

DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

By Frank R. Scatoni

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Date: 7/31/25

Race 7: \$80K optional-claiming/N2X for F&M going 8.5-furlongs turf (rails at 24-feet)

Post: approx. post 5:07 p.m. PDT

OVERVIEW

A full field of 14 ladies are entered in this \$80K optional-claiming/N2X contested at 8.5-furlongs on the turf, but since the rails are set at 24-feet, only 10 will greet the starter. Still, it's a really competitive field, so there should be plenty of places to land in this terrific online contest race.

#1 PARIS SECRET (IRE) (20/1), the first D'Amato entrant, makes the second start of her form cycle while cutting back from a 10-furlong stakes affair where she just basically ran around the track. She should be super-fit off that, so you can expect her to be rolling late. How far back will she be, however? She's a Grade 3 winner, so there's class here, but she'll be at the mercy of pace and trip. GRADE: C.

#2 RUNAMILEINMYSHOES (3/1) has tactical speed, so she'll benefit from the way the course has been playing so far this meet, flattering horses who have raced on or near the lead. Rugelach, on her outside, should keep her company every step of the way, however, so can this gal win the battle and the war while also trying to get an extra half-furlong? She's no great shakes at 3/1, but she's certainly usable in your exotics—though I'm going to try and beat her in the top slot. GRADE: C.

#3 **PARADISE LAKE (6/1)**, the first Eurton runner, looks solid to me. This gal fires every time, and I like that she doesn't have to be way off the pace like some of her main rivals. Her race two back was very live (the winner came back to win a Grade 3), and I like that she dug in to win a 9-furlong N1X in her last start. She's been freshened for this, so I'm expecting her to run a big one today. GRADE: A.

#4 HOPEFUL (GB) (4/1) looked good making her first U.S. start a winning one back on June 15. She beat nine other N1X foes, and she was game in that neck victory. She's had enough time off to avoid the dreaded Euro bounce, but she will have to face tougher N2X types today, so we'll see if she can make it two in a row. She's a legit contender, and I'm expecting her to be shorter than 4/1. GRADE: B.

#5 JOHANNY (20/1) overcame some issues in her first SoCal start to get up late and win by a neck in a 6.5-furlong downhill turf affair back in May. She rewarded her backers at 15/1, and

she's likely to be another big price today. I don't like that she hasn't won beyond a mile, so we'll see how she handles this quirky two-turn configuration, coming out of the chute. I'm okay watching one. GRADE: C.

#6 BALTIC FIRE (20/1) has two wins over this Del Mar turf course, including one at today's distance, so she'll appreciate a change of scenery after a mixed bag of races at Santa Anita this past winter and spring. She seems a bit slow on paper, but I like that she's pretty tractable, so Carmona can have her forwardly placed over this turf course, if he sees fit. Last November, she tracked in a good position before digging in to win at this distance at 15/1, so a similar trip could have her in the frame once again. She won't get bet because of her slow figs and her little known jock, but she's a lightly raced 4-year-old who could easily improve today. Upset special? GRADE: A.

#7 CIRCLE OF TRUST (12/1), the second D'Amato trainee, came off a long layoff last time and just ran around the track from a wide position. Surely that was just a leg-stretcher for today, since she was 24/1 and never looked like she'd be in contention. Note that she's a Grade 3 winner at 9-furlongs, so today's extra half-furlong after that mile prep race should suit her well. We have not seen the best of this lightly raced 4-year-old, so don't sell her too short. She needs a big step forward, but that's not impossible. If she doesn't fire today, definitely look for her next time third off the bench. GRADE: A.

#8 RUGELACH (7/2) has good early speed, so you can expect her to latch onto Runamileinmyshoes, and then we'll see which one is good enough to put the other one away and then stay on to beat the rest of the bunch. This course has favored speed, so she'll have every chance to get the W today, especially since she can put the heat on her inside foe any time she wants, but do note that this one has been off since last September, so she'll have to be super-fit today while attending the early pace. Also note that she was claimed for \$40K two back, so this is the toughest field she's ever faced. Look, I know that she and her rival can run one-two around the course, but they'll both be short, so let's take them on. GRADE: C.

#9 CANDY BAR (8/1) took a while to clear her NIX hurdle back East, which she finally did after too many tries to count back in July at Ellis Park. She made an easy lead and never looked back. She won't have things as easy for her today, but then again, she doesn't need the lead to win, since her run style is pretty adaptable. I typically upgrade East Coast turf runners, even ones who don't look all that great on paper like this one, but I can see her being stuck a little wide, and that should soften her up late. GRADE: C.

#10 VIBEZ (6/1), the second Eurton charge, just missed in a stakes race at Lone Star on June 28, and I have to think that that 8.5-furlong affair will have her in prime form for this spot. Two and three back, she was competitive at this level, and her tactical speed will give Berrios plenty of options, though it's never easy to get good position with that short run out of the chute and into the stretch for the first time. I'd like her a lot more if she were drawn inside, but she's certainly capable of getting the W with a repeat of her last race. GRADE: B.

#11 SAKURA BLOSSOM (20/1) (AE), the first Powell runner, was surely just prepping for this last time when running in a dirt sprint at Los Al. Her turf races at this level three and four back were pretty solid, so she's definitely a fit here. I'm just not sure what kind of trip she'll get from out here, since she likes to track the pace, and that means she'll probably be wide most of the journey. GRADE: X.

#12 ROYAL CHARTER (GB) (12/1) (AE), the second Powell trainee, has been competitive at this level, but she's had her chances and hasn't been able to get the job done. She's another who is looking at a wide stalking trip if she gets in. GRADE: X.

#13 VALENCE (20/1) (AE) is a pretty cool horse who can act on any surface and who can adapt to any pace, so I always like rooting for gals like this. That said, she'll need plenty of help from out here, and she'll need to run a career-best figure on the lawn. GRADE: X.

#14 CERTITUDE (FR) (5/2) (AE) was 9/5 at a similar level last time, and she was outkicked late to finish second after attending the pace. That was at a mile, so I'm not sure if she'll be able to find that extra oomph going an extra half-furlong, especially since she's going to be stalking the other speed horses from a bad outside position. I'm bummed she's probably not going to get into the race, because she's the kind of horse I'd love to beat, especially when you consider the fact that Sadler had her pegged for a starter-allowance type until she took advantage of some speed-friendly turf courses to flatter her true ability. GRADE: X.

CONCLUSION

I know full well that the top two choices could run one-two around the track as the two quality speed horses in the race, but there's also a real chance that they cancel each other out. That said, my top pick is **#3 PARADISE LAKE (6/1)**, and I expect her to be pretty good value in here. If you want a bigger price, consider **#7 CIRCLE OF TRUST (12/1)** or **#6 BALTIC FIRE (20/1)**.

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