

## DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

By Frank R. Scatoni

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**Date:** 7/23/23

**Race 9:** \$100K restricted Wickerr contested at 8-furlongs on turf (rails at 0-feet)

**Post:** approx. post 6:08 p.m. PDT

### OVERVIEW

It's the 34<sup>th</sup> running of the Wickerr Stakes, a one-mile turf affair restricted to horses who are non-winners of a sweepstakes of \$50K other than state-bred at one mile or over since September 1. It's a fine renewal of this event, which drew a big, full field.

**#1 CATHKIN PEAK (IRE) (4/1)**, the first D'Amato entrant, has legitimate closing times, so he figures to be running on strongly through the lane. He'll also get to save ground—but that means he'll also have to work out a trip in this big, full field. Note that he's never been off the board at a mile, so I'm going to bet that Rispoli will do whatever he can to get this guy to the winner's circle. GRADE: A.

**#2 EVENING SUN (GB) (6/1)** is a little interesting, simply because he attracts Berrios, who nearly won a Grade 1 with Irideo (Arg), so that tells me something. Before this guy had to hit the shelf, he was in terrific form, reeling off two wins in a row, including a Grade 3 at Golden Gate. But therein lies the rub: he hasn't been seen since April 2022, and that's a long layoff to overcome. Still, I'm interested. GRADE: B.

**#3 WHATMAKESSAMMYRUN**—program scratch.

**#4 LAMPLIGHTER JACK (20/1)** has a ton of early speed, so you know exactly where he's going to be turning for home—but I'm not sure he'll be able to sustain his run against these types of stakes horses, and it's very difficult to wire the field at a mile when the rails are set at zero-feet. GRADE: X.

**#5 RESTRAINEDVENGENGE (30/1)** is a cool old boy who has earned more than \$1 million in his storied career. That said, he's at the twilight of his career, and he just hasn't been able to turn back the clock. I will say that he does get some class-relief, and he does figure to improve stretching out in his second start off the bench. GRADE: X.

**#6 FLAVIUS (20/1)** has enough speed to get a good forward position behind Lamplighter Jack, so he will be in the right spot turning for home when that horse starts to back up—but is he good enough to win? His best race came in a restricted event, so that has to mean something since he's been riding in graded-stakes races of late. The big knock is that his best race came on the lead, and throughout his career, he's had a reluctancy to pass horses. GRADE: X.

**#7 DU JOUR (5/1)** is that rare Baffert trainee who has done fine work on the turf, but what you see is what you get, since he's been running similar figs since coming off a December 2021 layoff. That said, he has been facing tough graded-stakes horses, so he'll get some class-relief today, but I like him more for underneath. GRADE: C.

#8 TIME TO PARTY (20/1) should get a good stalking trip, but he faces a stiff class test today after just losing as the 7/5 favorite in a starter-allowance race. I do like that he's pretty honest, but he'll need a big move forward today to find the winner's circle. GRADE: X.

**#9 SALESMAN (IRE) (8/1)** figures big-time today, making his second start off a layoff after emigrating from France. Toss his U.S. debut, where he had to break from the 11-hole and had a pretty eventful journey. Mandella is so patient, so I'm sure that was just a prep for this spot. Plus, he doesn't have to face Grade 1 animals today. GRADE: A.

#10 CASH EQUITY (FR) (8/1), the second D'Amato runner, looked good last time beating \$80K AOCs, but he was the 2/1 favorite, so he was expected to win. He'll need to move forward big-time today, and it should be noted that Hernandez sides with the Baffert horse, so that's a big knock to me. GRADE: X.

#11 IRIDEO (ARG) (7/2) is a cool old boy who always shows up for work but often finds himself on the wrong side of the photo. That said, he is the defending champ, and he's done good work in only three starts over this course, so he should be right around the wire again—but it's a bit concerning that Berrios, who just missed with her last time in a Grade 1, jumps ship. GRADE: B.

#12 I'M A GAMBLER (IRE) (6/1) did good work overseas before coming to the U.S. and running a decent fourth in the Mathis Brothers Mile (G2) while coming off a two-month layoff. He's been off since then, but I'm okay with that, since Glatt knows how to get one ready to roll first time back. That said, the post is no picnic. GRADE: B.

#13 HIT THE ROAD (12/1) is a Grade 1 winner, so he brings some back class to the proceedings. The concern is that he's no longer the same horse he was back in 2021. He's only raced three times since 2021, so he clearly has some issues, and his last two races were sub-par. I trust Blacker to get this one right again at some point, but I think I'll watch this one. GRADE: X.

#14 COUNT OF AMAZONIA (IRE) (20/1) is a cool and honest racehorse, but his best work has come against much weaker company—and there must be a reason why Hess been sprinting this horse instead of routing him. I can't knock a runner who has hit the board in almost half of his races, but this is a tough spot. GRADE: X.

## **CONCLUSION**

As you can see, my top two picks are **#1 CATHKIN PEAK (IRE) (4/1)** and **#9 SALESMAN (IRE) (8/1)**, but based on the morning-lines, the contest play would be the latter, since he's going to be the bigger price.

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