

By Brad Free

BEST BET: Dare to Fly (5th race)

First Race

1. Saul Elliott	2. Mo Holland Drive	3. Ventry Strand
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Turf racing is scheduled to resume Sunday at Del Mar; this five-furlong Cal-bred allowance will be the first try on turf for **SAUL ELLIOTT**. Claimed for \$50k from a runner-up finish last out, 'ELLIOTT is a Cal-bred stakes-placed colt with enough turf influence in his pedigree to support the surface switch. His debut win in May, and third-place stakes finish in September, both on dirt, would be fast enough to win this turf sprint. 'ELLIOTT was claimed last out by Peter Miller, who also entered **MO HOLLAND DRIVE**. The latter scored a convincing maiden win two back in a turf sprint, then split the field in a Cal-bred dirt stakes. This field is easier, 'DRIVE has speed to press the pace, and is sufficiently versatile to rally from behind. Miller one-two? **VENTRY STRAND** is the late threat. He won his debut in a DMR turf sprint two back rallying from last; next out he finished a creditable fourth in a turf-sprint stakes that already produced two next-out winners. 'STRAND will be rolling in the lane.

Second Race

1. Case Hit	2. Pocket Venus	3. Its a Cinch
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Front-runner **CASE HIT** adds blinkers, drops in for a claim tag for the first time, drew the rail, and might be the speed of the speed. First start in two months, they'll have to catch him to beat him. **POCKET VENUS**, a filly vs. boys, drops into a race restricted to 3yos after a pair of runner-up finishes vs. older female winners. 'VENUS could get a cozy trip tucked just off the speed. **ITS A CINCH** also drops, returns to dirt, and is quick enough to pester the top choice.

Third Race

1. Night Out	2. Time Song	3. Poor Connection
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Trouble-prone **NIGHT OUT** can make amends in this starter allowance after a bad-trip runner-up finish in which he was disqualified and placed sixth. He was blocked into the lane, had to wait for room, bulled through rivals, and was second across the wire. He might have been best. Although he often encounters trouble, the come-from-behind gelding should handle this modest cast if he gets a clean trip. **TIME SONG** has an opposite running style; he sets or presses the pace. He led to midstretch last out in a N1X, and now drops to N2L starter. This race is among his easiest recent chances, although he won't get another easy lead due to stretch-out sprinter BURNING RUBBER. Third preference is the improving **POOR CONNECTION**, whose upward pattern included a game maiden win last out. 'CONNECTION has the rail to save ground; he has speed for a pressing trip.

Fourth Race

1. Darlin Sugaree	2. My Kat	3. Strong Morals
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A runaway maiden-32 win by **DARLIN SUGAREE** in her second start gives her a license to win this starter allowance for 2yo fillies. 'SUGAREE trained well after her debut, and ran accordingly second out. She pressed outside, and ran away by more than four lengths. If she continues her upward cycle, she can handle this modest field. **MY KAT** has not hit the board since her maiden-50 win in July, partly because she has been facing tough rivals. She tried three stakes and an allowance. Now she drops into a starter, and has more speed than the top choice. 'KAT is trained by George Papaprodromou, who also entered **STRONG MORALS**. The latter also was in tough in a Cal-bred stakes last out, but her maiden-claiming win two back puts her in the hunt. In this weak field, anything goes.

Fifth Race

1. Dare to Fly	2. Lovin' On the Run	3. Current Affair
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DARE TO FLY figures to win this N1X turf sprint. Her career stalled until she switched surfaces and finished second in back-to-back N1X turf sprints at SA. Her last-out runner-up finish was flattered when the winner ran back and won a second-level allowance. 'FLY has more speed than her main rival, and should get first run. **LOVIN' ON THE RUN**, who handles dirt or turf, dominated a N1X last out at LRC and is entered back at the same class level on turf. She turned into a win machine this year, having won three of her last five. 'RUN will be rolling from behind. Last-out DMR maiden winner **CURRENT AFFAIR** needed 10 starts to graduate, but she was earning relatively high figures even while stuck in the maiden ranks. Proven over the course, 'AFFAIR fits with these winners.

