

Date: August 8th, 2021**Track:** Del Mar**By Brad Free****BEST BET: Big Summer (5th race)****First Race****1. Surplus****2. Hot Spot****3. Misawa**

Speed has been good in turf sprints (pacesetters 6-for-12 into Friday), a profile that bodes well for **SURPLUS** in this Cal-bred maiden turf sprint. He finished second on dirt last out while four lengths clear of third, he showed in his debut he handles grass when he set/pressed for the first five furlongs of a six-furlong race at Santa Anita. He is rounding into form, cutting back to five, and the one to catch. Blinkers off. **HOT SPOT** ran better than the line looks first out. He raced in traffic, checked slightly into the turn, was buried behind runners, and finished evenly for fourth. Promising debut, improvement likely second out. **MISAWA** chased and faded in his debut on dirt. He has turf influence in his pedigree; a bullet work this week suggests more speed forthcoming. First-time starter ZIP NOW was produced by the top turf sprinter Unzip Me, a 10-time stakes winner whose first three foals all are winners.

Second Race**1. Defunded****2. Palace Coup****3. Beyond Brilliant**

DEFUNDED was best while finishing second last out in the G3 Los Alamitos Derby; he lost ground while stablemate-winner Classier saved ground setting the pace. Good try by **DEFUNDED**, who finished 14 lengths clear of third and now drops into an entry-level allowance while adding Lasix. This is his first vs. older; he faced top 3yos through spring and early summer. Working well over the Del Mar track, logical choice to win from just off the pace. He will have to catch **PALACE COUP**, who stretches back to his preferred two-turn trip and should make the lead. Long gone? **BEYOND BRILLIANT** was unable to cope with blistering fractions opening weekend, and backed up in a similar spot. Slower splits likely this time; his maiden win two back puts him in the picture.

Third Race**1. Castle****2. Bench Judge****3. First Prez**

Veteran turf sprinter **CASTLE**, a seven-time winner, returns from a brief respite as a proper choice in this Cal-bred allowance/optional claiming turf sprint. He runs well fresh, has defeated better, and there is plenty of pace to flatter his closing rally. **BENCH JUDGE** was in tough opening day and finished fifth against a salty allowance field. He returns to the Cal-bred ranks while entered for the optional claim tag; he has won at this level and has more speed than he was able to show last out. **FIRST PREZ** wheels back two weeks after an okay third on dirt; his runner-up turf finish two back in a similar state-bred allowance puts him in the picture. Comeback gelding **AUSTIN'S BOY** appears to have trained well for his first start in a year and a half. His maiden win in February 2020 was impressive.

Fourth Race**1. Respect the Code****2. Commissioner David****3. Midnight Mammoth**

This maiden-80 sprint for 2yos is the right spot to take a shot with second-time starter **RESPECT THE CODE**. Relatively ignored at 17-1 first time out, he was pushed along and merely went evenly for sixth. But second-start maidens tend to improve, from this stable in particular. The past five years, trainer Peter Miller is 23 percent (36 for 156) with second-start maidens, all categories. Now that 'CODE has a race over the DMR track, followed by a half-mile work, improvement is likely. Hint of a price, perhaps? First-timer **COMMISSIONER DAVID** blew out three furlongs from the gate Wednesday in a blazing 34.80 seconds. The work suggests he will show speed from the rail. **MIDNIGHT MAMMOTH** finished far back as the favorite in his debut, the same race the top choice exits. **MAMMOTH** probably is better than that. First-timer **REDLINE** is a sibling to debut winner Stella Noir. Debut 2-year-old progeny of Texas Red have won at an above-average 15 percent clip.

Fifth Race**1. Big Summer****2. Iva Toguri****3. Delta Wind**

Comeback maiden **BIG SUMMER** should be tough in this turf sprint, based on her promising third-place debut in February. Racing six furlongs on the SA turf, she broke slowly from the rail, zoomed to the lead, battled to deep stretch and tired to third behind two who returned to win next out. 'SUMMER, sibling to a handful of winners, shortens to five furlongs for her comeback. Her front-running style

has been effective in turf sprints. First-time starter **IVA TOGURI** is a Grazen filly with sharp dirt works at Los Al. She is a sibling to allowance winner Althea Gibson and another minor winner. Grazen progeny 3yos and up have won first out at a higher-than-average 16 percent. Also-eligible **DELTA WIND**, runner-up both recent stats on dirt, would influence the pace scenario if she draws in. VA VA **VOOM** is a 10-start maiden making her first start since September. Her career-best race was following a similar layoff.

