

Del Mar Bottom Line

By John Lies



John began working at Del Mar in 1993 and has provided analysis on simulcast television for over a decade. Last 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 ROCKET HEAT is the most accomplished runner in this field and the one to beat. There is none faster to the front early and his strike rate of four wins from seven starts over this course stands out amongst the others. He won at this claiming level two back.

#4 INCENSED finishes second more often than he wins but enters this race in good form. He has been the runner-up in both of his last two starts at this same turf distance including one here in August. He lands a capable out-of-town rider for a winning stable.

#6 MR VARGAS has less seasoning than his main rivals in this field. The three-year-old makes only his sixth lifetime start but never has run a bad race in his career. He has sprinted on turf twice before and was a good second each time including his last out.

RACE TWO

#6 OUT OF PATIENCE is one of a few contenders in this field with a pile of lifetime wins to his credit. He was outsprinted over a short distance last out as the beaten favorite but returns today to the same one-mile distance over which he won here in September.

#5 TRIBAL JEWEL is a serious pro. The eight-year-old has been taken good care of with only five starts this year but indicated he is feeling good with a perky second-place showing last out. He drops one level in class and has won at Del Mar five times before.

#9 KRISTO drew a tough post position at this distance. He has made only three starts this year and is dropping in class in search of a return to competitive form. He has faced much better than these throughout his career and remains in the hands of a sharp trainer.

RACE THREE

#2 WILD LANDO doesn't appear to have too much to beat as he returns to the races for his second lifetime start and first since March. It is a good sign that the homebred returns at this level after having raced for a claiming price before. His connections win races.

#7 HARDCORE TROUBADOR seems to be getting better. He has shown more speed and carried it farther each time over three starts and today will race with the addition of blinkers. He has a good post for the distance and the light weight of an apprentice.

#1 INSUBORDINATION has raced eight times before but never on the main track. He also returns to sprinting after fading in routes and stands a chance to improve cutting back around one turn. His rider can hustle one for speed and the rail forces their hand.

RACE FOUR

#1 HANDFUL OF STRIPES is well spotted for a big effort if he can stay a mile. He drops into this restricted claiming event with two sprints under his belt following a nine-month layoff. Early speed can be dangerous at this distance and he drew a good post.

#2 EXCAVATION switches riders and can win if he runs as well as he did when second in a race here in late July against similar rivals. He was protected in two non-claiming starts following that effort and has waited on the sidelines since the end of the summer.

#7 RINGS OF JUPITER figures to appreciate the drop to this class level. He has not been competitive in three starts against tougher horses since posting his lone career win. He is hoping for a fast pace that collapses and can be effective in a meltdown situation.

RACE FIVE

#6 PHANTOM OPENING looked like a different filly when she won big by a distance in her third and most recent start out East. She has trained smartly since that romp while her connections have been shopping around for a spot. Her rider is excellent on the turf.

#7 TWEETING returns to the site of her wire-to-wire maiden win here over this course in July under this rider. She was claimed that day by her current connections who saw her finish a willing fourth while coming on from behind in her only start since that win.

#2 WEST COAST BIAS should be tuned up for a good run at this distance after getting outrun down the hillside turf course when favored last out. She figures to be well-placed under a smart turf rider and did win over this course here in August. She fits with these.

RACE SIX

#2 PURE PURSUIT should benefit from the addition of blinkers after racing greenly in his only start here this summer. It is quite possible he has more speed than shown in just that one start over the turf course. His dam won four main track sprints in her career.

#4 MOMMA'S BABY BOY has not raced since February but participated in some productive maiden races when seen in three starts last winter. His best effort resulted in a third-place finish over a muddy track. He is related to eight winners and can run a bit.

#6 BOOGALUTE made just one start as a two-year-old and returns to the races as a gelding. It is tough to say what to expect but his workouts indicate he is ready to go. His presence in a non-claiming race could be taken as a positive sign. He should be a price.

RACE SEVEN

#6 MASTER MERION is on a roll and today goes for four in a row. He showed a new dimension winning from off the pace last out despite losing ground over a demanding course. He travels well and returns to Del Mar following a ship and win here in August.

#2 HOLIDAY STONE is winless this year but ran very well when third in his last start while facing the top selection above. He may have been too sharp wearing blinkers for the first time but stayed on well for third after being hounded in the early stages that day.

#7 MONYDONTSPENITSELF races both on turf and in California for the first time following seven starts in the Northwest. He has a right to like the turf given his breeding. His trainer had a very successful summer meet here and sends him out for the first time.

RACE EIGHT

#5 DREAMY GAL tries to make amends for a pair of losses as the favorite in her last two starts at this level. She has shown in the past she is capable of better right here on this track and her third-place comeback effort here in July seemed promising enough.

#11 GOTHAM DESIRE won both of her starts in Northern California this winter over a synthetic surface and has been training on that circuit for her return to action. She lands a top rider for her first attempt down here. It is very possible she can run along with these.

#3 MEET AND GREET won her only start to date in easy fashion as the heavy favorite in a six-horse field. Both her trainer and rider win their share of races and the homebred won well enough to be taken seriously as she takes this necessary step up in company.

RACE NINE

#10 KAZAN drew a concerning post and is at risk of losing ground. He might also be the best horse in the race and is sure to appreciate a return to the maiden ranks. The fact he has held his own in stakes company shows they think something of him and he can run.

#1 CHANNEL CROSSING could be a good gamble. He ran well in only his second start and first turf route after going out a bit too strong early in a race that has since produced three next-out winners. He has a chance to ride the rails and improve further.

#6 BIG BUZZ has the services of one of the very best turf riders. The full younger brother to a multiple stakes winner on turf checked in as the runner-up in his most recent start. He finished only a nose behind the top selection above in a race here this summer.