

**Date:** November 12th, 2021**Track:** Del Mar**By Brad Free****BEST BET: Essential Wager (4th race)****First Race****1. Phenom****2. Unbridled Mary****3. Pammy's Ready**

Two-year-old maiden fillies sprint on turf; this is a split of race 5. **PHENOM** is the choice based on her promising debut. She saved ground just off the pace, appeared to race greenly early, lowered her head in the stretch, finished well for third and galloped out super. Strong effort, she worked well since, and puts on blinkers. The debut filly **UNBRIDLED MARY** has worked like a filly who could fire first out. Sired by Maclean's Music, whose debut 2yos have won 18 percent, 'MARY is from a dam whose first three runners are winners including a debut winner. Sharp works suggest 'MARY is ready to fire. **PAMMY'S READY** goes route to sprint for her local debut. She tried longer distances and backed up both recent starts in the Midwest and East. Her style hints this five-furlong trip will be just right. **SHE'S SO SHINY** improved when she switched to grass. And yet 'SHINY would be the first turf-sprint winner by Capo Bastone, whose progeny were 0-for-19 in turf sprints at the start of the week.

**Second Race****1. Signofthecross****2. Kershaw****3. Tiger Dad**

Only five runners, **SIGNOFTHECROSS** may upset likely favorite **KERSHAW**. The last two starts by 'CROSS were double-digit losses, both with an alibi. Two back he did not handle turf; last out he was caught seven-wide the first turn, and never got involved. Now he is drawn only two stalls outside the only true front-runner, and should get a comfortable trip sitting second. He can get first turn if/when the pacesetter falters. To win, he must hold off likely favorite **KERSHAW**. The latter is a Del Mar horse for course (three wins, two seconds from six starts), returning from a six-month layoff. His last win was on this track, at this \$50k claiming level, at this mile distance. The "best horse" in the field could wear them down. **TIGER DAD** is the aforementioned front-runner stretching out and likely to make the lead with blinkers on. Five of the seven dirt routes opening week (two turns) were won by the pacesetter including Breeders' Cup winners Echo Zulu, Corniche, Life Is Good and Knicks Go. **DIRECT LINE** won by only a neck last out against easier, but his effort was better than it looks. He was in the parking lot the entire race, yet won anyway.

**Third Race****1. Bally's Charm****2. Fore Flag****3. Sippin N Kissin**

The promising fourth-place debut by **BALLY'S CHARM**, at this same mile turf distance and Cal-bred maiden level, sets him up for a second-start win. He lost ground forwardly placed three- and four-wide, made the lead at the top of of the lane, then weakened. Solid debut, he should move up with a race under his belt. **FORE FLAG** finished second in the same race as the top choice, finishing two lengths in front of that rival. Each start by 'FLAG has been better than the start before; he lost a lot of ground rallying wide into the lane last time but still finished okay. **SIPPIN N KISSIN** finished third in the same race while making his sixth start. The challenge is that his development seems to have stalled.

**Fourth Race****1. Essential Wager****2. Disco Ball****3. Today's Flavor**

**ESSENTIAL WAGER** ran super in his second-place debut and only needs a clean start, which he did not get first out. He stumbled and was away slowly, hard-held early, cut loose to set the pace, dueled on the inside and finished more than four lengths clear of third. He worked fast since including a sharp Nov. 1 team work with stakes-placed older filly Velvet Slippers. With a clean takeoff, 'WAGER should be gone. **DISCO BALL** is a five-start maiden, but his form is solid including his runner-up comeback two months ago. He finished two lengths behind Sumo, who returned with a 92-Beyer allowance runner-up. 'BALL finished four lengths clear of third in the maiden race, and can find a field he can defeat before long. Not convinced Del Mar is his favorite surface, however. **TODAY'S FLAVOR** ran well finishing second in his debut in April; comeback works suggest he is ready to fire. Inside post an obvious challenge. His stablemate is **SOY TAPATIO**, whose sire Not This Time gets a high rate of debut winners (22 percent, all ages combined). Trainer Doug O'Neill won with three of his last six first-time starters.