Sixth Race

1. Trip to Spain

2. Thirsty Always

3. Rock N Rye

TRIP TO SPAIN is wheeling back mighty quick (only two weeks) from his debut victory, and shipping from Golden Gate. But his win was dominating, and he might be up to the challenge in this Cal-bred stakes race. He popped the gate first out and crushed by more than four lengths in visually impressive style. Assuming he runs two alike on short notice, he can be long gone again. **THIRSTY ALWAYS**, cross-entered the G2 Best Pal on Saturday, is the most accomplished entrant. He followed his ordinary debut victory with a decisive stakes win at Pleasanton and has enough gas to keep the top choice in his sights. **ROCK N RYE**, off since his romping maiden in late May, figures to be involved early. **MR. T'S THIRSTY** disappointed as the favorite in the Pleasanton stakes race, but his maiden win two back was sharp. From the inside post, he has to "go."

Seventh Race

1. Mr Vargas

2. Tigerhon

3. Torosay

Veteran stakes winner **MR VARGAS** returns from a six-month layoff as the "best horse" in this \$40k claiming turf sprint. A two-time winner over the DMR turf course including a G3, the speedster gets a five-pound apprentice allowance and can be gone first start back. European import **TIGERHON**, who wired a 13-runner allowance field overseas in December, adds Lasix and blinkers for his U.S. debut. Though it is uncertain where he fits class-wise on this circuit, the horse he defeated by more than three lengths last out in England returned to win his next start, plus two more. Multiple stakes-placed **TOROSAY** returns from a one-year layoff; **JAMMING EDDY** is a two-time winner at DMR.

Eighth Race

1. Sally Stanford

2. Smart Monique

3. Bonita Leona

SALLY STANFORD lost at odds-on last time against similar, but she ran well. She was keen on the lead while trying to produce speed, but was excessively anchored. She tried to fight back late, and finished clear of third. Five-pound apprentice allowance this time, new rider Jessica Pyfer is likely to let her use her speed. The additional half-furlong of this 5.5-furlong race is a challenge, of course. **SMART MONIQUE** finished an okay third the same race as the top choice. 'MONIQUE is not quick, but will be running late and might benefit from the longer trip. **BONITA LEONA** veered out at the break in her debut, then backed up. It was a curiously odd performance at relatively low odds. She drops in for a tag, and might improve.

Ninth Race

1. Zoffarelli

2. Cathkin Peak

3. Hudson Ridge

This G3 turf route for 3yos is ripe for an upset by Euro-import **ZOFFARELLI**. He faced older and ran well last out, finishing only a head behind an older five-time winner despite being trapped behind runners the final quarter-mile. It was a better-than-looked runner-up effort by the gelding, who is fresh off the plane and facing modest local turf 3yos. He can sit back, wait, and blast home for the upset. **CATHKIN PEAK**, stakes winner in December at Santa Anita, returns from an extended layoff with a history of firing fresh. **HUDSON RIDGE** has improved every start; he won a stakes race two back while still a maiden, followed by a decisive allowance victory vs. next-out Oceanside Stakes winner Flashiest. 'RIDGE may vie for favoritism. **STILLETTO BOY**, recently purchased at auction for \$420k, crushed a dirt stakes last out in Iowa. This is his first start on turf.

Tenth Race

1. Head for Business

2. Safe Combination

3. Union Bliss

Class-drop maiden **HEAD FOR BUSINESS**, who duelled and cracked his first four starts, drops to the maiden-20 bottom and shortens to five and a half. Come catch him. First-time starter **SAFE COMBINATION** appears to have worked well enough to be considered a win candidate against a modest field. This stable wins with this type. **UNION BLISS** finished a creditable second here two weeks ago and will be chugging along late; **HOT PURSUIT** has speed and will keep the top choice honest.