

Date: August 17th, 2025

Track: Del Mar

By Brad Free

BEST BET: Explora (2nd race)

First Race

1. Sterling Sea	2. Later Than Planned	3. Born to Rock
<p>Second-time starter STERLING SEA, compromised by a bad trip finishing fourth as the favorite in his debut, can make amends in this turf mile for 2yo maidens. Favored first out at a mile on turf, 'SEA broke slowly, uncorked a middle move on the backstretch, got parked four-wide the far turn, raced greenly in the stretch, and missed by slightly more than five lengths. Under the circumstances, it was a very good debut. 'SEA switches riders to meet leader Juan Hernandez, and with a race under his belt he should be tough. He is trained by Phil D'Amato, who also entered LATER THAN PLANNED, runner-up in a 21-horse field his only start this spring in Ireland. 'PLANNED makes his U.S. debut with a string of once-a-week workouts. Over the past five years, D'Amato's win rate with foreign shippers in U.S. maiden races is 26 percent (15 for 58) according to Formulator. BORN TO ROCK adds blinkers after racing greenly and finishing an okay second in his debut. He should improve.</p>		

Second Race

1. Explora	2. Cherry Cider	3. Total Val
<p>Two-year-old fillies race five and one-half furlongs; EXPLORA has worked exceptionally well for her debut for trainer Bob Baffert including a six-furlong gate drill Aug. 8 under Hernandez and a quarter-mile blowout on Thursday. EXPLORA is cranked and ready. Her main rival is a stablemate with racing experience. CHERRY CIDER set the pace but got nailed on the wire in her debut opening week. It was a promising runner-up finish. She probably is the speed of the field, and could be gone now that she has a race under her belt. 'CIDER was ridden by Hernandez first out, the jockey goes to EXPLORA while Drayden Van Dyke picks up the mount on 'CIDER. Another first-time starter with solid works is TOTAL VAL, an Into Mischief filly whose dam was a 2yo stakes winner. COSMO FRIDAY split the field in her debut racing one mile last month in Kentucky; she cuts back to a sprint and should improve second out.</p>		

Third Race

1. Ah Jeez	2. Hotrocket	3. The Rabbi
<p>Del Mar horse-for-course AH JEEZ drops to N1X/optional claiming turf route after a Kentucky comeback that was his first start in eight months. He finished last of five in a race that he needed. 'JEEZ is a two-time winner on DMR turf and a winner at the entry-level allowance condition; he is entered for the \$50k optional claim tag. Improvement likely second start back; his fifth- and sixth-place finishes vs. tougher last summer at DMR are fast enough. HOTROCKET returns from a one-year layoff; he runs well fresh and ran well both turf starts here last summer. THE RABBI finished well for fifth and galloped out with run in a solid comeback opening day. That race was five furlongs, which was too short. Now he stretches to a route with a prep under his belt. He will be rolling late. SPYCATCHER always fires, but rarely wins. The 12-start gelding has one win, and six seconds. He will rally late, although a mile and a sixteenth is shorter than he prefers.</p>		

Fourth Race

1. Jalisco	2. Wave With Envy	3. Mr. Pippins
<p>JALISCO and WAVE WITH ENVY, front-runners in posts 1 and 2, head this maiden-20 for Cal-bred 2yos. The call is JALISCO, who drops from a tougher Cal-bred MSW and is quick enough to establish position from the rail. He chased a fast pace and faded last time; the winner Sammy Davis returned to win a stakes and the runner-up Mystic Moses was the program favorite Saturday in race 7. First time for a tag, JALISCO can take these all the way if he breaks running from the rail. But he will be pressured by WAVE WITH ENVY, the beaten favorite vs. Cal-bred maiden-50s his first two starts; he finished second and third. He drops in class to the bottom level for state-bred 2yo maidens and will contest the pace. Also-eligible MR. PIPPINS finished second at this level last out; DESERT KATE ran well with a tough trip (off slow, wide) in his debut at Los Alamitos. He adds blinkers and is likely to improve.</p>		