**Fifth Race**

**1. Pretty Rena****2. Comedic****3. Shoppingforpharoah**

This turf sprint for 2yo maiden fillies is a split of race 1; **PRETTY RENA** can upset likely favorite **COMEDIC**. Both ran well first out. Although the speed figure earned by 'RENA was below average, she actually ran well. She tucked in behind the pace, waited for room, split rivals in the lane and finished with run even though her past-performance line indicates she was losing ground. The one-two finishers rallied from the back, 'RENA was the only forwardly placed runner to stick around. Solid debut, maidens trained by Michael McCarthy win second out at 22 percent (compared to 7 percent first out, all categories combined). Tab for an off-the-pace upset by 'RENA, if she can catch **COMEDIC**. The latter dueled inside in her debut, and hung tough to finish second (third place Phenom entered in the first race this card). **COMEDIC** was well-backed first out, ran well, and might not need much improvement to win. She would be the first progeny of hot first-crop sire Practical Joke to win on turf (0-for-14 into the week). The speed of the field might be **SHOPPINGFORPHAROAH**, who set a blazing pace in her debut at Santa Anita, held a two-length lead at the eighth pole, then got collared by a winner that rallied from the back. Super debut by 'PHAROAH, who benefits by the distance cutback from six furlongs to five. Come and catch her.

**Sixth Race****1. Girona****2. Stradari****3. Chollima**

In a deep field of \$8k claiming filly-mare sprinters, Los Alamitos-based **GIRONA** gets the tepid call. She has speed, she has won at this level, and is in light with a five-pound apprentice allowance. All four career wins were at Los Al, however. **STRADARI** also is based at Los Al, but she won at Del Mar in summer against a similar field. She broke slowly and trailed last out as a longshot in a Los Al allowance; she fits for this low claiming tag. **CHOLLIMA** returns to her preferred one-turn distance after a pair of in-the-money finishes around two turns. She was re-claimed last out by Steve Knapp, who trained her this summer when she scored a decisive win in a \$10k claiming sprint. If she reproduces that race cutting back to one turn, she would be tough. She figures as one favorites, if not the outright favorite. **DISCERNMENT** dusted a Fresno claiming race last out with the highest last-out figure in the field. A **SEASON TO REMEMBER** fits for a piece off her runner-up finish here in summer. She missed by only a head to second preference **STRADARI**.

**Seventh Race****1. Hot Rageous****2. Lava Lane****3. Shylock Eddie**

**HOT RAGEOUS** is the best and fastest horse in this Cal-bred N1X/optional claiming sprint. If she handles turf, she should win. One-two in six of eight starts, she defeated a good field last out on Golden Gate synthetic; the second-, fourth- and seventh-place finishers returned to win. The uncertainty is footing; she finished fifth as the favorite he only previous start on turf. Nonetheless, 'RAGEOUS is the one to beat at a short price. She entered for the \$20k claim tag. **LAVA LANE**, runner-up at this level on this turf course last out, returns from a short two-month freshening and will be rolling late. She is lightly raced (five starts) and runs well fresh. **SHYLOCK EDDIE** is a deep closer who 0-for-28 since her most recent win in July 2018. But her recent form is creditable and she will be finishing. **MAMBA QUEEN** is fast, and probably the one to catch. She wired maidens last out at Golden Gate.

**Eighth Race****1. Starship Sky****2. Zahra****3. La Pulcinela**

In a strange route race with no clear speed, **STARSHIP SKY** gets the call dropping to the \$16k claiming N2L bottom level for the first time. She faced better four recent starts on turf; she ran well on dirt in spring. **ZAHRA** has won just once from 30 starts, but finished in the money 16 times including a runner-up finish at this class level last time out. **LA PULCINELA** drops off a pair of runner-up finishes against better company. She should vie for favoritism.