

Date: July 21st, 2023

Track: Del Mar

By Brad Free

BEST BET: North East Star (3rd race)

First Race

1. Next Revolt

2. Tone Feelin

3. Big Buzz

Del Mar opening day, first post 2 p.m. **NEXT REVOLT**, three-time DMR dirt winner, meets tougher after crushing a Los Alamitos starter allowance with a big fig. The horse-for-course can win right back with a pressing trip. **TONE FEELIN** was overmatched as a 51-1 outsider last out in his California debut that appeared to be merely a prep for this claiming route. A nine-time winner from his last 31 starts, his figures match or exceed par for this level. **BIG BUZZ** won a \$16k claiming mile on this track last summer, and probably needed his recent comeback. Improvement possible second start back. **SETTECENTO** drops in class, second start off the claim, for a stable with outstanding second-off-claim stats: 25 percent past five years (35 for 139) including 4 of 8 since January. **UNIVERSAL PAYDAY** might be ranked too low; he stretches out from a series of highly rated one-turn races in Florida.

Second Race

1. Dr. Venkman

2. Bye Bye Ray

3. Uncle Reg

First-time starter **DR. VENKMAN**, 3yo sibling to 2yo stakes winner Tranche, appears ready to fire based on his sharp gate work July 14 in which he was best over two rivals. He produced speed, was rated three-wide, then ran away from his work rivals (viewed online) like a horse who will run big first time out. With a five-pound apprentice weight break, for a trainer whose win rate with main-track firsters is 17 percent the past five years, 'VENKMAN looks well-meant. **BYE BYE RAY** ships from Ruidoso Downs; his best two races were runner-up sprints in the Midwest. **UNCLE REG** set a fast pace and tired last out in a comeback race he needed. He might be the one to catch. **CENTRAL DISPATCH** earned an okay figure (75 Beyer) finishing third in his debut; **DAZZLEMESILVER** goes route to sprint and will rally late.

Third Race

1. North East Star

2. Sakura Flavor

3. Oak Street Beach

A promising third-place U.S. debut by **NORTH EAST STAR** sets up the Irish filly as a likely maiden winner second time out. Her first start in California was super. Off slowly in a turf sprint that was dominated by two front-runners, 'STAR rallied from 14 lengths off to miss by just slightly more than three lengths. That was six furlongs; she wants this mile trip. Trainer Phil D'Amato is 10-for-22 with maiden turf-route favorites the past five years at DMR. **SAKURA FLAVOR** adds blinkers and cuts back to the mile distance of her career-best effort, a runner-up finish two starts back. The deliberately improving filly fits, while Florida shipper **OAK STREET BEACH** stretches to two turns for the first time, with speed to make the lead if she chooses. **FWIW**, last summer on this course, none of the 23 rails-at-zero turf miles were won by the pacesetter. **TEA TREE BABY** fits off her runner-up U.S. debut in December on turf. Her next start on dirt was a toss.

Fourth Race

1. Santos to Wilson

2. Tenth Street Don

3. Careless Kitten

This N3L claiming sprint is a scramble. **SANTOS TO WILSON** has been off since October, but he has affinity for the Del Mar track (one win, one second), runs well fresh, and has speed to be forwardly placed. **TENTH STREET DON** seeks his third straight after earning a career-best figure last out. Sharp form, modest foes, off-the-pace threat. **CARELESS KITTEN** does not have much sprint speed, but the route-to-sprint comebacker will finish. **CURLY ESA** will chug from off the pace, and **SAI CON** looks like the speed of the speed. Last summer at DMR, 12 of the 45 races at six furlongs were won by the pacesetter.

Fifth Race

1. Peppertini

2. Don't Worry Boss

3. Sky Sailing

Cal-bred juvenile filly firster **PEPPERTINI** debuts with fast works and a pedigree to win early. Her sire Stay Thirsty gets just 10 percent winners with debut 2yos, but the filly's stakes-winning dam Cholulu Lips won her career debut as a 2yo. **PEPPERTINI** is her first runner. The filly looks ready to ramble for trainer Craig Dollase and five-pound apprentice rider Armando Aguilar. **DON'T WORRY BOSS** finished a creditable second in her career debut at Golden Gate Fields, while four lengths clear of third. Improvement likely second time out for Northern California-based trainer Andy Mathis, who went 12-for-41 at Del Mar last summer. **SKY SAILING** probably wants more than five furlongs,

based on her pedigree. Expectations are progeny of her California sire Clubhouse Ride will make an impact this summer and beyond. SMILE BABY SMILE is the second Mathis starter; she can improve after breaking from the rail and finishing fourth in her debut. SAFA debuts with fast works.

