

Del Mar Bottom Line

By John Lies



John began working at Del Mar in 1993 and has provided analysis on simulcast television for nearly a decade. This year he joined Will Rogers Downs and Fair Meadows as the racing secretary, announcer and oddsmaker and has called races at all Southern California racetracks.

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RACE ONE

#1 HADFUNLASTNIGHT is a winning warrior. The seven-year-old has finished first or second in exactly half his lifetime starts, boasts more wins than any other and exits a key live race. He has speed to get right in the race and was recently second going a mile.

#3 SUCCESSFUL RUNNER is another strong seven-year-old contender. He has never finished out of the top three while lightly raced throughout his career and lands in Southern California for the first time. He won both of his starts this year in Kentucky.

#9 ACCELERANT tops the oldsters in this field at age nine. He proved in his last start he still has what it takes with a convincing win under the same rider aboard him today as he goes out for a different trainer. This guy has visited the Del Mar winners circle before.

RACE TWO

#7 RADISH seems ripe for the picking. The daughter of a popular stallion here in California has finished second in both of her starts to date. She defeated the only other runner in this group to have raced before in one of those outs and now draws outside.

#2 I'LL BE AROUND finished only a head behind the top selection in this race when third in her career debut. Her experience could make a difference in this field of mostly unraced maidens. She was cut out to be useful at a young age and does have speed.

#3 COCO SMOOCHES could be worth a look at a price first out. She hails from a winning family which includes a graded stakes-placed juvenile runner and should do well early in her career. Her rider is having a good year and can hustle one out of the gate.

RACE THREE

#4 AMERICAN ARISTOCRAT could be a good gamble. He has assembled a solid record up north including some turf wins while facing lesser opposition. He figures to utilize his early speed under a light apprentice rider much like he was doing last fall.

#8 ANATOLIAN HEAT lacks seasoning but has ability. This will mark his first try against winners and only his fourth lifetime start. He has moved forward each out with the addition of turf and more distance for a trainer who is generally in it to win it.

#10 PREACHER ROE has what it takes to be competitive in this event. He has not raced since New Year's Day but was in good form when last seen and finished out of the exacta only once last year. He is winless in two turf tries but was second in both of them.

RACE FOUR

#2 NEXTDOORNEIGHBOR returns to the races at age nine for his first start in ten months. He won easily in both of his outs here last summer and has made only one start out of state since. He could represent wagering value and certainly knows how to win.

#3 MY SAMURAI WARRIOR won first off the claim for his current connections last out and can win again today. The same rider who made a splash here in his first year at Del Mar last year got to know him last out and is back in saddle looking for another.

#1 DROVER CRAZY is taking a drop in class and should be competitive at this level. He won here at Del Mar when the track was a synthetic surface but has proven ability on dirt as well. The inside post position is not always a plus at this particular distance.

RACE FIVE

#5 LA BOHEME is reunited with the same jockey who both rode her to her only win so far and has made such a positive impression with his riding style since coming to this country. That could make a difference. She faces winners here for just the second time.

#11 GRANDMA'S HANDS is the one to beat. The mare has progressed steadily since arriving from her native Ireland and was second in her last two races against similar opposition. She may only need to move at the right time and not lose too much ground.

#9 STYLISH IN BLACK could be a good play at generous odds. The lightly-raced mare is overdue for some racing luck after some troubled journeys and an off-turf throw out when sent off favored. Her two wins have come in her only starts over this turf course.

RACE SIX

#12 SONG FOR JADE looks like the one to catch. She came close to leading all the way in a similarly short maiden claiming event last month and this looks like much the same scenario. She figures to try and flee these from the outside gate and not look back.

#6 WONDROUS CAT has led early and weakened late in both of her starts so far. She was well supported at the windows on both occasions and today runs for a different trainer. She seems likely to gun for the early lead and could do well in a race like this.

#11 TRIBAL CACHE is the longshot to consider. She showed more ability in her one and only start than the past performance line might first suggest. She could do much better today from an outside post at this shorter distance with that one under her belt.

RACE SEVEN

#4 MISSING GROOM is primed for a big effort at decent odds. He pushed the pace and tired last out over a longer distance in a race he figured to need following nearly a year on the shelf. Today he returns to the same site and distance of his last win here last year.

#7 WESTFEST has the looks of an obvious contender. He is fresh off a maiden win when introduced to a route of ground following a few sprint tuneups. He certainly has two of the best in the trainer and jockey category and need only be fast enough to win.

#8 KARMA KING should not be overlooked in this spot. The sharp older gelding has been getting claimed and climbing the ladder while in good form of late. The fact he has been primarily a sprinter means he has the speed to be effective at this one-mile distance.

RACE EIGHT

#2 MOONLIGHT DRIVE was very impressive this winter when he won his only start in this country. He was sidelined briefly but now returns in what could be the perfect spot for him to launch a turf campaign for the second half of the year. He has a lot of talent.

#9 DRESSED IN HERMES was a stakes winner over this course on the last day of the Bing Crosby season here last fall. He was unplaced in a pair of graded stakes events on the road in his last two starts but fits well here. His Hall of Fame rider knows him well.

#8 ARCATURE might be best over the flat mile distance of today's event. His best races so far have come at a mile including his debut victory over this course last summer and a minor stakes win two starts back. Enough cannot be said about the strength of his jockey.

RACE NINE

#4 GOT EVEN is a threat to take these wire-to-wire. He is being managed like a horse that is doing well by a trainer who has been very sharp for many years. This will mark only his second start since January. He is fresh and fast with a hustling rider aboard him.

#10 CHIEF OF STAFF has what it takes to win this. He will have to deal with a poor post position for this distance and did throw in a clunker last time but can be tough when he feels like it. His last win was a whopper and came here over this distance last summer.

#5 DR. DORR helps make this race tough. His presence must be considered as he won first out and now returns for his three-year-old debut following a throw-out stakes appearance here last fall when he was eliminated at the start. He is in the best of hands.

RACE TEN

#11 ALASKAN SON is worth a look in the paddock and on the tote board. The European import placed twice in races in Ireland last year. He arrives in this country into a barn that has blossomed over the last few years and looks to a very capable rider.

#9 LANGHAM was bred to run on the grass as a grandson of two profound turf influences. He carried a hefty price tag at auction as a yearling and now debuts for a trainer who can send them ready. The fact they look to a Hall of Fame rider is a plus.

#2 ALLEY BOSS could outrun his odds despite the fact he showed little in his only start. He has some pedigree and a right to do well as he stretches out and tries the turf both for the first time. His Hall of Fame rider figures to save ground and give him every chance.