Date: July 18th, 2021   **Track:** Del Mar

By Brad Free

BEST BET: Neptune's Storm (7th race)

First Race

1. State of the Union	2. Eddiespaghetti	3. Barsabas

STATE OF THE UNION can win an apparently wide-open maiden-claiming sprint for 2yos. His works at San Luis Rey Downs look good on paper; trainer Cliff Sise won with 4 of his last 8 maiden-claiming firsters over the past three years. **EDDIESPAGHETTI** also debuts at the bottom. The SLR-based Doug O'Neill trainee appears to have worked well and debuts with a top rider. **BARSABAS** was gelded after his debut, a noncompetitive try vs. special-weight maidens. He looked okay working from the gate in a three-way team drill July 5 (viewed at XBTV.com). Improvement likely second out. SIP SIP HOORAY had trouble in his debut. A filly facing boys, she drops in class second time out for trainer Walther Solis, whose second-start 2yo maidens this year are 4-for-8.

Second Race

1. Self Taught	2. Hold Me Black	3. Dark Hedges

SELF TAUGHT returns to the $20k claim level of his decisive win two starts back. He was claimed from the win, misfired next out, and now returns fresh from a brief layoff. He has run well over the Del Mar surface, and should fire a top shot first start back. Off the pace and into the winner's circle. **HOLD ME BLACK** is an eight-win veteran shipping from Churchill Downs; his starter-allowance win two back over former California-based allowance sprinter P R Radio Star would be fast enough for this level. Midwest-based trainer Matt Shirer (22 percent career win rate) is campaigning at Del Mar for the first time. Early indications he arrived with "live" stock. **DARK HEDGES** drew the rail and therefore must use his speed. His front-running win three back makes him a legit threat to wire the field, although six and one-half furlongs might be a reach. CAJUN TREASURE goes route to sprint, turf to dirt. He won a fast route at DMR last summer.

Third Race

1. Gypsy Blu	2. Nightlife	3. On Deck

Veteran mare **GYPSY BLU** merits horse-to-beat status in this $32k claiming turf sprint. A six-time winner, she won a fast Cal-bred sprint last out, she has run well in 5-furlong turf sprints at DMR, and she has speed to keep the leaders in her sights. **NIGHTLIFE**, another Shirer trainee, returned to form last out with a sharp $50k claiming win at Churchill Downs. She fits with these. **ON DECK** has run dirt figures that put her in the hunt, but her only turf start was bland and her pedigree leans toward dirt. INVINCIBELLA will roll late, but this 5f distance is probably shorter than she prefers.

Fourth Race

1. Sally Stanford	2. Smart Monique	3. Miss Shady

SALLY STANFORD is likely to be heavily favored dropping to Cal-bred maiden-50 after a pair of thirds vs. MSW Cal-breds. She has early speed, and the top figs. The knock is price. Her odds could be short. **SMART MONIQUE** switches to Umberto Rispoli, drops into a state-bred race, and adds blinkers after a troubled third-place debut. **MISS SHADY** is gradually racing into condition, third last out as the favorite. MY SWEET MARY is another Solis-trained second-start maiden 2yo. They have won often this season.

Fifth Race

1. Go Big Blue Nation	2. Lady Noguez	3. Star of Africa

GO BIG BLUE NATION and **LADY NOGUEZ**, four-five finishers last out in a stake race, drop to N1X and stretch to a mile and three-eighths as the proper choices. 'NATION outkicked her rival last time and showed two back she can say a marathon when a respectable fourth in a G3. Tepid choice. LADY NOGUEZ finished two lengths behind the top choice after a spot of traffic on the far turn. She has improved this season as the distances have increased. **STAR OF AFRICA** is likely to set the pace. Long gone at a price? Maybe, although the past four summers, DMR pacesetters are just 3-for-20 at a mile and three-eighths on turf.

Sixth Race

1. Miss Alegria	2. Cowboys Daughter	3. Dozo

MISS ALEGRIA returns from an extended layoff with a history of running well fresh; both wins were first start following layoffs. Her best speed figures are among the highest in the field, and a perfect fit for this $20k claiming N3L level. **COWBOYS DAUGHTER** goes route to sprint and drops in class. Her bullet work early this month may have been designed to put speed in her. **DOZO** set a blazing pace and tired in a creditable comeback. She drops for her second start back and might be the one to catch.

