

Date: July 22nd, 2023**Track:** Del Mar**By Brad Free****BEST BET: Anisette (9th race)****First Race****1. Strike That****2. Handr'sdream****3. Wyfire**

STRIKE THAT and **HANDR'SDREAM** are the only front-runners in this \$20k claiming sprint; they could race one-two throughout. **STRIKE THAT** gets the nod off his decisive win at this level two months ago at Santa Anita. A six-time winner who won his career debut at DMR in summer 2019, **THAT** can be long gone if he puts away the pace rival to his outside. That is **HANDR'SDREAM**, who returned to dirt last time and earned a career-best fig (81 Beyer) winning a restricted claiming race by nearly four lengths. He is drawn outside the top choice and could get a comfortable trip pressing the pace in the clear. **WYFIRE** returns to dirt (2 for 3 on dirt) with enough speed to keep the top pair in his sights.

Second Race**1. Economical****2. Soul of Midnight****3. Group Hug**

ECONOMICAL was in tough last time in a starter allowance on turf; he finished last. Now he returns to preferred footing (dirt), drops back to the level (\$16k claiming, N2L) at which he was claimed three back, and has enough speed to be forwardly placed from the outside post. Tepid choice only. **SOUL OF MIDNIGHT** should vie for favoritism while dropping to the bottom class level (\$16k claiming, N2L) for the first time. He will ding-dong on the front end. **GROUP HUG** is a 1-for-22 shipper from the Midwest with speed figures that rank among the highest in the field. **SPIRITIST** will rally late; **JAM SESSION** has speed.

Third Race**1. The Key Is Unity****2. Dual Threat****3. Ice Storm**

Also-eligible **THE KEY IS UNITY** drops to the maiden-20 bottom for the first time. He is a 13-start maiden, but this is his easiest chance yet. Also-eligible **DUAL THREAT** returns from a layoff while employing the no-claim waiver. That typically signals optimism. **THREAT** ran super over the Del Mar main track last summer; this is his first start since. **ICE STORM** missed by a neck last time vs. similar, while longshot stretch-out **SAN JAC** exits a race that produced a pair of next-out winners. First-time long, likely high odds, weak foes, upset chance.

Fourth Race**1. Alvina****2. Mrs. Astor****3. Ruby Nell**

ALVINA stretches to a mile after a better-than-looked fourth in her U.S. debut in a turf sprint. The import from France broke slowly, was rated, lost ground three- and four-wide through the turn, and finished steadily in an ideal prep. She should improve; the uncertainty is distance. This is her first try around two turns. **MRS. ASTOR**, third in a G3 last out in Kentucky, drops into an entry-level allowance and will be rolling late. Her trainer Jonathan Thomas consistently wins at about a 25 percent clip; he is firing at 28 percent this year. **RUBY NELL** was aiming to the G2 San Clemente off a sharp maiden win last out, but the stakes race overfilled and she did not get in. Her last-out maiden win was her best race yet, first-time long on turf. Same conditions here, vs. tougher rivals. Cal-bred stakes winner **CAROLE LOMBARD** returns to her preferred footing, which is turf.

Fifth Race**1. Borntostaythirsty****2. Conquest Celsius****3. Asada Fries**

BORNTOSTAYTHIRSTY finished in the money all three starts this spring at Santa Anita; she is the tepid choice in a 2yo sprint for Cal-bred maiden fillies. She is no champ, but perhaps good enough to grind out a win over this bunch. **CONQUEST CELSIUS** put it all together last out with a runner-up finish that was the best effort of her three-start career. She set the pace and only got collared on the wire. She is quicker early than the top choice. **ASADA FRIES** is a Clubhouse Ride filly from a stakes-winning dam who has produced two winners. **EBOK'S DREAM GIRL** posted a series of fast workouts at Los Alamitos. Her dam won her career debut; the only sibling to 'GIRL to start is five-time winner **Blue Wildcat**, who broke his maiden in his fourth start.

Sixth Race

1. Moose Mitchell

2. Howbeit

3. Escape Route

MOOSE MITCHELL moves up to N2X after a 95-Beyer smasher last out in a N1X. The horse he crushed (Kingdom Heart) was scheduled to start as one of the top N1X contenders Friday in race 9. 'MITCHELL won two races at DMR last summer. His stablemate **HOWBEIT** merits an upset chance if his most recent start can be overlooked. He finished last in a G2. This N2X/optional \$80k claiming level is fine; his respectable fourth-place finishes in graded stakes early this year put him in the hunt. **ESCAPE ROUTE** finished second in a fast race at this class level last out. His stablemate **AFFABLE** is probably prepping for longer, but he will be rolling late as a first-time gelding.

