Date: November 21st, 2021   **Track:** Del Mar

By Brad Free

BEST BET: Steak and Cheese (2nd race)

First Race

1. Suzie Qzz Brother	2. Irondale	3. Self Isolation

SUZIE QZZ BROTHER will be tough in this Cal-bred maiden sprint if he reproduces his runner-up comeback. Returning from a layoff of nearly a year and adding Lasix, he pressed the pace, made the lead in the stretch and got collared while running the best race of his career. Obvious choice. **IRONDALE** merits upset consideration following a better-than-looked seventh in a turf sprint. In a race mostly dominated by closers, he was forwardly placed, lost ground while wide, and lost his punch in deep stretch. He is improving each start, returns to dirt, and has speed to be near the pace. The filly **SELF ISOLATION** adds blinkers and goes turf to dirt after a lackluster comeback. She should improve second start back, while RIFEY did improve second out, a closing third while earning the highest speed figure in this field (76 Beyer). Blinkers on this time.

Second Race

1. Steak and Cheese	2. Mucho Del Oro	3. Kennebec

STEAK AND CHEESE is simply the fastest in this turf mile for claiming 3-year-olds. Each of his last four turf routes were solid including a decisive N2L claiming win last out against older. There was not much behind him, but this age-restricted field also came up light. 'CHEESE looks like an off-the-pace, low-odds winner for a reliable outfit. Since opening a stable in California, trainer Mike Maker started six turf-route favorites: three wins, two seconds. **MUCHO DEL ORO** ran super first start off the claim last out, runner-up in a claiming turf mile similar to this. 'ORO has a bit more speed than the top choice, and therefore will get first run. **KENNEBEC** finished only a half-length behind 'ORO last out. He will be rolling late. OPTIMISTIC VALOR misfired both recent starts, but is reunited with the jockey who rode him to a career-best win on the Del Mar turf course in summer.

Third Race

1. Straight Up G	2. Playin in the Band	3. Disobey

STRAIGHT UP G ran like a horse that needed a start first out. Racing over the slow surface at Santa Anita, and favored based on workouts at San Luis Rey Downs, he raced wide midpack and finished evenly in what appeared to be little more than a schooling run. He worked well since, and will be racing over a DMR surface that is much quicker than SA. Furthermore, Richard Baltas-trained maidens tend to improve second time out. First-time starter **PLAYIN IN THE BAND**, sibling to race-1 favorite Suzie Qzz Brother, debuts with a decent work pattern. Progeny of first-crop sire Stanford are 7-for-28 first out. **DISOBEY** finished sixth in his debut, but he returned to work well and is likely to improve with a race under his belt. He is the first runner produced by a Cal-bred juvenile stakes winner. WORSE READ SANCHEZ drew the rail for his debut.

Fourth Race

1. Viazar	2. Pop Pop's Dream	3. Unbreakable

With five consecutive runner-up finishes including three as favorite, **VIAZAR** is tough to trust. And yet she is the most likely winner of this starter allowance turf mile. She has the field's top figures, fires every start, and is the fastest finisher. **POP POP'S DREAM** popped second time out and was claimed for $50k. The lightly raced filly has plenty upside in just her third career start, and has never lost at this level (this is her first try at this level, obviously). **UNBREAKABLE** has four thirds from five starts since her maiden win, and she finished behind VIAZAR twice. The last-start debacle by UNBREAKABLE can be attributed to dirt. She returns to her preferred footing, which is turf, and will pick them up late. TAYET ships in from Kentucky, where she defeated a weak maiden-40 field on dirt last out. Her best races in the Midwest were on turf.

