

By Brad Free

BEST BET: Shangrilama (3rd race)

First Race

1. Uecker	2. Dr. Filkins	3. Eye of the Smiley
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Monday post time, 12:30. This five-furlong turf sprint for 2yo Cal-bred maidens is perfect for first-time starter **UECKER**. He debuts with fast works including four successive gate drills that include two bullets. Juvenile progeny by Sir Prancealot won at a 10 percent clip first out (roughly average); the dam of UECKER produced three debut winners from six runners. UECKER acts like he has speed, and might be gone. **DR. FILKINS** ran well in his creditable third-place debut. Ignored at 53-1, he raced evenly behind the leaders, and finished okay. However, that race was six and one-half furlongs. This race is only five. 'FILKINS is eligible to improve second out even though the shorter distance is a challenge. **EYE OF THE SMILEY** returns to the Del Mar turf sprint course on which he finished second in his debut three back. His next two starts are excusable. He dwelt second out, then switched to dirt and merely ran around the track to finish fourth. Now 'SMILEY is back on turf, with speed to be forwardly placed breaking from the inside post.

Second Race

1. Saint Mihiel	2. Empress of Grace	3. Petite Treat
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A conspicuous lack of pace in this five-runner field benefits **SAINT MIHIEL**, who figures to set or press easy fractions. Fourth last out in a \$16k claiming sprint for 3yo fillies after breaking slowly and being blocked on the turn, she could be loose on the lead. Come and catch her. **EMPRESS OF GRACE** won the race in which SAINT MIHIEL finished fourth; 'GRACE is a late-runner whose rally might be less effective due to the shortage of pace. But the six and one-half furlong distance benefits 'GRACE, who will be running late. **PETITE TREAT** exits Cal-bred allowance races to run in this N3L claiming sprint. She has enough zip to keep the top choice in her sights.

Third Race

1. Shangrilama	2. Katerini	3. Willow Cove
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SHANGRILAMA looks obvious in this claiming turf sprint for fillies and mares after missing by a neck as the favorite at Santa Anita at this level. The honest mare won her only start on DMR turf in summer; she has fired in every U.S claiming race (two wins, one second). **KATERINI** returns from a six-month layoff while optimistically entered with the "no-claim waiver" by an outfit that can win with comebackers. **WILLOW COVE** drops in class after a speed and fade comeback in a Cal-bred allowance. The best race of her career was her only start over the DMR turf in summer 2024. **ELTONSINGSANOTHER** is speed, although she might need dirt for her best.

Fourth Race

1. Emirates Affair	2. Miracle Ball	3. Discrepancy
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The 11-for-53 mare **EMIRATES AFFAIR** returns to claiming after being overmatched in a N1X. Her runner-up finish two starts back at DMR would probably be fast enough to handle these. She has tactical speed to press the pace outside her main rival. That is **MIRACLE BALL**, who wired similar last out and was claimed. 'BALL looks like the speed of the field, but the top choice will not be far away. **DISCREPANCY** seeks her third straight after dominating a \$16k claiming sprint at Los Alamitos.

Fifth Race

1. O K Rose	2. Crossanna	3. Upcharge
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Late-runner **O K ROSE** can score an overlay win in this N3L filly-mare starter at a mile on turf. She was too close to the pace last out and weakened to fourth; the one-two finishers rallied from last and next to last. 'ROSE runs best when she takes back and kicks late, that is her likely trip here. **CROSSANNA** stretches out from a strong comeback win in a dirt sprint. She proved she can route last year, and she also runs on turf. The stretch-out gray moves up the ladder and out in distance in sharp form with a versatile style. Turf late-runner **UPCHARGE** figures to vie for favoritism off a runner-up finish in which she finished in front of top choice O K ROSE. HOW LOVELY stretches out with speed to make the lead. Trainer Doug O'Neill won with four of his last six sprint-to-route turf runners including last-out winner NO OTHER LIKE YOU. 'YOU and stablemate HOW LOVELY will keep the pace honest.

Sixth Race

1. Broadway Venus	2. Lady Monclaire	3. Unbridled Scholar
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A soft bunch of \$8k claiming fillies and mares race one mile; dropper **BROADWAY VENUS** is the tepid choice. She won a \$16k claiming N2L route three back, then was not good enough in two subsequent starts in Cal-bred allowances. She shows up at a low class level, and she can carry her speed two

turns. **LADY MONCLAIRE** also returns to the claiming ranks after she pressed and faded in a Cal-bred allowance. Win or lose, she will keep the pace honest. **UNBRIDLED SCHOLAR** had trouble and misfired in her California debut, but her runaway win two back at Emerald Downs in Washington gives her a shot with an up-front trip.

Seventh Race

1. Angelic Appeal	2. Thebestisyettobe	3. Sakura Blossom
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ANGELIC APPEAL and **THEBESTISYETTOBE**, stablemates trained by Phil D'Amato, are tough to separate in this N1X turf marathon. **ANGELIC APPEAL** stretches out from an inconclusive U.S. debut in which she finished sixth by two lengths after she was stymied with nowhere to run on the far turn. That race was only 8.5 furlongs; she was a long-distance runner in Ireland. With a comeback prep under her belt and more distance, 'APPEAL should improve second start back. **THEBESTISYETTOBE** missed by only a half-length the last time she ran this distance at DMR, a runner-up finish in summer. Third by less than a length last out racing a mile and one-quarter at SA, 'YETTOBE stretches out to a third turn and will be rolling late. **SAKURA BLOSSOM** drops from N2X to run for the optional \$50k claim tag. Not sure about this marathon distance, but 'BLOSSOM has been facing tougher than these.

Eighth Race

1. Captain Sparrow	2. Hard to Figure	3. Hawker
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CAPTAIN SPARROW figures to win this \$25k claiming N3L sprint if he runs back to his summer N2L crusher over the DMR track. He subsequently misfired in a N1X, but now returns to the claiming ranks, with a versatile running style and a 91 Beyer two starts back that is the highest recent figure in the field. **HARD TO FIGURE** returns to preferred footing after he set the pace and caved in a turf mile. Dirt is his thing; the last time he ran on dirt at DMR he won a N2L claiming route by more than five lengths with a big number. **HAWKER** ran a winning race on turf last out, missing by a nose while finishing well clear of third. Although he has been a turf horse most of his career, he has run well on dirt.

Ninth Race

1. Defiance	2. Eternal Reign	3. Candy Bar
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Evenly matched **DEFIANCE** and **ETERNAL REIGN** top this N1X turf mile; it's a close call. **DEFIANCE** finished second last out after making the lead a touch too soon. She rallied from far back, hit the front in the stretch, then got collared. The race was validated when the third-place finisher returned to win her next start. With a well-timed ride, **DEFIANCE** can rally for the win. **ETERNAL REIGN** shortens to a mile after a pair of long-distance races (11 furlongs, 10 furlongs) were slightly out of reach. She seems to prefer this shorter mile distance; she finished in the money four of six starts at this N1X level. 'REIGN has more speed than **DEFIANCE**, and should get first run. Also-eligible **CANDY BAR** drops from N2X to run for the optional \$50k claim tag. Her close fourth over the DMR course in a July N2X would be fast enough to win this N1X. **AMBAYA** might be ranked too low; she missed by a nose last out in a N1X for 3yo fillies. This is her first start vs. older.