Seventh Race

1. Very Scary

2. Warrens Candy Girl

3. Honey Pants

This restricted stakes for filly-mare turf milers sets up for a late-runner. The closers **VERY SCARY** and **WARRENS CANDY GIRL** fit the bill in a wide-open race. **VERY SCARY** placed in a pair of graded turf miles early this year; either of those third-place finishes would be enough for this. In order to back 'SCARY, one must draw a line through her moist recent start. She finished last in a toss-out race. **WARRENS CANDY GIRL** also misfired last time, without a visible alibi. But the come-from-behind mare is a four-time winner over the DMR turf, including a Cal-bred stakes last summer. If her subpar recent start can be forgiven, she is qualified for this restricted race. **HONEY PANTS** stretches out for her comeback. One mile is a reach, but her recent stakes-placed sprint form is solid. Post 12 is tough, the distance is tough, but her speed figures rank among the highest in the field.

Eighth Race

1. Ashley

2. Dua

3. Hope Road

First-time starter **ASHLEY** has shown speed in morning workouts; the 2yo Into Mischief filly will need her speed breaking from the rail. She was quick from the gate in her July 15 work (viewed online), and can bust to the front and wire the field. **DUA** makes her debut with sharp workouts for a stable whose debut runners typically are ready to fire. The Arrogate filly capped off her work pattern with a sharp half-mile team drill from the gate last weekend. **DUA** was under a hold much of the work, and probably could have gone faster than her :47.40 clocking. Stablemates **HOPE ROAD** and **MOCHA GRANDE** have been working in company; 'ROAD perhaps worked slightly better. She was produced by multiple graded stakes-winning sprinter Marley's Freedom. 'GRANDE broke slowly from the gate in her final drill, recovered and worked fairly well. The stablemates are actually tough to separate.

Ninth Race

1. Anisette

2. Paris Secret

3. Ancient Peace

An impressive U.S. debut by **ANISETTE**, and a favorable pace scenario in this G2 turf mile, gives the lightly raced filly a license to score right back. Last out as the only 3yo facing older, she ran faster each successive quarter-mile (:24.78, :24.26, :23.32, :23.16), weaved through traffic, and won going away. The N1X was validated when two who finished behind her returned to win. **ANISETTE** meets a field with plenty of pace to flatter her closing kick. **PARIS SECRET** won a G3 two back, followed by a flat third as the favorite. But even before her last start, her connections were looking forward to running her over a DMR turf course typically more kind to her closing style than Santa Anita. Furthermore, the pace scenario suits her rally. The pace is not a benefit, however, to **ANCIENT PEACE**. A free-running filly who handles turf or dirt, she ran super finishing second last out in a G2 dirt route; her misfire on turf two back was the result of her resentment of being rated. She wants to rock and roll, but so does the filly to her inside. That is **FLYING CONNECTION**, who makes her first start since a creditable sixth in the Kentucky Oaks. Pace-pessing sprinter **SPICYBUG** has never gone long, but she won both recent starts at six furlongs on turf and may handle a mile. **WED**, stablemate of the top choice, makes her U.S. debut under the circuit's leading rider Juan Hernandez. Two-time stakes-placed **THE WILD GRAZER** is another contender in a deep field.

Tenth Race

1. Donnie the Chiro

2. Dr. No No

3. Capo Luigi

Maiden 2yos bred in California race five furlongs; first-time starter **DONNIE THE CHIRO** gets the call based on fast works, pedigree and trainer. The gelding posted a handful of bullet drills at San Luis Rey, he is a sibling to two modest stakes winners including a 2yo debut winner, and trainer Peter Miller is 4-for-8 with Cal-bred 2yo firsters at Del Mar the past five summers. **DR. NO NO** also has trained fast, and is bred to win early. Sired by Smiling Tiger, he is a sibling to debut winner/stakes-placed Sell the Dream from the same stable. Trainer Brian Koriner is 10-for-41 with debut 2yos the past five years (trainer stats from Formulator). **CAPO LUIGI** showed late interest after breaking slowing and rallying to third in his debut at Golden Gate, while **BURAQ'S REFLECTION** improved a bunch to miss by only a neck in his second start.

Eleventh Race

1. Tio Magico	2. Sarwar	3. Vancougar
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Comebacker **TIO MAGICO** and the currently sharp **SARWAR** are tough to separate in this N1X turf mile. TIO MAGICO ran super over this course last fall, runner-up behind a next-out winner, then finished less than three lengths behind subsequent G1 winner Exaulted. That was in January, and it was the most recent start for 'MAGICO. He appears to have worked well, runs well fresh and it looks like there is pace to flatter his closing rally. SARWAR raced recently, runner-up last month behind a slow-pace front-runner while running his final three furlongs in :34.73. Sharp effort at a mile and one-eighth, he'll be farther off the pace at this shorter distance, and will fly late. **VANCOUGAR** stretches out for the first time; his close third-place finish last out in a downhill turf sprint at SA suggests a two-turn mile is in reach. LIBERAL is a five-time winner who will rally from far back.