

Date: August 5th, 2023**Track:** Del Mar**By Brad Free****BEST BET: Maxville (5th race)****First Race****1. Mission Beach****2. Dagger Ranch****3. Next Level**

First-time starters **MISSION BEACH** and **DAGGER RANCH** both worked well for Bob Baffert; both 2yo colts by Curlin look "live" first out. **MISSION BEACH** repeatedly worked in company; his last three gate works include two sharp drills over the Del Mar surface. **DAGGER RANCH** worked in company July 30 with 2yo MSW winner Prince of Monaco, who won by eight lengths last month. For what it's worth, the win rate for Curlin debut 2yos is 11 percent according to Formulator. **NEXT LEVEL** is the only entrant with racing experience. He made his debut in a stakes race, was not quick early, and basically trailed throughout. That was in June, he worked well since including a solid five-furlong gate move last weekend. Tab for an improved effort second out. **BIGREDSANDRIBEYES** appears to have trained well for his debut; progeny of first-crop sire Vino Rosso are 2-for-21 first time out.

Second Race**1. Annie's Song****2. Rakassah****3. Bella D**

ANNIE'S SONG returns to her preferred surface, which is turf, and figures for a forwardly placed trip positioned just off the speed. Prior to her dirt disappointment last out, she finished second in successive Santa Anita claiming turf sprints similar to this. The turf rails move to the 18-foot setting Saturday. Last summer with the rails at 18 feet, three of the four turf sprints were won by the pacesetter. **RAKASSAH** nosedives from a close third in a N2X down to \$32k claiming for her first start in more than three months. Curiously steep drop, but the 6yo mare figures as a contender and has run well over the DMR turf. **BELLA D** also drops for her comeback. She will be rolling late, while speedster **DANCING SOUL** hopes the speed-friendly rails-at-18 track profile from last summer continues this summer. 'SOUL is quick, so is **GYPSY LYNN**.

Third Race**1. Colette's Joy****2. Betty's Song****3. Jensco**

The runner-up debut at SA by **COLETTE'S JOY** was better than the figure (64 Beyer), and sets her up for a maiden win second out. She had to wait for room while blocked behind runners on the turn, squeezed through a narrow opening on the inside in the lane, finished well and galloped out well. Promising debut, solid work pattern since, all systems go from the outside post. The first two weeks of the meet, 10 of the 30 dirt sprints were won by horses breaking from one of the two outside posts, irrespective of field size. First-time starter **BETTY'S SONG** has trained well including a smart gate work last weekend in which she took pressure from the outside and finished in a minute. She is ready to fire, it appears. **JENSCO** finished sixth in her debut, but actually ran well. She broke last and trailed by a long way, made a wide rally on the turn, then stalled. She missed by only three lengths, worked fast since, and should improve with a clean takeoff. Inside post is an obvious challenge.

Fourth Race**1. Doinitthehardway****2. Lucky for You****3. Justique**

The best efforts by enigmatic 3yo **DOINITTHEHARDWAY** are fast enough to defeat the older fillies and mares she faces in this N2X dirt mile. Her N1X sprint two back was relatively fast; her maiden route win four back was very fast. But she does not always run two alike; she finished fifth twice recently in stakes for 3yo fillies. She moves to N2X, and can be treated with Lasix which she used both recent wins. She is quick enough to establish position from the outside post (8 of 8); she gets a five-pound break from most rivals and a seven-pound break from 4yo stablemate **LUCKY FOR YOU**. The latter returns from a layoff of nearly three months. The five-start filly is 2-for-2 at two turns, and likely to contest the pace. **JUSTIQUE** returns to the DMR track on which she scored both wins. It is uncertain if she really wants two turns, or perhaps is best as a closing sprinter. But she certainly is a better filly than she showed during the SA meet, new jockey Mike Smith has been working her, she gets Lasix. **JUSTIQUE** entered the G2 San Clemente two weeks ago, but did not draw in from the also-eligible list. **KRISTI'S TIGER** stretches out in peak form; the last-out starter allowance sprint winner will keep the pace honest.

Fifth Race**1. Maxville****2. Johnny Paycheck****3. Defensor Fortis**

MAXVILLE wheels back eight days after a terrific fourth in a similar Cal-bred maiden turf route. Based on his effort last weekend, he can mow these down. Last week, making his third start and first time long, he flew from the back with a sub-24 final quarter-mile and missed by only a length and a half. Big effort by an improving gelding who found his niche around two turns. **JOHNNY PAYCHECK** is a seven-start maiden who figures as a contender if his most recent is forgiven. He finished last. But a pair of in-the-money finishes in previous Cal-bred MSW turf miles rank among the top efforts in this field. He certainly will be positioned in front of the top choice turning for home. **DEFENSOR FORTIS** lost ground last time and finished eighth; he is reunited with the jockey who rode him to a runner-up finish two back.

