

By Brad Free

BEST BET: L Rankin (6th race)

First Race

1. Counterbalance	2. Velvet Dream	3. Miss Donna
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Five furlongs on turf might be too short for **COUNTERBALANCE**, but the 2yo maiden filly gets the call based on her better-than-looked turf-sprint debut at Del Mar in summer. She finished fourth by three lengths, she was flying at the finish, and galloped out super. Despite a subsequent misfire racing one mile, she gets the call shortening to a sprint for her first start in 12 weeks. 'BALANCE can win from off the pace. **VELVET DREAM** is speed, first start in nearly six months. Both starts in spring were solid: debut third, second-start runner-up switching to turf. 'DREAM will set or press the pace. **MISS DONNA**, stablemate of top choice COUNTERBALANCE, also returns from a short layoff. 'DONNA ran well both turf sprints in summer at DMR: debut third, followed by a better-than-looked fourth-place finish while four- and five-wide in a race that already produced four next-out winners. 'DONNA will be running late. ESSENTIAL LADY adds blinkers after showing speed and fading in her debut. Produced by outstanding turf sprinter Lady Shipman and sibling to G1 turf sprint winner Golden Pal, 'LADY can improve second out. Win or lose, she figures to be involved in the pace.

Second Race

1. Contrary Chieftain	2. Be Punctual	3. Northern Quest
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Class dropper **CONTRARY CHIEFTAIN** and last-out winner **BE PUNCTUAL**, both front-runners/pace-pressers, are tough to separate in this \$5k claiming route. 'CHIEFTAIN plummets from \$16k claiming to \$5k claiming, drew the inside post, and probably is the one to catch. He was compromised by a four-way pace battle last time when he finished next to last. Easier foes this time, although his main rival will be nipping at his heels. That is BE PUNCTUAL, who crushed a \$5k claiming race by 15 lengths last out. A pace-presser, 'PUNCTUAL will push the top choice from the outside. If the top pair duel, the race could set up late-runner **NORTHERN QUEST**, a 16-for-77 pro who has won at 11 different tracks. SEA DOG looms the upsetter dropping to \$5k claiming for the first time.

Third Race

1. Robin With a Why	2. Lady Chic	3. Heads in Beds
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First start in eight months, **ROBIN WITH A WHY** can upset this turf sprint for maiden fillies and mares. The best race of her career was her runner-up debut, which proves she can fire fresh. 'WHY regressed three subsequent starts due to trips and/or pace. Off since March, working regularly (but not fast), she shortens to five furlongs and switches to top gate jockey Edwin Maldonado. 'WHY might be the one to catch. Her slow workouts are similar to the relatively slow works she posted prior to her excellent debut. **LADY CHIC** disappointed as the favorite last out, but she did not have a great trip. Hard-held inside behind runners into and through the turn, she sputtered when she finally found room in the stretch. That fifth-place finish was her first start in three months; she can improve with a race under her belt. Her runner-up finish three starts back in a turf sprint at Santa Anita is one of the fastest races by any in this field. **HEADS IN BEDS**, in the money three of four starts, should tuck into a cozy trip right behind the speed. CURTSY ran well over the DMR course in summer.

Fourth Race

1. All in the Game	2. Syntax	3. Sexy Blue
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Second-start comebacker **ALL IN THE GAME** can win this small-field sprint for Cal-bred maiden fillies and mares. Her debut this spring was not good. She broke slowly and trailed throughout. But she may have improved since. Her five-furlong workout Nov. 9 impressed the clocker for socialworkoutreport.com; 'GAME followed with an easy half-mile Sunday morning. Not much here to beat if the second-start filly runs like she has trained. First-time starter **SYNTAX** appears to have worked well for her debut, although maidens trained by Ed Freeman typically race into shape rather than fire first time out. Ed Freeman is 2-for-85 with first-and second-start maidens combined; his third-start maidens won 7 of 38 according to Formulator, over the past five years. Second preference nonetheless. **SEXY BLUE**, an 11-start maiden, was overmatched in a stakes race last out. She finished in the money 5 of 10 starts vs. maidens.

