

## DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

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**Date:** 9/4/21

**Race 11:** \$250K Del Mar Derby (G2) for 3YOs contested at 9-furlongs on turf (rails at 0-feet)

**Post:** approx. post 6:37 p.m. PDT

### OVERVIEW

What a stacked renewal of the \$250K Del Mar Derby (G2), a 9-furlong turf affair for 3-year-olds with the rails at zero-feet. We've got a big, full field—and I think the strongest contenders have the worst posts, so I'm going to be a little wacky in here.

#1 HUDSON RIDGE (9/2) has tactical speed, draws the inside position, and attracts Prat, so you can expect this one to get a very good trip in a race where the main contenders are all parked outside. I can see Prat getting good forward position, sitting back just a little bit, and then hoping a seam opens for the stretch run. This one is in very good form right now, and if not for a troubled head defeat, he'd be sitting on a three race win streak. The only knock is that he's the morning-line favorite in a big, competitive field, and I want to find a price! GRADE: B.

#2 BARRAZA (12/1) has tactical speed, but he also showed last time that he could come from off the pace when just missing against N1X foes in a one-mile race. He came home in fast time, suggesting the added ground should be okay for him today even though he did cough up the lead at this distance three back when he tried to wire the field. Maybe he's figuring things out—but he still needs a big step forward today. GRADE: X.

#3 HOCKEY DAD (8/1) has speed but removes the hood after two recent near misses going a mile over this course. Maybe that will help him ration his speed better while providing him with that extra bit of awareness deep in the lane. Still, I'm not sure he'll be as effective going 9-furlongs, so I can see him in the hunt but being outkicked late. GRADE: X.

#4 NONE ABOVE THE LAW (12/1) has done very good work against Cal-breds, but he faces a stiff test today squaring off against open foes—something that didn't go too well for him in the Oceanside. In his defense, he did have a wide post that day, so I can be forgiving, especially since he bounced back and crushed in the Real Good Deal going 7-furlongs on dirt. You have to admire his versatility, but win-rider Prat doesn't bother to ride back, and that's a red flag to me. GRADE: X.

**#5 NO FOOLERY HERE (8/1)**, the first Baltas entrant, will be the wiseguy play in here, since he has very strong come-home times, was beaten by only a head in the shorter Oceanside, and should get a good ground-saving trip with most of his main rivals parked way outside of him. I know this guy is still eligible for an N1X, but I like that he has a win at today's distance, and I'm sure Baltas skipped the La Jolla (G3) so that he would have a fresh horse for this. That said, I want a little better than 8/1. GRADE: A.

#6 OPTIMISTIC VALOR—program scratch.

#7 PETRUCHIO (20/1) makes the second start of his form cycle after running a closing sixth in the Oceanside, where he might have been a short horse off an April layoff. In that April race, he just missed

in the Singletary with an eventful trip, so he definitely fits class-wise—and he should take a big step forward today. Will it be enough at today's distance? The only time he raced this far, he weakened badly in the El Camino Real Derby on the Golden Gate Tapeta. I'm sure Mandella will have him fit and ready. Is he good enough? GRADE: C.

#8 CATHKIN PEAK (IRE) (12/1) is a little interesting in here. He was very good last winter in his first two U.S. starts, but then he wasn't able to get a campaign going after returning in the Pasadena, where he ran evenly to finish second as the even-money favorite. He needed time off again, and then came back and ran a dud in the La Jolla (G3), where he was keen early and weakened. I think he'll be ready to run so much better today, second off the bench and being more relaxed early now that he's got a race under his belt. This one requires a leap of faith, but why not? GRADE: B.

#9 ZOFFARELLI (IRE) (6/1) is obvious in here after just missing in the La Jolla (G3) but getting put up via DQ after getting pinballed late. He should continue to move forward for an outfit who does an excellent job with these types of imports, and the only real concern is the trip, since he'll probably find himself wide at some (or many) points in the race after having to break from out here. Still, he's a contender, so monitor him for value, since 6/1 would be a square price on him. GRADE: B.

#10 JIMMY BLUE JEANS (12/1) is a perfect 3-for-3 on turf, and the reason for that is because he makes his own good trips. That said, he is a Cal-bred who is facing the toughest test of his life today, so we'll see if he can take another step forward. I like that he's tactical and has a win at today's distance (in the Cal-bred Snow Chief), but I can see him stalking the pace from a wide slot, and I'd rather land on a horse who is going to settle and make one big run. GRADE: C.

**#11 LINCOLN HAWK (IRE) (20/1)**, the second Baltas runner, has a very strong late kick, so you can expect him to be flying late, assuming he can work out a trip from this tough outside post. I don't like that both Bravo and Hernandez end up elsewhere, but, hey, you get the Pacific Classic (G1)–winning jockey to take the call, so there's that! I think this one is in with a big shot today, but I'd like him so much better if he had a better post. GRADE: A.

#12 CREW DRAGON (8/1), the first Sadler charge, loses win-rider Rispoli to his stablemate, so that's a little bit of a concern, especially since this guy has done nothing wrong. He has a win at today's distance and has run two good races over this course, so I can't fault anyone for taking a shot with him—but the post is no picnic, and I prefer others more. GRADE: C.

#13 SWORD ZORRO (IRE) (5/1), the second Sadler trainee, came off a layoff and got his nose on the line to “win” the La Jolla (G3), but he was DQ'd to third. Rispoli will look to make amends for that defeat, and this one is certainly good enough to come right back and cross the wire first again. Note that he was no match for Hudson Ridge two back at today's distance—and that foe gets a much better post in here—but I do think there is still upside, making him an obvious contender. GRADE: B.

#14 FLASHIEST (6/1) got our meet off to a grand start when he won the Oceanside as our top pick at 12/1. He then went back East to face some monsters in the Saratoga Derby Invitational (G1), where he had to break from the 10-hole and never really had a chance. Unfortunately, he drew the short straw today and has to break from an even farther-out post! His stretch run is certainly good enough to make him a strong contender in here, but he'll need so much luck from out here that I'm tempted to just watch him today. GRADE: C.

## **CONCLUSION**

As I mentioned in the intro, most of the contenders are parked all the way outside, so I'm going to pick a horse who draws toward the inside—and one whose form is quiet enough to get me a fair price—and that's **#5 NO FOOLERY HERE**. This horse has a decent stretch run, so all Franco has to do is settle him early and push the button turning for home—while hoping all of the better horses get caught up in traffic trouble! If you want another price, I also think the second Baltas horse, **#11 LINCOLN HAWK (IRE)**, will outrun his massive odds. This horse should not be 20/1, and I'll get involved if he's anywhere over 10/1.

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