

Date: August 7th, 2021**Track:** Del Mar**By Brad Free****BEST BET: Luck (8th race)****First Race****1. Laurel River****2. Savile Row****3. Fratelli**

LAUREL RIVER drops in class into an entry-level allowance, his first start since finishing second in a Grade 3 three months ago. He lost to a good horse; The Chosen Vron returned to win another stakes race. 'RIVER will be treated with anti-bleeding medication Lasix; the best race of his career was a 92-Beyer maiden win his only previous start with Lasix. He is trained by Bob Baffert, who also entered comebacker **SAVILE ROW**. The latter won his only start on this track last fall, and has been working well with top company for his return. He scratched from a similar race three weeks ago after he drew the undesirable inside post. One-two finish for the stablemates? Meanwhile, six-time winner **FRATELLI** has won twice at this level, and will set or press the pace. I GOT NO MUNNY is arguably the fastest based on figures, but compromised by the rail post. He will be under pressure throughout.

Second Race**1. Queen Goddess****2. Cliffsofthunder****3. Floral Essence**

The promising runner-up debut by **QUEEN GODDESS** stamps her most likely winner of this maiden turf route. She dropped farther off the pace than planned first out, uncorked a fast final quarter-mile in 23.51 seconds, and missed by only a length. She is likely to be positioned closer to the front this time, and should be tough with a race under her belt. **CLIFFSOFTHUNDER** ran well her only career start in Ireland; she rallied from off the pace to finish fourth in a race dominated by the three pacesetters. The Del Mar turf course has played favorably for her off-the-pace running style. Trainer Richard Baltas pops once in a while with foreign imports, his best might be in race 7. **FLORAL ESSENCE** finished only a half-length behind the top choice last out, while making her first start since last summer. Improvement likely second start back.

Third Race**1. Carpe Donum****2. Twirling Derby****3. Sigalert**

CARPE DONUM scored a front-running maiden-claiming win first out, and catches a somewhat paceless field of low-level claiming winners for his second start. If he breaks on top and makes the lead again, he can be long gone. Seven of the first nine races this meet at five and one-half furlongs were won by the pacesetter (one was disqualified). **TWIRLING DERBY** improved significantly after being claimed in spring. He followed his maiden win two back with a solid runner-up finish last out at this level over this racetrack. The 77 Beyer Figure he earned is the top last-out figure in the field. Obvious contender. **SIGALERT** drops in class, shortens from a sprint to a route, and adds blinkers. His only win was on this track three years ago; he has never raced at this low level.

Fourth Race**1. Montebello****2. Flying Drummer****3. Forbidden Kingdom**

First-time starter **MONTEBELLO** has trained like a colt that will come out firing. He is by Curlin, whose 2yo progeny win at only slightly higher-than-average 13 percent (average is 10 pct), but his team work July 22 stamps him ready. He worked in company and appeared to "win" the workout with Enbarr, who ran super last weekend finishing second in a fast maiden race. Inside post no bargain for **MONTEBELLO**, but the team drill with a top rival suggests he can overcome the draw. He is trained by Baffert, who also entered first-time starter **FLYING DRUMMER**. The latter is by hot first-crop sire Gun Runner (33 pct debut winners, 6-for-18) and produced by a dam that won her career debut as a 2yo at four and one-half furlongs. Baffert one-two again? **FORBIDDEN KINGDOM** also makes his debut; he reportedly is among the top 2yo prospects trained by Richard Mandella. Sired by American Pharoah (10 pct debut wins by 2yos), his dam was a debut winner/G3 winner as a 2yo, so he has speed in his pedigree.

Fifth Race**1. Midnight Jostar****2. Good Bye Putin****3. Ox Bridge**

Kentucky shipper **MIDNIGHT JOSTAR** meets a modest field of turf-route locals for his return to California; the stretch-runner ran super finishing fourth last out. He flew his final quarter-mile in a blazing 22.57 seconds. 'JOSTAR has been stabled in California for more than

month, and if the DMR turf course continues to favor late-runners, he can mow them down late. **GOOD BYE PUTIN** adds blinkers and switches riders for his third start following layoff. Theoretically, it should be his best effort. His figures rank among the highest in the field. **OX BRIDGE** is all speed. He stumbled and was eliminated opening day, but three previous turf routes give him a chance to steal it even over a turf course that has favored late-runners.

