Date: July 17th, 2026 **Track:** Del Mar PRINT

By Brad Free

BEST BET: Matt At Five (9th race)

First Race

1. Hard to Figure	2. Keep Movin' On	3. Mighty Kai

HARD TO FIGURE is easy to like in the Del Mar summer meet opener. 'FIGURE wired $16k claiming milers last out with a lose-on-the-lead trip, and though he might not get the same soft-pace scenario here, he is drawn outside main pace rival HABEAS and looms the one to beat with a pressing trip. Wagering value could be minimal. **KEEP MOVIN' ON** looms an upset candidate in his second start following a long layoff. His fifth-place comeback was not bad. He raced at the back and raced evenly in a race that was controlled by two front-runners. 'MOVIN ON adds blinkers and should improve with a prep under his belt. He ran races against better company last year that put him in the hunt. He is expected to rally from behind. Late-runner **MIGHTY KAI**, runner-up to HARD TO FIGURE last out, would benefit by a quicker pace. That will depend on how much pressure HABEAS and PIONEER PRINCE put on HARD TO FIGURE.

Second Race

1. Waiting For You	2. Red Cherry	3. Victorious Dream

A better-than-looked U.S. debut by **WAITING FOR YOU** stamps the stakes-placed European filly the one to beat. 'YOU lagged at the rear in her comeback, finished well for fourth, and galloped out super after the wire. It was an ideal prep by a filly should improve now that she has a race under her belt. She will have to catch likely pacesetter **RED CHERRY**, runner-up in the same race the top choice exits. 'CHERRY, whose turf routes were the two best races of her career (maiden win, allowance runner-up), is the speed of the field. For what it's worth, the past two Del Mar summers at a mile and one-sixteenth on turf, pacesetters are just 1-for-11 with the rails at this 12-foot setting. It might not matter if 'CHERRY shakes loose. **VICTORIOUS DREAM**, stakes-placed two back and maiden winner last out, will be rolling late.

Third Race

1. Billy Goat	2. Charlie's Clock	3. Lost Angeles

Second-start 2yo **BILLY GOAT** can wire this maiden field based on an acceptable debut in which he pressed a fast pace before he faded. That MSW race was won in a romp by Kennyten, an early favorite for the G3 Best Pal Stakes on Aug. 8. BILLY GOAT, trained by Doug O'Neill, drops into an "auction race" (horses sold or reserve-not-achieved for $150k or less), and looks like the speed of the field. Rail-drawn **CHARLIE'S CLOCK** finished third in his MSW debut; Peter Miller-trained 2yo maidens typically improve second out (6 percent debut wins, 23 percent second out). 'CLOCK also is dropping in class into an auction race. First-time starter **LOST ANGELES** should be fit for this five-

and one-half furlong race, having worked six furlongs from the gate last week. Since last fall, Michael McCarthy-trained 2yo firsters are 4-for-6, with two thirds (2-for-3 this year).

Fourth Race

1. Code Duello	2. Doncic	3. Nasty Habit

A pair of veteran 8yos who misfired last out, **CODE DUELLO** and **DONCIC**, get top billing in a competitive $40k claiming turf sprint. CODE DUELLO did not finish last out, but worked well since and won at this level two back. 'DUELLO, an eight-win veteran, ran well all three previous DMR turf sprints (win, third, close fourth); his inside post and up-front style could translate to a good trip tucked right behind the speedster two stalls to his outside. DONCIC, a late-runner, misfired last time without a visible alibi, but three previous turf sprints at Santa Anita (six furlongs, and a pair at six and a half) make him a contender rallying from behind. Five furlongs is perhaps shorter than he prefers, but he will be finishing. **NASTY HABIT** ships from the Midwest, where his sprint form gives him a look. He is first-time turf, which is okay based on his pedigree. He figures for a pressing trip, while the aforementioned likely pacesetter is first-time turf speedster ALPHABETICAL ORDER.

Fifth Race

1. Rosa's Miracle	2. Looks Like N Angel	3. Tijuana Money

This maiden race for Cal-bred 2yo fillies could set up for first-time starter **ROSA'S MIRACLE**. Five furlongs is a bit short (sired by Corniche, sibling to Cal-bred turf-route stakes winner Carmelita's Man), but this race should unfold at a hot pace and John Sadler-trained 2yo sprint firsters are 6-for-15 since spring 2025 according to Formulator. Tab for an off-the-pace upset. **LOOKS LIKE N ANGEL** could vie for favoritism off her sharp gate work July 6 in which she showed speed (work viewed online, validated by Southern California Workout Report). 'ANGEL is a McKinzie filly who looks "live." **TIJUANA MONEY** is in from Turf Paradise, where she finished second both starts behind three-for-three two-time stakes winner Caps and Carnage, who after her last start won a stakes by nearly 20 lengths at Wyoming Downs. 'MONEY adds blinkers and figures to be prominent early. First-time starters ON BROADWAY and MANEE also are likely to show speed. This is a deep field.

