

Date: November 21st, 2020**Track:** Del Mar**By Brad Free****BEST BET: Kershaw (4th race)****First Race****1. Blackout****2. Mystery Messenger****3. Mr. Lovejoy**

BLACKOUT faces softer than last out, when he split the field for a \$40k claim tag. His runner-up finish two back over the Del Mar turf course would probably be fast enough. The versatile gelding figures for a ground-saving trip positioned just off the speed. Is he reliable? Uncertain, the veteran seems to have lost the knockout punch. He won just one of this last 17 starts, most at relatively low odds. Nonetheless, the turf sprinter is the one to beat. **MYSTERY MESSENGER** finished only two lengths behind the sharp Psycho Dar; the top choice lost to that rival by more than three lengths. The third-place finish by 'MESSENGER last out was his first start in more than three months; he could improve second start back. Front-runner **MR. LOVEJOY** wheels back in one week while facing less pace. Long gone against this easier cast? His main pace rival is **HIT THE SEAM**, who misfired in his comeback two weeks ago. the runner-up finishes by 'SEAM in the summer meet here put him in the hunt. **PORTANDO** will rally from the back.

Second Race**1. Midcourt****2. Extra Hope****3. Royal Ship**

This G3 would represent class relief for **MIDCOURT**, who won this race in 2019 then spent much of 2020 chasing G1 winners including now-retired Improbable and Maximum Security. When he breaks cleanly, MIDCOURT is tough at this level. The "best horse" in the field would be the one to beat, although his status for this race is not confirmed. It will be a race-day decision whether he runs, or waits for winter. **EXTRA HOPE**, runner-up this race a year ago as a 3yo, is likely to have improved this season as a 4yo. He scored a solid N2X win last out in his second start following an extended layoff; his up-front style should play well in a race likely to unfold at a soft tempo. **ROYAL SHIP** was a Group 1 winner on turf in Brazil; he drops from a pair of local G2s on turf. This is a much easier spot for **ROYAL SHIP**, who has trained very well on dirt, although the mile and one-eighth distance is his first start beyond a mile. The filly **STELLAR SOUND** trounced a N1X last out by seven lengths. This would be a steep hike. She is nominated to a filly-mare G2 next week at Churchill Downs, and is not a confirmed starter in this race.

Third Race**1. Miss Fraulein****2. Trouville****3. No Cover Charge**

MISS FRAULEIN lost as the odds-on favorite last out on turf, but she ran a winning race. She pressed fast fractions, shook off a pace rival who finished last, opened up and was collared by a rival that rallied from far back. Excellent runner-up finish by 'FRAULEIN, who was claimed off the effort and switches to dirt. Her three starts on the DMR main track produced a win and two seconds. Drawn outside, first off the claim, the consistent filly merits horse-to-beat-status with a pressing trip. But she is not the only front-runner in this lineup, and a contested pace could set it up for **TROUVILLE**. The latter won two of her last three starts rallying from off the pace; she benefits by a lively pace scenario and will motor late. **NO COVER CHARGE** is a Northern California-based speedster whose only option from the inside post is to "go." **ZELAIA** also is quick, and has won 3 of 4 on dirt. **CANADIAN GINGER** adds even more speed.

Fourth Race**1. Kershaw****2. Popular Kid****3. Mongolian Legend**

KERSHAW enters this \$50k claiming dirt mile as the most probable winner on the Saturday card. He drops from a N2X won by Extra Hope, a contender in the G3 Native Diver (race 3). **KERSHAW** always runs well over the Del Mar track, the class drop is reasonable, his speed figures are consistently higher than his rivals. The best, fastest in the field is trained by Phil D'Amato. The past four years, D'Amato is 8-for-15 with favorites in Del Mar dirt routes. **POPULAR KID**, an 11-win veteran including three at Del Mar, was claimed last out from a Cal-bred N1X/optional \$20k sprint victory. Sharp gelding up in class, to a distance and surface at which he is proven. Interestingly, the last time he routed at Del Mar (Nov. 24, 2018), he finished a half-length behind top choice **KERSHAW** in a first-level allowance. **MONGOLIAN LEGEND** occasionally outruns his odds; he did not have a clean trip two weeks ago on a wet track. **BOLD ENDEAVOR** earned a big figure (91 Beyer) last out wiring a \$32k claiming race at Santa Anita, although the runner-up returned to finish a disappointing third while his figure dropped 13 points. **CHAMPAGNEONME** drops and stretches out with an upset chance.