Sixth Race

1. Gold Rush Candy

2. Joker Boy

3. Erebus

First-time starter **GOLD RUSH CANDY** posted a series of fast works; his sire is off to a hot start with debut 2yos (limited sample, 2-for-4). As for his trainer, Baffert is 3-for-5 this summer (through Sunday) with debut 2yos. **JOKER BOY** is a Brian Koriner-trained firster with a solid work pattern and win-early breeding. First-crop sire Practical Joke is 6-for-16 with debut 2yos. **EREBUS** merits longshot consideration. He was a short on fitness last out when he made his first start since being castrated. His work pattern was abbreviated, he flashed speed, and tired. This is his second start following the "ultimate equipment change," improvement is likely at generous odds. He is trained by Walther Solis, whose **SIPPIN N KISSIN** did not have a good trip finishing third last out. **HAY JUAN**, by the same sire as the top choice, has worked well for his debut.

Seventh Race

1. Escape Route

2. Black Belt

3. Hollywood's Best

ESCAPE ROUTE won a fast race at this level last autumn while he was still a maiden, he returns at the same level for his first start in eight months. He runs well fresh, likes the DMR surface, is among the fastest in the field based on figures, and likely to have improved since his 2yo campaign. Florida shipper **BLACK BELT** crushed maidens last out at Gulfstream Park; he beat a decent field. The runner-up won his next start; the third-place finisher won two starts later. Outside post is a plus, the question is fitness. He has only one recorded work since his June 27 maiden win. Contender nonetheless. **HOLLYWOOD'S BEST**, comeback stablemate of the top choice, earned relatively high figures last year. Like his stablemate, this is his first start of the year. Trainer Mark Glatt won with three of his last four comebackers off six months or more.

Eighth Race

1. Luck

2. Lady Noguez

3. So Much Happy

An import from France, **LUCK** merits "best bet" status for her U.S. debut. She won two allowance races overseas, and remains eligible to this level (non-winners of one other-than) due to the small purses overseas. Equally important is her solid team workout July 13 on the DMR turf. She worked in company with graded stakes winner Bodhicitta and appeared to "win" the workout. **LUCK** looks poised for a top effort first start in the U.S., and she has a history of firing fresh. She won her career debut, and her comeback this spring. This is her first start in three months. Plenty to like. **LADY NOGUEZ** is usually in the hunt vs. similar, though her record on the DMR course is dubious (one runner-up finish from five tries). **SO MUCH HAPPY** is all speed, and the one to catch. The course has favored closers this summer, but with a five-pound apprentice allowance, she has a shot to steal it.

Ninth Race

1. Pappacap

2. Finneus

3. Bet On Mookie

The defection of pre-entry favorite Big City Lights from this G2 for 2yos turned this race into a scramble. Comeback shipper **PAPPACAP** gets the call. He won first out like a top prospect, worked well since arriving from Florida and meets a field with surprisingly little speed. If he is as quick at DMR as he was at Gulfstream Park, color him gone. **FINNEUS** employs an opposite style; he rallies from behind. The improving colt targeted this race for weeks, he might be overlooked in the betting. Look for him to rally late. **BET ON MOOKIE** dominated maidens last out on turf and must produce speed breaking from the inside post. He and the top choice are the only serious front-runners.

Tenth Race

1. Maxim Rate

2. Charmaine's Mia

3. Dogtag

MAXIM RATE returned to peak form last out by winning the G1 Gamely at Santa Anita; she is a two-time winner over the DMR course and employs an off-the-pace style that suits the course profile. This G2 turf route has been her objective since her most recent start in late May. Off the pace and into the winner's circle? Maybe, but she must catch **CHARMAINE'S MIA**. The latter was run into the ground on a suicidal pace last out, but previously scored three straight graded wins. Big chance if she ran rasion her speed over a turf course that plays completely different than the Santa Anita turf she dominated in winter and spring. **DOGTAG** finished only half-length behind

CHARMAINE'S MIA two back. Although DOGTAG lost as the odds-on favorite last out, this shorter distance helps. LAURA'S LIGHT is a 7-for-13 pro returning to preferred footing, which is turf.

Eleventh Race

1. Sweet and Cheeky

2. Sweet Sonny

3. My Tigress

SWEET AND CHEEKY must overcome the inside post in this maiden-claiming sprint, but she has never faced a field this soft. Although the distance of five and one-half furlongs might be shorter than preferred, she enters as simply the best, fastest horse in the field. **SWEET SONNY** is an 11-start maiden who squandered multiple chances as the favorite, five-time beaten chalk. But she has speed, is generally competitive vs. similar, and benefits by the shorter distance. **MY TIGRESS** will rally late. Her five starts produced five in-the-money finishes.