Date: August 2nd, 2026 **Track:** Del Mar

By Brad Free

BEST BET: Free Closer (9th race)

First Race

1. Collmus	2. Essos	3. Newton

First-time starter **COLLMUS**, a $2.2 million auction purchase three years ago as a juvenile, makes his long-postponed career debut at a mile on dirt. A 5yo son of Gun Runner, COLLMUS has been in and out training since late 2023; he should be plenty fit for this. He has 18 recorded works in his current pattern that began in March; trainer Bob Baffert is 5-for-15 with first-time starters in dirt routes the past five years (all ages). **ESSOS** ran the best race of his four-start career last out in his first dirt route. The winner wired the field, ESSOS rallied from last to second despite losing ground while wide. He was gelded since, and likely to continue his upward pattern. **NEWTON**, stablemate of the top choice, finished a better-than-looked third in his career debut in a sprint. He raced midfield, went one-paced, and galloped out like he will appreciate two turns.

Second Race

1. Thebeachisback	2. Mystic Aurora	3. Liberty N Justice

First-time starter **THEBEACHISBACK** can win this sprint for maiden 2yo fillies based on her recent bullet gate drill, her pedigree, and her trainer. 'BEACHISBACK smoked a half-mile in :47 last Sunday, the stallion Omaha Beach gets an above-average 15 percent winners with debut 2yos, and trainer Michael McCarthy is 3-for-8 this season with debut 2yos. The filly's dam has produced three runners including a debut winner. **MYSTIC AURORA** worked very well into her career debut at Santa Anita, but never looked comfortable and finished fourth as the favorite. The footing gives her an alibi. 'AURORA worked well on dirt, but she never got going in her debut on turf. Now she is racing on dirt, and likely to improve. First-time starter **LIBERTY N JUSTICE** zipped three furlongs from the gate last Sunday in :34.60. The Maclean's Music filly apparently is quick. PACEMAKER chased and faded in her debut in Kentucky; she should move up with a race under her belt. Same with HONKY TONK GIRL, last in her debut but from a stable that does well with second-start maidens (21 percent second-start maiden winners last five years, all levels).

Third Race

1. No Cap	2. Sweet Gal of Mine	3. Marian Cross

The consistent **NO CAP**, in the money 9 of her last 10 starts including four straight at this level, gets the call in a competitive N1X turf sprint for fillies and mares. She has speed for a pressing trip from the rail, and benefits by the distance cutback from longer races at SA to five furlongs on turf at Del Mar. She has been losing her punch late in longer races. Last summer at DMR, vs. Cal-breds over this five-furlong layout, NO CAP produced a win and a second. With a ground-saving trip from the rail, she can win. The past 10 years, the inside post has produced the second-highest percentage of turf-

sprint winners at DMR: 14 percent (post 3 produced 14.3 percent wins). **SWEET GAL OF MINE**, who finished in front of the top choice last out, has improved this season as a 5yo. A sibling to the outstanding sprinter Sweet Azteca, 'GAL OF MINE is making just her third start of the season, she has speed, but does not require the lead. **MARIAN CROSS** won this N1X condition two starts back; she is entered for the $50k optional claim tag and adds speed. O K ROSE is racing at a distance shorter than she prefers, but she will be running late and this field has plenty of pace to run at.

Fourth Race

1. Truth Or Dare	2. Cheever	3. Knave of Hearts

TRUTH OR DARE, a 3yo who is the first runner produced by multiple G1-winning sprinter Gamine, makes his debut with solid workouts for Baffert. Six of the eight entrants are first-time starters; Baffert firsters usually are ready to fire. **CHEEVER** is one of the pair who have started, and he has run fast enough to win a maiden special-weight. His first three sprints earned Beyers of 92, 86 and 87. Those figs are good enough for a MSW win in California. CHEEVER is making his first start since November, he is a first-time gelding, and his :58.80 gate work two weeks ago and 1:00.60 drill early this week suggest he will come back firing. CHEEVER is trained by Mark Glatt, whose debut colt **KNAVE OF HEARTS** has worked well for his debut. He is by Maxfield, who gets an above-average 16 percent winners with first-time starters, and produced by a dam whose five runners include two debut winners. SCORPY is a $1 million Tapit colt making his debut; BLACK TIE OPTIONAL is the other Baffert starter.

Fifth Race

1. Gypsy Tears	2. Dirty Words	3. One Smokin Dude

Class-drop late-runner **GYPSY TEARS** meets a field with enough speed to set up his closing rally as he drops to $10k after finishing fifth for $25k claiming opening week of the meet. 'TEARS is a two-time winner at DMR, the pace looks fast enough to set it up for a closer even at five and one-half furlongs. **DIRTY WORDS**, claimed for $12.5k from a runner-up finish at Los Alamitos, drops a notch off the claim. No big deal, he fits at this class level and his trainer Hector Palma is a first-off-the-claim expert. The past five years, Palma is 9-for-36 first off the claim. 'WORDS drew the rail, but he has speed to establish position and is versatile enough to rally from just off. **ONE SMOKIN DUDE** regressed last out when second as the heavy favorite in a $8k claiming sprint. Up a notch for his new connections, 'DUDE will be rolling late. His $12.5k claiming win two starts back puts him in the hunt. Front-runners include NIJINSKY HALO, THE BIG CHEESEOLA, DES DOIGTS and DEVIL MOON.

