

Date: November 13th, 2022

Track: Del Mar

By Brad Free

BEST BET: Italiano (2nd race)

First Race

1. Malibu Coast

2. Kid Azteca

3. Castleknock

Close call between **MALIBU COAST** and **KID AZTECA** in this turf mile for N1X 2yos. Lightly raced **MALIBU COAST** gets the nod dropping from third in a G3 turf mile at Santa Anita. He raced evenly throughout, but the front-runners kept going while he maintained his position though the lane. The turf course at Del Mar, where he won his debut two back, is generally more conducive to his off-the-pace style. **KID AZTECA** maintained his solid recent form finishing second last out in a similar N1X. The top choice beat him in September, but 'AZTECA improved since. He has tactical speed and can finish. He is trained by Peter Miller, who also entered front-runner **CASTLEKNOCK**. The latter finished second in a G3 two back, in front of **MALIBU COAST**, then third last out behind stablemate **KID AZTECA**. Win or lose, **CASTLEKNOCK** looks like the one to catch.

Second Race

1. Italiano

2. Shady Empire

3. Joe Don Looney

ITALIANO should win this \$16k claiming sprint despite the inside post, facing a field without much speed. **ITALIANO** can be forwardly placed; both starts at DMR in summer were fast: win and runner-up at higher class levels. The knock is a curious drop below the \$25k level at which he was claimed two back. Will side with the "best horse" and expect 7yo veteran **ITALIANO** to score his ninth victory. **SHADY EMPIRE** moves up slightly in class to open claiming after winning a N3L claiming sprint. His speed/pressing style gives him a tactical edge; most in this field are late-runners. **JOE DON LOONEY** returns from a brief freshening adding blinkers and switching to top gate jockey Edwin Maldonado. 'LOONEY could show more speed first start back while adding blinkers. The 12-win veteran **BLACK STORM**, stablemate of the top choice, will rally from the back.

Third Race

1. Hawk of War

2. Ready Soul

3. Moody Jim

Another close call, this a \$50k claiming turf route with **HAWK OF WAR** vs. comebacker **READY SOUL**. The solid recent campaign by 'WAR includes four wins from his last six starts and third-by-a-neck last out against similar. If there is a knock on his last start, it is the runner-up returned to finish a disappointing fourth as the favorite for \$40k claiming and the fifth-place finisher returned to finish a disappointing third as the favorite. Nonetheless, 'WAR gets the call shortening from nine furlongs to eight and a half. **READY SOUL**, graded stakes-placed twice in winter at Santa Anita, returns from a nine-month layoff and drops into a claiming race for the first time. Flavien Prat rode him four times previously: two wins, a second and a third. Close call between 'WAR and 'SOUL. **MOODY JIM** is a 4-for-14 pro reclaimed last out from a third-place finish by his previous trainer Jeff Mullins, who also entered **COAST OF ROAN**. The latter has run races fast enough for this group.

Fourth Race

1. Everlys Girl

2. Laurel Canyon

3. Shared Future

Other than a problematic pace rival in the outside post, **EVERLYS GIRL** is logical in this \$40k claiming sprint for 3yo fillies. She ran well on this track in summer, and drops from older state-bred allowance into an age-restricted claiming sprint. She has speed, but has run well from slightly off the pace. She may need to employ that style here, because dropper **LAUREL CANYON** is quicker. First time in for a claim tag, blinkers on, third start back from a layoff, 'CANYON will take them as far as she can. If she weakens and drags the top choice down with her, the race could unfold perfectly for late-runner **SHARED FUTURE**, who finished second on this track at this class level during summer. **YOUTEYOURHONOR** also will rally late.

