**Date:** August 16th, 2026 **Track:** Del Mar

## By Brad Free

### *BEST BET: Bull Shoals (1st race)*

**First Race**

| 1. Bull Shoals | 2. Royal Rumor | 3. Doing Time |
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**BULL SHOALS**, runner-up both recent starts vs. open maidens at Saratoga, takes a huge class drop to face Cal-bred/Cal-sired maidens. 'SHOALS might be a standout vs. this modest company. East Coast trainer Jena Antonucci and jockey Jose Morelos nearly sprang a Del Mar upset July 31 with Cal-bred stakes runner-up Party Animal; BULL SHOALS figures to start as the favorite in this maiden turf route. He'll be tough to beat if he reproduces his SAR form. **ROYAL RUMOR** ran the best race of his career last out in his first around two turns. He pressed the pace in the Cal-bred maiden turf mile, and might have made a race of it except he raced greenly and was reluctant to switch leads until late in the race. He still finished a creditable second, and clearly is on the improve. His sharp workout last weekend indicates he holds form. **DOING TIME**, a 12-start maiden, looms the knockout. He rallied to fifth last out, running his final quarter in :23.51, fastest by any in the field. He benefits by the additional sixteenth, and will be running late at a price. GOING NOWHERE had no visible excuse finishing seventh last out, but his two previous runner-up finishes at Santa Anita give him a look.

**Second Race**

| 1. Running Super | 2. Pretty Cecy | 3. Bear's Board |
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It takes a leap of faith to back a horse that has not won in a year and a half, and finished next-to-last in its comeback. **RUNNING SUPER** is the choice nonetheless, based on fast races last year and likelihood of improving second start back while dropping in class from open $25k claiming to $16k claiming non-winners of three. Second start off the bench, she can upset the "now "filly. That is **PRETTY CECY**, who scored a decisive N2L claiming win last out while reestablishing her affinity for the DMR track. 'CECY is now 2-for-3 at DMR, moving up slightly in class, and with a strong finishing kick. Five and one-half furlongs seems short for her, but she broke her maiden at the distance two years ago as a juvenile. **BEAR'S BOARD**, runner-up last out at this class level, has transitioned into a late-running sprinter. Look for her late. HOW LOVELY is speed, adding blinkers first off the claim. She probably is the one to catch.

**Third Race**

| 1. Repo | 2. Little King | 3. Is That You Wing |
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Cal-bred maiden 2yos go six furlongs; last-out runner-up **REPO** gets the call to win third time out. Sired by Kentucky stallion Nyquist, REPO ran well both starts: third vs. open MSW company on turf, runner-up second out vs. Cal-breds on dirt while more than three lengths clear. REPO has worked well at DMR for trainer Michael McCarthy, including a team drill Aug. 8 with Magic Queen, an

unraced sibling to recently retired Journalism. REPO is likely to continue his upward pattern. **LITTLE KING** lost ground while wide in his debut, yet kept grinding and finished third by only a length a half. It was a solid debut, 2yo maidens trained by George Papaprodromou typically improve. The past five years, Papaprodromou is 2-for-69 with debut 2yos according to Formulator; 6-for-46 with second-start maiden 2yos. **IS THAT YOU WING** showed run finishing second in his debut nearly three months ago, he is another who has trained well over the DMR track. EMPIRE OF ASH is a firster by Pavel, whose 2yo progeny have won 10 of 43 first time out according to Formulator. 'ASH is a sibling to three winners including recent local maiden winner Factor P.

**Fourth Race**

| 1. Scene by Me | 2. Hacking It Up | 3. Disko Tribute |
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**SCENE BY ME** has improved every start and is a proper choice in this Cal-bred N1X turf sprint based on his third-place comeback early this month in a similar spot. 'ME pressed the pace, put away two pace rivals who finished nowhere, then tired late. Good try by a five-start gelding whose figures continue to inch upward. If wheeling back in 15 days is not too much to ask, SCENE BY ME can grind out the victory. **HACKING IT UP** is a six-time winner shortening to one turn after he set the pace and tired in an open N1X turf route. 'HACKING missed by less than a length the last time he sprinted on turf at DMR, he has speed to be forwardly placed and tuck in from the outside post. The challenge for 'HACKING is distance. Five furlongs is a bit on the short side. Second preference, nonetheless. **DISKO TRIBUTE** returns from a four-month layoff; he has run well and won over the DMR turf sprint course, and he should be involved in the pace scenario. PIPER'S CAUSEWAY has not raced in 10 months, but his two starts on this course last summer put him in the hunt.

**Fifth Race**

| 1. Sweet Azteca | 2. Thermal | 3. Sweet Gal of Mine |
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**SWEET AZTECA** figures to start at a short price as she seeks her third consecutive victory in the Grade 3 Rancho Bernardo for filly-mare sprinters. 'AZTECA only had five works before her recent comeback at Los Alamitos; she won anyway with a modest (for her) 87 Beyer. Since then, 'AZTECA has not skipped a beat in morning works, she is drawn outside (post 5 of 6) where she has options, and enters as simply the best horse in the field. **THERMAL** enters off a 106-Beyer smasher in a stakes at Lone Star. However, she is stuck on the rail and her best races have been when she was treated with Lasix. No Lasix in this graded stakes. THERMAL has speed to establish position from the rail, but she will be hounded from the outside by the favorite. **SWEET GAL OF MINE**, 5yo sibling to 6yo SWEET AZTECA, switches to dirt after a pair of runner-up allowance finishes on turf. 'GAL OF MINE is not fast enough to beat the top pair, but she has run well on dirt and could slip into the exacta if the inside post compromises THERMAL. FWIW, favorites are 7-for-11 in this race since DMR reinstalled dirt.

