the final eighth of a mile when trying to navigate 9-panels. He's been laid up since that January race, and he comes back at a much better distance for him, since his second win came at the \$50K starter-level (N2L) and today's distance. That said, both his wins came on the engine, so he's going to have to hustle from out here, and that will likely soften him up late off the long layoff. GRADE: C.

### **CONCLUSION**

You can't really go wrong with many of these, since these are some honest runners. Because of that, I'm going to stick with the horses toward the inside, expecting them to get the best trips. You can certainly price shop among the "B's," but I'll be focusing on my two "A's": **#1 VANTASTIC**, who might be too short to play however, and **#5 EAST RAND**, a strong closer who gets a major barn upgrade today.

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