

## DEL MAR FEATURED RACE OF THE DAY

By Frank R. Scatoni

X: [Frank R. Scatoni \(@ScatoniSureShot\) / X](#)

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**Date:** 8/30/25

**Race 10:** \$1 million Pacific Classic (G1) contested at 10-furlongs on the main track

**Post:** approx. post 6:11 p.m. PDT

### OVERVIEW

It's the marquee race of the summer, the \$1 million Pacific Classic (G1), a 10-furlong main-track affair for the top older horses in the country. What a race, filled with suspense and intrigue: a Baffert beast who has never been 10-furlongs; the second-best 3-year-old in America facing elders for the first time; an East Coast invader whose best race ever came in defeat here at Del Mar. How does this movie end?

Before we find out, keep in mind that there are two online contest races today, so you can pick and choose your spots. The other one is Race 11: the \$300K Del Mar Handicap (G2), and if you keep scrolling after this race, you'll find my analysis for that as well.

#1 FIERCENESS (3/1) is capable of running some monster races, but he's also capable of some serious duds, like last time when he finished fifth in the Whitney (G1) at 6/5 with no major excuse. That said, this East Coast invader ran his guts out last year here when finishing second in the Breeders' Cup Classic (G1), attending a wicked pace only to get run down late by the best closer in the race. He'll have to go from the rail, and a lot of his success will depend on the race shape and whether or not Midnight Mammoth or someone else tries to stick it to him. GRADE: B.

#2 MIDNIGHT MAMMOTH (12/1) ran lights out in the Gold Cup (G2) when losing a tough one to the very talented Skippy Longstocking. He paired up tops in that race, so it's no surprise that Dollase gave him some rest to bring him back a fresh horse here off a three-month layoff. This guy is that unique type of horse who has legit early speed but also some serious stamina as well. His best race came in last year's Cougar II (G3) here at Del Mar when he obliterated the field in that 12-furlong race. He won't have to run as far today, but that does mean he'll have to run faster early, and that could pose a problem against some really classy animals. I'll be rooting for the connections, but I think a win here is going to be tough. GRADE: X.

#3 ULTIMATE GAMBLE (20/1) was put up to first last time after getting outgamed late by a horse who came back to win the always tough Longacres Mile, franking this one's form. I like that he has tactical speed, so he should get a great forwardly placed trip—but I'm concerned

about today's 10-furlong distance, since he's never been this far, and it's not like he's shown an extra gear late in any of his shorter races. GRADE: X.

**#4 NYSOS (8/5)** is ridiculously talented, and I love the way that Baffert has been campaigning this horse this year—taking his time with him, building a strong foundation, moving forward each race since May, and having this Grade One as his target all along. Of course, this guy's never been beyond 8.5-furlongs, so we'll see how he handles the taxing 10-panels today, but after his brilliant victory in the Triple Bend (G3) at 7-furlongs two back, Baffert said he's been planning to stretch this guy out all along because he believes he's absolutely a two-turn horse classic horse. Well, he proved that he could go two turns in the San Diego Handicap (G2), an extremely useful prep for this. In Baffert, we trust. All else pay cash. GRADE: A.

**#5 INDISPENSABLE (15/1)** hinted at promise last year, but it took him a while to really get going. Once he broke his maiden, he showed up in some decent stakes races and wasn't disgraced—but he didn't win either. He was game in victory last time when necking out my top pick in that race, Lyell's Song, so I'm kind of annoyed at him right now—but I won't let that cloud my judgment. I just think he's a one-paced grinder who needs the speed to back up for him to sort of win a race by default. I know that sounds harsh, but that's how he's always been. Granted, he's still a 4-year-old with plenty of upside, and if one guy can take this horse to the next level, it's Sadler. I think he's outclassed by the top three in here, but I am curious to see how this grinder handles 10-furlongs. GRADE: X.

