Date: August 21st, 2026 **Track:** Del Mar

By Brad Free

BEST BET: Captain Shreve (2nd race)

First Race

1. Smashing Machine	2. Michael	3. Running Spartan

Turf-sprint first-time starter **SMASHING MACHINE** has trained like a 3yo colt who can fire first out for Bob Baffert and jockey Drayden Van Dyke. Baffert firsters are most always ready to rip, the colt's pedigree is fine for turf. Progeny of Charlatan have won 18 percent of turf sprints (15-for-80, all class levels) according to Formulator. **MICHAEL** also makes his debut with a string of decent workouts. The San Luis Rey-based colt is trained by Peter Miller, whose maiden turf sprinters generally improve second out (9 percent debut wins, 19 percent second-start maiden turf sprint). But this colt's works at SLR suggest he is ready to fire; Miller and jockey Joel Rosario teamed Aug. 1 to win a maiden turf sprint with a 2yo first-time starter ($12.80 Off in the Corner). **RUNNING SPARTAN** is a 13-start maiden whose third-place finishes in turf sprints both recent starts give him a shot to hit the board. SEMPER STRONG has worked fast, but progeny of Knicks Go are just 1-for-31 in turf sprints.

Second Race

1. Captain Shreve	2. Sharons Maxfield	3. Gandalf

CAPTAIN SHREVE figures to win this maiden-62.5k, his first start since April. 'SHREVE faced tough company early this year at Santa Anita including subsequent stakes colts Crude Velocity, Potente and Secured Freedom. 'SHREVE now drops from MSW to $62.5k maiden-claiming. A homebred gelding owned by Kretz Racing, 'SHREVE runs well fresh, and he has speed. Looks like a low-odds standout even though he was a recent vet scratch on July 23. **SHARONS MAXFIELD** makes his first start since finishing a distant third last summer behind subsequent stakes winner Boyd. 'MAXFIELD was fairly well bet that race (6.60-1), but did not produce any speed and merely picked up the pieces late. But he returns as a first-time gelding, adding blinkers, and being treated with Lasix for the first time. He is likely to have improved since last summer. **GANDALF** is a turf horse with speed, switching to the main track for his third career start. He has worked well on dirt, and could keep the top choice company.

Third Race

1. Luck Lucky	2. Hurricane Way	3. Proud Racer

The Friday pick six begins with a mishmash turf sprint, $25k claiming non-winners of two. **LUCK LUCKY** dropped to this level and finished second by a half-length last out. That was two months ago; he has trained steadily since, and could get a cozy trip within striking range of the speedster to his outside. **HURRICANE WAY** exits fast dirt sprints, second and third. Those were his first starts in more than a year; he ran well on turf before he was sidelined and might benefit by a return to grass. He has no speed, but he will be rolling late. The turf rails are at the outermost 30-foot setting. Although rail setting is often overstated, most rails-at-30 turf sprints this summer were won by horses setting or pressing the pace (eight rails-30 sprints: five gate-to-wire winners, two pressed from second or third, through Aug. 16). The profile is against the closing style of HURRICANE WAY. **PROUD RACER** has never crossed the wire first (winner via disqualification last out), but his third in a maiden-50 turf sprint this spring puts him in the hunt. Longshot LUCKY AND GONE is the aforementioned front-runner drawn outside the top choice. 'GONE will take them as far as he can.

Fourth Race

1. Billie Holiday	2. Dottie Hinson	3. Berry Valley

BILLIE HOLIDAY can win this Cal-bred allowance sprint if she reproduces her last-out maiden win. That was a romp by more than five lengths over a next-start winner. However, the race was way back in December; this is the filly's first start since. She runs well fresh; her maiden win was her first in three months. Lasix on, speed to establish position from the rail, and modest foes make 'HOLIDAY the one to beat first start back despite the inside post. Late-runner **DOTTIE HINSON** fired both starts, debut winner at DMR last fall and allowance runner-up this spring at Santa Anita. She returns with a solid workout pattern, she obviously runs well fresh, and she will be rolling in the lane. She would benefit by a pace duel between the front-runners in posts 3-4. **BERRY VALLEY** merely split the field last out racing two turns; her best race since returning from a long layoff was her most recent dirt sprint. It was a closing second three back at LRC that puts her in the hunt. LA SILENCIOSA and TIMEKEEPER'S CHARM are the aforementioned front-runners in post 3-4. LA SILENCIOSA actually has a shot, drawn outside her pace rival and with a history of improving with a race under her belt (maiden winner second out).