Fifth Race

1. Yogi Boy	2. Betterdaysrcoming	3. Zoffarelli
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YOGE BOY makes his first start in two months in a \$25k claiming turf sprint that did not come up that tough. In the money all four starts this season in turf sprints at Santa Anita, 'BOY earned speed figures in those races that match or exceed par (84 Beyer) for this level. And though he is not a front-runner, he does have enough speed to be forwardly placed from the rail. Despite not hitting the board in four previous starts on DMR turf, he actually ran well in a pair of turf sprints here last summer. **BETTERDAYSRCOMING** misfired in his comeback, but now faces easier and has a pressing style that matches the speed-friendly course profile this summer in turf sprints. **ZOFFARELLI** pressed and cracked in his comeback last month. That was his first start since last summer; the veteran gelding should move forward second start back. Front-runner **HOT BOX** might be listed too low. He has won four races on turf, and looks like the speed of the field.

Sixth Race

1. Disposition

2. Petite Ange

3. Recycleyourheart

Last-out maiden-20 winner **DISPOSITION** is realistically spotted for his first vs. winners, first off the claim by trainer Peter Miller. This \$10k claiming sprint is restricted to non-winners of two races; N2L claiming races often are won by last-out maiden-claiming winners. **PETITE ANGE** was claimed from a runner-up finish at this level. The winner Tennesseehoneybee was favored Friday in race 2. A good effort by her would flatter PETITE ANGE. Class dropper **RECYCLEYOURHEART** was in tough all three starts since breaking his maiden. He moves from \$16k claiming 3yos to \$10k claiming N2L older. His maiden win four starts back puts him in the hunt.

Seventh Race

1. Grand Slam Smile

2. Moment's Pleasure

3. Miso Phansy

GRAND SLAM SMILE, five-time stakes winner and runner-up vs. tougher last out, is the one to beat in this turf stakes for Calbred fillies and mares. Although 'SMILE set the pace last out, she does not require the lead. She also runs well from just off the pace, which is the likely strategy here. One-two 12 of 13 starts, 'SMILE can win with a pressing trip. The last favorite to win this stakes was Cordiality in 2018. **MOMENT'S PLEASURE** won this race last summer when she was already in peak form and moving up from an allowance win. It is different this year, because 'PLEASURE has not raced in five months. But this race always was a summer target; five starts on DMR turf produced two wins, two seconds. **MISO PHANSY** did not have a good trip in the G2 San Clemente, yet she finished less than four lengths behind winner Thought Process, the favorite Saturday in the G1 Del Mar Oaks. MISO PHANSY placed in two stakes for 3yos, and will be rolling late in a race likely to unfold at a quick tempo. 'PHANSY is facing older, but MOMENT'S PLEASURE won this stakes last year as a 3yo, and Halo Dolly won it as a 3yo in 2011. Stakes winners SNEAKER and PRANCINGTHRUPARIS help insure an honest pace.

Eighth Race

1. Man Child

2. El Diablo Rojo

3. Harry's Onthefly

MAN CHILD cuts back to a sprint after a troubled sixth in a route on opening day of the meet. 'CHILD broke from an outside post, lost ground, and his right rein broke. Yet he was still in contention at the eighth pole before fading. Most of his best recent races have been sprints; he benefits by the cutback. **EL DIABLO ROJO** returns from Texas, where he scored a comeback upset at Lone Star. Although LS shippers typically are in tough at DMR, 'ROJO has been here before. He won a maiden-50 at DMR five summers ago. **HARRY'S ONTHEFLY** has never raced on dirt, but the speed figures he has earned on turf and synthetic make him a contender from off the pace. **GYPSY TEARS** moves up a notch to \$20k claiming after a workmanlike win for \$16k.

Ninth Race

1. Caitlin Fever

2. Rehearsal

3. Thea

MSW droppers **CAITLIN FEVER** and **REHEARSAL** top this maiden-50/62.5k turf mile. CAITLIN FEVER stretches out from a creditable fourth-place comeback in a turf sprint; she ran well here last summer finishing second in a maiden turf mile. Easier foes, speed for an up-front trip, 'FEVER should get the jump over her main rivals. REHEARSAL will be rolling late. She was compromised by traffic trouble all three U.S. starts vs. tougher; this is her first start for a tag. She will rally late. **THEA** drops in class and adds takes off blinkers. Her third-place finish here last summer in a maiden turf mile compares well. THEA is the only Sunday mount for jockey Mike Smith.