

Date: August 15th, 2025

Track: Del Mar

By Brad Free

BEST BET: Strong Morals (5th race)

First Race

1. Uncle Happy	2. Royal 'n Rando	3. Sydney Street
<p>Friday first post moves to 3 p.m. A class drop and shorter distance benefit UNCLE HAPPY in this restricted claiming turf route (non-winners this year). Both comeback starts by 'HAPPY were decent: third in an open \$50k claiming mile and sixth in a N1X marathon after pressing the pace. He adds blinkers, meets easier, and backs up to his preferred middle-distance trip. His speed figures are close enough to par for this level. 'HAPPY can win with a front-running/pace-pressing trip. ROYAL 'N RANDO improved each start this year including a creditable fifth last out in a stakes won by the streaking Kings River Knight. 'RANDO has not run on turf since January 2024, but he has won on turf and meets easier. SYDNEY STREET mirts an upset chance despite a last-place finish from which he was claimed. He was wide most of the trip and lost interest. His previous races this year include in-the-money finishes vs. unrestricted claiming rivals that would be fast enough for this bunch. LOW EXPECTATIONS makes his first start in more than eight months, entered with the "no-claim waiver." He also ran races last year fast enough for this.</p>		

Second Race

1. Tennesseehoneybee	2. Rousing Jewel	3. Madiha
<p>TENNESSEEHONEYBEE crushed a soft N2L claiming sprint last out in a performance fast enough for this open \$14-16k claiming sprint. 'HONEYBEE was claimed by John Sadler; she is the sharpest in the field and has a pressing style that should lead to a cozy trip just off the speed. ROUSING JEWEL returns to a preferred surface (dirt) second start following a four-month layoff. She was overmatched last out on turf, now she meets easier and is back on dirt with speed to contest the pace. MADIHA upset a Cal-bred N1X at Los Alamitos last out in just her second start following a long layoff. MADIHA will rally late over a track that plays fair at six and one-half furlongs. Prior to a pair of front-running 2yo maiden winners last week, the first six races this summer at this distance were won by late-runners. Emerald Downs shipper HARNEY LANE adds speed.</p>		

Third Race

1. Goatski	2. We the Hobby	3. Just a Kiss
<p>Despite a disappointing fifth as the favorite in a similar Cal-bred maiden turf mile, GOATSKI gets the call. Her runner-up sprint debut two back was sharp, which is the reason she was favored in the route. The dam of GOATSKI won in England at a mile and three-sixteenths and beyond; GOATSKI can make amends while reuniting with Hector Berrios, who rode her in her promising debut. WE THE HOBBY is an eight-start maiden with six in-the-money finishes including a respectable third last out making her first start in three months. She did not have a good trip. Three-wide throughout after being rank early, she actually ran well to miss by only three lengths. Better post this time (from post 9 to post 5) and a rider switch to Tyler Gafflione. JUST A KISS stretches out from midpack finish in her debut in a sprint. Trainer Andy Mathis won with 5 of his last 19 second-start maidens going sprint to route. PURE CHAOS adds speed.</p>		

Fourth Race

1. Winds of Freedom	2. Panuco	3. Don't Fly Stand By
<p>WINDS OF FREEDOM returns to the Del Mar dirt track on which he has won 2 of 3 starts, while dropping slightly in class to \$16k claiming 3yos. He has speed for an up-front trip; he is sufficiently versatile to chase from just off. First start in three months, 'FREEDOM is ready to fire. PANUCO is better than his ninth-place finish last out. He was in tough vs. older Cal-bred allowance horses, and now returns to the claiming ranks. His runaway win two starts back at Santa Anita is faster than anything the top choice has done. DON'T FLY STAND BY, stakes-placed at Turf Paradise and Zia Park, makes his local debut as a first-time gelding making his first start in a claiming race while also adding blinkers. TOUGHNESS, last in both recent starts, adds speed to the field.</p>		