Fifth Race

1. Autumn Leaves	2. Ardente	3. Seeking Attention

The familiar faces are modest in this turf sprint for maiden fillies and mares. It's a good spot for a well-connected first-time starter with solid workouts. Two fit the description: rail-drawn **AUTUMN LEAVES** and outside-drawn **ARDENTE**. The call is the filly on the rail. AUTUMN LEAVES has worked well for trainer John Sadler, who is 5-for-21 with firsters in DMR turf sprints the past five years; progeny of Tiz the Law can sprint on turf. So far this summer, most rails-at-30 turf sprints have been won by forwardly placed runners. That is the likely position for firster AUTUMN LEAVES. But ARDENTE also has trained well for her debut. She worked in company Aug. 8 with Tap the Gin, a maiden winner who was scheduled to start as a contender Thursday in an allowance sprint (race 1). Tap the Gin was best in the workout, but ARDENTE is "dropping in class" from the workout to face maiden fillies and mares in the race. **SEEKING ATTENTION** finished in the money her last four starts, all turf sprints. The filly who beat her last out, Somerset West, returned to upset the G2 San Clemente here opening weekend. GOT THE RING will be rolling late in her first start in nearly a year. Come-from-behind upsetter?

Sixth Race

1. For All Mankind	2. Ghost of Midnight	3. Tessuto

FOR ALL MANKIND meets easier than last month, when he produced speed and retreated in a N2X/classified/optional $100k claiming. He was simply overmatched. But his runner-up finishes two and three starts back at Lone Star and SA earned figures plenty fast enough for this $40k claiming sprint. 'MANKIND has speed to press the pace likely to be contested by the entrants in posts 1-2; if he runs to his springtime form he can handle this easier group with a pressing trip. **GHOST OF MIDNIGHT** raced evenly and finished fifth three weeks ago, a race that looked like a prep. A two-time DMR winner early in his career, he is likely to improve second start over the track this summer. His spring races at Oaklawn Park were fast. **TESSUTO** shortens to a sprint and wheels back on short notice after a solid runner-up comeback. RED FLAG is a 9-for-28 pro who rallies from the clouds. A four-time winner at DMR, he will be rolling late. But he'll need pace assistance from the front-runners in posts 1-2. Those are CENTRAL DISPATCH and THIRTY TWO CHUNK.

Seventh Race

1. Canto Della Terra	2. Raw Ability	3. Tahini

CANTO DELLA TERRA can win this N2X turf mile if she merely reproduces her most recent start. That was an excellent runner-up finish in her first route, despite breaking from an outside post and losing ground rallying wide into the stretch. The lightly raced filly (six starts) drew the rail this time, figures to save ground, and with a route under her belt is likely to continue her improving pattern. She must hold off the rally of deep closer **RAW ABILITY**. The latter missed by only a length last out in a restricted stakes. Already a winner at this N2X level, 'ABILITY is entered for the optional $100k tag for her second start of the meet/second start of the year. She will be rolling from the back, and has won over the DMR course. **TAHINI** is pure speed, stretching out from sprints. The quickest in the field based on her sprint form, she will be hounded by the filly to her outside. That is RIBBONS, who ran well in her comeback. She set the pace into the lane, and tired to fourth. With a race under her belt, she should move forward. She is expected to be positioned second behind TAHINI, and would get first run if/when that rival tires.

Eighth Race

1. Poppi's Charlie	2. No Limit	3. Stanford Warrior

POPPI'S CHARLIE gate to wire? The 2yo showed speed both starts against Cal-bred MSW foes this spring at SA; he tired in both. Now he has a two-month freshening between starts, drops to $50k maiden-claiming, and might be the speed of the field. **NO LIMIT** chased and cracked in his debut against tougher last month. Gelded since, blinkers on, and easier company add up to likely improvement second out. **STANFORD WARRIOR** was favored in his debut in May, but lost his rider. Off since, dropping in for a tag, he is likely to show speed. SMOKEM WICKED finished in the money both recent starts; HERE COMES TOO TOO showed speed and tired first out. He is another likely to move forward with a race under his belt. The truth is, this race looks wide open.