

Date: September 5th, 2025

Track: Del Mar

By Brad Free

BEST BET: Counterbalance (6th race)

First Race

1. In the Mix	2. Opus Uno	3. Jewlz
<p>Friday first post 3 p.m. IN THE MIX is a tepid choice in this maiden-50 for 2yos, based on his improved second start. He popped the gate against MSW rivals, was rated, dropped to the rail on the turn, then finished evenly to split the field. Not bad. Now he dips into the maiden-claiming ranks for trainer Doug O'Neill. Since late 2023, O'Neill's 8 MSW-to-MCL juveniles produced 4 wins, 4 seconds. OPUS UNO took some betting action in his MSW debut at Churchill Downs, but broke slowly and raced near the rear throughout. He was gelded since, and maidens from this stable frequently improve second out. He is trained by Peter Miller, who also entered the filly JEWLZ. She showed speed and tired her first two starts against fillies; this field of colts did not come up that tough. First-time starter TEXAS WILDCAT appears to have trained okay.</p>		

Second Race

1. Comeback Girl	2. Young Love	3. Tight Squeeze
<p>The highly rated runner-up finish by COMEBACK GIRL last out stamps the improving filly the choice in this N1X turf sprint for 3yo fillies. Maiden winner two back on turf at Santa Anita, she ran even better when she switched to the Del Mar turf opening weekend. Although she did not catch the front-running winner, 'GIRL finished more than three lengths clear of third, posted four maintenance works since, and should be tough to beat with a front-running or pace-pressing trip. YOUNG LOVE is speed, seeking her fourth straight, and third at the summer meet. She got away with a relatively slow pace in her DMR turf win two back, but this race may also unfold at a modest tempo. Either way, 'LOVE will be involved early. TIGHT SQUEEZE is the late threat if the pace gets fast. A closing third last out after an imperfect start, she will be running in the lane. Her closing style probably is better suited to longer turf-sprint distances at SA compared to five furlongs at DMR. BAELA wired maidens first time out and has plenty room to improve.</p>		

Third Race

1. Supreme Coast	2. Rocksalot	3. Toppers At Seaside
<p>Although low-level maiden-claiming runners who rally from behind are up against it, 14-start maiden SUPREME COAST is the reluctant choice rallying from off the pace. This is his first try at the bottom class level (\$12.5k maiden-claiming), his speed figures compare favorably to the field, and he could be fitter after an okay fourth that was his first start in three months. If this race is won by a speed horse, it might be stretch-out ROCKSALOT. He contested the pace going six furlongs both recent starts, and probably is quick enough to make the lead in this two-turn race. If he clears, he could get brave. However, TOPPERS AT SEASIDE could keep him honest. 'SEASIDE is an 11-start maiden-claiming route horse with speed. Third last out while in front of top choice SUPREME COAST, 'SEASIDE probably will sit second behind the speed and get first if/when the pacesetter falters. CAGEY BURGLAR drops from maiden-50 and returns to dirt as a longshot bomb. CANO FOR THE WIN had a wide trip last time finishing fourth, but he drew another outside post for this mile affair (post 9 of 9).</p>		

Fourth Race

1. Glorious Life	2. Andtheomofthebrave	3. Check's On the Way
<p>GLORIOUS LIFE dominated maiden turf sprinters over this course in his comeback as a first-time gelding. The manner of his maiden win suggests he can win right back in this Cal-bred N1X over the same turf course. 'LIFE ran fast (:56.37), and earned an 88 Beyer that was validated when runner-up Jack Fisher returned to win a maiden race by nearly three lengths. Up the ladder with GLORIOUS LIFE. A respectable third-place comeback by ANDTHEOMOFTHEBRAVE gives him a license to win. He dueled and tired, but he ran faster here last year and has a history of improving second start back. CHECK'S ON THE WAY exits a stakes for Cal-bred 3yos on dirt, he has won on turf and should be rolling in the stretch. This field has plenty of pace to run at. Also-eligible CASE HIT would add speed; FRANK BULLITT and BELLY UP also have gas.</p>		