Fifth Race

1. Mac Daddy Too**2. Endless Sunset****3. By Moonlight**

A close fourth in a MSW turf sprint eight days ago, **MAC DADDY TOO** drops to maiden-80 and stretches to a turf mile as the logical choice. Not sure if he benefits by the longer distance, but both starts on the Del Mar turf were solid. The one to beat with a front-running/pace-pressing trip. **ENDLESS SUNSET** finished a promising second in his career debut, runner-up in a sprint at Golden Gate Fields. A homebred by Violence, 'SUNSET is the first runner produced by a Lemon Drop Kid mare. A mile should be fine. **BY MOONLIGHT** lost his chance at the break last time, but rallied to miss by less than three lengths in a Cal-bred turf sprint. Two turns is within reach. **LABOR UNION** returns from a two-month layoff as a first-time gelding. He had a troubled trip in his MSW sprint debut in summer.

Sixth Race**1. Exotic West****2. Peachtree Road****3. Leia Marie**

First-time starter **EXOTIC WEST** debuts with fast works for a stable that sends them ready to fire. She showed speed from the gate in her recent workout Nov. 13 (viewed on video), trainer Bob Baffert debuted nine juvenile fillies this year: 3 wins, 4 seconds, 2 thirds. Although 'WEST is by Hard Spun, whose debut juvenile progeny have won just 8 percent, the filly was produced by a dam who won her only start by more than four lengths for Baffert and owner-breeders Gary and Mary West. Bottom line: it is a "go." **PEACHTREE ROAD** flashed brief speed and faded in her career debut three months ago. A sibling to an undefeated stakes winner (Princess Arabella, 2012), 'ROAD is likely to have returned as an improved filly. **LEIA MARIE** returns to a sprint and returns to dirt after splitting the field in a turf mile. First-time starter **EMPIRE HOUSE** is an Empire Maker filly who might want a longer distance than six and a half.

Seventh Race**1. Combat Zone****2. Kris' Wild Kat****3. Hartel**

COMBAT ZONE lost all chance at the break last out at Santa Anita. He went to his nose when the gates opened, dropped back and trailed most of the way. He was 3-1 in the betting based on a promising fourth-place comeback over the Del Mar course. 'ZONE runs back at the same starter-allowance level as his last start, returns to Del Mar, and can make amends with a clean takeoff. **KRIS' WILD KAT** finished third in the same race the top choice exits. Blinkers on, he should get a forwardly placed trip saving ground. **HARTEL** makes his first start in a year. His 2019 form puts him in the picture, though comebackers from this stable generally race into condition rather than fire first start back. **CAERULEAN** wired Cal-bred maidens on this course three months ago and figures to contest the pace. There is not much speed in this field.

Eighth Race**1. Brace for Impact****2. Chipper****3. Starship Chewbacca**

BRACE FOR IMPACT returns from a five-month layoff as the speed of the field. Unsure about his ability to stay six and one-half furlongs, but there is little doubt he will control the race. Based on fast-pace runner-up finishes racing six furlongs in spring at Santa Anita, the comeback gelding is the one to catch. **CHIPPER** was no match for a runaway winner last out in a similar Cal-bred maiden sprint, but he finished nearly four lengths clear of third and may be rounding back into form. **STARSHIP CHEWBACCA** was compromised by a troubled trip from the inside post last time in a statebred maiden-50; his runner-up finish was better than it looks on paper. Trouble is, he drew the rail again here. **LIL RICHARDS BELLO**, back-to-back runner-up as the favorite vs. similar Cal-bred maidens, moves from the rail to the middle of the field. Four starts into his career, his development seems to have stalled.

Ninth Race**1. Justin's Quest****2. Golden Doughnut****3. Worthy Turk**

First-time turf **JUSTIN'S QUEST** gets the call in this \$25k claiming turf mile. His comeback last month was only okay, but his summer dirt form puts him in the hunt. Although his sire Justin Phillip is not known as a turf sire, the dam of **JUSTIN'S QUEST** produced two turf winners. If he reproduces his form while switching surfaces, 'QUEST can handle this modest cast. **GOLDEN DOUGHNUT** returns to his preferred two-turn trip after he was outrun last time in a sprint. His 4-5-6 finishes here in summer actually make him a contender vs. this modest cast. **WORTHY TURK** figures as one of the favorites based on his last-out runner-up finish at Santa Anita and his victory two starts back over the Del Mar turf course. Also-eligible front-runner **MITHQAAL** would influence the pace scenario.