

Date: August 8th, 2025

Track: Del Mar

By Brad Free

**BEST BET: Hero Or Zero (7th race)**

First Race

1. Cowboy Mike
2. Ghazaaly
3. Moose Mitchell

Twilight racing Friday at Del Mar, first post 4 p.m. **COWBOY MIKE** returns to a \$40k claiming dirt mile after being overmatched vs. Kings River Knight and company in a \$100k Cal-bred stakes at Los Alamitos. 'MIKE ran fast enough in winter at Santa Anita to win a race like this; he has tactical speed for a pressing trip just off the pace. **GHAZAALY** looms an upset candidate, dropping into a claiming race for the first time since his most recent victory two years ago. He has earned figures vs. allowance company that match or exceed par for this claiming level; he will be grinding from slightly off the pace. **MOOSE MITCHELL** returns from a two and one-half month break as a potential pacesetter. 'MITCHELL has spent most of his career in sprints, but he is quick enough to make the lead in this spot, depending on how much speed is produced by stretch-out DEL MAR JERRY.

Second Race

1. Heads in Beds
2. Vinalia
3. Baela

Phil D'Amato-trained **HEADS IN BEDS** and **VINALIA** top this turf sprint for maiden fillies and mares. HEADS IN BEDS should improve after her promising third-place debut. She was not quick while rated, then finished well and galloped out with run. The race was validated when the one-two finishers ran well next out (allowance second, maiden win). The challenge for 'BEDS is this short distance. He raced six and one-half in his debut; this race is only five furlongs. Furthermore, the DMR turf-sprint course favored front-runners and pace-pressers the first three weeks of the meet. 'BEDS is likely to rally from behind. **VINALIA** also is a late-runner up against the speed-friendly course profile. But she ran well the first three starts of her career, before she bombed last out. Off two months, working well, **VINALIA** will rally late. First-time starter **BAELA** debuts with a series of fast works at LRC; **JUDITH** shortens in distance after a speed-and-fade comeback at a mile. She can improve second start back, and she should be forwardly placed.

Third Race

1. Miracle Ball
2. Moochie Girl
3. Big Pop

**MIRACLE BALL** won this N3L claiming level last out when she raced over her eligibility. Now she runs back at the same level as the potential controlling speed. Although only 2 of the first 14 races this summer at six furlongs were won by the pacesetter, 'BALL has an apparent pace advantage. Come and catch her. Kentucky shipper **MOOCHIE GIRL** makes her California debut after being sold privately and changing trainers. Her win four starts back ranks among the fastest in this field; she will rally late. **BIG POP** drops to N3L claiming for the first time, while making her first start since late May. Her Cal-bred allowance win three back puts her in the hunt; trainer Mark Glatt led the summer-meet standings at the start of the week. He won four races this summer with horses off two to six months. Same pattern with **BIG POP**, a pace-presser who must overcome the inside post. **SHES JUST FLUFFY** has enough speed to keep the top choice in her sights.

Fourth Race

1. He's a Knockout
2. Throwthefirstpunch
3. Mystic Moses

First-time starter **HE'S A KNOCKOUT** debuts with sharp works that suggest he will come out firing in this turf sprint for maiden 2-year-olds bred in California. 'KNOCKOUT showed enough ability in workouts that his connections nominated him to the \$100k Graduation Stakes (race 7). This maiden race makes sense; the colt's gate work Aug. 2 looked good on video. The last time that trainer Carla Gaines and jockey Juan Hernandez teamed at DMR with a first-time starter in a turf sprint, Zip Now wired the field Aug. 8, 2021. **THROWTHEFIRSTPUNCH** also makes his debut. He was overmatched in his July 27 team work, but then he worked faster from the gate last weekend. Also-eligible **MYSTIC MOSES** improved second time out, runner-up on dirt. The move to turf adds uncertainty. Also-eligible **EYE OF THE SMILEY** blew out a sharp three furlongs from the gate one week ago and probably will show speed.

Fifth Race

1. Tommy Norris
2. Southern Melodee
3. Another Bulleit

The speedster **TOMMY NORRIS** can lead gate to wire in this dirt sprint for Cal-bred maiden 2-year-olds. Transferred since raced to local trainer Librado Barocio, the first two starts by 'NORRIS were vs. winners at Turf Paradise; he set the pace to deep stretch before finishing second and third. He has been with Barocio for three weeks, blew out a sharp three furlongs on Sunday, and might run them off their feet. **SOUTHERN MELODEE** adds blinkers after two possibly better-than-looked fourth-place finishes (dwelt, wide). He could produce more speed with blinkers. **ANOTHER BULLEIT** finished fairly well for third in his debut, while first-time starter PAVEL'S TREASURE is by Pavel, whose 2yo debut progeny are 5 for 23 according to Formulator.

Sixth Race

1. Crazy Cavalier
2. Unrivaled Hero
3. Poor Connection

In the money seven of his last eight starts at this maiden-50 turf level, career maiden **CRAZY CAVALIER** is tough to trust. But both starts since stretching to two turns were decent including a runner-up finish last out. The horse who beat him returned to finish third vs. winners. An 11-start career maiden, 'CAVALIER looks best of a modest lot. **UNRIVALED HERO**, who was in tough vs. MSW rivals his last three starts, returns to the maiden-claiming ranks and makes his first start since he was gelded. The only time he ran for a \$50k tag long on turf, he finished second. **POOR CONNECTION** goes sprint to route, dirt to turf, MSW to MCL and also makes his first start since he was gelded. 'CONNECTION is trained by Michael McCarthy. His last 10 MSW-to-MCL turf route starters produced 4 wins, 5 seconds.

Seventh Race

1. Hero Or Zero
2. Sammy Davis
3. What's a Good Name

Impressive debut winners **HERO OR ZERO** and **SAMMY DAVIS** top this sprint stakes for Cal-bred 2yos. The \$100k Graduation Stakes was won by favorites the past four years; the trend is likely to continue if HERO OR ZERO runs like did in his debut. He pressed the pace outside, and ran way by more than six. That race was mid-June, he worked well since, and drew comfortably outside. On paper, he looks like the most probable winner on the card. But he'll have to catch speedy SAMMY DAVIS, who wheels back 20 days after a sharp debut. He dueled inside, broke it open into the stretch, and won clear. 'DAVIS probably is the speed of the field. The filly **WHAT'S A GOOD NAME** scratched from the CTBA Stakes on Sunday to go in this seemingly easier race against colts and geldings. Her maiden win opening week was decent; she'll have to gun from the rail. FIONELLO was produced by a stakes winner, and is a sibling to two stakes winners. FIONELLO won his only start three months ago; he race was flattered when runner-up TRUMP ERA won his next start.

Eighth Race

1. Word Play
2. Oveta's Hobby
3. Princess Snow

**WORD PLAY** moves up to N3L starter allowance after a decisive N2L victory over next-out winner Giggle Giggle. No reason 'PLAY cannot make it two straight, rallying from off the pace. **OVETA'S HOBBY** is speed, stretching out for the first time. Runner-up in a dirt sprint last out, 'HOBBY is trained by John Sadler, who is 5-for-10 with sprint-to-route turf runners since April. **PRINCESS SNOW** should get a cozy trip positioned right behind the speed. 'SNOW set the pace and faltered last out, but two starts back she tracked from third and won a fast race at 25-1 odds. 'SNOW figures for a similar trip here. MAYACAMA finished second at this level last out.