Fifth Race

1. Usha	2. Artisma	3. Wishtheyallcouldbe
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The smashing 11-length maiden by **USHA** makes her the one to beat in this N1X sprint. Her win was validated when runner-up Margarita Girl returned to win her next start. Although USHA must overcome the inside post after winning from the outside last out, she ran fast (95 Beyer) and trained well since. Her solo drill Aug. 29 was visually impressive on video. But she faces a legit rival directly to her outside. She is **ARTISMA**, who took a shot in the G1 Test and tired after pressing the pace. Back with allowance rivals, the stakes-placed filly has speed to be involved early. **WISHTHEYALLCOULDBE** can improve off her runner-up comeback that was her first start in four months. **IN THE AIR TONIGHT** is a late threat. She finished fourth last out in the productive Fleet Treat Stakes; the first- third- and fifth-place finishers all won next out.

Sixth Race

1. Counterbalance	2. Olivia	3. Radiant View
An outstanding dirt sprint debut by COUNTERBALANCE stamps the 2yo maiden filly the choice in this maiden turf mile. Racing five furlongs first out, she saved ground while outrun early, finished well for fourth and galloped out super after the wire. She wants to run long, sired by Caravaggio and produced by a Kitten's Joy mare whose dam was multiple G1 winner Balance. With a solid work pattern since raced, COUNTERBALANCE should be tough switching to two turns on turf. Second-time starter OLIVIA is likely to improve off her respectable debut. Racing one mile, she set the pace into the lane and tired to fifth. Good try. Blinkers are off for her second start, she should be fitter now that she has a route under her belt. RADIANT VIEW finished a respectable fourth in her debut and is bred to run long. CORTINA D'AMPREZZO makes her U.S. debut after two good tries in Ireland: runner-up in a 15-horse field, third in an 18-horse field.		

Seventh Race

1. Thirsty Rebel	2. Sammy Davis	3. Saul Elliott
Impressive debut winner THIRSTY REBEL and two-for-two stakes winner SAMMY DAVIS top the I'm Smokin Stakes for Cal-bred 2yos. The race was shortened this year from six furlongs to five and one-half. In a close call, THIRSTY REBEL gets the nod based on his flashy DMR win on opening weekend. Bet to favoritism despite the rail in a 10-runner field, 'REBEL took dirt inside, was always full of run, angled out and crushed. The win was flattered when the second- and fourth-place finishers returned to win. With plenty time between starts and a versatile running style, 'REBEL can fire right back from slightly off the pace. SAMMY DAVIS is making his third start of the meet, having won his debut and Graduation Stakes in front-running fashion. He drew the inside post this time, but is quick enough to make the lead. If he reproduces his most recent start, he could wire the field. Graduation Stakes winners in the I'm Smokin are 6-for-11 the past two decades. SAUL ELLIOTT fits off his sharp debut victory in May at Santa Anita; he subsequently misfired when he bled and finished sixth in the Bashford Manor Stakes in June at Churchill Downs. 'ELLIOT has recovered from the Midwest debacle, trained well at DMR, and should improve now that he is back with Cal-breds. MAX CIAO put it all together with an emphatic maiden win last out, although third-place finisher ANOTHER BULLEIT had lots of trouble.		

Eighth Race

1. Penny Worth	2. French Moonlight	3. We the Hobby
With a pair of fifth-place sprints under her belt, PENNY WORTH is ready to stretch out and win this Cal-bred maiden turf mile. She split the field her first two starts; her second try was a lot better than it looks on paper. She was blocked into the lane, got completely stalled, then finished well and galloped out with run after the wire. She is bred to run long. FRENCH MOONLIGHT ran the best race of her three-start career last out, runner-up in a similar Cal-bred maiden turf mile while removing blinkers and racing for the first time over the DMR turf. Each start has been better than the start before, 'MOONLIGHT fits perfect with a pressing trip. WE THE HOBBY is a nine-start maiden who finished in the money all four starts against two-turn maidens. She can press the pace, she can rally from behind, and one of these days she will find a field she can handle.		