Fifth Race

1. Cuban Crisis

2. Real Fire

3. Socially Smart

A promising third-place comeback and favorable pace scenario in a field with lots of speed sets up **CUBAN CRISIS** for a maiden win second start back in a filly-mare turf sprint that is not that tough. 'CRISIS had been off nearly eight months when she rallied from midpack

to miss by a length; runner-up Phenom returned to crush by six lengths. The main challenge for 'CRISIS is shortening from six furlongs to five, and working out a trip rallying from behind. **REAL FIRE** has been a moneyburner in her four-start career, and finished behind the top choice last out. But she hit the board her first three starts, goes third off the layoff, and is reunited with Prat. She'll get a pressing trip in the clear, and being by Street Boss, turf should be her deal. One more chance? **SOCIALLY SMART** is speed, first start in more than a year; she'll have to cope with fellow speedsters DREAM A DREAM and TOPOLINA.

Sixth Race

1. Gilmore**2. Navy Man****3. Massimo**

First-time starter **GILMORE** has shown speed in morning works (viewed on XBTV.com) and looks tough to catch. By the excellent debut stallion Twirling Candy (18 percent wins debut 2yos), expectations are for a top effort first out for an amazingly productive trainer-jockey combo. Since fall 2021, Bob Baffert and John Velazquez are an incredible 11-for-13 with first-time starters on dirt. **NAVY MAN** ran well finishing third in his debut after breaking from the rail and chasing a fast colt (Arabian Lion) who returned to finish second in a fast allowance. 'MAN moves to an outside post, and should improve with a race under his belt. **MASSIMO** is the second Baffert entrant, in the money all three starts and removing blinkers for the first time. He should be running late. **SULLY** is a \$700k yearling by Uncle Mo making his career debut for a stable that typically races maidens into shape rather than fire first time out.

Seventh Race

1. Rvalentina**2. Classy****3. Witch Moon**

In a wide-open N2L starter at a mile on turf, **RVALENTINA** gets the call based on her runner-up finish last out. She might have made the lead too soon, and got run over by School Dance, one of the favorites to win a N1X on Saturday (race 5). **RVALENTINA** should be forwardly placed in a race without much pace; she will get first run. The maiden **CLASSY** improved a ton second out, finishing third while running her final quarter-mile in a decent 23.93 seconds compared to the top pick's :24.73 come-home. Maidens occasionally win this N2L starter condition, **CLASSY** is improving and gets Prat. **WITCH MOON** will rally from the back at long odds, while **WEEMISSGRAMMY** won the maiden-50 race while defeating **CLASSY** by two and a half lengths. 'GRAMMY might be ranked too low by this handicapper.

Eighth Race

1. Fun to Dream**2. Big Novel****3. Taming the Tigress**

FUN TO DREAM and **BIG NOVEL** are the principals in this small-field Cal-bred sprint stake. The call is 'DREAM, who did not have a great trip last time in heavy traffic, yet powered home to win the N1X route at SA by more than four lengths. She proved in summer she likes DMR when she won a stake for Cal-bred 3yo fillies by more than nine lengths; she has a current-racing edge over comebacker **BIG NOVEL**. The latter placed in five Cal-bred stakes, she is a two-time winner, and hit the board all eight starts. Her workout pattern for her first start since April looks solid. **TAMING THE TIGRESS** is probably a cut below the top pair on ability, but the allowance-caliber filly is all racehorse, having won 6 of 16 including three at DMR.

Ninth Race

1. La Peer**2. Window Shopping****3. Jennifer's d'Light**

Runner-up by a half-length last out with a 23.50-second final quarter-mile, **LA PEER** gets the call in this turf mile for MSW 2yo fillies. She had to weave through traffic in the lane, and finished well. But this field is deep, and first-time starter **WINDOW SHOPPING** has trained as if she is live. She worked repeatedly in company including a fast team drill Oct. 23 with older graded winner Tizamagician. 'SHOPPING is by American Pharoah; her dam produced two runners who both won first out (dirt sprints). Always tough to win a route first out, but 'SHOPPING appears to be an above-average maiden. **JENNIFER'S D'LIGHT** missed by less than a length in her second start, she is racing into condition like maidens from this stable typically do. **MOUNT MARY** may have only been prepping last month with an okay third in a sprint; **THE DANCE BETWEEN** sprints like a filly who wants two turns. Seems like a wide-open race.