

Date: July 25th, 2021**Track:** Del Mar**By Brad Free****BEST BET: Suki (5th race)****First Race****1. Bobby Bo****2. Affable****3. Who's the Star**

BOBBY BO is training very well, as if he can amend for his forgettable debut four months ago. Favored at odds-on, he flashed brief speed and backed up without a visible alibi. He worked twice afterward, went two months without a work, but now returns with a strong recent tab including a solo drill July 19 that appeared longer than the official distance of five furlongs (viewed on XBTV.com). Outside post a benefit for 'BO, who looks ready to fire. **AFFABLE** also returns from a layoff. Runner-up three starts last fall winter and winter, he adds blinkers for his comeback and posted a bullet gate work over the Del Mar track last week. **WHO'S THE STAR** has a recency edge over the top pair, he finished second in a relatively fast maiden race a month ago at Los Alamitos. Tough inside post, however.

Second Race**1. Drink the Wind****2. Murray****3. Sumter**

If the blistering gate drill this week by **DRINK THE WIND** is legit (bullet :46.20), the colt can wire these maiden 2yos. Trainer Peter Miller is 9-for-29 with 2yo special-weight dirt firsters at DMR (summer-fall combined, five years). 'WIND could be quickest in this field. **MURRAY** is one of three trained by Bob Baffert, he outworked a stablemate in a team drill last Sunday (same work time, but MURRAY "won" the work). He is comfortably drawn near the outside, and ready to fire. **SUMTER** has shown precocity in works for trainer Richard Mandella; the son of War Front is yet another that looks "live" first out. His gate drill July 11 at Santa Anita was solid. Inside post an obvious challenge for a first-time starter. **CARBONITE** adds blinkers after a modest debut third. He is trained by Baffert, whose **BAROSSA** is the colt MURRAY worked better than last weekend.

Third Race**1. Gator Shining****2. Hot Box****3. Exhalting**

Trouble-prone **GATOR SHINING** gets the call in this \$50k claiming turf sprint, the lowest level he has run at. The five-furlong distance poses a challenge for the late-runner, though he won a maiden race at the distance here last summer rallying from midpack. If he can somehow avoid habitual trouble (off slow, shuffled, steadied), he can win from behind. He has run well against better company. **HOT BOX** is pure speed, also dropping in class for his first start in nearly three months. Problem is, at least three others to his inside employ the same up-front style. 'BOX might be the speed of the speed, and he is one of only a pair in the field with three career wins. The other three-time winner is front-runner **EXHALTING**, who adds Lasix after stopping badly his last two starts. He chased a suicidal pace last time in a stakes race vs. older, and now drops in for a claim tag vs. 3yos.

Fourth Race**1. Alexandros****2. Littlebitamedal****3. Bibleman**

Seven-time winner **ALEXANDROS** was claimed from a sharp \$25k claiming win in Kentucky, and makes his California debut for trainer Jeff Mullins as the one to beat. He has tactical speed for a pressing trip; his speed figures are close to par for this \$32k claiming level. **LITTLEBITAMEDAL**, a horse-for-course stretch-runner, drops from a pair of highly rated N1X/optional claiming sprints. He won at DMR in 2018 and 2020, and will roll late. **BIBLEMAN** might be the speed of the field. He was claimed for \$25k from a runner-up finish at Lone Star by Todd Fincher, who is 4-for-12 first-off-the-claim the past five years. Although shippers from LS historically underperform at DMR, that might be changing this season. Fincher-trained 2yo filly Smash Ticket, from LS, crushed a maiden special-weight here last weekend. **MAJOR CABBIE** goes route to sprint after a better-than-looked wide-trip fourth at two turns.

Fifth Race**1. Suki****2. Little Miss Ellie****3. Viazar**

The improving **SUKI** merits "best bet" status based on outstanding Kentucky form since switching to turf. She followed her decisive maiden-75 victory with a sharp second in a starter allowance. The undefeated filly she lost to won a N1X next out. **SUKI** remains at the starter allowance level; Midwest trainer Matt Shirer is 10-for-16 with turf-route favorites the past five years. **LITTLE MISS ELLIE**

switches surfaces after a series of solid dirt efforts. The uncertainties are two turns (she lost ground late both routes) and turf. Progeny of the sire Richard's Kid have won 16 percent of turf routes (11 percent is average). **VIAZAR** returns from an eight-month layoff with proven DMR form. Five turf starts here produced four seconds and a third, although comebackers from this stable tend to race into shape rather than fire first start back. Lightly raced **DESIE DELIGHT** is improving each start; her recent runner-up was better than it looks. She pressed the pace, made the lead, then got collared by a filly that rallied from last.