Sixth Race

1. Detain	2. Charlie's to Blame	3. Game Warrior

A promising third-place U.S. debut by **DETAIN** stamps the Grade 1-placed European import the horse to beat in this N2X at a mile and a sixteenth on turf. In his comeback, he lagged midfield, angled out and finished well. Perfect prep. Improvement likely second start back for a colt who is arguably the "class" of the field. **CHARLIE'S TO BLAME** is probably the one to catch. The front-runner set strong fractions last out, put away two pace rivals who finished eighth and 11th, then got worn down. Good try by 'BLAME, who could take these a long way. He faces the same challenge as race-2 front-runner Red Cherry: carrying his speed a mile and a sixteenth with the rails at 12 feet. Del Mar horse for course **GAME WARRIOR**, the Oceanside Stakes winner here last summer and maiden winner here two summers ago, returns from an eight-month layoff. This is the 4-year-old's first start against older, not sure if he is ready to fire first start back. Third preference, nonetheless.

SCIPIO is a stakes-placed first-time gelding who could improve following the ultimate equipment change.

Seventh Race

1. Pacer	2. Hondo Crouch	3. Circuit Breaker

PACER scored a decisive "victory" last out in a $16k claiming N2L dirt mile, but was disqualified for interference. He runs back in a similar $25k claiming N2L dirt mile, and looks obvious at relatively low odds. **HONDO CROUCH** did not have a good trip last time, finishing fourth vs. similar. He got bottled up inside behind a crawling pace, was never comfortable, and finished fourth. Although he has been stuck at this class level for a while, he always shows up and is better than his most recent start suggests. Kentucky shipper **CIRCUIT BREAKER** returns to preferred dirt footing and more realistic class level after being overmatched on turf. Second-off-the-claim by trainer Bob Hess Jr. is a high-percent angle at Del Mar: 9-for-33 since September 2021 according to Formulator. DAY MAN can improve second start back, while comebacker SKYQUIST ran well here last summer and returns from a layoff while optimistically entered with the no-claim waiver.

Eighth Race

1. Mr. A. P.	2. Bust Out	3. Iriseach

A deep field entered the $150k Oceanside Handicap for 3yos on turf. Comebacker **MR. A. P.** gets the call, first start since finishing second in the BC Juvenile last fall. He was sidelined in spring with a knee chip, and returned as a better horse this year at age 3 based on strong workouts. He is bred top and bottom for turf (by American Pharoah, from a mare who won two of four turf starts including a stakes). Despite an eight-month layoff, MR. A. P. gets the call to win with a forwardly placed trip. **BUST OUT**, 122-pound top weight, fits perfect off his stakes win two back at SA and excusable effort last out against at Churchill Downs. He went one-paced, finished fourth, but galloped out willingly after the wire. Not bad. He is one of many in this field with a chance. **IRISEACH** could turn the top tables on BUST OUT, who defeated him in May. Off since, IRISEACH has trained well and proved last fall he likes the DMR course, maiden win and G3 runner-up. SECURED FREEDOM, briefly on the Derby trail in spring, scored a confidence-building win last out in the Affirmed Stakes on dirt. The challenge for 'FREEDOM is surface. Progeny of Practical Joke generally prefer dirt, although the dam of 'FREEDOM has produced two turf winners.

Ninth Race

1. Matt At Five	2. Rodrigoknows	3. Moment of Valor

MATT AT FIVE should be tough in this Cal-bred allowance dirt sprint, as he shortens to his preferred one-turn trip after faltering around two turns. Both wins in May (maiden, allowance) were decisive wins on turf, he previously ran well on dirt and trained fast on dirt at San Luis Rey Downs. Assuming he avoids a pace duel with IT'S A CINCH, MATT AT FIVE can deliver as one of the more probable winners on the card. **RODRIGOKNOWS** looms an off-the-pace upset candidate if a pace duel unfolds. The fourth-place comeback by RODRIGOKNOWS three weeks ago at Los Alamitos looked like a prep. He raced wide in midpack, went wider into the stretch, and evenly late. Although he might prefer longer and turf, he should be finishing well. He is an upset candidate if the top choice

falters. Debut winner **MOMENT OF VALOR** also will rally. The field he defeated included two next-out winners; no reason he will not handle the switch to dirt. This is only his second start, he has room to improve.

Tenth Race

1. Goodies	2. Pentle Bay	3. Jasmine

A deep field of maiden fillies and mares run a mile on turf in the opening-day finale. The call is **GOODIES**, who stretches out following a pair of third-place sprints. She showed speed and tired first out, and ran better next out when she rated off the pace. She waited for room, went evenly late, and ran like a filly who will relish two turns. Trainer Phil D'Amato won with 5 of his last 8 turf-maiden stretch-outs. **PENTLE BAY** should vie for favoritism off a creditable runner-up comeback. She placed in two stakes last year as a 2yo, and has improved this year based on her comeback. **JASMINE** ran super last out, finishing third after setting a fast pace in a similar maiden turf mile. Two turns might be a reach, but if she can slow down just a little early, she has s shot to steal it. During the 2025 summer meet, 6 of the 12 turf miles with the rails at this 12-foot setting were won by the pacesetter. HELEN'S TIME stretches out from a respectable third-place career debut in a dirt sprint. She galloped out in front of the odds-on winner, and has plenty upside.