Date: August 21st, 2021   **Track:** Del Mar

By Brad Free

BEST BET: Mo Forza (7th race)

First Race

1. Mirasol	2. Ain't Easy	3. Benedict Canyon

The 2yo filly **MIRASOL** received an education in her creditable third-place debut, and should improve a ton. She broke from the rail first out, took dirt, saved ground and finished evenly. She worked well since, gets off the rail, and stretches to five and one-half furlongs. Produced by a graded winner who produced four graded winners, MIRASOL looks tough unless one of the first-time starters is special. **AIN'T EASY** is an Into Mischief filly whose works are solid including an Aug. 1 team work with Cal-bred Connie Swingle, who exited the work to win a Cal-bred maiden race by more than seven lengths. **BENEDICT CANYON**, Bob Baffert-trained stablemate of the top choice, debuts with a solid work pattern and an advantageous outside post. Rail-drawn KEYCHAIN GIRL is a firster by hot sire Practical Joke, whose progeny are 7-for-21 first time out.

Second Race

1. P R Radio Star	2. Speed Pass	3. Major Cabbie

Del Mar horse-for-course **P R RADIO STAR**, with two wins and a second in four starts over the track, returns from the Midwest while ideallly spotted to fire a big shot first start in nearly two months. He split the field in a deep N2X last out, this $25k claiming sprint is the right level to win from just off the pace. **SPEED PASS** could vie for favoritism as he drops into a claiming race for the first time. Third-place finisher four successive N2X or graded stakes, his up-front style should play well in a field without much pace. **MAJOR CABBIE**, runner-up for a $32k tag last out, drops one level and will rally late. MR. DOUGIE FRESH goes second off the claim and returns to the selling ranks; BUTTERED NOODLES should be forwardly placed.

Third Race

1. Memo Daddy	2. Ottawa Fire	3. Evening Sun

MEMO DADDY can score a minor upset in this N1X turf route after a brutal trip in a similar race. He was blocked trying to rally in the stretch, took up sharply, and eliminated. He was not the only horse in the race who had trouble, but he could have been right there with clear sailing. The improving Chilean import can surprise from off the pace. **OTTAWA FIRE** finished in front of the top choice, sixth as the favorite, in his U.S. debut. Though 'FIRE did not have "trouble," he finished willingly and galloped out with run. He can improve adding blinkers. **EVENING SUN** crossed the wire first, in front of the top pair, weaving through traffic and causing trouble himself. He was disqualified and placed eighth. That was only his second U.S. start, he is on the upswing. ONE FAST BRO might be ranked too low. His Cal-bred N1X win by nearly four lengths last out was fast.

Fourth Race

1. Kamui	2. Forbidden Kingdom	3. Rhetoric

First-time starter **KAMUI** has worked well, in company, like a 2yo ready to fire first out. He worked with talented 3yo Defunded in July; he outworked a stablemate Aug. 7 (viewed on XBTV.com), and posted a sharp five-furlong work a week ago. All systems go for Baffert, who entered three. **FORBIDDEN KINGDOM** makes his debut for trainer Richard Mandella with sharp works and win-early breeding on the bottom. His dam was a graded stakes-winning 2yo whose three foals to start include a debut winner. Mandella does not always crank them for a debut, but this colt might be an exception. **RHETORIC**, like the top choice a Baffert trainee by Quality Road, appears to have worked well but drew a tough inside post. THE MET is the only entrant with afternoon racing experience. Upset candidate after a fourth-place debut?

Fifth Race

1. Barbwire	2. Prince Abama	3. Subconscious

BARBWIRE is racing into shape and poised for a maiden win third time out. He improved a bunch last out, runner-up while racing against the grain of the anti-speed turf bias. **PRINCE ABAMA**, listed as a first-time gelding and adding Lasix for his U.S. debut, hails from an outfit that is 6-for-12 since late last year with foreign shippers making their U.S. debut in a maiden race. **SUBCONSCIOUS**, first-time gelding, flashed speed finishing second and third in a pair of turf routes at Santa Anita. He might be a better horse since gelded, if he can ration his speed. Four-start maiden AFFABLE has the top figures, but he is not exactly bred to for turf. In the money all four starts, he must be respected despite his pedigree.

Sixth Race

1. Private Mission	2. Forest Caraway	3. I'm So Anna

This stakes race is the first leg of the mandatory-payout pick six. Sprint winners **PRIVATE MISSION** and **FOREST CARAWAY** stretch out in this G3 mile for 3yo fillies. PRIVATE MISSION gets the nod first in two months, while 'CARAWAY wheels back just 20 days after her comeback win. 'MISSION is drawn outside where she can set or press the pace. Expect her to use her seed and go on with it. FOREST CARAWAY parlayed a rail-skimming trip to a decisive comeback win on this track. She won by more than three lengths over Big Sweep, who the top choice only defeated by less than a length.

'CARAWAY has two wins and a G1 second from three starts at DMR. **I'M SO ANNA** is the most accomplished entrant, a three-time stakes winner proven around two turns. LADY MYSTIFY defeated older fillies and mares in a N1X mile here last month.

