

MORE MATRIX CONTENT FOR DEL MAR!

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Date: 11/8/26
Race 8: $100K The Betty Grable for Cal-bred fillies and mares going 7F on the main track
Post: approx. post 4:03 p.m. PST

OVERVIEW

A solid group of Cal-bred fillies and mares lines up for this year's Betty Grable. The even-money favorite, Grand Slam Smile, is a millionaire with proven versatility, but her Del Mar record is just "good" rather than her usual "dominant." The pace doesn't look especially hot, though several could be forwardly placed or press the issue. There are a few interesting alternatives if the favorite falters, but I like one in particular.

#1 GRAND SLAM SMILE is one of my favorite horses in training—a millionaire who can handle any surface or distance. That said, her Del Mar record is solid but not overwhelming: 4 starts, 1 win, 2 seconds, 1 third. She's the class of the field, but there's just enough reason to wonder if she's beatable here. My inclination is to take her on from this tough post, but I can't in good conscience label her anything other than a top contender! GRADE: A.

#2 CHRISTEL CLEAN (5/1) loves Del Mar and is versatile at any distance. She was no match for Grand Slam Smile on turf last time, but she's consistent and always gives a good account of herself. The question is whether she's quite good or fast enough to turn the tables today. GRADE: B.

#3 LINO'S ANGEL (30/1) was 32/1 last time she tried stakes company here and was well-beaten. Would be a major surprise if she were to contend. GRADE: X.

#4 CLUBHOUSE CUTIE (8/1) can sprint or route and comes off a nice win against open company at Santa Anita going 6.5 furlongs. She has a win at Del Mar and still has room to improve, especially with a good stalking trip today—but she needs a career best to win this. GRADE: B.

#5 FIBONACCIS RIDE (15/1) has one dirt win but not here at Del Mar, and her best form has come on turf. She's had a strong year with a Cal-bred stakes win on the grass to brag about, but it's a question whether that form will transfer to this surface and against this field. GRADE: C.

#6 BIG HUG (8/1) is a win machine with 20 wins in 32 starts on fast dirt, missing the board only twice in those main-track spins. Most of her best work has come in the minor leagues, but she's back with Brinkerhoff for a reason—and that's to win this race. At 8/1, she's a good value play for me. GRADE: A.

#7 SHE'S NO QUANT (6/1) is a talented 3-year-old who found Grade 2 company too tough last time at a distance that was too far. She won the 7-furlong Fleet Treat here over the summer against fellow sophomores. Yes, she has ability and could certainly win this, but facing older horses at level weights is a new challenge. GRADE: B.

#8 ISSA COURT (12/1) is versatile and consistent, and she gave Grand Slam Smile a run for her money throughout much of last year's Betty Grable before being outfinished. At eight, she's reliable, but she seems to have reached her ceiling. GRADE: C.

#9 LADY MENDELSSOHN (15/1) was a top pick for me the last two times, and even though she ran well to hit the board, she couldn't quite finish the job against Cal-bred N1X types. This is

a tougher group. She still might have a breakout race in her, but she seems more like a price play for underneath. GRADE: C.

CONCLUSION

#1 GRAND SLAM SMILE (1/1) is the clear class of the field and the most likely winner, but her Del Mar record is just suspect enough to keep things interesting for those looking to beat a short price. Enter **#6 BIG HUG (8/1)**, a consummate professional who knows how to win races. She should get a great stalking trip while racing in the clear—and 7-furlongs is her specialty. My gut says she won't be as high as 8/1, but with the chalk being so short, Big Hug should still be a bettable price.

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