Date: August 23rd, 2026 **Track:** Del Mar

By Brad Free

BEST BET: Johnny B (4th race)

First Race

1. Dustem Too	2. Cotta Ride	3. Baby Needs Shoes

A tepid pace scenario benefits **DUSTEM TOO** in this $12.5k claiming sprint for 3yo fillies. She looks like the controlling speed after she chased/pressed a fast pace last out and finished third vs. similar. Now she meets a field otherwise void of speed, and can be long gone. **COTTA RIDE** was claimed from a decisive maiden-16 victory in which she rallied from off a slow pace to win going away. She broke from the rail last out and will break from the rail again here as late-running alternative to the front-running top choice. **BABY NEEDS SHOES** plummets from older Cal-bred allowance to low claiming for 3yo fillies. Her last-out figure (62 Beyer) when she split the field virtually matches the top choice. 'SHOES fits at this level. PRIDE OF QUEENS returns from a six-month layoff to the Del Mar track on which she broke her maiden last summer. Her only start this year was a runner-up finish for $25k, 'QUEENS is an off-the-pace contender, for sure.

Second Race

1. Eltonsingsanother	2. Buds N Suds	3. Baytown Butterfly

Six furlongs might be a reach for **ELTONSINGSANOTHER**, but the pace-pressing mare is helped by a tepid pace scenario in this $8k claiming sprint. Always quick from the gate, ELTONSINGSANOTHER ran well finishing third last out for $10k. She dueled three-wide, put away two pace rivals who finished up the track, and hung tough to deep stretch. She meets easier, and can win with an up-front trip if she can stay six furlongs. **BUDS N SUDS** moves up a notch off a closing second for $6.25k claiming. She will be grinding from off the pace, while **BAYTOWN BUTTERFLY** plummets from $25k claiming. Blinkers are on, she has never raced this low, and her springtime races at Oaklawn Park would be fast enough for this bunch. PERFECT LIFE, sixth last out in the race the top choice exits, will be clunking along from the back of the pack.

Third Race

1. Joint Venture	2. Hard to Figure	3. Habeas

JOINT VENTURE returns to preferred dirt footing after he set a fast pace and faded to sixth in a claiming starter on turf. 'VENTURE has never hit the board on turf, but on fast dirt he is a six-time winner. He may have needed his comeback prep 16 days ago, which was his first start in four months. 'VENTURE figures for a forwardly placed trip, and can win if he avoids a duel with the horse to his outside. That is **HARD TO FIGURE**, who went too fast setting the pace in the first race of the meet; he tired to fourth as the favorite. Claimed from that $16k race, he moves up to $20k, and looms the one they have to catch. If he slows down a bit early, he could wire the field. **HABEAS** ran super last out. He chased the fast pace set by HARD TO FIGURE, kept grinding, and finished well clear of

next-out winner/third-place finisher Pioneer Prince. HABEAS figures for a similar pressing trip here, while the winner of the meet opener, MIGHTY KAI, took advantage of the hot pace to win from far back. Up in class first off the claim by a hot sable, 'KAI might be ranked too low. His trainer Antonio Garcia is having a big summer, 6-for-22 into Thursday.

Fourth Race

1. Johnny B	2. Bo Diddley	3. Winsor George

The pick six begins with a sprint for Cal-bred maiden-20 juveniles that **JOHNNY B** figures to win based on his debut. He saved ground in fifth, waited briefly inside, shot through along the rail and finished very well for second. Good try after breaking from the rail. Now he moves to the outside post at the same class level, and should be tough with a race under his belt. Pick six single right off the bat? **BO DIDDLEY** could vie for favoritism based on his runner-up finish in a Cal-bred maiden-50. He finished nearly two lengths clear of third while running the best race of his three-start career. The class drop off a good race is curious, but based strictly on performance, BO DIDDLEY is a contender. The past year, trainer Steve Miyadi has started nine maiden-claiming 2yos: one win, six seconds. **WINSOR GEORGE**, stablemate of top choice JOHNNY B, drops after setting the pace and caving in as the odds-on favorite in a Cal-bred maiden-50. Blinkers are on, 'GEORGE figures as a pace factor. First-time starter MRSAINTPATRICK debuts with just three published works, which seems odd. But trainer Doug O'Neill won July 24 with a first-time starter who had just three works. Little Opal, a 3yo filly, wired the field. Similar circumstances here with the abbreviated work tab for 'PATRICK.