**Sixth Race**

| 1. Whynotanotherone | 2. Rapid Ascent | 3. Hoosick Falls |
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If he reproduces his last-out runner-up in a fast maiden-20 route, **WHYNOTANOTHERONE** can win this maiden-16 route. His effort was the first dirt route of his career, against an okay field. The

third-place finisher won a maiden-50 two starts later; the last-place finisher won a low-level maiden-claiming race at Emerald Downs. WHYNOTANOTHERONE has been off three months, the same layoff that preceded his career-best effort last out. He has speed to be forwardly placed, while **RAPID ASCENT** will have to be hustled from the outside post as he drops in class following a pair of fourth-place finishes in MSW and maiden-50s in the Midwest. He is likely to be sent from post 11; this is a soft spot in which to make his California debut. **HOOSICK FALLS** drops in class and goes sprint to route for the high-percent trainer-jockey combo of Jeff Mullins and Kyle Frey. Since late December, they are 10-for-27 together. KING OF SUCCESS, runner-up both recent, adds speed to the field. CANO FOR THE WIN will be rolling late, at a big price, in a race that should unfold at a strong tempo. This is his third start back from a long layoff, it should be his best.

**Seventh Race**

| 1. Goodies | 2. Midnight Horizon | 3. Misleading |
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The only 3yo in the field of older fillies and mares, last-out maiden winner **GOODIES** can post her second win of the meet in this N1X turf mile. She stretched out last time in just the third start of her career, tucked third on the rail, angled out and won clear. Perfect trip, sharp win. Her pressing style should lead to another good trip forwardly placed in a field without much pace. Late-runner **MIDNIGHT HORIZON** is potentially compromised by the pace scenario, but her last-out third was better than it looks. She made up more than nine lengths the final half-mile, smoked her final five-sixteenths in :28.82, and missed by only a half-length. The filly she finished a half-length behind (Take Another Card) was scheduled to start as a contender Saturday in the Solana Beach Stakes. With or without pace help, MIDNIGHT HORIZON will be flying late. **MISLEADING** stretches out for the first time, in the third start of her career and first start since January. Previously trained by the late John Shirreffs, now trained by Peter Eurton, MISLEADING has always been well-regarded and she runs well fresh (debut winner). CIPRIANI is a dirt filly, with a dirt pedigree, trying turf for the first time. She might be up against it on pedigree/surface, but she has speed to in a field without much of that.

**Eighth Race**

| 1. Leyas Candy | 2. Big Juanito | 3. Mongolian Max |
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A deep field of $8k claiming veterans race a mile; front-runner/pace-presser **LEYAS CANDY** gets the call making his first start in two months. His figures are close to par for this class level, he has speed but does not necessarily require the lead, and he has won over the DMR track. In a wide-open race, dropping from a third-place finish for $16k, 'CANDY is the one to beat. Horse-for-course **BIG JUANITO** was listed as a vet scratch from a $10k claiming race July 26, but he came back with a solid five-furlong workout last weekend when he briefly hooked in with Sweet Azteca. 'JUANITO is a DMR specialist, 2-for-3 over the track. He will be running late. **MONGOLIAN MAX** lost by more than nine lengths last out for a $10k claim tag, but he actually ran very well to finish second. The winner Pioneer Prince freaked. A one-level class drop for 'MAX puts him in the hunt. CATHAL will be rolling late at a price.

**Ninth Race**

| 1. Dhitjari | 2. Sir Rocket | 3. Private Gem |
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**DHITJARI** drops from N2X to N1X/optional claiming, shortens from a mile to five furlongs on turf, and has run figures fast enough to win at this level. This is his best chance from four starts since he was imported from Europe, and he could get a beneficial trip positioned midpack behind the abundant speed, and in front of the deep closers. **SIR ROCKET** ran a winning race last out, rallying from behind a fast pace with a perfect trip to miss by only a half-length. His off-the-pace style suits this speed-filled race. **PRIVATE GEM** also rallies from behind; he finished a length behind SIR ROCKET last out. GETTINBY is the fastest in the field, but his recent Beyers in the 90s were earned on dirt, and he faces a host of others with the same front-running style. Those front-runners/pace-pressers include NASTY HABIT, LEGAL HEIR, DOUBLE JAB, GABALDON and BULLWHACKER.

**Tenth Race**

| 1. Let It Begin | 2. Melba Montgomery | 3. Little Sandy Bee |
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The week ends with a soft maiden-12.5 for fillies and mares bred in California. Also-eligible **LET IT BEGIN** drops from Cal-bred MSW to rock bottom, the speed she showed in turf races suggests she will attend the pace in this dirt sprint. **MELBA MONTGOMERY** cuts back to a sprint after she set the pace and cracked racing a mile vs. open maiden-20s. She fits better at this shorter trip, having finished second in a sprint two starts back. **LITTLE SANDY BEE** has changed trainers, adds blinkers, drops from maiden-50 and goes turf to dirt. She could wake up vs. this soft cast.