

**Date:** July 10th, 2020

**Track:** Del Mar

**By Brad Free**

***BEST BET: Taming the Tigress (6th race)***

**First Race**

**1. El Huerfano**

**2. Fire When Ready**

**3. Secret Touch**

Del Mar opening day, first post 2 p.m. Dropper **EL HUERFANO** and up-in-class **FIRE WHEN READY** are tough to separate in a \$16k claiming route that includes several additional contenders. EL HUERFANO is a 9-for-48 veteran that has never raced this low, and his most recent win coincides with his most recent start on this track. He gets the nod dropping from a fifth-place finish in a N1X. FIRE WHEN READY goes first off the claim, returning to the track on which he scored his most recent win. That was a \$32k claiming route here last summer for Bob Hess Jr., who re-claimed the gelding last out from an okay third. 'READY obviously is good enough to win at this level. The top pair are difficult to separate. **SECRET TOUCH** returns from a freshening, he is 2-for-4 on this track and could tuck into a cozy trip sitting second behind the stretch-out sprinter to his inside. BLAME IT ON KITTY and CAMINO DE ESTRELLA will rally late; TREASURE HUNTER is the aforementioned sprinter expected to set the pace.

**Second Race**

**1. Aqua Seaform Shame**

**2. Seaside Dancer**

**3. Rakassah**

**AQUA SEAFORM SHAME** defeated an exceptionally deep field winning a Del Mar maiden turf sprint in November; that was her last start. Five rivals behind her returned to win next out including runner-up Venetian Harbor, who later won a graded stakes; third place Speech is graded-placed and a contender Friday at Keeneland in a Grade 3. The point is, 'SHAME beat a good bunch. She likes this course, and trainer Richard Baltas has won at a 25-percent clip with six-month-plus comebackers the past five years: 30 for 119. 'SHAME has speed, and looks like the one to catch. **SEASIDE DANCER** would be wheeling back five days after a modest third at Los Alamitos; her turf form is better than her dirt form, and her best recent race was a runner-up finish in a claiming turf sprint at Santa Anita that compares favorably to this field. **RAKASSAH** benefited from an inordinately slow pace when she steamrolled maidens last out. She will be chasing quicker splits here, but she is in top form.

**Third Race**

**1. Rayray**

**2. Garth**

**3. Charlito**

**RAYRAY** is sitting on a maiden win after running fast enough to win both recent starts. Runner-up in a highly rated comeback, he ran even better last time even though his speed figure declined. He set a blazing pace inside a four-way duel, and finished third. The winner Cezanne returned to win an allowance. RAYRAY is drawn outside his pace rivals this time, and figures for a front-running/pace-pressing trip in the clear. **GARTH** was a highly touted juvenile last year, but fell short of expectations. Off since December, fast works, he might return as an improved horse at age 3. **CHARLITO** finished in front of the top choice last time out, while taking advantage of a perfect trip positioned alone in fifth behind the pace duel. CHARLITO will rally late. MIDNIGHT MYSTERY, stablemate of GARTH, also has speed.

**Fourth Race**

**1. Tropical Terror**

**2. Table for Ten**

**3. Cali Caliente**

Runner-up four straight at this level (Cal-bred maiden turf route), **TROPICAL TERROR** may finally be ready to win. Or, not. He actually ran a winning race last out, finishing nearly three lengths clear of third. 'TERROR also ran well on this course last fall. Tough to trust a seven-start maiden with six in-the-money finishes, of course. **TABLE FOR TEN** finished a creditable third in the same race the top choice exits, and what makes it noteworthy is that it was the career debut for 'TEN. He probably has the most room to improve for trainer Phil D'Amato, who went 3-for-5 with second-start maidens long on turf during the Santa Anita meet. **CALI CALIENTE** improved a bunch second time out, and returns to the grass surface for which he is bred. EL DIABLO ROJO looms an upset candidate, stretching back out off a pair of even-paced sprints.

**Fifth Race**

**1. Dia de Pago**

**2. Mongolian Legend**

**3. Polar Wind**

**DIA DE PAGO** can win this starter allowance route if he gets a better trip than last out. He was four- and five-wide start to finish in that \$25k claiming N2L, and missed by only two lengths. DMR G2-placed as a juvenile in 2017, 'PAGO can post a minor upset if he saves ground this time. **MONGOLIAN LEGEND** finished eight lengths clear of third last out in a N1X, and drops in class to maiden-50 starter. **POLAR WIND** looked good crushing maiden-40 sprinters; he is bred to run long. MONGOLIAN HERO returns to the track on which he ran the best race of his career last fall (on "good").

