

Date: August 11th, 2023**Track:** Del Mar**By Brad Free****BEST BET: Smokem Ez (6th race)****First Race****1. Eligio****2. Bowtie Boys****3. Ace of Clubs**

Twilight racing, Friday first post 3:30 p.m. Second-time starter **ELIGIO** merits horse-to-beat status in this \$100k maiden-claiming sprint for 2yos, based on his troubled runner-up debut for \$50k. He broke slowly, raced wide, made the lead in the stretch, then lost his punch and missed by a nose to the favorite while finishing five lengths clear of third. With a clean start, he could have won. **ELIGIO** bumps up slightly in class his second start, and worked well over the Del Mar track. First-time starter **BOWTIE BOYS** appears to have trained well. Sired by Frosted (14 percent wins debut 2yos), 'BOYS is the first runner produced by a mare who preferred two turns. 'BOYS has worked quickly; five and one-half furlongs is probably fine. **ACE OF CLUBS** misfired in the same race the top choice exits; 'CLUBS finished a distant third after getting bumped at the break and steadying at the three-eighths. With a race under his belt and rider switch second out, he should move way up. **ALWAYS ON CAY** is likely to improve second time out after a wide-trip seventh in his debut at Gulfstream Park.

Second Race**1. Mac's Time****2. Chicknfingerfriday****3. Curly Esa**

MAC'S TIME should be tough in this N3L claiming dirt mile if he reproduces his most recent start, a highly rated N2L win nearly three months ago in Kentucky. He was claimed from the win by Robertino Diodoro, and enters as the fastest in the field based on his Kentucky win. Diodoro was 3-for-6 with Del Mar favorites last summer. **CHICKNFINGERFRIDAY** won a N2L two starts back, then ran okay last out finishing third in a Cal-bred N1X that was his first start in more than two months. He drops in class second start off the short break, and fits off his Santa Anita form. **CURLY ESA** stretches to two turns and should be forwardly placed in a dirt route that could unfold at a soft pace. Uncertain if he can stay the trip, but his even-paced running style suggests he might like it. **BIG SWEDE** finished in front of **CURLY ESA** two starts back. **MR. T'S THIRSTY** and **STOTLAND** have run races fast enough for this bunch.

Third Race**1. Grand Tiger****2. Lord Tripping****3. Black as My Heart**

Speed has been increasingly effective in turf sprints, the short-term profile suits comeback speedster **GRAND TIGER**. His third-place debut two back on turf was creditable, he stumbled and misfired next time on dirt. Freshened since, working well, cutting back to five furlongs, he is the one to catch. Four of the last eight turf sprints last week, with the rails at 18 and 30 feet, were won by the pacesetter. The rails are at 24 feet today. **LORD TRIPPING** is an unknown on turf, but his wide-trip debut on dirt two starts ago earned a big figure considering ground loss. He subsequently misfired in a route, but worked well since and fits off his debut. His dam was a pure turf runner. **BLACK AS MY HEART** makes his second start after a creditable midpack finish in his debut two months ago on dirt. He posted a series of fast works since, has some turf potential in his pedigree.

Fourth Race**1. Handsome Gary****2. Big Hand****3. Super Chief**

This Cal-bred N1X is wide open. It's a good spot to take a shot at a price with **HANDSOME GARY**, who was compromised by wide trips in recent starts. The seven-time winner gets a new rider, he has won at DMR, and meets a field with pace to flatter his rally. The 7yo should start at generous odds; he is fast enough to win at this level. Tab for an upset. **BIG HAND** makes his first start of the year with fast works, and ability to run well fresh. The best two races of his career were first time out, and when he returned from a two-month layoff. Now he returns from a layoff of nearly nine months; he worked a 46.80 bullet from the gate a week ago. Lightly raced 5yo **SUPER CHIEF** won a fast maiden race in his debut last year; he finished second last out in a productive race from which the winner and third-place finisher returned to win. Notwithstanding an abbreviated work pattern, just four recorded drills, he fits on ability. **MYSTIC FLYER** appears to have trained well for his first start of the season, first against older. He improved last year in each subsequent start as a 2yo. **WINDRIBBON** scored a sharp claiming win opening weekend with help from the pro-outside bias. The racing surface has evened out since. The challenge for **WINDRIBBON** is working out a trip from the rail.

