

Date: September 3rd, 2021**Track:** Del Mar**By Brad Free****BEST BET: Big Moon (4th race)****First Race****1. Via Egnatia****2. Cleopatra's Strike****3. Sea of Liberty**

Friday first post, 3:30 p.m. **VIA EGNATIA** is ready to fire, first start in more than six months. He runs well fresh, posted a fast work on the Del Mar turf last weekend, won on the course last fall, and earned speed figures close to par for this \$32k claiming route restricted to non-winners this year. Pace-presser **EGNATIA** is a live mount for seven-pound apprentice rider Juan Espinoza. **CLEOPATRA'S STRIKE** returns from a layoff of nearly three months, drops in class and will rally late. He finished second at this level in May, and runs well with time between starts. **SEA OF LIBERTY** looms a contender facing easier than he met last out. Although this is his third start of the meet, it probably is his best chance. **FRENCH GETAWAY** will pick up the pieces while dropping slightly in class, from open \$25k claiming to restricted \$32k claiming.

Second Race**1. I'm a Giraffe****2. Miss Reno****3. Malibuena**

This maiden-40 sprint for 2yo fillies is baffling. **I'M A GIRAFFE** gets the call wheeling back in eight days, dropping from maiden special-weight, and shortening from a route to a sprint. Her third-place sprint debut two back was okay, followed by a speed-and-fade effort last week in a MSW mile. These are easier. She is trained by Peter Miller, who also entered first-time starter **MISS RENO**. The latter has been training at San Luis Rey, where she posted a bullet work last month. Progeny of stallion Jess's Dream rarely win first out, but the dam of **MISS RENO** produced two debut winners from four runners. First-time starter **MALIBUENA** is by a high-percent debut stallion; 2yo debut progeny of Gormley won 5 of 22, with 3 seconds. Contender despite an abbreviated work pattern. **HALF PAST TWELVE** drops in class and has speed; **SUE ETTAS GHOST** will be rolling late. Tough race.

Third Race**1. Lava Lane****2. Squared Shady****3. After Midnight**

A strange trip compromised **LAVA LANE** last out; fifth in a similar Cal-bred allowance turf sprint. She broke well, but her rider took hold, lost position into the turn, got trapped behind runners, and never had a chance thereafter. It was curious strategy with a filly who runs best forwardly placed. Assuming she uses her tactical speed and reproduces her dirt runner-up last out or turf maiden win two back, she can win this turf dash with an up-front trip. **SQUARED SHADY** returns from a three-month break after she bled and finished far back in May. Fast workouts suggest she is ready to fire, she has speed and finished second at this level three back. **AFTER MIDNIGHT**, runner-up in the race the top choice exits, might not get the same easy pace she benefitted from last out, but she is in top form and her runner-up finish was validated when the first- and fourth-place finishers returned to win. Also-eligible **NICE ICE** routes like a sprinter.

Fourth Race**1. Big Moon****2. Naughty Evelyn****3. Miracle of Hope**

BIG MOON drops to maiden-20 for the money run, third start following a layoff. Her fourth-place comeback two starts ago in a dirt sprint was decent; she was overmatched last out in a maiden-50 turf route. Now she returns to dirt, drops to the bottom class level, and proved last fall she can run long when second in a maiden-claiming dirt race. Facing modest rivals, this is a race **BIG MOON** "should" win. **NAUGHTY EVELYN** finished a creditable second last out in her return from a layoff of nearly a year. The figure she earned is the highest last-out dirt fig in the field, though she might not get the same easy pace scenario she benefitted from last out. **MIRACLE OF HOPE** drops in class and goes tries dirt for the first time. **QUEEN OF LOVE** showed speed last out and finished an okay fourth after leading to deep stretch.

Fifth Race**1. Mogollon Rim****2. Quincey****3. Fore Flag**

Also-eligible **MOGOLLON RIM** gets top billing in this Cal-bred maiden turf route based on his better-than-looked debut fourth at this same mile trip. He raced three-wide throughout, steadied late behind rivals, and missed by a length and a quarter. Solid debut by the sibling

to California Cup Derby winner Fast Enough. Tough outside post, however. **QUINCEY** finished creditable fourth in his debut, one mile on turf vs. open MSW company. Now he drops into a Cal-bred restricted race with a prep under his belt. Improvement likely after his debut vs. tougher. **FORE FLAG** stretches out from a debut sprint at Arlington. He is bred for two turns. **PEACEHAVEN**, a filly facing boys, takes off blinkers after she got rank and weakened in her debut. Her trainer won with 4 of his last 7 starters in in Cal-bred maiden turf races.

Sixth Race

1. Connie Swingle

2. Big Novel

3. Drizella

Based on her maiden romp, **CONNIE SWINGLE** should be favored in this stake for 2yo Cal-bred fillies. She crushed by more than seven, earned a lofty 78 Beyer, and drew comfortably outside. However, the filly she defeated in the maiden race could have made it a contest with better luck. She is **BIG NOVEL**, who ran super finishing more than seven lengths back. She took up at the break, was last from the gate, made an extended run into and through the turn, loomed a threat and flattened out. Super debut, she would have been right there with a clean takeoff. The top pair are more evenly matched than the margin. **DRIZELLA** did not have a good trip finishing second in the CTBA. She was forced outward at the break, took up on the backstretch, was caught three- and four-wide on the turn and into the lane, made the lead, but got worn down. Good try by **DRIZELLA**. An upset candidate is **CARMEN MIRANDA**, who broke flat-footed in the CTBA, made a middle move while wide, and split the field. She worked well since then including a dynamite work Aug. 28 in which she dusted race-5 contender Peacehaven. **MIRANDA** might be better than her modest figures indicate. **ZUBOSHI** crushed a maiden turf sprint; the filly she defeated by more than seven returned to win a low-rated race via disqualification.

Seventh Race

1. England's Rose

2. Get On the Bus

3. Star of Africa

ENGLAND'S ROSE, N1X runner-up twice at this meet at shorter distances, stretches to a mile and three-eighths on turf. Troubled runner-up two back, second-best last out, she is bred for the marathon distance. The challenge is to hold top form three successive races. That is not easy to do at the short summer meet. **GET ON THE BUS**, also third start of the meet, improved a bunch finishing third last out in a N1X vs. 3yo fillies. She faces older fillies and mares, gets a four-pound age concession, and will rally late. **STAR OF AFRICA**, third across the wire in a Golden Gate stake race last out, will be pressing the likely slow pace. **KLEEN KARMA** moves up in class and stretches out in distance after defeating modest Cal-breds.

Eighth Race

1. Scabbard

2. Next Revolt

3. California Street

SCABBARD finished a closing second last out at this N3L claiming level going six and a half, was claimed off the effort, and stretches to seven furlongs first off the claim by Jonathan Wong, who went 3-for-6 here last week. **NEXT REVOLT** earned a career-high figure winning a N3L claiming route, but was disqualified for interference. The in-form gelding can sprint or route, and will be running late. **CALIFORNIA STREET** returns from a layoff of nearly four months with back figures fast enough for this level. **DARK PRINCE** is all speed. Come and catch him.