DEL MAR FEATURED RACES OF THE DAY
By Frank R. Scatoni
On Twitter @ScatoniSureShot

Date: 9/3/22
Race 9: $300K Del Mar Derby (G2) for 3-year-olds going 9-furlongs on turf (rails at 0-feet)
Post: approx. post 5:10 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW
What a stacked Pacific Classic Day card! We've got 11-races, five stakes races, four graded-stakes races, a mandatory Pick 6 payout, an on-track live bankroll contest, and two online contest races to sink our teeth into. In other words, opportunities abound! So let's get to it: the first contest race of the day is a very competitive renewal of the $300K Del Mar Derby (G2), a 9-furlong turf affair (with the rails at 0-feet) for 3-year-olds only. [NOTE: my analysis of today's Race 11 is at the end of this analysis.]

#1 CABO SPIRIT (4/1) looked very good winning the La Jolla (G3), which is a traditional prep race for this event. He now makes the second start of his form cycle, stretches out a half-furlong, and draws a good post for a good jockey/trainer combination. I see no reason why this guy won't run well again today. GRADE: B.

#2 SLOW DOWN ANDY (8/1), the first O'Neill entrant, has class with several graded-stakes victories on dirt, so he must be considered off that alone—but how will he handle the turf for the first time? Well, the breeding suggests he'll be just fine, but you never know until they get on it. He has tactical speed, and should be attending the early pace, perhaps setting it up for his stablemate. I suppose he could hang on and win, but I'm going to stick with the proven turf horses. GRADE: C.

#3 WAR AT SEA (6/1) has won three in a row, including a 9-furlong victory in the Cinema at Santa Anita, where he beat the rail horse. That said, he has tactical speed and was forwardly placed on a speed-favoring turf course that day, so it wouldn't shock me if the rail horse turned the tables on him today. There's really nothing wrong with this one; I'm just not really feeling it today. GRADE: C.

#4 SPYCATCHER (30/1), the first Glatt trainee, is still a maiden, so this is a really tough spot for him to be in. He does have tactical speed, so he should get a good trip, but the waters get much deeper today. Methinks he is just a rabbit for his longer-fused stablemate. GRADE: X.

#5 DANDY WARHOL (IRE) (4/1), the second Glatt charge, looked really sharp last time when winning an N1X against eight other horses. He was coming off a better-than-looked troubled trip in the Oceanside, so it was nice to see him get a W. He's a nice horse, but it's telling to me that win-rider Rispoli sticks with the outside horse, so I have to go with his judge of horse flesh when it comes to choosing mounts. Still, there is upside here, and it's not like you lose anything with Prat! GRADE: B.

#6 ST ANTHONY (30/1) is a pretty honest horse, but it should be noted that all of his wins have come against weaker competition up north. He's in good hands with Drysdale and with Berrios taking the call, but this is a tough spot for a horse who was 23/1 and well-beaten in the Oceanside. GRADE: X.

#7 MACKINNON (3/1) looks good in here; he has tactical speed and it looks like he has been pointed to this spot. Toss his even-money defeat in the Oceanside where he was buried at the rail in a full field and

did not have the most comfortable of trips. He'll have options from the 7-hole today. Plus, his owner— Colorado Avalanche player Erik Johnson—is going to be out here with the Stanley Cup on Saturday, so I'm thinking he'd love to pose in the winner's circle with the hardware! *Ferda!* GRADE: A.

#8 BARSABAS (20/1) is a cool horse who tries hard every time, but he seems a slight cut below the best in here. He just ran third against a few of these in the Oceanside, where he set the pace and was overtaken late. I think the same fate awaits. GRADE: X.

#9 BALNIKHOV (IRE) (5/2) is the one to beat. He looked so good in the Oceanside, coming from off the pace to mow them all down fairly easily in that one-mile affair. His closing time was super-solid, so getting more ground is going to help his cause. The only concern is the post, but win-rider Rispoli sticks around, and he's the best out here when it comes to working out a good turf trip. GRADE: A.

