

**Date:** August 18th, 2022**Track:** Del Mar**By Brad Free****BEST BET: Box of Chocolates (7th race)****First Race****1. Besame Mucho****2. Shardial****3. Peso**

Runner-up her last three starts at this maiden-20 level, **BESAME MUCHO** exits a race that produced three next-out winners. First off the claim by trainer Doug O'Neill, the pace-pressing gelding is the only entrant who has exceeded the speed-figure par for this level (65 Beyer). He also gets a weight break with five-pound apprentice Chel-c Bailey. **SHARDIAL** returns at the lowest level following an 11-month layoff. He showed speed and faded his only start at a higher level last year, was claimed for \$40k, and disappeared. His work pattern is solid, he is quick enough to establish position from the rail, and will be involved in the pace. **PESO** finished next-to-last in his debut vs. maiden special-weight rivals, and drops to the bottom for his second start. **MOUNT OLYMPIC** has some speed, this is his first start this year.

**Second Race****1. Lord Dragon****2. Colonelsdarktemper****3. Holden the Lute**

Plenty of pace in this \$40k claiming dirt mile to set it up for veteran closer **LORD DRAGON**. A 10-time winner claimed for \$25k in June, he entered a \$32k claiming route July 24 but did not draw in from the also-eligible list. This higher-level race will do fine. 'DRAGON meets a field in which five of his six rivals have some degree of speed. First off the claim by Bob Hess Jr., **LORD DRAGON** can mow them down. **COLONELSDARKTEMPER** also was claimed in Kentucky last out, from a win for \$32k by trainer Robertino Diodoro. A nine-win veteran with a front-running/pace-pressing style, 'TEMPER could get a good trip outside and behind the speed. **HOLDEN THE LUTE** missed by a nose last out in a N1X/optional \$50k claim route. He subsequently scratched July 24, and shows up for a \$40k tag. He has speed, but is also effective from off the pace. **OFFSHORE AFFAIR** is speed, so is **LOUD MOUTH**.

**Third Race****1. Liberty Forever****2. Offlee Icy****3. Orth**

Also-eligible **LIBERTY FOREVER** returns from a seven-month layoff with solid works and proven form in similar Cal-bred maiden turf sprints. In the money all three starts against maidens, the comeback gelding is the fastest on numbers, has speed, and runs well fresh. **OFFLEE ICY** missed by only a length in a promising fourth-place debut, although the quality of that field is dubious. Ten from the race ran back since, they produced one second and one third. On the other hand, 'ICY is likely to improve in the second start of his career. Trainer John Sadler is 6-for-24 with second-start maiden turf sprinters the past two-plus years. **ORTH** is an eight-start maiden who finished in the money three of his last four. **LET'S ACCLIMATE** might be ranked too low by this handicapper. His Los Al workouts look good on paper.

**Fourth Race****1. Brittle and Yoo****2. Livin' At the Bu****3. Sugar Kisses**

**BRITTLE AND YOO** drops into a claiming route restricted to non-winners of three lifetime, while returning to the only footing (dirt) on which she has won. The last time she ran on dirt, she ran the fastest race of her career. With a switch to leading jockey Juan Hernandez, 'YOO gets the call to win from just off the pace. **LIVIN' AT THE BU** was overmatched at 45-1 in a Cal-bred allowance last out, but two previous starts including a maiden-claiming win on turf, and a relatively fast N2L claiming win on dirt. He drops back to a more appropriate level. **SUGAR KISSES** is a longshot closer who will pick them up late. Five of the nine runners here exit sprints, so the pace should be legit. **V BUCK** might be the speed of the speed, stretching out for the first time after a N2L claiming sprint win.

**Fifth Race****1. Nak Nak Bolt****2. Abinadi****3. Mor Tequila**

This \$150k maiden-claiming sprint for 2yos is a good spot to take a shot with shipper **NAK NAK BOLT**, who exits one of the most productive maidens races of the season. It was July 2 at Churchill Downs, the MSW produced four next-out winners including G2 Saratoga Special winner Damon's Mound and three others who won MSW races. 'BOLT pressed and cracked that race, he was gelded since, drops in

class and should look vastly improved against easier company. **ABINADI** also drops from a productive MSW in Kentucky. The winner returned to win the \$150k Tremont Stakes, the third-place finisher returned to win a Texas-bred stakes race. **ABINADI** was gelded since raced, posted fast works over the DMR surface and should improve on the class drop/equipment change. **MOR TEQUILA** is a fast-working first-time starter purchased in spring for \$130k. It makes sense he can debut for \$150k. **SOUTH COAST ROUTE** drops from MSW, as does **AIR KENNEY**.

#### Sixth Race

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##### 1. Turn On The Jets

##### 2. Gregory's Pride

##### 3. Time to Party

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The top local runner in this N1X turf sprint has lost six straight at this level; he finished in the money all six. Perhaps this race is ripe for a new shooter with credentials. Enter the European import **TURN ON THE JETS**, who has been working well for his U.S. debut and won an allowance race last year in Ireland. He gets Lasix and the leading rider for his first start for trainer Phil D'Amato and just might upset stablemate **GREGORY'S PRIDE**. The latter is the aforementioned always-in-the-money starter. His last six starts include three successive runner-up finishes. He has trained well since his last start, and is likely to vie for favoritism. **TIME TO PARTY** will roll early. He dueled and cracked last time out in the same race many of these exit, but the enigmatic front-runner/presser figures as a contender off his runner-up finish two back. **JOHNNY PODRES** will rally, up in class after a Cal-bred allowance win.

#### Seventh Race

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##### 1. Box of Chocolates

##### 2. Squalotero

##### 3. Big Scott Daddy

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**BOX OF CHOCOLATES** looks tough in this \$20k claiming N3L sprint. Claimed from a solid runner-up comeback, he drops to restricted claiming with speed figures this year and last that exceed the 77 Beyer for this level. The inside post is a challenge, but the consistent gelding enters as simply the best and fastest in the field in his first start for Hess. **SQUALOTORO** returns to restricted claiming after finding Cal-bred N1X rivals too tough. A deep closer who ran well over the DMR dirt track last fall, **SQUALOTORO** might be the best finisher in the field. **BIG SCOTT DADDY** misfired last out while possibly too close to the pace. **WINHAPPY** returns from a layoff of more than a year, with speed to make the lead if he wants.

#### Eighth Race

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##### 1. Fore Flag

##### 2. Attenzione

##### 3. Oubabe

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**FORE FLAG**, an 11-start maiden with six in-the-money finishes including his last three attempts at this one-mile distance, is the one to beat in this Cal-bred maiden turf mile. Runner-up in a similar race three weeks ago with a :23.62 final quarter, 'FLAG may finally have found a field he can mow down. Trouble-prone **ATTENZIONE** exits the same race as the top choice. The slow pace negated the rally of **ATTENZIONE**, who did show some late run. He might benefit from this rider switch. **OUBABE**, beaten favorite seven straight Cal-bred maiden races, figures as a contender once again following a third-place finish in the same race as the top pair. **AGADOR SPARTACUS** has run races that put him in the hunt.