**Sixth Race**

**1. Taming the Tigress**

**2. Big Andy**

**3. Super Game**

First-time starter **TAMING THE TIGRESS** should come out firing in this sprint for Cal-bred maiden 2yo fillies. Bred for speed, she worked fast last month at San Luis Rey Downs, and capped her work pattern with a sharp :47.60 half-mile gate work a week ago at Del Mar. Trainer Peter Miller is 3-for-7 this year with 2yo firsters, including two winners ridden by Flavien Prat. Same connections. **BIG ANDY** "won" her debut rallying from midpack, but was

disqualified for interference. Two works since, an additional half-furlong, and a race under her belt hint at improvement. **SUPER GAME** debuts with fast works, while **SMOOTHLIKEBUTTAH** adds blinkers and changes riders after breaking slowly her first two starts.

#### Seventh Race

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##### 1. Maxim Rate

##### 2. Strike At Dawn

##### 3. Pulpit Rider

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A solid runner-up comeback stamps **MAXIM RATE** the choice in this competitive N2X turf mile. 'RATE had been off six months, she finished fast and missed by a head. It is true she benefitted from a favorable "race shape," as the one-two finishers rallied from the back, but 'RATE could get a similar pace scenario here. At least three front-runners/pressers entered; the DMR turf generally is kind to closers. **STRIKE AT DAWN** returns to the course on which she scored her most recent win, opening weekend of the 2019 summer meet. 'DAWN may have been positioned too close to the pace in both recent comeback races; fifth in both. She drops from a stakes race at mile and one-quarter into a N2X allowance at one mile and picks up Prat. Expect her to take back, and rally. **PULPIT RIDER** finished an okay fourth in her comeback, she returns to a course on which she ran well her last three starts (one win, two seconds). This race should set her up for the Solana Beach Stakes for Cal-bred fillies and mares Aug. 15. ZEE DROP has a prep under her belt, she won here last summer. TONAHUTU crushed \$32k claiming rivals last out and was claimed.

#### Eighth Race

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##### 1. Sash

##### 2. Lightning Fast

##### 3. St. Joe Bay

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**SASH** became a new horse after he was gelded and switched to dirt. Runner-up in two highly rated N1X routes at Santa Anita since the gelding/footing changes, he cuts back to seven furlongs with a forwardly placed style that should play well in a race without much speed. He should get a cozy trip positioned second. The knock is price; high speed figures typically translate to low odds. **LIGHTNING FAST** was a first-time gelding when he crushed Cal-bred maidens in January; that was his most recent start. He might be a better horse than the modest 77 Beyer. He looped the field and won by six. Solid work pattern for his comeback, the lightly raced 3yo has room to improve. **ST. JOE BAY**, a Grade 2 winner and "class" of the field, drops another notch from N2X to entry-level allowance/optional \$40k claiming. He will lead the field as far as he can. During the 2019 summer meet, pacesetters were only 1-for-10 at seven furlongs; in 2018 summer, 1-for-14.

#### Ninth Race

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##### 1. Hit the Road

##### 2. El Tigre Terrible

##### 3. Margot's Boy

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**HIT THE ROAD** and **EL TIGRE TERRIBLE** top the traditional opening-day Oceanside Stakes, a mile turf race for 3yos. HIT THE ROAD is the one to beat based on stakes-winning form last year and an outstanding comeback victory against older. 'ROAD was the only 3yo in the field, first start in more than five months, unleashed an impressive late rally and won the N2X going away. He ran faster each successive quarter (:24.00, :23.45, :23.42 and :23.32) and was strong through the wire. He drops into a restricted race for 3yos, there is pace to flatter his rally. EL TIGRE TERRIBLE has never tried two turns, but he also was a stakes winner last year as a juvenile and ran super in his comeback. Blocked from the five-sixteenths to deep stretch in a sprint stakes, he got clear too late and missed by a half-length while undoubtedly best. He rations his speed in races and works, and therefore should stay a mile despite a sprint pedigree. **MARGOT'S BOY** found nine furlongs out of reach last time in a Cal-bred stakes; this mile distance suits. Despite the outside post, he could tuck into a cozy trip positioned behind the stretch-out sprinters. K P ALL SYSTEMS GO has improved since adding an outside extension blinker and switching riders three starts back: maiden win, allowance win, stakes runner-up last out. KANDAREL and AJOURNEYTOFREEDOM finished one-two in a minor stakes race at Golden Gate; ROOKIE MISTAKE, HOWBEIT and SILARDI are the aforementioned sprinters that insure an honest pace.

#### Tenth Race

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##### 1. Castle Gate

##### 2. Jen Go Unchained

##### 3. Julius

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**CASTLE GATE** returns to the claiming ranks (non-winners three lifetime) after he faded in a N1X sprint. His blowout win two back in a \$25k claiming N2L sprint would be fast enough. A bullet work last week over this track suggests he is ready to fire with a pressing trip. **JEN GO UNCHAINED** merits an upset chance from off the pace. In the money his last three starts at this N3L claiming level, he ran the fastest race of his career on this track last summer. Look for him late. **JULIUS** is another Del Mar horse-for-course. He won the first race of the 2019 summer meet by more than 11 lengths. His form declined since, but he drops in class and should be forwardly placed. RED VALOR is speed, DARK HEDGES has an upset chance first off the claim by a high-percent f.o.c. stable.