Sixth Race

1. Into the Hall	2. Lubie's Music	3. Neko
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Back-to-back runner-up finishes by **INTO THE HALL** stamp her the likely winner of this maiden sprint for fillies and mares. She improved when blinkers were added two back; she set the pace and finished second in both. Her last-start runner-up finish was validated when winner Magnificat returned to win an allowance. 'HALL meets a field without much pace, she drew outside, and looks tough with a front-running/pace-pressing trip. First-time starter **LUBIE'S MUSIC** has worked very well for her debut. Sired by Maclean's Music, the filly has worked in company, worked fast, she is drawn near the outside and appears live first out. **NEKO** is not quick, but she will be running late in just the third start of her career. MAD PURSUIT has enough speed to make her presence felt from the rail while making her first start since January. She has a series of fast recent works.

Seventh Race

1. Mrs. Astor	2. Public Assembly	3. Venganza
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MRS. ASTOR, a four-time stakes winner who won this G3 turf marathon last year, returns from a three-month freshening. She has plenty of conditioning, runs well fresh, and is the class of the field. Her third-place finish as even-money favorite her most recent start was not bad. The winner got loose on an easy lead; MRS. ASTOR chased throughout. First start back, she is ready to fire in her final start at DMR. Plans call for MRS. ASTOR to start again in winter at SA, and be bred next spring. As potential favorite, MRS. ASTOR faces a historical challenge: favorites are just 1-for-11 in this stakes. **PUBLIC ASSEMBLY** stretches to a mile and three-eighths and meets easier than she faced early this season. G2 runner-up over the DMR turf in summer, 'ASSEMBLY is proven at long distances. She won a N1X at a mile and one-quarter in spring; she won a maiden race at a mile and five-sixteenths last fall. With a class drop and a longer distance, 'ASSEMBLY enters as a legit contender. **VENGANZA** is a rounding into form; she is better than she showed two back when eighth in a similar filly-mare turf marathon. She followed with an improved fourth in a restricted stakes at one mile. Upset candidate? WILL THEN, stablemate of top choice MRS. ASTOR, is a 3yo who was supplemented to this stakes and would be racing around three turns for the first time in her career and first against older.

Eighth Race

1. Nimah	2. Lerios	3. Miss Watermelon
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Maiden 2yo fillies sprint 6.5 furlongs, first-time starter **NIMAH** debuts with a series of sharp works. First-time starters trained by Bob Baffert are typically ready to fire; the daughter of Gun Runner can add to the trend. However, first-time starter **LERIOS** also has worked fast for trainer Richard Mandella. Sired by Into Mischief, LERIOS is the first runner produced by G1 winner Paris Lights. Back-to-back bullet drills suggest she is ready to roll. **MISS WATERMELON** worked fast over the DMR track and is likely to improve off her lackluster seventh-place debut in a turf mile at Keeneland. The last two works by 'WATERMELON, both on dirt, were fast. She smoked :58.60 from the gate Nov. 7, and followed a week later with another :58.60. Based on her works, she is better than her debut.

Ninth Race

1. Wildfire Princess	2. Angelica Bay	3. Gathered
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This filly-mare maiden-50 turf mile is wide open. The tepid choice is **WILDFIRE PRINCESS**, down a notch to the level of her runner-up finish two back. She regressed last out when she tried a higher level at a longer distance, but she hung tough to deep stretch before tiring to fifth. If she can ration her speed, she might win this shorter race (one mile) with a pressing trip. **ANGELICA BAY** is the late threat, returning to the maiden-claiming ranks with a closing style that could play well in a race likely to unfold at a legit pace. **GATHERED** adds speed. She drops from MSW into her first maiden-claiming race. This is a difficult race to end the Sunday card. A reminder that Del Mar will race on Monday, 12:30 first post.