

**Date:** December 4th, 2022

**Track:** Del Mar

**By Brad Free**

**BEST BET: Paulliac (3rd race)**

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**First Race**

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**1. Dandy Man Shines**

**2. Ashcroft**

**3. Heartbreak Kid**

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Sunday is Del Mar closing day; Los Alamitos opens its all-dirt meet on Friday, Dec. 9. **DANDY MAN SHINES** is the choice dropping into a maiden race for the first time in his fifth start. He was not disgraced recent starts in Group 2-Grade 3 races including a midpack finish last out in a race that produced two next-out winners. A habitual slow starter, this maiden turf mile is the easiest chance yet for 'SHINES. The recent comeback by **ASHCROFT** was better than it looks. Keen and unrelaxed early, blocked into and through much of the stretch, he ran well finishing fourth. That Keeneland race was his first in more than five months; his effort was partly validated when winner Worthington returned with a decisive allowance win. **HEARTBREAK KID** misfired on dirt last out, previous third- and second-place finishes in turf routes put him in the hunt. **CARVER** had an eventful trip finishing sixth in his debut; he can improve.

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**Second Race**

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**1. Midnight Majesty**

**2. Agrigento**

**3. U R Pressed**

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Maiden-20s go six and a half, **MIDNIGHT MAJESTY** will race at the bottom class level for the first time while returning to the DMR track on which he ran the best race of his career finishing second in a summer maiden-40. **AGRIGENTO** is the only other entrant who has never raced at this bottom level. His recent third-place comeback was not bad; he gets a weight break over the top choice due to a 10-pound apprentice allowance. **U R PRESSED** is coming back around, based on his respectable third last out vs. similar. Late-runner **CROSS EXAMINE**, in the money four of five starts, will be rolling in the lane.

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**Third Race**

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**1. Paulliac**

**2. Hawker**

**3. Single Track Mind**

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**PAULLIAC** will be tough in this turf mile for maiden 2yos, which is a split of the first race, based on an impressive U.S. debut over this course and distance. **PAULLIAC** broke last, rallied wide, ran his final quarter-mile in :23.09 and missed by a head. With a clean takeoff in his second local start, he can deliver at a short price. **HAWKER** is a \$675k Justify colt from a productive female family, stretching to a route and changing surfaces after a pair of sprints. He missed by only a neck in his debut, then did not have a good trip next out when caught wide into and through the turn. He can improve at this longer distance. **SINGLE TRACK MIND** ran better his second U.S. start, rallying to third in a race won by the even-money pacesetter.

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**Fourth Race**

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**1. Bruins Mastery**

**2. General Welfare**

**3. Nobe**

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Mandatory payout in the 20-cent pick six; the sequence begins with this low-level maiden-claiming sprint for 2yos. It looks like a "spread" race. Tepid choice is second-timer **BRUINS MASTERY**, who took some action first out (4-1), chased the pace and went evenly to finish third. Produced by a stakes-winning dam, she ran like a filly who can improve second out. A trio of first-time starters have a look, including **GENERAL WELFARE**. Trainer Bob Hess Jr. has won a fair share of maiden-claiming races with first-time starters including a debut filly by Merit Man on this track four years ago. This filly, by the same sire, debuts with okay works and seems like a contender. **NOBE** may fit against this ordinary field. Trainer Mike Puype won with 2 of his last 8 juvenile maiden-claiming firsters including a \$26 winner. **PRESTIGIOUS**, from the stable of productive debut trainer Luis Mendez, merits a look. **MISS KALINE** drops in class and will rally late. **CHERRY CHAOS** probably fits. Lots of contenders in a seemingly wide-open race.

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**Fifth Race**

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**1. Speed Boat Beach**

**2. Ah Jeez**

**3. First Peace**

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Two turns may be a challenge for sprinter **SPEED BOAT BEACH**. But the stakes-winning stretch-out is quick enough to open a significant lead and wire the field. After winning his first two starts including a turf sprint, he finished ninth last out in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf Sprint. Not sure how far he wants to run, but certainly the one to catch. The distance dilemma also applies to **AH JEEZ**, who scored a sharp turf-sprint allowance win here opening weekend and ran like a colt who could find a mile within reach now that he has

returned to form. AH JEEZ backed up two previous starts at a mile, but improved since and could get a cozy trip positioned second. He will get first run if the pacesetter falters. **FIRST PEACE** has improved each start, he wired maiden turf milers last time including race-3 maiden contender Single Track Mind. **FIRST PEACE** won't get the same front-running trip, but he does stay two turns. **RANSOMWARE** will rally late in a race that sets up for his style. Last time out racing a mile, he defeated race-3 maiden favorite Paulliac.