Sixth Race

1. Liberty Forever**2. King Apollo****3. Ambivalent**

LIBERTY FOREVER appears ready to fire in his N1X turf sprint, which is his first start since November. His turf-sprint maiden win on this course last summer proves he runs well fresh and likes the layout. He is not the only front-runner in this field, but he can be effective from a pressing position if necessary. On the lead or from just off, the comeback speedster gets the call. **KING APOLLO** will rally from the back in a turf sprint that could unfold at a quick enough pace to flatter his closing kick. **AMBIVALENT** has not raced in 10 months, but the multiple stakes-placed comebacker runs well fresh and his best two races were turf sprints including a comeback here last fall at this level in which he missed by less than a length.

Seventh Race

1. Keen to Go**2. Clooney****3. Deservedly**

KEEN TO GO was not disgraced last out as a first-time gelding, first off the claim by trainer Jeff Mullins. 'GO chased, pressed and tired in a turf route dominated by closers. The switch to dirt is fine; he ran very well on dirt early this year and returns to the main track in a starter allowance mile that should unfold at a pace fast enough to flatter his rally. **CLOONEY** turned the corner this spring when he returned to a dirt route; his maiden win two back and third-place starter allowance last out put him in the picture. He lost as the favorite last out, but the race was dominated by the one-two pacesetters; late-runner **CLOONEY** did not have a fair shot. He should get pace to run at here, especially if also-eligible **DESERVEDLY** gets in. The latter is a one-dimensional front-runner whose outside post means he must go. **THIRTY FOUR COUPE** was compromised by an anti-speed bias last out on turf. He hung tough to deep stretch before he faltered. He has run okay on dirt, and will be forwardly placed, on the lead or just off.

Eighth Race

1. Escape Artist**2. Classical Cat****3. Game Time**

The improving **ESCAPE ARTIST** enters the Oceanside Stakes off an allowance romp at Santa Anita that suggests he can win right back while facing tougher. He did benefit from sweet trip pressing slow fractions, but he flew late with a final quarter-mile in a solid 23.28 seconds. Sharp win. 'ARTIST previously finished a better-than-looked third in a stakes, he figures for another comfortable pressing trip, and can win again with his blast-home rally. **CLASSICAL CAT** has not raced since Dec. 30 when he won a similar turf stake at SA. 'CAT is 3-for-4, and 2-for-2 at a mile on turf, he runs well fresh and he can deliver a kick. **GAME TIME** finished behind the top pair in May and December, but he had excuses (tough trip, tired in final start of his five-start juvenile campaign). **GAME TIME** fired all three starts this spring, and targeted this stake since winning at Golden Gate in late May. Outside post (13 of 14) is a challenge, but he does have tactical speed. **ZALAMO**, an import from France, did not care for the wet going while facing Group company his last two overseas. He'll get firm turf for his U.S. debut, and merits a longshot chance.

Ninth Race

1. Del Mar Jerry**2. Reiquist****3. Sir Atticus**

Although **DEL MAR JERRY** must overcome a 10-point deficit to likely favorite **REIQUIST** (77 Beyer vs. 87 Beyer), a likely odds discrepancy could make 'JERRY a proper gamble in this N1X sprint. His debut was better than the fig; he dueled and inched clear late over a field that included two next-out winners. Subsequently overmatched in a \$100k stakes route, 'JERRY returns to a sprint, and if he can somehow work out a trip from the rail, just might score an upset. It will not be easy; **REIQUIST** will be tough if he runs as well as his comeback at Santa Anita. He trounced maidens by more than seven lengths, earned a lofty fig, and worked fast since. Not sure about the field he beat, although runner-up Uncle Reg is a maiden contender in race 2 Friday. Based strictly on figures, **REIQUIST** looks formidable. **SIR ATTICUS** was no match for the top choice first out, but improved a ton second out with a sharp 85-Beyer maiden victory. Like the top pair, he is lightly raced and moving in the right direction. **TAHOE SUNRISE** did not have the greatest of trips either start against winners. He continues to work fast and is drawn outside, in the clear.

Tenth Race

1. Twist**2. Lure Him In****3. Yes This Time**

A promising runner-up U.S. debut by **TWIST** sets him up for a N2X win second start back. TWIST was a handful first out, rank and hard-held much of the trip before unleashing a rally-wide move and out-finishing all but the favorite with a 22.88-second final quarter. The extra furlong of this nine-furlong turf race is beneficial based on his European form. The five-time winner is eligible to the N2X condition due to low prize money overseas. **LURE HIM IN** returns to California in top form; his runner-up stakes finish last out was validated when the winner returned to win another stakes and two who finished behind him won their next start. The point is, LURE HIM IN ran well against good company in that Gulfstream Park race, and fits here. **YES THIS TIME** was overmatched last out in the G1 Hollywood Gold Cup; he previously finished second in consecutive N2X turf routes similar to this. LAMPLIGHTER JACK is a dropper with speed, aiming for a longshot theft. Come and catch him.