Fifth Race

1. Strong Morals	2. Riveralation	3. Om Time Gal
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Calbred 2yo maiden fillies race for a \$20k claim tag. If she runs as well as she worked Aug. 4 from the gate, first-time starter **STRONG MORALS** can handle this bunch. She blew away a workmate in the half-mile drill (viewed online); she is a full sister to We the Free, who won her career debut last summer at DMR for the same owner-breeder and trainer, Richard Barton and George Papaprodromou. **RIVERALATION** finished a distant sixth in her debut at Emerald Downs, but second-start maiden-claiming runners trained by Tim McCanna are 10-for-53 the past five years (19 percent wins, \$2.53 return per \$2 win wager). **OM TIME GAL** is an Om filly produced by Cal-bred stakes winner You're Late. The dam's first three runners have modest ability, which is all that is required to win a maiden-20 for juveniles.

Sixth Race

1. Mrs. Astor
2. Sunset Glory
3. Venganza

MRS. ASTOR is queen of the female marathon turf division; five starts in California include four stakes wins and one runner-up finish. She won by a nose last out at odds-on, in a mile and one-quarter stakes shorter than she prefers. She trained well and pointed to this mile-and-three-eighths stakes since, and enters as simply the "best horse." With clear sailing stretching to three turns, she should be tough although favorites won this stakes just once in the last 11 years. **SUNSET GLORY** won this race last year. She won her comeback in June at Santa Anita, then misfired her next start at DMR. But that mile race was merely a bridge to this stakes; she benefits by the longer distance. **VENGANZA** looms an upset candidate, stretching to beyond a mile for the first time in her career. Sired by Curlin and produced by two-time mile-and-quarter G1 winner Avenge, **VENGANZA** stretches out from a late-running fourth in a restricted stakes at one mile. She trained well since, and could slip through the cracks in the betting. **STARRY HEAVENS** hit the board all three U.S. starts in stakes, although **MRS. ASTOR** finished in front of her each time. **ALPHA BELLA** won a G3 turf marathon in early 2024; her recent turf form is only okay.

Seventh Race

1. Seattle Surf
2. My Hero
3. Boltless

This maiden-20 sprint is a good spot to take a shot at a price. **SEATTLE SURF**, a 10-start maiden with speed, could post a front-running upset. He is quick enough to make the lead, his runner-up finishes last year were fast, he worked a quick half-mile over the DMR track last week. Come and catch him. **MY HERO** drops again, after a runner-up finish in a maiden-40 at one mile that was his first start on dirt. Although he is not particularly quick, and this race is only five and one-half furlongs, **MY HERO** has been running well against better and will be rolling late. **BOLTLESS** is trained by Bob Baffert, who won the last eight races in which he had a starter (seven at DMR, one at Saratoga). The knock on **BOLTLESS** is he was purchased last year for \$800k and makes his debut for only \$20k. Not a great pattern, nor does LRC-based **BOLTLESS** have a DMR workout. Must respect the connections, however. Baffert and jockey Juan Hernandez have teamed to win seven straight. **DIRTY WORDS** drops from maiden-50 for his first start since March and first on dirt.

Eighth Race

1. Siennois
2. Twirling Point
3. Doncic

A deep field entered this N2X turf mile; the tepid call is last-out runner-up **SIENNOIS**. He was off more than six months prior to his runner-up comeback. He rallied from sixth, but the speed never stopped; the race was won by the pacesetter. **SIENNOIS** finished well, he has a history of improving second start back and might mow them down. **TWIRLING POINT** is realistically spotted for his first start this year. A stakes winner last season, he returns for the optional \$80k claim tag for a trainer whose comebacks command respect. Jonathan Thomas won with 3 of his last 5 starters returning from layoffs of six months or more (Geometry at DMR, Starry Night at Colonial Downs, Major Mischief at Presque Isle Downs). **DONCIC**, a 7yo who has never raced two turns, stretches out for the first time. His recent turf sprint form is solid, if he is going to stay a mile it will be the first time he tries. **REQUIST** can improve second start back.