

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

By Frank R. Scatoni

On Twitter @ScatoniSureShot

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Race 8: \$100K Oceanside Stakes for 3-year-olds only going 8-furlongs on turf (rails at 0-ft.)

Post: approx. post 5:30 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

We're back! And it's going to be a sold-out Opening Day Friday for the 2022 meet—hope to see you all there! Before I get into today's analysis, I just wanted to let you know that we are bringing back our "Best Bet" seminar every Sunday at 11 a.m., where I will livestream myself and a guest going over some key plays from Sunday's card. Be sure to tune in, as this week's guest will be the inimitable Leo Vukmanovich.

I'm also pleased to announce that I will be hosting the live, on-track "Sunday Handicapping Seminar" at 1:05 at the Seaside Terrace (by the far turn) to go over the entire card every Sunday as well. This Sunday's afternoon guest will be Ciaran Thornton, a racehorse owner and a well-respected handicapper. Come say hi. For more details on both Sunday events, follow me on Twitter @ScatoniSureShot or check out the DMTC.com seminar page at <https://bit.ly/3PMmQZq>.

Okay...let's get cracking! Today's contest race is the always exciting Opening Day feature: the \$100K Oceanside Stakes, a 3-year-old restricted turf affair contested at one mile on the lawn (with the rails at 0-feet) and restricted to 3-year-olds who have not won a sweepstakes of \$50K at a mile or over in 2022. We've got a full 14-horse field that includes some invaders.

#1 MACKINNON (5/2) is the one to beat. He's a talented horse who has done great work at a mile and here at Del Mar. I'm sure he's been pointed to the turf series here at Del Mar, and he gets the top jock to ride. He'll get a good tracking trip while saving all the ground. The only knock will be the price. GRADE: A.

#2 AMMER HALL (20/1) broke his maiden at first asking in a turf sprint over this course, and then he had to hit the shelf. He came off a long layoff to prep in a dirt sprint against older horses at Pleasanton, presumably as a tune-up for this ambitious spot, where he will stretch out for the first time. The connections are asking a lot, but there must be a reason why they are running this lightly raced runner here. Upset special? GRADE: A.

#3 ST ANTHONY (15/1) is a hard-tryer who will be running on through the lane—but will he be good enough to beat the best in here, since both of his career wins have come up north at Golden Gate. He hasn't been disgraced on this circuit, but he will need to do better. GRADE: X.

#4 BOISE (15/1) is a horse whom I have backed a few times before, hoping he would run back to his solid fourth-place finish in the Qatar Gold Mile, which came over this course last fall on Breeders' Cup Friday. Unfortunately, his turf races haven't been that good since, but I do like a few things about him again today: first off, he returns to Del Mar, the site of his best turf race; secondly, it looks like Wong has entered a rabbit to help this guy's cause. Still, he'll need a career best. GRADE: C.

#5 BRIT'S WIT (12/1) was just claimed for \$50K by Blacker, who doesn't claim many—so it's interesting to see him put this guy right into a stakes race after several mediocre races back East. Blacker

is having a terrific year, and he must see something he likes here, but I'm tempted to watch one. GRADE: X.

#6 CASTLE LEOCH (8/1) was game in victory last time at Belmont, winning an entry-level allowance race in his first try routing. That bodes well for continued improvement, and it's nice to see Mike Smith ride for Ward, who doesn't ship horses out here just for the ocean view. He should give a good account of himself. GRADE: B.

#7 BARSABAS (20/1) is going from being a voided-claim at the \$75K level to running here in the Oceanside, so his connections must love the way he has been training since that May defeat as the 15/10 favorite. Before that, he was running well against similar competition as he faces today, so he's not in without a shot—especially since his one Del Mar turf try was pretty solid—but he's going to have to show a bit more oomph in the lane today. GRADE: X.

#8 BALNIKHOV (IRE) (3/1) ran two pretty good races in a row before a dull effort in the Cinema last time, where he stalked 3-wide and failed to kick on as the 3/5 favorite. Maybe he didn't like the addition of blinkers that day—or perhaps he didn't appreciate 9-panels. Well, the hood comes off today, and he shortens up to a mile, so he'll have every chance to show his best stuff. Note that Hernandez sides with the rail horse, but you get Rispoli instead, and that's not too bad. My only concern is that D'Amato was winning everything at Santa Anita, and yet this guy couldn't get a win. Still, he's a major threat and a likely win-candidate. GRADE: A.

#9 DANDY WARHOL (IRE) (6/1) looked good breaking his maiden at first asking on the all-weather at Dundalk back in March. He was purchased out of that race by an owner who does very well with these types of imports—so whoever picks out these horses is doing a great job. That said, I prefer when this owner gives these types of horses to Mullins, since Glatt—whom I like and do really well with—is much better with sprinters and dirt horses, in my humble opinion. I'm tempted to watch one, but it wouldn't shock me if this guy could run a little bit. GRADE: C.

#10 NERO TULIP (GB) (12/1) won two in a row overseas as a juvenile, but he was sent off at 17/1 in his first U.S. start, and he failed to menace after an eventful journey. I can forgive that race, but I don't like that he needed some time off after that May race, so it's likely he might need one before firing his best shot here in SoCal. That being said, I do think there is more here than meets the eye. GRADE: C.

#11 ROYAL 'N RANDO (20/1) is a cool Cal-bred who has won five races while acting on all surfaces, so you have to admire his versatility. Three back, he won the Silky Sullivan at a mile up north against fellow Cal-breds, and he was game in victory while doing it. His races since then have been just as good, so he brings solid form into this event—but the waters get deeper today as he faces much tougher competition than he's been used to. GRADE: X.

#12 AS AMATTER OF FACT (20/1), the second Wong entrant, has done his best work sprinting, so I'm thinking this guy might be a rabbit for his longer-fused stablemate, especially since Boise has beaten him before. Expect Roman to gun hard and hope for the best. GRADE: X.

#13 HEAVEN STREET (12/1) has three wins at three different tracks, so hats off to him. He now makes his first SoCal start after a decent third in an overnight stakes race at Canterbury, where he had a wide

journey, so he should be fit and ready for this. I think he can be competitive here, but the post is brutal, and it will be up to Van Dyke to try and work out the right trip. GRADE: B.

#14 SYDNEY STREET (GB) (8/1) won two in a row overseas this past winter, and he now makes his first U.S. start off a January layoff for a trainer who doesn't really play this import game. I'm going to watch one, especially since this post is going to make things very tricky for a runner whose two wins came with forwardly placed trips on the synth. GRADE: C.

CONCLUSION

The top-two morning-line favorites—#1 MACKINNON and #8 BALNIKHOV (IRE)—are deserving choices, but their short prices won't do us any favors in the contest. I'm going bombs-away here with #2 **AMMER HALL** at 20/1. I have to think that Peter Miller is going to have this one ready to fire his best shot, and I think that jockey Vazquez is one of the better riders in this colony. If you don't want to take a leap of faith with me, you can look at the two invaders from back East, #6 CASTLE LEOCH and #13 HEAVEN STREET.

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