Sixth Race

1. Pretty Rena

2. La Paloma Blanca

3. Copper Bo Ten

PRETTY RENA and **LA PALOMA BLANCA** are the principals in a modest maiden-20 at five and one-half furlongs. **PRETTY RENA** set the pace and tired both recent starts, but she held second last out while more than six lengths clear of third. Her early speed and outside draw give her the edge. **LA PALOMA BLANCA** is dropping to the bottom class level for the first time; she will rally late. She missed by a length last out after a wide trip. **COPPER BO TEN** drops in class and should be forwardly placed. **WARREN'S SHOW BIZZ** is a 15-start maiden who will pick up the pieces.

Seventh Race

1. Geezer

2. My Man Bags

3. I'm Dr. O

This Cal-bred N1X turf sprint is wide open. The call is comebacker **GEEZER**, though he has never raced on grass and returning from a seven-month layoff. But his works signal readiness, he has turf influence in his pedigree, two of his three SA dirt wins were fast, he has speed, and is versatile. **MY MAN BAGS** is the fastest in the lineup, based on dirt form. He scored highly rated dirt wins both recent starts (85 and 90 Beyer), he is a better horse now than the last time he tried turf. From his outside post (9 of 10), he will need to use his speed. **I'M DR. O** ships from Golden Gate Fields, where he split the field. The top two finishers won next out; the fourth- and fifth-placers finished second next out. Turf is new for 'DR. O, but he is by Clubhouse Ride and produced by a Desert Code mare. Grass should be fine. Lightly raced **ROY HOBBS** had a tough trip last out on dirt. He also should like turf, sired by Grazen and produced by an Unusual Heat mare.

Eighth Race

1. Frost Alert

2. Got Thunder

3. Keen to Go

FROST ALERT missed by a length last out against tougher turf company, he drops to the lowest level for winners (\$16k claiming N2L). Dirt is fine, he won a maiden race on dirt in March. **GOT THUNDER** makes his second start since he was gelded, and first start in a claiming race. He was cut out to be better than this; the descent to the bottom looks like the right move. **KEEN TO GO** drops for his second start of the meet after a subpar effort two weeks ago against much tougher. **KO SAMSUI** fits off his turf form. This race is a scramble.

Ninth Race

1. Kings River Knight

2. Carmelita's Man

3. Indian Peak

Although he won both recent stakes setting the pace, **KINGS RIVER KNIGHT** does not need the lead. Good thing, because versatility may be required in this Cal-bred turf mile stakes with plenty of speed. 'KNIGHT has run well from off the pace, a style he could employ. He won both turf starts at DMR last summer; he can extend his win streak if he avoids a pace duel. Favorites are 9-for-17 in this stakes since its 2006 inaugural. **CARMELITA'S MAN** is a horse-for-course with three wins and two seconds on DMR turf including this stakes last year. His winter form at SA is better than it looks. A late-runner, he was compromised by pace last time in a race won by the front-running top choice; 'MAN had a series of unlucky trips previously. He benefits by the pace scenario, and will roll late. **INDIAN PEAK** stretches out from sprints against top company; he finished a head behind the top choice in a March sprint at SA. It is possible he is best running short, but he has won running long and has a versatile style that should play well in a race with speed. **ROYAL 'N RANDO** will rally at a price.

Tenth Race

1. Adare Manor

2. Fun to Dream

3. Desert Dawn

Front-runner **ADARE MANOR** faces a more challenging pace scenario than either stakes win at SA, but at least she is outside her pace rivals. 'MANOR emerged this spring as top distance dirt mare in California winning a pair of Grade 2s wire to wire. If she rations her speed outside stablemate **FUN TO DREAM** and the sprinter on the rail, 'MANOR can win with a pressing trip. She is trained by Baffert,

who also entered FUN TO DREAM. The latter has worked fast for her first start in nearly five months. She won a pair of graded sprints in winter at Santa Anita, then missed at odds-on in a G1 route. That narrow loss earned the highest figure of her career; she crushed an allowance route her previous try running long. The point is, this mile-and-sixteenth trip is within reach. She has speed, and she is versatile. **DESERT DAWN** is a late-runner who was taken out of her game last out when she pressed/chased and tired. The strategy cost her a chance to finish second. She benefits by a livelier pace scenario; she can drop back and rally late. The late-runner is trained by Phil D'Amato, whose ELM DRIVE is the aforementioned sprinter on the rail. Her 44/45 sprint speed should put her on the lead. This is only her second career route. Come catch her. Late-runner KIRSTENBOSCH will roll late as the longest shot in the five-runner field.

Eleventh Race

1. Irish Patsy

2. Norah's Princess

3. Tickle My Fancy

IRISH PATSY sprints as if this one-mile turf starter allowance is okay. Her two sprints against similar starter-allowance winners were not bad; one mile should be okay. **NORAH'S PRINCESS** returns to the starter allowance ranks after a midpack finish in a Cal-bred N1X. This is her third start following a long layoff; it should be her best. **TICKLE MY FANCY** is speed from the East Coast, **TIERGARTEN** was claimed from a maiden-50 in March, scratched since, and returns following a layoff of more than four months. She fits with these.