

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

By Frank R. Scatoni

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Date: 7/27/25

Race 9: \$250K Eddie Read (G2) contested at 9-furlongs on turf (rails at 18-feet)

Post: approx. post 6:03 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

#1 DICEY MO CHARA (GB) (12/1) has earned more than \$680K the hard way. He's started 31 times and has only 4 wins, but he has 12 placings in pretty lucrative races. In other words, he typically shows up for work and cashes a check, which is why his last race is concerning. He saved ground and found nothing against upper-level allowance foes. It was not his typical honest effort, and that's not something you want to see coming into a tough race like this. That said, when he shows up he's usually right around the wire—but someone usually out-finishes him. Look, it wouldn't completely shock me if he won, but I think a few others are slightly better animals. GRADE: X.

#2 BALNIKOV (IRE) (10/1), the first D'Amato runner, has a solid late kick, but more often than not, he leaves himself with way too much to do—and that is not a good thing the way this turf course has been playing so far this meet. I don't know what the track superintendent did to the turf course, but it's been a parade of wire winners. I've always thought this guy was a cool horse, but I also think he's a cut below some of the best in here, and he needs more racing luck than most of these giving his run style. GRADE: X.

#3 ATITLAN (4/1) is a talented 4-year-old who still has some upside, especially since he's in good hands with Shirreffs, but he's another one who looks to sit off the pace and power home, and that means he'll have to buck the course profile. Plus, I think he's a little bit better going longer, and Shirreffs is on record saying that this is a prep for the 11-furlong Del Mar Derby (G2) later in the meet (courtesy of *DRF*'s Brad Free). GRADE: C.

#4 **FORMIDABLE MAN (5/2)** won a Grade 1 over this course and at this distance last year as a 3-year-old, and then he did it again when taking the Frank E. Kilroe (G1) in his second start this year. He had too much to do last time going a mile, so the added ground today should definitely help. He does like to come from off the pace, but he's way more tactical than many of his main rivals. GRADE: A.

#5 GOLD PHOENIX (IRE) (3/1), the second D'Amato, is such a cool horse. He's earned nearly \$2 million, and he's been the best U.S. turf representative at the Breeders' Cup with two fourth-place finishes in the Breeders' Cup Turf (G1) the last two years. You might not think fourth

place is a big deal, but trust me, it is. He's held his own with the most elite turf horses in the world, and that's not an easy thing to do. That said, he is another deep closer who will have to buck the course profile—and conventional wisdom suggests that this is a prep for the longer Del Mar Handicap (G2), a race he's won a remarkable three times in a row. GRADE: B.

#6 STAY HOT (6/1) ran well in tough graded-stakes races as a 3-year-old, and it was nice to see him fire a big shot in his first start this year when wiring the field in an overnight stakes at Lone Star, a curious spot for his comebacker, but clearly Eurton was looking for a good spot for this guy to prep for this race. Last year, he liked to come from off the pace, utilizing a very strong late kick, but last time he was prominent early, and that kind of versatility will come in handy in a field like this. He will need a big step forward, but the hot-riding Fresu has been a big difference-maker so far this meet. I'm expecting a big effort. GRADE: A.

#7 CABO SPIRIT (5/1) does his best work on or near the lead, so I'm a little confused as to why Papaprodromou would also enter stablemate Balladeer, who also likes to be on or near the lead. I'm sure the jocks will be told not to duel, but sometimes these horses have minds of their own. I do think Cabo Spirit is faster and a little classier—and his run style is well-suited to the way this course has been playing. He was right there three back at 31/1 against Formidable Man, so don't sell him too short—and I have a feeling he might go off higher than 5/1. GRADE: A.

#8 BALLADEER (20/1) is accustomed to getting easy leads in longer turf races, so my guess is that this frontrunner will concede the lead to his inside stablemate and look to just sit off the pace in good stalking position. He hasn't won in a long time, but he has some races on his form that are pretty darn good, and you know he'll be fit after three marathon turf races. A few of these have him on form, and that's an issue because I'm not sure where the necessary improvement will come from with this 6-year-old. GRADE: X.

CONCLUSION

This is a really tough race to assess because of the way the turf course has been playing, and this field is filled with terrific stretch runners, which is how good turf horses are supposed to run. So I'm basing my analysis on the bias I've seen, which is why I like two horses—**#6 STAY HOT (6/1)** and **#7 CABO SPIRIT (5/1)**—who haven't been as classy as Formidable Man and Gold Phoenix (Ire). Then again, class often prevails on turf, no matter how tilted the course is playing. Note: I do have **#4 FORMIDABLE MAN (5/2)** as an "A," but he won't offer any value in the win pool

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