

# DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

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**Date:** 11/20/21

**Race 8:** \$100K Native Diver (G3) contested at 9-furlongs on the main track

**Post:** approx. post 4:00 p.m. PST

## OVERVIEW

There are two contest races today, Races 7 and 8, but I'm going to focus on this one, Race 8: an interesting renewal of the \$100K Native Diver (G3), a 9-furlong main-track affair for some competitive handicap horses. We've got three Bafferts, an East Coast invader, and the 2019 winner of this race, among others, all competing for top honors.

#1 ESTABLISHED (6/1) has sprint speed and an aggressive jock—and breaks from the rail. You do the math. Normally, I'd say, "wire to wire!" But there is a lot of other speed in here, and there's no way in hell Espinoza is going to want to stay stuck inside, so I'm having a hard time seeing the path to victory for this one, since the pace should be taxing, and who knows if this guy can handle today's distance, since he's never been beyond a mile before. GRADE: X.

#2 MIDCOURT (4/1) won this race in 2019, and looked good doing it—blasting off from the rail and never looking back. Granted, it was a weak renewal of this event, but his form since then has held up pretty well—though he is the type of runner who kind of needs things to go his own way, and when things don't, he doesn't put up much of a fight. Unfortunately for him, I can't see him getting an easy lead in here—or getting the lead at all—so he will have to show he can suck back, sit off the leaders, and then look to power home. He's capable of doing that on his best day, and he should be sitting on a peak effort, making the second start of his form cycle after a toss-out race last time. GRADE: B.

#3 WICKED TRICK—program scratch.

#4 BAL HARBOUR (8/1) invades from back East, where he was last seen finishing third, losing by a neck, in the restricted Governor Day going a little more than a mile at Delaware. He'll need to do better than that, but this guy does have races on his form that certainly fit with these. Can he run back to them, especially since he hasn't found the winner's circle in a very long time? I'm tempted to watch one, but he's usable in your exotics at a fair price. GRADE: C.

**#5 AZUL COAST (4/1)**, the first of three Bafferts, doesn't look as flashy or as fast as his stablemates, but he should trip out really well in here, because there was a time when this guy could settle off the pace and come on with a strong late run. He's been a lot more tactical of late, and that will surely come in handy in a race with a lot of speed. This is also where Prat ends up, so you have to upgrade his chances despite that poor last race in the Awesome Again (G1) where he faded badly after a wide journey. He looks poised for a big bounce-back effort today. GRADE: A.

#6 EIGHT RINGS (7/2) is a pretty speedy Baffert who was thought well enough to be entered in the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (G1), and he ran a respectable fourth at 15/1, losing to one of the better horses on the planet right now. Before that, this guy was sharp in victory against N2X foes going 8.5-furlongs—but can he handle 9-panels, since he's never tried it before? Well, the breeding says "yes," and of course,

Baffert knows how to get them to stay any distance, so I'm not too worried about it. I am worried that he might be too close to a very hot pace, however. GRADE: B.

#7 AX MAN (6/1) looks like an older version of his inside stablemate, a really speedy runner who is capable of running some fast races, but who likes to be on or near the lead in order to show his best stuff. I'm sure the two Bafferts won't duel, but there should be a pretty hot pace in here regardless, and that's going to compromise this guy's chances, especially since he's never really acted like a horse who wanted to go this far. He's certainly fast enough to win, but let's take him on today given the race shape. GRADE: C.

**#8 KISS TODAY GOODBYE (5/1)** will be the value play in here, since he's likely to get overlooked off that bad last race, where he just failed to fire while chasing them wide around the track. I like that this horse is capable of sitting off any pace and powering home—though I guess we'll see if he's as effective with the addition of blinkers today. I also like that he is a Grade 2 winner with strong come-home times, suggesting that 9-panels should be right up his alley. His two 9-furlong races on turf weren't bad, and his one try on the dirt going this far was in an impossible spot against Grade 1 animals in Florida. He looks sneaky to me. GRADE: A.

### **CONCLUSION**

If you want a fuzzy, then **#8 KISS TODAY GOODBYE** is the horse for you, since his best races are good enough, and the race should set up well for his stretch run—and he should be a decent price. If you want a more obvious runner, **#5 AZUL COAST**—one of three Bafferts—should also benefit from the race shape.

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