Date: August 24th, 2025   **Track:** Del Mar

By Brad Free

BEST BET: Hejazi (8th race)

First Race

1. Penalty Box	2. Westwood	3. Ballyhooligan

Last-out runner-up **PENALTY BOX** and Grade 1-placed **WESTWOOD** top this maiden dirt mile. The edge goes to 'BOX, who stretched out and finished more than eight lengths clear of third last out. The race was flattered when the winner won an allowance his next start. Even with blinkers coming off, 'BOX should get the jump on WESTWOOD. The latter placed in the Santa Anita Derby two back, then ran in a stakes at Los Alamitos and finished nowhere. Back with maidens, his figures are higher than 'BOX. WESTWOOD scratched July 20 after he got kicked by a pony and sustained a minor superficial injury. He worked twice since, and is the "class" of this maiden field. **BALLYHOOLIGAN** split the field in a decent sprint debut; he is bred to run long. HARMONIQUE, a filly facing boys, stretches out with a route pedigree. Sired by Nyquist, she is a sibling to G1 winner Battle of Midway.

Second Race

1. Sweet Azteca	2. Formula Rossa	3. Chismosa

Odds-on **SWEET AZTECA** is poised to become the sixth consecutive favorite to win the G3 Rancho Bernado Handicap, based on outstanding form last year and highly rated comeback win last month. 'AZTECA sped to the lead setting a fast pace and defeated Kopion by a length and a half. The race was flattered when runner-up Kopion ran super next out: earning a 107 Beyer finishing second in a G1 route. 'AZTECA drew post 5 of 5 in this small field of sprinters, and looks tough to beat with a front-running/pace-pressing trip outside lightly raced **FORMULA ROSSA** in post 3. 'ROSSA is two-for-two, both wins were fast. It is a big step up from N1X to G3, but the 98 Beyer that 'ROSSA earned last out is higher than 10 of the last 11 winners of this stakes. The only recent Rancho Bernardo winner to earn a figure higher than 98 is SWEET AZTECA, who earned 101 last year. Multiple stakes-winning late-runner **CHISMOSA** returns to preferred dirt footing and will be rolling late. She is 4-for-7 on Del Mar dirt.

Third Race

1. Crazy Cavalier	2. Pacific Quest	3. Night Out

CRAZY CAVALIER finally put it all together in his 12th start. He crushed maiden-50 turf milers by more than three lengths and gets the call to win right back in this N2L starter. 'CAVALIER has tactical speed to keep his main rivals within reach; he can win if he runs two alike. However, **PACIFIC QUEST** defeated the top choice two back at SA, followed by an okay third last out over the DMR course at this same class level. 'QUEST had a relatively soft trip pressing easy fractions last out; a similar scenario could unfold this time. 'QUEST is a top contender with a front-running or pace-pressing trip. **NIGHT OUT** missed by a neck as the favorite last out, finishing second while a neck in front of PACIFIC QUEST.

Fourth Race

1. Pocket Venus	2. Maximun Gold	3. A Fleet Ride

POCKET VENUS won her debut by more than eight lengths with a 77 Beyer that is high enough to repeat in this starter allowance dirt sprint. The likely pacesetter, 'VENUS can be gone if she repeats her first start. **MAXIMUN GOLD** is better than her last three starts. Two were on turf, in another she was as an overmatched longshot in an entry-level allowance. But four starts back she won a restricted maiden dirt race with a figure comparable to the top choice. 'GOLD is drawn outside where she should get a pressing trip in the clear. Best of all, she might be overlooked in the betting. **A FLEET RIDE** goes route to sprint and drops in for the optional $50k claim tag. Her only win was a sprint; she will be rolling in the lane.

Fifth Race

1. Will Happen	2. Miss Donna	3. Umbralle

First-time starter **WILL HAPPEN** debuts with fast works and a win-early pedigree. She posted two bullet works this month; 2yo debut progeny sired by Vekoma have won at a 19 percent clip, nearly double the average. With a five-pound apprentice rider, 'HAPPEN is likely to produce speed. The uncertainty is turf; the filly has never worked on turf. Trainer Richard Baltas won with 3 of his last 11 debut runners

in turf sprints. **MISS DONNA** ran well in her third-place debut, which was a turf sprint. She was not quick, raced midpack while saving ground, and finished with run. She is likely to take a big step forward with a race under her belt. **UMBRALLE** should vie for favoritism based on her third-place debut on dirt. She sped to the lead, and tired in deep stretch. Now she cuts back from five and one-half furlongs to five, and probably is the speed of the field breaking from the inside post.

