

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

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Race 10: \$1 million Pacific Classic (G1) contested at 10-furlongs on the main track

Post: approx. post 6:33 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

It's the signature race of the meet, the \$1 million Pacific Classic (G1) contested at 10-furlongs on the main track. It's also part of an excellent 11-race card that features five graded-stakes races. It's an unbelievable day of racing, and I hope you all really get involved, especially since there is a mandatory payout in the Pick 6 with a jackpot pool that is sure to be more than \$2 million and a total pool that should reach \$6 million or more!

#1 TRIPOLI (5/1) is in the best form of his life, and he moved up several lengths since being put on the dirt two back. Last time, he rallied late to just miss in the San Diego Handicap (G2), losing to Express Train. Can he move forward off that race? Maybe. But it should be noted that he was getting five pounds from that rival last time and now they are racing at equal weights. I think it's cool that this runner has been reinvented as a dirt handicap horse, but he'll have to really show he can beat the best in here.

GRADE: C.

#2 TIZAMAGICIAN (5/1) ran a hole in the wind last time in the Cougar II (G3) going 12-furlongs over this main track and beating one of today's foes in the process. He got a perfect trip and made the most of it, as Prat saved plenty for the stretch run and won pretty convincingly as the 3/10 favorite. Can he run another big race at a shorter distance where the pace is going to be a lot quicker? I'm not so sure, though there's no denying the fact that he is a much better horse this year than he was last year when Mandella was trying to figure him out and get the most out of him (since there was a time when this guy really didn't want to look another horse in the eye). It's hard to knock his recent form and his good work over the track, but I prefer others today. GRADE: C.

#3 DR POST (4/1) invades from the East Coast after a solid victory in the Monmouth Cup (G3), looking like a lightly raced 4-year-old who still has plenty of room to improve, especially since he's trained by one of the best in Todd Pletcher—and you know Rosario isn't out here for just the fish tacos. You can expect this one to get a very good tracking trip—and even though he hasn't been this far, the way he finished up that Monmouth Cup (G3) suggests that any added ground won't be an issue. As the new face in the crowd, he'll have every chance to crash this party. GRADE: A.

#4 ROYAL SHIP (BRZ) (7/2) is a lot better than his last race looks, since he raced inside on the absolute worst part of the track and also kind of looked like a short horse coming off a brief freshening and with Mandella having this target in mind. I don't like that he was outgamed two back in the Gold Cup (G1) at today's distance, but he did run a winning race and just couldn't edge out a Baffert runner who was sitting on a peak effort. I'm sure Mandella is going to have the screws turned on this one today, and I can see this guy getting a good tracking trip just waiting to uncork a run into the lane. GRADE: A.

#5 EXPRESS TRAIN (3/1) has been a favorite of mine for a while now—he's just a big, beautiful horse who always shows up for business. He is the deserving favorite in the race, and I'd be shocked if he didn't

go off at less than his morning-line of 3/1—but there is some distance issues here. In the Santa Anita Handicap (G1) four back, he had the lead late and was overtaken with no real excuse. I can be more forgiving of his Gold Cup (G1) race, where he was kept wide and never really kicked on, finishing third. He did look good in the San Diego (G2), going 8.5-furlongs, so the onus is on him to prove his distance-doubters wrong, especially since he loves this track. He's a legit contender, but the price won't be anything special. GRADE: B.

#6 MAGIC ON TAP (20/1) was 11/1 in the San Diego (G2) against a few of these, and he ran a blah fifth with some trouble. I'm sure Baffert will have him fully cranked today, but is this guy's best race good enough? You can expect Cedillo to be aggressive here, and I agree with that strategy, since there's no way he's going to rate and outkick some of the big boys in here. It's never wise to throw out a Baffert runner in a big event in SoCal, but there is really nothing on the paper form to recommend this guy as the winner of the race. GRADE: X.

#7 INDEPENDENCE HALL (5/1) has done his best work at a mile or less, so today's 10-furlongs seems a bit beyond his scope, though I have to say that Michael McCarthy is one of the best distance/stamina trainers on this circuit, so I wouldn't entirely count him out. Two back, this guy was 3/1 in the Santa Anita Handicap (G1), and he was no match for Express Train, just lacking the requisite oomph in the lane to crack the trifecta. I do think it's interesting that McCarthy adds blinkers today, since this guy does like to run early, so it wouldn't shock me if Geroux was very aggressive today, looking to take the race to everyone early. But can this guy wire this field? Well, there has always been a lot of talent here—but I think the minor awards are more likely. GRADE: C.

#8 SHERIFF BROWN (30/1) would be a shock, since he hasn't really run fast enough to be competitive against the likes of these—as was evident in the San Diego (G2) when he was 50/1 against a few of these and finished seventh. That said, he's never been this far, so if you think the race will fall apart as this guy just grinds along, then I suppose you can make a small case for him. Me? I'm just not seeing it. GRADE: X.

#9 CUPID'S CLAWS (15/1) is a little interesting in here, since you know the distance will be no problem, and he can just tick off steady internal fractions while racing in a good in-the-clear position and avoiding kickback from this outside post. He really doesn't look fast enough on paper, but he should be sitting on a peak effort, cutting back after running second to Tizamagian in the 12-furlong Cougar II (G3), where he looked a little short after just two one-mile races. That last race should have him fit and ready, and do note that he annihilated Tizamagian last fall in the Tokyo City (G3), so he's not far off a foe who is lined at 5/1 by Jon White. In other words: can you say value? He will need to do a lot more to win today, but that's not out of the question—and at the very least, you'd be remiss not to use this horse in your exotics at a big number. Plus, what a great story this would be: a horse claimed for \$50K winning the Pacific Classic (G1)? Look what this ownership group and trainer did with the great Brandothebartender. Why not? GRADE: B.

CONCLUSION

This is an interesting race, since there is no real standout. I do think **#5 EXPRESS TRAIN** is a legit favorite, but I can see **#4 ROYAL SHIP (BRZ)** turning the tables on him today at a slightly better price. I also think you need to look at **#3 DR POST**, though I'd want a little more than 4/1. If you need a bomb, **#9 CUPID'S CLAWS** fits that bill, since he has every chance and will be an excellent price. If you'd like to learn more about **OptixEQ**, visit www.optixeq.com.