CONCLUSION
I don't have anything super-clever in here, since I like the top few choices. My top pick is **#7 MACKINNON (3/1)** simply because I think this race was the goal all along, and I think he's sitting on a big one.

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Date: 9/3/22
Race 11: $300K Del Mar Handicap (G2) contested at 11-furlongs on the lawn (rails at 0-feet)
Post: approx. post 6:20 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

This is a really tough renewal of the $300K Del Mar Handicap (G2), an 11-furlong turf affair for some excellent handicap turfers. D'Amato is loaded for bear, so he seems to have the race surrounded—and I actually like one of his horses the best at what should be a good price.

#1 DICEY MO CHARA (GB) (15/1) gets a major jock upgrade, and he has races on his form from his 3-year-old year that would be a good fit against these—but it doesn't look like he's really taken a step forward this year, with his best race coming up north on the synth at Golden Gate. He's a cool horse, but he's not for me today. GRADE: X.

#2 GOLD PHOENIX (IRE) (6/1), the first D'Amato, looks really good to me, since he's been compromised in his last few defeats with no pace to run at. He also gets more ground today, and he has the look of a stayer, especially when you consider how good his gallop-outs have been. Oh, and look who shows up to ride: Prat! GRADE: A.

#3 GREGDAR (5/1), the second D'Amato, looked good winning last time, and I thought last time was the time to have him, since he was bet down to favoritism against some really nice N2X types, despite hardly ever taking that kind of money in N2X races previous to that. Hmmm. He fits right back, but I prefer others. GRADE: C.

#4 RED KING (8/1), yet another D'Amato, is a cool old boy, an 8-year-old who has danced a lot of dances and won some big races. That said, this veteran has probably lost a step and will need everything to go his way to get the W. But if he wins, applaud and tip your cap for this warrior. GRADE: C.

#5 TANGO TANGO TANGO (20/1) was 14/1 against a few of these last time, and he ran to those odds, stalking the pace and finding nothing. He can run better today second off the bench, but he will need a big step forward. GRADE: X.

#6 TIZAMAGICIAN (4/1) was nominated for the Pacific Classic (G1) but decided to duck Flightline and run here instead, which is curious, since he's only tried the turf once, to no avail. He has speed and should be attending the pace—and he can certainly handle any distance—but I suspect he'll be overbet, and I'm going to look for someone to run him down. GRADE: X.

#7 ORDER AND LAW (30/1) is a very versatile sort who can act on any surface and run at any distance—but he seems a little class-compromised in here against proven graded-stakes turf horses. GRADE: X.

#8 TESORO (20/1) was 13/1 in a restricted stakes last time and finished seventh. The waters get much deeper today. GRADE: X.

#9 MASTER PIECE (CHI) (3/1) could prove very tough if he moves forward off his visually impressive victory in the Eddie Read (G2) last time, where I thought he was just prepping for this. I suspect he'll be shorter than his morning-line, and I expect him to be competitive right back, but the post is no picnic (even though he did win from the 10-hole last time when he took out half the field out of the gate!). GRADE: B.

#10 MASTEROFFOXHOUNDS (6/1), the final D'Amato, has tactical speed and will need to use it from out here, and I think that will compromise his chances late. I like him more for underneath, but he could easily win if he moves forward second off the bench. GRADE: B.

#11 HEYWOODS BEACH (8/1) has acted on all surfaces and can run all day, so that must be considered—but I've never considered him a top-tier turf horse, and he'll have to work out a trip from all the way out here. If he wins, I lose—but it could make for a nice day for Sadler if he can capture the late double with Flightline into this guy. GRADE: X.

CONCLUSION
I do think this is a really competitive race, but **#2 GOLD PHOENIX (IRE) (6/1)** looks really good to me. I think this was the target for him, and I love that Prat takes the call after a couple of tough trips and slow paces the last few times.

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