Seventh Race

1. Mo Forza	2. Hit the Road	3. Smooth Like Strait

Brilliant turf miler **MO FORZA** seeks his second straight G2 Del Mar Mile. If he runs like last year when he smoked a mile in 1:33.27, he will be tough to beat. His win last year followed a seven-month layoff; this year the layoff is 10 months. Best horse, fastest horse, most probable winner on the card. But he faces legitimate G1 winners: **HIT THE ROAD** and **SMOOTH LIKE STRAIT**. Although HIT THE ROAD has not started since April, he runs well fresh, with three wins following layoffs. He defeated SMOOTH LIKE STRAIT in March. 'STRAIT missed as the favorite last out in the G2 Eddie Read, but he got beat by a good horse (United) and might be better at this shorter mile trip. The pace is likely to be set by either 'ROAD or 'STRAIT, while last-out minor stakes winner NEPTUNE'S STORM could influence the pace. He is a stablemate of MO FORZA.

Eighth Race

1. Positivity	2. Littlebitamedal	3. Scary Fast Smile

POSITIVITY and **LITTLEBITAMEDAL**, highly rated winners up in class first off the claim by Doug O'Neill, are preferred in this N1X sprint. POSITIVITY crushed a $50k claiming sprint for 3yos by more than five lengths last month while reaffirming his DMR horse-for-course tendency; 2-for-3 over the track. He faces older, and might be fast enough to make the jump. LITTLEBITAMEDAL defeated older $32k claiming sprinters rallying wide to win more impressively than the margin. Now 3-for-6 at DMR, he will roll late. **SCARY FAST SMILE** is back doing what he does best, which is sprint. He can be forgiven for his recent last-place route. He is speed, maiden winner RISK AND REWARD also runs on the front end. Multiple graded-placed DREAM SHAKE might be ranked too low by this handicapper. However, his last two starts suggest he has tailed off.

Ninth Race

1. Fluffy Socks	2. Going Global	3. Closing Remarks

FLUFFY SOCKS, who won a G3 on the DMR turf last year at age 2, would be the sixth East Coast-based filly in the past 11 years to win the G1 DMR Oaks. She is rounding into form, her G3 runner-up last out was better than it looks. The pace was slow, she finished well, and now benefits from the DMR course profile that promoted closers all summer. **GOING GLOBAL** missed at odds-on the one-mile San Clemente last out, but it was her first start in two months and a useful prep. She ran her two best races at this nine-furlong trip in spring at SA. **CLOSING REMARKS** is back doing what she does best, which is run long on turf. SOARING SKY is a new shooter from Europe, fresh off the plane with an upset chance. MADONE might be ranked too low after winning the San Clemente. But can she stay nine furlongs? If so, obvious contender.

Tenth Race

1. Express Train	2. Royal Ship	3. Dr Post

DMR horse-for-course **EXPRESS TRAIN** has plenty going for him in the G1 Pacific Classic. He is a G2 winner, multiple G1-placed, 3-for-4 at DMR with big works since winning a G2 last month, and his tactical speed allows him to adapt to the pace scenario. He ran well both previous starts at a mile and one-quarter (Big 'Cap runner-up, Gold Cup third). He figures for pressing trip, and should get first run over **ROYAL SHIP**, who re-emerged as a top handicap horse after being gelded late last year. All three dirt races this year were solid: G2 winner, G1 runner-up, third with a compromising trip last out in the race won by the top choice. 'SHIP raced inside, had to wait for room from the five-sixteenths into the lane, tried to rally inside, and missed by slightly more than a length. Good effort despite an imperfect trip. East Coast shipper **DR POST** added blinkers and scored a sharp G3 win last out in New Jersey. The improving son of Quality Road is peaking at the right time. TIZAMAGICIAN won a G3 at a mile and one-half; INDEPENDENCE HALL adds blinkers and is a candidate to set the pace.

Eleventh Race

1. Arklow	2. United	3. Masteroffoxhounds

East vs. West in the G2 Del Mar Handicap, close call between **ARKLOW** and **UNITED**. This is the second trip to DMR for East/Midwest-based ARKLOW, who won a G2 here in fall. A nine-time winner of $2.7 million, ARKLOW had an alibi finishing sixth in a G1 last out. He clipped heels and stumbled; the race was won by the pacesetter. ARKLOW trained forwardly since and his closing style suits the course profile. UNITED returned to form winning the G2 Eddie Read last out over Smooth Like Strait to remerge as the top distance turf horse in California. His only recent misfires were due to discomfort with the Keeneland course in the Breeders' Cup, and a foot problem that compromised him two back at SA. He is otherwise a gem of consistency; five turf starts at DMR produced three wins, two seconds. **MASTEROFFOXHOUNDS** has targeted this race since early June; he is dropping from a G1. MEDIA BLITZ looked good winning a N2X, and enters as an upset candidate on the class hike.