Sixth Race

1. Bad to the Bones	2. Mongolian Altai	3. Silver N Black

BAD TO THE BONES plummets to $10k claiming N2L after misfiring last out for $25k. He had the race shape against him last time; the top three finishers rallied from the back; the pacesetters including 'BONES all collapsed. The splits should be softer vs. this easier lineup. He would crush if he ran back to his fourth-place finish three back vs. tougher. **MONGOLIAN ALTAI** also slides in class. He finished third last out for a $25k claim tag; this is the lowest level at which he has raced. The outside post (10) is a challenge. of course, at a mile on dirt. **SILVER N BLACK** meets similar after a runner-up finish last out in which he ended up nearly five lengths clear of third. He is trained by Bob Hess, Jr., who also entered stretch-out class dropper YOURAMYSTYLE.

Seventh Race

1. Naturally Blonde	2. Fly At Knight	3. Sacred Sound

NATURALLY BLONDE, a nine-start maiden, may finally have found a field of Cal-bred fillies and mares she can defeat. Her most recent start three weeks ago on this turf sprint course was the best of her career. She saved ground, cut the corner and finished well. Although the filly she lost to returned to finish off the board Thursday as the favorite in an allowance race, 'BLONDE does not face any world beaters in this maiden lineup. She has learned to ration her speed and finish. Look for her to wear them down late. **FLY AT KNIGHT** has more speed than the top choice. This is the first start for 'KNIGHT in nearly a year; her works look good on paper and she will influence the race on the front end. **SACRED SOUND** rallied from last to fourth while improving dramatically over her debut. She has more speed than she showed last time, and she obviously is improving. Progeny of Om continue to excel in turf sprints. BUZZ THE TOWER flashed speed and faded in he debut. She adds pace.

Eighth Race

1. Hejazi	2. Ghost of Midnight	3. Awesome Rhythm

Based on his fast-pace runner-up finish in the G1 Bing Crosby, **HEJAZI** looks tough to beat dropping to a N2X sprint. Both starts on the comeback trail were solid runner-up finishes, he might be the speed of the field, and should be long gone with a front-running/pace-pressing trip at a short price. **GHOST OF MIDNIGHT** is making his first start since finishing a length behind The Chosen Vron in spring 2024 in a G3. Off since, 'MIDNIGHT runs well fresh and can rally from behind. **AWESOME RHYTHM** and TAPALO would scratch from the G2 Pat O'Brien on Saturday to run in this easier spot. 'RHYTHM has won three of his last four; TAPALO makes his second start back and has more speed than he showed in his sixth-place comeback. RED FLAG will rally late over a DMR dirt track on which he has won 4 of 5.

Ninth Race

1. Hurricane Cloud	2. Don't Swear Dave	3. Margot's Boy

HURRICANE CLOUD finished a length behind **DON'T SWEAR DAVE** last out in a similar $25k claiming turf route, but 'CLOUD ran as well as the winner, perhaps better. 'CLOUD got banged around early and fell farther off the pace than normal, next to last. He lost ground three- and four-wide much of the race, and finished evenly. Good try with an imperfect trip. 'CLOUD gets a rider switch to Kazushi Kimura and can turn the tables with a better trip. DON'T SWEAR DAVE took advantage of a ground-saving ride to spring the upset under Antonio Fresu; he figures as a contender back at the same level. **MARGOT'S BOY** looms the upsetter, exiting the same race as the top pair. 'BOY was forwardly placed, challenged for the lead into the lane, then lost his punch and faded to seventh. It was his first start in nearly a year; he was claimed by trainer Jeff Mullins (20 percent wins first off the claim past five years). 'BOY is likely to improve second start back, and he will be involved in the pace scenario. CASTLE LEOCH appears to have trained well for his first start since November. Comebackers from this stable often fire first start back.