Sixth Race

1. Sauls Call

2. Thirsty Chapo

3. City of Champions

Not sure if **SAULS CALL** can be trusted stretching to five and a half furlongs, because he backed up both recent starts at five. But he drops slightly from Cal-bred MSW to Cal-bred maiden-claiming, and has the top figures in the field. Tepid choice, with an up-front trip. **THIRSTY CHAPO** finished five lengths clear of third in a promising debut at this level. Unlike the top choice, the extra distance does benefit his closing style. The low-rated third-place debut by **CITY OF CHAMPIONS** might not be indicative of his ability. The race was marred by a spill, the pace was slow, 'CHAMPIONS checked early and showed late run rallying inside. The point is, he ran better than his low 16 Beyer. Likely improvement second time out.

Seventh Race

1. Superstition

2. Bruja Escarlata

3. Bulletproof One

Five furlongs is an optimum distance for **SUPERSTITION**, who lost her punch two recent turf-sprint stakes at longer distances. She returns to the course on which she won both starts in fall, has gas for cozy trip right behind the speed, and her bullet work 10 days ago suggests she is sharp. Undefeated **BRUJA ESCARLATA** gets a class test, moving into a stakes race after front-running wins her first three starts. The presence of at least three other front-runners is a problem, but she is drawn outside where she may have the option to press the pace in the clear or going on with it. Her figures say she is good enough. **BULLETPROOF ONE** is a 7-for-14 pro and co- highweight. But this is her first start since September, she will be pressured from the outside. **CONSTANTIA**, co- highweight, would prefer this be longer than five furlongs. Stakes winner and G2-placed in spring at Santa Anita, she will rally late.

Eighth Race

1. Colt Fiction

2. Canadian Pride

3. Howbeit

COLT FICTION, 3-for-4 at DMR, enters summer at the top of his game. He finished second last out behind graded winner Brickyard Ride, expected to be among the favorites next weekend in the G1 Bing Crosby. 'FICTION is comfortably drawn outside, and a solid choice to win this N2X from slightly off the pace. **CANADIAN PRIDE** ran the race of his career last out, a 97-Beyer second behind Bing Crosby-possible Dr. Schivel. 'PRIDE finished more than five lengths clear of third in that N2X, and is quick enough to establish position from the rail. **HOWBEIT** crushed a N1X last out with a big number. His DMR form is nondescript, but he is a better horse this year at age 4. **FASHIONABLY FAST** is a back-class Cal-bred stakes winner who may have lost a step.

Ninth Race

1. Brandothebartender

2. North County Guy

3. Margot's Boy

BRANDOTHEBARTENDER misfired at Los Alamitos, but that was dirt and turf seems his preferred surface. A three-time turf stakes winner, he has eight turf wins overall (just one win on dirt), he returns to preferred footing as tepid choice from a disadvantageous outside post in this turf mile. **NORTH COUNTY GUY**, freshened three months, finished less than a length behind the top choice last out in a similar Cal-bred turf mile stakes. Sharp works, he is ready to fire off the bench. He is drawn widest, however. **MARGOT'S BOY** was only prepping last out, runner-up by less than a length. He ran the race of his career on the DMR turf course last summer, runner-up in the G2 Del Mar Derby. Off-the-pace contender second start back from a three-month layoff. **WOUND TIGHT** has a chance to steal it, depending on how much pressure he gets from comebacker **GALILEAN**, who won this race last year.

Tenth Race

1. Kind But She Lies

2. Rowangoeshollywood

3. B'esame Me Mucho

KIND BUT SHE LIES, third last out in a maiden-30 at six furlongs, drops to maiden-20 and gets an additional half-furlong to flatter her closing rally. **ROWANGOESHOLLYWOOD** adds Lasix for her first start in nearly three months; back-to-back thirds vs. similar in spring give a big look. First-time starter **B'ESAME ME MUCHO** debuts for a stable that occasionally pops with slow-working firsters. That is a temporary wrap for this handicapper. Midsummer vacation next week, returning for the Aug. 5 Del Mar card.