Fifth Race

1. Alittletoofabulous	2. Maggles McGee	3. Fantabulous

First-time starter **ALITTLETOOFABULOUS** has trained like she means business in this turf sprint for Cal-bred maiden fillies and mares. Her team work Aug. 8 looked good on video, trainer Carla Gaines won with 3 of her last 8 first-time starters, and the experienced runners in this field look modest. Those include **MAGGLES MCGEE**, third by a length last out while making her first start in more than three months. She lost her punch late in two previous starts around two turns, it seems she runs best around one turn. **FANTABULOUS** debuts with a decent work tab, though maidens from this stable typically race into condition rather than fire first out. CYCLONE CLAIRE also appears to have worked well for her debut; trainer John Sadler does well with this type (5-for-21 turf-sprint firsters last five years).

Sixth Race

1. Hondo Crouch	2. Che	3. Day Man

HONDO CROUCH takes an alarming class drop from a third-place finish for $25k claiming down to $10k claiming non-winners of two races. The drop is odd, just two starts after he was claimed for $25k. But he is the fastest in the field on numbers, blinkers are on, and his trainer does well with this type. The past five years according to Formulator, George Papaprodromou is 9-for-19 with non-maiden claiming favorites dropping in price by 50 percent or more. **CHE** is the alternative based on his runaway maiden-16 win two starts back. He was subsequently in too tough vs. in a restricted $25k

claiming route, but he meets easier this time around. **DAY MAN** is a first-time gelding taking a similar class drop, while BAKO COUNTRY stretches out following a last-to-first maiden-claiming sprint upset.

Seventh Race

1. Proletariat	2. Charlie's Curlin	3. Secured Freedom

PROLETARIAT is a deserving favorite in the G2 Del Mar Derby based on his impressive victory in the Oceanside Stakes. He set the pace in that mile turf race, always looked comfortable, smoked his final quarter-mile in :22.78, and won by more than five lengths. Big win by a gelding who has learned to ration his speed. The extra distance of this mile and one-eighth race should be fine. Not sure if he will make the lead due to the presence of route front-runner/presser PAVLOVIAN, but PROLETARIAT has run well from slightly off the pace if necessary. The top-choice front-runner is trained by Jeff Mullins, whose second entrant is an off-the-pace longshot with an upset chance. **CHARLIE'S CURLIN** ran better than his seventh-place finish suggests in the Oceanside. He checked hard on the far turn, lost his momentum, then finished evenly without being aggressively ridden. It was a better-than-looked effort by a colt with a chance to outrun his likely high odds on the stretch-out. 'CURLIN can be positioned closer to the lead than he was last time. Dirt stakes winner **SECURED FREEDOM** ran well to finish third in the Oceanside, which was his first try on turf. He will be rolling late. MELISMATIC and TRIBALISM move up in class following one-two finishes in a highly rated N1X. The aforementioned PAVLOVIAN stretches back to this preferred two-turn trip, and could pester PROLETARIAT on the lead.

Eighth Race

1. Sophia Mija	2. Anti Slapp	3. Stormy Gal

SOPHIA MIJA gets a needed class drop to maiden-16 after fourth- and fifth-place finishes her first three starts vs. Cal-bred maiden-50s/MSW. Although 'MIJA has no speed, she does finish okay, and adds Lasix. Tepid choice in a strange maiden race that is conspicuously void of speed other than the mare on the rail. **ANTI SLAPP** makes her first start in two months after running okay her first two starts (third, fourth) against Cal-bred maiden-50s. 'SLAPP has enough speed to keep the aforementioned rail-drawn pacesetter in her sights. **STORMY GAL** is the speed-on-the-rail 5yo mare. She is a 12-start maiden shortening from routes for her first start in two months. If she makes the lead, she could be tough to catch in a race filled mostly with late-runners.

Ninth Race

1. Orange Thunder	2. Wild West Coast	3. Syntax

The outside post (12 of 12) is a challenge for **ORANGE THUNDER** in this Cal-bred allowance turf mile, but the Clubhouse Ride filly might be sharp enough to handle the post and class hike after upsetting a starter allowance last month. 'THUNDER improved this summer after shipping to DMR, and is bred to continue her upward pattern. Sired by Clubhouse Ride, she is a sibling to multiple G2 winner Closing Remarks. If she tucks in without losing ground, and if she can weave through traffic, and if she continues her improving pattern, she just might score another off-the-pace upset. **WILD WEST COAST** improved each successive start including a runner-up finish at this level last out in

just the fourth start of her career after breaking from post 10 in a turf mile. She moves to post 4 as a logical contender. **SYNTAX**, third in a dirt sprint last out, stretches to the mile distance of her starter allowance win three starts back. SYNTAX is quick enough to make the lead if she wants it. REDHEADED REBA, in the money all five starts in dirt sprints, stretches out and tries turf for the first time. Based on her pedigree, she should handle the change (by Om, produced by a Street Boss mare).