**#6 JOURNALISM (9/5)** was the target in his two defeats this year to Sovereignty; well, today, he'll be the one targeting, and that's a good thing for a horse who needs something to run at. There's no denying this 3-year-old's talent and gutsiness, but we shall see if his big figs can be replicated while facing older horses for the first time. He's in good hands with Michael McCarthy, so I'm expecting him to run his race, but will it be good enough to run down the likes of Fierceness and Nysos? Maybe. GRADE: B.

**#7 LURE HIM IN (20/1)** is a very cool 8-year-old who has some graded-stakes form from back in the day, but that was a long time ago. This year, he's run some decent races, but he's been doing his best work against high-level claimers and starter-handicap horses. This is a completely different ballgame, and a win against these would be a total shock to me. GRADE: X.

**#8 TARANTINO (20/1)** is a 7-year-old who is in the best form of his career, so hats off to Peter Eurton, who took this former claimer and picked up some nice checks with him in graded-stakes races. That said, this horse has always been a career nibbler, so I just can't see a world in which he presses the pace and has enough left to outfight some classier horses when it matters most. GRADE: X.

## **CONCLUSION**

"You come at the King, you best not miss." That's a quote from *The Wire*, but it's most certainly applicable to Bob Baffert here at Del Mar. He has won this race seven times, and I know how

important it is for him to get his eighth with **#4 NYSOS (8/5)**. I'm excited to see him try the classic distance, but if he doesn't handle it, then **#6 JOURNALISM (9/5)** and **#1 FIERCENESS (3/1)** will have every chance to depose the King.

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**Date:** 8/30/25

**Race 11:** \$300K Del Mar Handicap (G2) contested at 11-furlongs on turf (rails at 0-ft.)

**Post:** approx. post 6:43 p.m. PDT

### OVERVIEW

Today's second online contest race is the nightcap, the \$300K Del Mar Handicap (G2) contested at 11-furlongs on the lawn with the rails at zero-feet. The great Gold Phoenix (Ire) is looking for his fourth win in this race, a remarkable achievement—but he's got his work cut out for him today after drawing the short straw and getting parked all the way outside in the 11-hole.

#1 BALNIKHOV (IRE) (12/1), the first D'Amato entrant, is a hard-tryer who often comes on with his late run—but he's winless this year, and it looks like this 6-year-old may have lost a little punch. That said, he enters this race off the same pattern as last year: a prep in the Eddie Read (G2) and then a shot at glory in the Del Mar Handicap (G2). Last year, that approach worked: he ran a monster race but lost by a neck, finishing third behind his stablemate, Gold Phoenix (Ire). If he can replicate that effort, he'll be right there yet again. GRADE: B.

#2 ADIOS COLE (30/1) finished up nicely to beat allowance types last time despite coming off a January layoff. He was game to the wire, and his closing time was above-average, which is why I suppose his connections are taking a shot here. He's definitely in deep class-wise, so we'll see how he hangs with the big boys, but a win would be a legitimate upset. GRADE: X.

#3 NITTI (IRE) (12/1) has a nice late kick, and you have to like that he can run all day, proving that in the marathon 14-furlong San Juan Capistrano (G3) last time. He's been freshened since that June effort, but he's pitted against a much better group of horses than he was facing at Santa Anita. Powell is a terrific trainer, and I do think this 4-year-old has upside, but he will need a career-best against these beasts. GRADE: X.

#4 STAY HOT (5/1) is a really nice horse who looks to be sitting on a peak effort, third off the bench after two nice comeback races in preparation for this. Last year, this guy wasn't too far off Formidable Man, the morning-line favorite in today's Del Mar Mile (G2). He also traded decisions with today's foe Atitlan, so if you like that one, then you have to like this one as well. I'm a little concerned about the 11-furlong distance, but it wouldn't shock me if this one ran a winning race today—but if he does, it will have to be a career-best. GRADE: C.

