

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

By Frank R. Scatoni

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Race 10: \$200K Pat O'Brien (G2) contested at 7-furlongs on the main track

Post: approx. post 6:35 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

We've got a fine renewal of the \$200K Pat O'Brien (G2), a 7-furlong main-track affair that is a "Win and You're In" race for the Breeders' Cup Mile (G1). I think the two main choices are going to be tough, but let's go horse-by-horse and see if we can come up with someone clever...

#1 GINOBI (6/1) gets a negative jock change and has to break from the rail after running a monster race going a mile over this track back on July 17. It was a really nice performance, but where the heck did it come from? Well, he always hinted at ability, but he has never been able to really put it together—until that N1X victory where he challenged a hot pace and drew off to win by a city block. The cutback should be fine—he almost won the San Vicente (G2) at today's distance—but I would like him a lot more if he were drawn outside, since the rail is typically brutal at 7-panels. GRADE: C.

#2 HOWBEIT (6/1) has proven to be an astute claim by Glatt, who took him for \$32K and then got him to reel off one big race after another as he cruised through his allowance conditions. Now he faces the acid test today: a stakes race. I do like that he is versatile and has tactical speed, but I don't like that he'll have to use some of that speed to jockey for position down inside. A win wouldn't be a shock, but he will need to show he can run with the big boys today. GRADE: C.

#3 SURFING STAR (30/1) was a top pick for me two back, and he nearly got the job done at 16/1, finishing second and losing to his stablemate. That was a tough beat, but he couldn't move forward off that effort, finishing fourth in an N2X and losing to Howbeit in his next start. He did stumble and have a wide journey, so I won't be so harsh, but this guy will really need a major step forward to beat the best in here. GRADE: X.

#4 MO MOSA (10/1) could be the wise-guy play in here, cutting back after a decent fourth in the San Diego (G2), where he loomed up but flattened against the likes of Tripoli, who only went on to win the Pacific Classic (G1) in his next start! Before that, this guy did decent work back East, beating today's favorite in a one-mile race at Lone Star (albeit in the slop). Granted, this one is probably a better two-turn horse than a one-turn horse, but I get why the connections are running here, since this is a "Win and You're In" for the Breeders' Cup Mile (G1). His best race is good enough, but I do think C Z Rocket turns the tables on him today. GRADE: B.

#5 EIGHT RINGS (6/1), the first Baffert entrant, got a good stalking trip in the Bing Crosby (G1) and nearly won but was outgamed by the very nice Dr. Schivel. He now makes the second start of his form cycle while having to go an extra furlong. He's won beyond 6-furlongs before, so the distance shouldn't be an issue, but is he going to outfinish C Z Rocket or Flagstaff? Probably not. That said, he is a lightly raced 4-year-old trained by Baffert, so we may not have seen the best of him. GRADE: C.

#6 CLASSIER (12/1), the second Baffert runner, has route speed and is cutting back, and that is always dangerous at 7-furlongs. He's coming off a sharp win in the Los Al Derby (G3), but therein lies the rub: he's a 3-year-old facing older runners for the first time. There is still plenty of upside here, but this guy is going to have to show he can run with some of the best older sprinters on the West Coast. GRADE: C.

#7 BRICKYARD RIDE (8/1) is the speed of the speed, but he sometimes goes too fast for his own good, something that happened last time in the Bing Crosby (G1) when he bobbled at the start and then gunned to the lead, opening up by almost two lengths before getting worn down and finishing fifth. He should be able to go slower today at this longer distance—and there's no denying this one's brilliance—but he's had a long campaign, and he's got some big guns who are going to be taking dead aim on him the whole length of the stretch. GRADE: C.

#8 FLAGSTAFF (3/1) is a legit runner, and he's a Grade 1 winner at today's distance, which so happens to be his best trip. He's been off since June, but I'm sure Sadler has been pointing to this spot the whole time. Will this 7-year-old be good enough to finally turn the tables on another 7-year-old, C Z Rocket, who has been his nemesis for quite a while now? He'll run his race, but I think C Z Rocket will probably run him down in the shadow of the wire. GRADE: B.

#9 **C Z ROCKET** (5/2) looks to be sitting on a monster race here after just coming up short in the Bing Crosby (G1) after a two-month layoff. I like that this guy is the defending champ, has run well over this track, and is a pro at the distance. He should also get a pace to grind away at with Brickyard Ride leading the way. He's the one to beat, especially since he's drawn so well here on the outside—he can just track and pounce. GRADE: A.

#10 CALIFORNIA STREET—program scratch.

CONCLUSION

I said in the intro that I thought the top-two were going to be tough, and of those two, I give the nod to #9 **C Z ROCKET**, but he will be the favorite. If you want a wise-guy horse, maybe #4 **MO MOSA** can transfer that two-turn form to one-turn. After all, he did beat C Z ROCKET two back.

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