

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

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Race 9: \$2 million Breeders' Cup Mile (G1) contested at 8F on the lawn (rails at 0-feet)

Post: approx. post 3:20 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

We've got an embarrassment of riches today on Breeders' Cup Saturday. So many great races—and two contest races to choose from. As you can see, I'm writing up the ridiculously competitive and difficult Breeders' Cup Mile (G1), but the Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) is also an online contest race. If you care, I like Essential Quality in the big one. As for this one-mile turf affair, keep on reading...

#1 MASTER OF THE SEAS (IRE) (12/1) is a 3-year-old colt who will need to step forward today, but I do think that's eminently possible since he's making the third start of his form cycle. I can also make excuses for his last two races, while his race three back, when he lost by a nose in the Group 1 Guineas at Newmarket, is good enough to win this. Last time, he steadied at the start and was racing on off-going, while two back, he was likely a short horse. Throw in the rail draw, and you're looking at a runner who should improve leaps and bounds if he can find a seam late. **GRADE: A.**

#2 SMOOTH LIKE STRAIT (10/1) is a very nice animal, but Mo Forza has been his nemesis, so he'll need to finally outkick that foe while also fending off some other terrific milers. On the plus side, he's very tactical, so he can sit a good trip just stalking the pace, since I'm sure Blowout (GB) will be leading the way. He's done good work over this course and at this distance, but he will need to show a bit more oomph in a race such as this. **GRADE: C.**

#3 SPACE BLUES (IRE) (3/1) is your lukewarm morning-line favorite by dint of his monster races overseas, putting up some big speed-figures in the process. That being said, those races have come in sprint races, so what's going to happen today when this guy tries to navigate two turns in a big, full field? Well, the good news is: those 7-furlong sprints overseas are taxing enough that they play like mile races over here—and you have to admire this one's versatility in that he's acted on all kinds of grounds. If he can transfer that sprint form, he'll be tough—but that's a big *if!* **GRADE: B.**

#4 RAGING BULL (FR) (15/1), the first Chad Brown entrant, was 12/1 in this race last year, and he could only manage a mild late bid while having to break from the 13-hole. He finished tenth and was never a threat. He draws much better today, but will that be enough for him to get the win? He'll certainly have a pace to close into with his stablemate leading the way and other presser types in the mix, so I think you could use him in your exotics, but he'll need a career-best to beat the likes of these. **GRADE: C.**

#5 VIN DE GARDE (JPN) (20/1) hasn't won in a year, and that came in a mile race in a Group 2. Since then, he's run a mixed bag of races, but he does have a second-place finish in a Group 1, so maybe he's not too far off the best in here—though that came on good ground. You have to respect a \$2 million earner, but others seem in better form right now. **GRADE: X.**

#6 MO FORZA (5/1) is the king of California turf racing—a veritable win-machine who has shown such grit and tenacity when beating some really good animals out here. Can he run another big one today? I think so, especially since he's finally going to get a pace to close into, since he's been against the flow in his last two SoCal races yet still found a way to win. Plus, you don't come home in under 23-seconds unless you're a legitimate racehorse. **GRADE: B.**

#7 IN LOVE (BRZ) (8/1), the first of two Paulo Lobo charges, was dominant in the Keeneland Turf Mile (G1) last time, but he caught good going and ran the best race of his life. Can he replicate that effort on firm ground? Well, he ran well before that at Kentucky Downs when capturing the TVG Stakes on firm ground, but that course plays more like a European course than Del Mar ever will, so we'll see how this guy handles a small course and firm ground. I'll let him prove me wrong. GRADE: X.

#8 HIT THE ROAD (15/1) is a very good horse, but he's had to do battle with two of the best milers Southern California has seen in recent memory, so he's often been the odd man out. That said, he has won a Grade 1, and his last two races in preparation for this are better than they look. He's another horse who has come home in under 23-seconds, and he hasn't been too far off Mo Forza and will be three times the price. Still, he will need a step forward today. GRADE: C.

#9 MOTHER EARTH (IRE) (8/1) is a 3-year-old filly whose best race came on soft ground (though she has acted on good-fast, so I think she'll be fine out here). She was no threat last time against the boys, though she did have some trouble at the start; and two races before that, she lost as the favorite, finishing behind Pearls Galore (FR), though she did have some trouble. In other words, she does have some excuses—but are they enough to make her a strong contender? I have a hard time playing a 3-year-old filly against older males, so I'll let her prove me wrong. GRADE: C.

#10 BLOWOUT (GB) (8/1), a 5-year-old mare and the second Chad Brown runner, will have pace-setting duties, since she likes to be out front just winging it. She's certainly good enough and fast enough to pull off a wire job, though I think it's way more likely she gets run down late. Maybe you can use her underneath in your exotics in case she somehow gets away with a soft lead (though I think Smooth Like Strait will have dead aim on her the whole way, and then plenty of others will be charging late). GRADE: C.

#11 GOT STORMY (10/1) is a very cool 6-year-old mare who ran a terrific race in the Fourstardave (G1) at Saratoga, stamping her ticket to this event. You can toss her last run in a sprint, where she probably bounced off that big effort at the Spa. She's always been a very good miler, which is why I think it's weird she has sprinted so much the past year, and I also think she's looking at a wide journey from out here. It would be a cool story if she won, but I think she's in a little deep today. GRADE: X.

#12 PEARLS GALORE (FR) (12/1) is a 4-year-old filly who is in very good form right now, so it wouldn't shock me if she ran a big one today. She's a neck away from being a Group 1 winner, and last time, she finished second against the boys, losing to the sharp Space Blues (IRE) in a 7-furlong race on heavy French ground. She could possibly turn the tables on the favorite here, since this gal at least has shown she can handle this mile distance. That said, the post is no picnic, so she will need a lot of racing luck. GRADE: B.

#13 CASA CREED (15/1) will likely just pull back, angle over, and look to save ground while parked all the way out here. He's run some really good races, but his best work has come as a closing sprinter. Two back, he lost by 2-lengths to Got Stormy, who draws a better post than this guy does today, so I'm having a hard time seeing him turn the tables on her let alone beating some of the better ones in here. GRADE: X.

#14 IVAR (BRZ) (12/1), the second Lobo trainee, has a very nice late kick, so I'm sure he'll be looking to just anchor and then make one big run. Talamo, who rode in California for years, is good at trying to save ground, so at least there's that in his favor—and this guy has never run a bad race at a mile ever since Talamo started riding him. Unfortunately, he'll need a lot of things to go his way; case in point, he

had to break from the 10-hole in this race last year and could only manage a late-running fourth. GRADE: C.

#15 REAL APPEAL (GER) (15/1) (AE) enters this race as a new gelding off a win in Ireland, and that kind of move always confuses me. That said, this one has been very consistent throughout his career, and it should be noted that he got the measure of Pearls Galore (FR) three back in a 7-furlong event. He's also won at a mile, so he can surely handle the distance. Will he get the trip though if he gets in? Probably not, but there is some ability here. GRADE: C.

#16 QUEEN SUPREME (IRE) (30/1) (AE) was the queen of South Africa, but she easily got dethroned when she shipped to Newmarket and never got untracked in a Group 2, losing to one of today's foes. This 5-year-old mare is definitely a long shot, and the post will do her no favors. GRADE: X.

CONCLUSION

I'm going to be bold and plant a flag here even though there are so many places to land—and they all should be square prices. I'll look for **#1 MASTER OF THE SEAS (IRE)** to pull off the upset in this deep field.

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