Sixth Race

1. Revera	2. Will Happen	3. Surfin' U. S. A.

Stakes winner last year as a 2yo, **REVERA** drops from a series of stakes, adds Lasix for the first time, and is fast enough to win this allowance turf sprint for 3yo fillies. Her only turf start was a solid fourth in her comeback this May, she faced older fillies and mares last out and finished third in a dirt stake. Back with 3yos, speed for position, proven on turf, REVERA can win with a forwardly placed trip. **WILL HAPPEN** is speed, up a notch after wiring three rivals in a N1X at SA while reproducing

her career debut victory from last summer over the DMR course. 'HAPPEN is speed. **SURFIN' U. S. A.** will rally late, and though five furlongs is perhaps shorter than she prefers, there is plenty of pace in this field. 'U. S. A. is dropping from a G3, and will be finishing. YOURS SINCERELY also will rally, while STILL UNWRITTEN and ZOLENE rank among the quickest in the field.

Seventh Race

1. Mystic Moses	2. Driftingandreaming	3. Proof He's Fast

MYSTIC MOSES drops from Cal-bred MSW to Cal-bred maiden-50 for the second start of his comeback while returning to his favorite surface. The three best races 'MOSES ran were over the DMR track last year; his comeback was not bad. He dueled, chased and tired while making his first start in eight months. The winner (Lit) was a contender Friday in the Real Good Deal Stakes. With a race under his belt and facing easier company, 'MOSES can win with a front-running/pace-pressing trip. **DRIFTINGANDREAMING** makes his career debut with a respectable work pattern for a wining stable. Although 3-and-up progeny of Volatile have won only 7 percent first out, and the dam produced just one debut winner from eight runners, this Cal-bred field did not come up particularly tough. **PROOF HE'S FAST** lugged out and faded in his career debut, but drops slightly in class and is likely to improve with a race under his belt. Maidens trained by Andy Mathis won just 8 percent first time out, but 23 percent second time out (past five years).

Eighth Race

1. Call Me Sir	2. News At Ten	3. Joejoe Go

CALL ME SIR improved this winter and spring, and looks fairly solid dropping from a Cal-bred stakes into a N3L starter. The Cal-bred N1X win by 'SIR two back at SA was relatively fast; he ran well last fall over the DMR course. First start since late May, facing easier, and with a pressing style to keep the pacesetter in his sights, 'SIR is strictly the one to beat. But the one to catch is likely pacesetter **NEWS AT TEN**. The latter stretches back to a route, he could get the same front-running turf-route trip that led to his N2L starter victory two starts back. From the inside post, 'TEN is expected to make the front and try to wire the field. **JOEJOE GO** is in from the Midwest, where he has been facing tougher N2X rivals. He has enough speed to stay in contact early. HENRY ADAMS drops from N2X to run for the optional $50k claim tag.

Ninth Race

1. Free Closer	2. Sentient Soon	3. Stay Bossy

A modest field of Cal-bred 2yo fillies race five and one-half furlongs in the $100k CTBA Stakes, It's a race that habitual slow starter **FREE CLOSER** figures to win if she breaks with the field. Her debut victory two back at SA was outstanding. She was off slow, raced at the back, and somehow rallied to get up at four and one-half furlongs. Her second start, in a stakes at Churchill Downs, FREE CLOSER never had a chance. Off slow again, she was taken wide, raced five- and six-wide through the turn and into the lane, then flattened out. Now she gets a rider switch to Juan Hernandez, drops from open stakes to Cal-bred stakes, and only needs an improved takeoff. **SENTIENT SOON** wired her debut three months ago with a sharp display of speed. That race produced one next-out winner. 'SOON is fast, probably the speed of the field breaking from the rail. **STAY BOSSY** improved a ton

second time out, rallying from midfield to win a Cal-bred maiden race while improving her Beyer some 22 points. 'BOSSY will be rolling late; JOLENE FURY is a speedster drawn directly outside aforementioned speedster SENTIENT SOON.

Tenth Race

1. Dea Matrona	2. Going Deep	3. Little Hidden Port

Claimed last out from a $25k claiming turf mile win, **DEA MATRONA** runs back at the same level for meet-leading trainer Doug O'Neill (leading trainer through last week, at least). There is enough speed in this field to flatter the mare's closing rally. **GOING DEEP** wired similar last out at SA, and won her only turf start at DMR last summer. She might not get the same lone-speed trip as last time, but she could get a good trip positioned second behind the stretch-out sprinter likely to set the pace. **LITTLE HIDDEN PORT** returns to dirt after a misfire on dirt. She ran well over the DMR course last fall. FALABELLA is the aforementioned stretch-out sprinter expected to set the pace.