Fifth Race

1. Runamileinmyshoes**2. Asada Fries****3. Pondergating**

First-time starter **RUNAMILEINMYSHOES** has the pedigree and works to fire first out in this turf sprint for Cal-bred maiden 2yo fillies. Sired by Street Boss and full sister to speedster second-start winner Gritty Gal, 'SHOES was working fast as early as April. It appears her connections have been waiting to run her on turf. Makes sense considering her pedigree. Although maidens trained by Jeff Mullins typically race into condition rather than fire first out, this filly might be the exception. Mullins won with a Street Boss debut 3yo in March. Boss Lady paid \$43.20. **ASADA FRIES** is a Clubhouse Ride firster whose dam has produced two debut winners from three runners. Solid works, 'FRIES has a shot even though she also is from a stable that races maidens into shape. Second preference nonetheless. **PONDERGATING** showed speed from the gate in her final work last week (viewed online). She has a speed rider aboard, and figures to be prominent early.

Sixth Race**1. Smokem Ez****2. Refocus****3. Salsation**

SMOKEM EZ trounced maidens in his debut three months ago, he targeted this stakes for Cal-bred 2yos ever since. He obviously runs well fresh, slow works are standard from this stable, the colt has the same pattern as 2018 Graduation Stakes winner Tap the Wire: decisive debut victory in May, off three months, win the stake. **REFOCUS** followed his fast debut victory with a modest third in a stakes race. He has a sharp workout pattern in the two months since raced, and will need to produce his speed from the inside post. **SALSATION** scored a maiden-50 debut victory over race-1 selection Eligio. If that rival ran well, **SALSATION** deserves a look second time out. **SALSATION** is trained by Luis Mendez, who won this stakes three of the last four years (Big Returns, Positivity, The Big Wam). **SHADY APPEAL** and **LORD PRANCELOT** are stablemates with speed.

Seventh Race**1. Corporal Violette****2. Inner Beauty****3. Shezmisbehaving**

CORPORAL VIOLETTE drops from allowance to \$32k claiming N2L for her third start in the country. It is a significant drop; the speed figures she has earned against tougher suggest she is fast enough for this restricted claiming turf mile. Furthermore, trainer Paddy Gallagher and jockey Umberto Rispoli are highly productive. The past three years on turf, they teamed to win 15 of 56 races (26 percent). **INNER BEAUTY** is challenged by distance; her ability to stay two turns is uncertain. But she is quick enough to make the lead from the inside post, and will try to take them gate to wire. Her sprint form is okay. **SHEZMISBEHAVING** drops in for a claim tag for the first time in her career. Similar to the top choice, 'MISBEHAVING has been earning speed figures against better company fast enough to win at this level. **ABHITA** can improve second start back.

Eighth Race**1. Montana****2. L L L Cool****3. Buffett**

MONTANA stretches out for the first time in the 11th start of his career; his creditable fifth in a sprint here opening week gives him a license to upset this modest maiden-20 route. The even-paced style he employs in sprints suggest one mile is within reach. As a general rule, maiden-claiming sprints are tougher than maiden-claiming routes. **MONTANA** is therefore "dropping in class." **L L L COOL** is likely to vie for favoritism off his sharp comeback. He missed by a head, finished five lengths clear of third, and earned a 68 Beyer that exceeds par for this class level. **BUFFETT** merits a longshot look based on the track bias he ran into opening weekend,. He set the pace inside, under pressure, on a track that promoted rally-wide closers. The bias dissipated since, inside speed is holding better. **LEN'S LUCK** raced inside most of the trip in the same race. His third-place finished after rallying wide into the lane was actually okay. **ALL THE KING'S MEN** had the bias in his favor finishing second last out in the best race of his career.