Seventh Race

1. Neptune's Storm	2. Homer Screen	3. Bob and Jackie

Runner-up in a G3 last out making his first start in nine months, **NEPTUNE'S STORM** has a current-class/form advantage in this restricted stake. He chased a fast pace in that turf mile, made the lead late, then got collared. Fine comeback. He drops in class, and is established over the DMR turf. Runner-up in the G1 Hollywood Derby and G3 La Jolla, he also finished third in a pair of G2's. The "now" horse should be tough with a pressing trip. However, an intriguing import from Brazil shows up for his U.S. debut with five wins from six starts in South America. **HOMER SCREEN** arrived in February, has looked good in morning works (viewed at XBTV.com), and his debut romp last summer shows he runs well. The comebacker **BOB AND JACKIE** won this race last year returning from a layoff. But his work pattern a year ago was deeper and stronger than his work pattern into this year's comeback. His early speed and course record command respect. Four starts on the DMR turf produced three wins. NEXT SHARES will be rolling late.

Eighth Race

1. Ko Olina	2. Bonita Leona	3. Warren's Queen Bee

KO OLINA enters this maiden race for Cal-bred 2yo fillies as a legit favorite based on her first-over-the-wire "victory" last out against open company. She set the pace, held by a nose, but was disqualified after she drifted out through the stretch and interfered with the runner-up. The improving filly drops into the state-bred ranks and could be tough to catch if she runs straight. But Northern California-based first-time starter **BONITA LEONA** debuts with a series of sharp works. 'LEONA is by 11-percent debut 2yo stallion Smiling Tiger (that stat is about average), and is a sibling to four multiple winners including stakes winner El Tigre Terrible. The presence of Flavien Prat suggests positive intent. Stablemates **WARREN'S QUEEN BEE** and WARREN'S SHOWGIRL are Clubhouse Ride firsters that have shown promise in works at Santa Anita. 'QUEEN BEE debuts with trainer Craig Lewis's go-to rider Juan Hernandez; 'SHOWGIRL is a full sister to multiple stakes winner Warren's Showtime and probably wants a longer distance than 5f.

Ninth Race

1. Fantasy Heat	2. Anna Fantastic	3. Angelcents

FANTASY HEAT makes her first start of 2021 while returning to the N1X/optional $40k claiming class level of her most recent win. A two-time turf sprint winner at Del Mar, she runs well fresh and should get a cozy trip saving ground just off the speed. **ANNA FANTASTIC** followed her dominating maiden win with a troubled runner-up finish in a N1X that turned out to be a productive race. The winner and third-place finisher returned to win. Freshened since April, recent bullet work, versatile style, and reunited with Rispoli. Obvious contender first start back. **ANGELCENTS** is a 5-for-7 shipper from the Midwest. She is all speed, probably the one to catch. Well-bred THRILLING popped at 15-1 in her debut and might be this good. She is sired by Uncle Mo, produced by G1 winner Together.

Tenth Race

1. Tizamagician	2. Red King	3. Contagion

TIZAMAGICIAN has a lot going for him in this G3 dirt marathon. He can stay a mile and one-half, having won a similar graded race by nine lengths two back. He runs well at DMR, a win and two seconds from five starts. He has speed to set or press the pace in a field without much speed. His runner-up finish as the favorite in a similar race last out at Belmont Park was better than the double-digit margin of defeat. He reared at the start, was off slowly, and lost to sharp veteran Lone Rock, who was winning his sixth race in his last seven starts. It all adds up to a likely win at low odds for TIZAMAGICAN. Turf specialist **RED KING** is interesting. He has never raced on dirt, but he is a G2 winner on turf who will run all day. He will rally late, assuming he runs here instead of waiting for the Del Mar Handicap next month. He won that race a year ago. **CONTAGION** is a sharp claiming horse taking a shot in peak form. He dominated easier last out. Though outclassed, he commands respect based on current form. HEYWOODS BEACH fits off his highly rated N2X win two back.

Eleventh Race

1. Javanica	2. Carpe Fortuna	3. Lady Emily

Multiple stakes-placed **JAVANICA**, runner-up by a head to subsequent Preakness winner Rombauer early this year, returns from a short

layoff as the class of this entry-level allowance for 3yo fillies. She finished second in a G3 her only previous start on DMR turf, her comeback works are solid. Lightly raced **CARPE FORTUNA**, maiden winner on this course last fall and only a length and a quarter behind the top choice in a stakes race in December, returns from a four-month layoff with a history of running well fresh and more tactical speed than the top choice. **LADY EMILY**, smashing debut winner long on turf in her career debut two back at Gulfstream Park, drops from a sixth-place finish in a stakes race, adds blinkers and is Lasix-on. Sired by First Dude, her dam is a maiden sibling to two-time Breeders' Cup Classic winner Tiznow. BURGOO ALLEY wired maidens last out and will be involved in the pace scenario.