Fifth Race

1. Sangre Azul	2. I'm a Giraffe	3. Surely Spectacular

SANGRE AZUL ran well with a wide trip in her third-place debut, then was in over her head second out in a maiden-50. She returns to the maiden-32 level of her debut, with an off-the-pace running style that has been effective this meet in dirt sprints. **I'M A GIRAFFE** will

vie for favoritism dropping from a stronger turf route to the surface/footing/class level of her runner-up finish two back. **SURELY SPECTACULAR** is the fastest in the field based on the 52 Beyer she earned three starts back. Problem is, two starts before and two since were only average. Trainer change since raced, bullet workout early this week, improvement possible.

Sixth Race

1. Bristol Bayou	2. Provocation	3. Stella Noir

Up in class following a decisive starter allowance win, **BRISTOL BAYOU** can upset potential favorite **PROVOCATION**, who will be making her first start since December. 'BAYOU won her last three dirt sprints with figures within, or close to, five points of par for this N1X level. She is drawn outside where she can stalk, press or go on with it. The "now" horse faces a tough rival however, because PROVOCATION posted a series of fast works that suggest she is ready to fire. She won her career debut, so firing fresh is nothing new. She is fast on numbers, has speed, and will be tough for the top choice to beat. **STELLA NOIR** took a shot in a route, and faltered to third. She is best as a closing sprinter. With her stalking style, she should be racing midpack behind the top pair and she will be running late.

Seventh Race

1. Miss Carousel	2. Invincibella	3. Savvy Gal

MISS CAROUSEL drops to $25k claiming after finding open N1X rivals too tough all three starts after an allowance win vs. Cal-breds. She wheels back in a week for a trainer who does well with short layoffs. Ed Freeman won with 6 of his last 21 starters running back in 10 days or less; MISS CAROUSEL posted two turf-sprint upsets on this course in summer. The consistent late-runner **INVINCIBELLA** figures as one of the favorites off a third-place finish in a fast $40k claiming turf sprint at Santa Anita. She will be rolling late, while **SAVVY GAL** will be rolling early. 'GAL missed by only a neck at this level last out at SA, running six furlongs on the flat. This is her first shot at five furlongs, a distance she should relish. The best race of her career was at five and a half.

Eighth Race

1. Colt Fiction	2. None Above the Law	3. Fashionably Fast

In a strong field of Cal-bred stakes sprinters, **COLT FICTION** is the one to beat dropping from a respectable midfield finish in a Grade 1. 'FICTION has a pressing style adaptable to any pace scenario, he is 4-for-6 at DMR including a highly rated allowance win two back that would be fast enough to handle this cast. He has a better post and more advantageous running style than his chief rivals. Those are graded stakes winner **NONE ABOVE THE LAW** and multiple Cal-bred stakes winner **FASHIONABLY FAST**. The last time NONE ABOVE THE LAW sprinted on DMR dirt, he won a Cal-bred 3yo stake by more than five lengths. He followed by winning the G2 Del Mar Derby, misfired last out, and now returns to the Cal-bred ranks. He will be rally late. FASHIONABLY FAST is stuck on the rail, but probably quick enough to establish position. The two horses to his outside are not that quick. It will be COLT FICTION applying pace pressure. PRINCIPE CARLO is longshot speed, second start back from a layoff. LOUD MOUTH is good enough when he fires.

Ninth Race

1. Buzz of New York	2. Dream of Jeanne	3. Buy American

Beaten favorite both recent maiden turf routes, **BUZZ OF NEW YORK** had a tough trip last out at a mile and one-eighth distance that was too far. She finished fourth. She shortens to a mile, returns to the DMR course and to the mile trip at which she finished second twice in summer. This is her best chance yet. **DREAM OF JEANNE** sputtered last out on the main track at SA, with no visible alibi. Maybe she did not like the slow footing. Her main-track debut at DMR was solid, she is by American Pharoah, therefore a switch to turf should be fine. She might be a lot better than her most recent start suggests. **BUY AMERICAN** is slowly learning how to run. He was taken back last time, and actually finished okay after being keen early. Now blinkers are off, the distance is shorter. Major contender if he can settle and finish.