#5 ATITLAN (5/1), like Stay Hot, is a 4-year-old who still has some upside. Unlike Stay Hot, however, this guy is proven at these long distances. Note that he was supposed to go in the Eddie Read (G2) earlier in the meet as a prep for this, but Shirreffs decided to train him up to this race. I guess we'll see if that strategy works. If he can run back to his San Luis Rey (G3) victory back in March, he'll have a big say in the outcome. I know I said that if you like Atitlan, then you have to like Stay Hot as well, and I do, but I like Atitlan a little more mainly because he's proven going long. GRADE: B.

#6 MONDEGO (GB) (20/1), the first Michael McCarthy runner, was the gift of the summer last time when he made the second start of his form cycle a winning one, stretching out from 9-furlongs to 11-furlongs to win an upper-level allowance race in game fashion at a square price. Clearly, he likes the course and the distance, but now this 5-year-old will have to take yet another step forward to beat graded-stakes animals. Back in the day, he finished third in a Grade One, so there is some class here—and he's in great hands with McCarthy, so he's not completely out of it, though a minor award seems a bit more likely. GRADE: C.

#7 **TRULY QUALITY (6/1)** disappointed in his one race this year, never getting untracked in the San Marcos (G3) back in February. Thomas backed off him and now brings him back in a very tough spot. That said, I love the confidence, so I'm hoping this guy can run back to that monster victory he had in the Hollywood Turf Cup (G2) here last year going 12-furlongs. I think it's silly that he only gets one pound from Gold Phoenix (Ire), who is a more accomplished foe, but I still like this guy's chances. GRADE: A.

#8 FINAL BOSS (4/1) ran a hole in the wind last time when he crushed a very nice group of upper-level allowance types (including today's morning-line favorite in here, who, granted, was just prepping). It was a career-best for this 4-year-old, and he did it by tracking a fast pace and then taking over when asked. As good as that race was, he was absolutely flattered by a very speed-friendly surface that day, and he had first jump on all of the others. He'll be forwardly placed yet again, but will he be able to sustain his run at 11-furlongs? I'm playing against. GRADE: X.

#9 **ENDLESSLY (12/1)** is a little sneaky in here. First off, no one is better than Michael McCarthy at getting horses to run all day, and this guy has always looked like a horse who wants to run as far as they'll card the races. He had no chance from the 10-hole in the Wickerr on a speed-favoring turf course, but his come-home times in his two previous races were pretty darn good. He was running on late, so today's added ground will help tremendously. McCarthy has thought enough of this guy to run him in a few Grade Ones, so that tells me there is more here than meets the eye. GRADE: A.

#10 CITY EXILE (GB) (20/1), the second D'Amato entrant, has been prepping for this race with two shorter turf races under his belt here at Del Mar, where he ran respectably, albeit against much lesser. His last win came going 11-furlongs, so I have to think this has been the target for

this 5-year-old. On paper, he looks too slow to beat the best in here, but I appreciate the old-school campaigning, and if he runs a career-best, he could spice up the supers. GRADE: X.

#11 GOLD PHOENIX (IRE) (3/1) is such a cool horse, and I will always root for him, even if I don't always bet him. I'm bummed he drew the 11-hole today, because they start this race right at the start of the far turn, so Prat's going to have to work out his magic in a big way. I'm also concerned that he missed his prep in the Eddie Read (G2) because of a minor issue and had to run in an allowance race instead. The good news is: this guy has won this race three times already, so he knows how to find the wire here going 11-furlongs. He leaves things pretty close, however, so there is little margin for error. GRADE: B.

### **CONCLUSION**

I've always been a big fan of #7 **TRULY QUALITY (6/1)**, but betting him does require a leap of faith that Jonathan Thomas will have him right after that February flop. I think 6/1 is a fair price on him. That said, I think that the wiseguy contest play is #9 **ENDLESSLY (12/1)**. This horse could absolutely freak getting all of this extra ground today, and he looks to be sitting on a big effort.

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