#### Sixth Race

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**1. Resilient****2. Square Cat****3. Brace for Impact**

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**RESILIENT**, a lightly raced 5yo with three starts, can win this Cal-bred allowance sprint if he reproduces his most recent effort in a similar race at Santa Anita. He did not have a great trip inside and behind runners, he dropped back on the turn, then re-rallied inside for second. Solid effort, now he moves to the outside post with speed for a pressing trip in a race that could unfold at a tepid pace. **SQUARE CAT** crushed a Cal-bred allowance turf sprint last time; he retains Cal-bred eligibility moving to dirt. He raced only once on dirt, third in a maiden race one year ago. Sharp gelding is a legit late threat. **BRACE FOR IMPACT** looms a front-end upset candidate, second start following a layoff and returning to preferred footing, which is dirt. The speed figures he earned prior to his layoff are fast enough for this. **SINGLE ME OUT**, entered for the optional \$20k claim tag, will rally.

#### Seventh Race

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**1. Regal Glory****2. Wakanaka****3. Hamwood Flier**

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Top-class mare **REGAL GLORY** is favored to win the Matriarch for a second straight year in what is expected to be her final start. Compromised by a wide trip last out against in the BC Mile, she finished tenth in a better-than-looked effort considering ground loss. Class of this field, fastest on numbers, legit chalk. **WAKANAKA** was no match for the top choice the last two times they met, but **WAKANAKA** maintained her form as the season unfolded, and enters off a sharp victory in a \$371k turf stake at KEE. She will rally late. **HAMWOOD FLIER** is an interesting pace play. The speedster is jumping significantly in class after a restricted stakes win, but her 45-and-change gas puts her loose on the lead. Though "outclassed" by the top pair, her speed makes her a threat. Long gone? **DOLCE ZEL**, Chad Brown-trained stablemate of the top choice, is a 3yo facing older. She runs well fresh, but younger fillies generally are up against it. Since 2014 when the Matriarch moved from Hollywood Park to Del Mar, 17 younger fillies contested the Matriarch: one second, one third. The last 3yo to win the Matriarch was Better Lucky in 2012 at Hollywood.

#### Eighth Race

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**1. Papale****2. Bright Leaf****3. Street Art**

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**PAPALE** returns from a four-month layoff as one the fastest horses in this N2L starter allowance, based on races this spring and 2021. He runs well fresh, and has run well over the DMR track. **BRIGHT LEAF** could vie for favoritism off his runner-up finish on this track in September and third in spring at Santa Anita when he finished less than a length behind **PAPALE**. The top pair will rally late, while the horse to catch is stretch-out sprinter **STREET ART**. Two turns on dirt is uncharted territory for 'ART, but he is virtually guaranteed to make the lead stretching out. Going into Friday, three of the last five dirt miles were won by the pacesetter. **ONCOMING** figures as a contender if he reproduces his turf and synthetic-surface races moving to dirt.

#### Ninth Race

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**1. Ready Soul****2. Earls Rock****3. Count of Amazonia**

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Last-out \$50k claiming winner **READY SOUL** and last-out N2X runner-up **EARLS ROCK** top this N2X/\$80k claiming turf route. The call is 'SOUL, a graded stakes-placed gelding claimed for \$50k from a facile comeback win. He wired that race, but can rally from behind, and gets an optimistic class bump first off the claim by trainer Doug O'Neill and assistant Leandro Mora. **EARLS ROCK** was off a year and a half before he returned with a strong third-place comeback. He ran his final quarter in :22.91, worked fast since, and is likely to improve second start back. **COUNT OF AMAZONIA** finished a head in front of **EARLS ROCK** last out. The closer will rally, while front-runner/presser **MECKLENBURG** will contest the pace moving up from a \$40k claiming win. That is a wrap for this handicapper. Taking a break during the LRC December meet that begins Friday, plan to return for the Dec. 26 opener at Santa Anita.