Fifth Race

1. Arrakis	2. Flyover	3. Regal Patriot
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**ARRAKIS** moves up in class to N2X turf sprint following an impressive N1X at SA. He pressed the pace and won going away in 1:07.64, fastest six furlongs on turf at the fall meet. The improving 3yo turned into a new horse this spring when he came back as a first-time gelding and switched to turf. He has won over the DMR turf, and has speed to establish position before being caught wide. The knock on the win by ARRAKIS is that the horse he beat (Tigerhon) returned to finish a disappointing fourth in a N1X. **FLYOVER** also moves up to N2X after a decent N1X win early this month. FLYOVER has tactical speed for an up-front trip; the versatile colt also can rally from behind. Front-runner **REGAL PATRIOT** is speed. He is 2-for-3 in DMR turf sprints, shortening to five furlongs after tiring late at six and a half.

Sixth Race

1. L Rankin	2. A. P. Again	3. Sendit Mo
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The maiden win by **L RANKIN** was validated when runner-up Captivator subsequently won a maiden race by more than 10 lengths with a 74 Beyer. The win flattered L RANKIN, whose two dirt starts since he was gelded in summer were sharp. L RANKIN faces winners in this stater allowance/optional claiming sprint; no reason he cannot win again. **A. P. AGAIN**, who defeated the top choice in September at Los Alamitos, returns to a realistic class level after being overmatched in a N1X. Both dirt races this fall at LRC were good, it is uncertain if he can be as effective at DMR. **SENDIT MO**, a maiden, is a first-time gelding with speed. He drops out of the Speakeasy Stakes on turf, and though he is a maiden, he is quick enough to possibly set the pace.

Seventh Race

1. Balnikhov	2. Nineeventurbo	3. Truly Quality
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**BALNIKHOV**, runner-up in the G2 Hollywood Turf Cup a year ago, is the horse to beat in the same race after a decisive win in a N2X/optional claiming turf marathon. The effort marked a return to form for BALNIKHOV, a four-time stakes winner who is the sharpest in the field. **NINEEVENTURBO**, third in this race a year ago, stretches back to a marathon a following a fourth-place finish in a Keeneland N3X that was better than it looks on paper. 'TURBO was three- and four-wide most the race, six-wide into the lane, and ran as well as he could under the circumstances. He lost by slightly more than five lengths, and would have been closer with a better trip. 'TURBO can stay the distance, he will be running late. **TRULY QUALITY** won this race last fall when he was in peak form, but minor setbacks this year have prevented him from putting together an extended campaign. The gelding makes his first start in three months; he might need the race for conditioning purposes. BALLADEER is the speed of the field; he figures to be loose on the lead. Come and catch him. MONDEGO might be listed too low. His close fifth this summer in the G2 Del Mar Hcp puts him in the hunt.

Eighth Race

1. Wave With Envy	2. Matts Advisor	3. Lanzador
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Cal-bred 2yo maidens race for a \$20k claim tag; the race came up weak. **WAVE WITH ENVY** ran well finishing third in a pair of maiden-claiming sprints this summer over the DMR track; his third last out at SA was flattered when the one-two finishers returned to win their next starts.'ENVY, a consistent gelding, does not have much to beat, it appears. **MATTS ADVISOR**, in the money all three starts this summer at Emerald Downs, was scratched Oct. 24 from his scheduled SoCal debut. He posted two works since the scratch; his races in Washington compare favorably to this lineup. First-time starter **LANZADOR** has worked okay; CHIEF RESIDENT also is a first-time starter making his debut in a very soft field.

Ninth Race

1. Glorious Life	2. Jetovator	3. Minister Shane
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**GLORIOUS LIFE** can make amends returning to DMR after he misfired as the favorite in a similar Cal-bred allowance turf sprint at SA. He was awkward crossing the dirt, always in traffic, and merely ran in place to finish eighth. But he likes the DMR turf, maiden win and Cal-bred allowance third in summer. The lightly raced gelding benefits by a return to his preferred course. **JETOVATOR** is a 9yo pro dropping from a runner-up finish vs. open \$25k claiming rivals into a Cal-bred allowance/optional \$20k claiming race. He'll be forwardly placed, while **MINISTER SHANE** will rally from behind. A Carla Gaines-trained stablemate of top choice GLORIOUS LIFE, MINISTER SHANE faces better company after winning a N3L claiming race at SA. 'SHANE is a late threat.