

Date: November 11th, 2023**Track:** Del Mar**By Brad Free****BEST BET: Habeas (6th race)****First Race****1. Dark Vintage****2. Hedwig****3. Invincible**

DARK VINTAGE and **HEDWIG** are stakes-placed 2yo turf sprinters who pre-entered last week in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf Sprint. The race oversubscribed and neither made the cut. They meet in this N1X, the call is locally based **DARK VINTAGE**. Winner of a maiden turf sprint at Del Mar in summer, he subsequently ran well finishing second in a \$100k turf-sprint stakes at Santa Anita. He pressed, made the lead, then was outrun by the odds-on favorite while finishing two+ lengths clear of third. Good try. He has a versatile pressing style, and is proven at DMR. But his main rival is good. **HEDWIG** faced better than these when second in a \$487k turf sprint stakes last out at Kentucky Downs. The winner returned to finish third in a G2, the third-place finisher won a stakes race two starts later. **HEDWIG** is dropping significantly in class. Close call between the top pair. **INVINCIBLE** added blinkers and wired maidens last out. Perhaps he found his niche as a turf sprinter, but this really looks like a two-horse race.

Second Race**1. Pilot Commander****2. Imagination****3. E J Won the Cup**

First-time starter **PILOT COMMANDER**, a Justify sibling to stakes winner Freedom Flyer, looked strong working five furlongs in company Nov. 5 (viewed online). Juvenile progeny of Justify have won at an above-average 22 percent rate first time out. His stable also starts \$1 million yearling **IMAGINATION**, a full brother to G3 winner Occult. Sharp works suggest **IMAGINATION** is well-meant. Close call between two well-bred stablemates. Bob Baffert trains. **E J WON THE CUP** removes blinkers after he chased a blazing pace and cracked. His runner-up finish two starts back over the DMR surface might be fast enough. **BRITISH ISLES** raced greenly and misfired far back in his disappointing debut. Stablemate of the top pair, he should improve second time out.

Third Race**1. Respect the Crown****2. Auratium****3. Ellie Moore**

Maiden 2yo **RESPECT THE CROWN** stretches out with two sprints under his belt and a running style that suggests two turns is what he wants. He took an awkward step on the turn last time and flattened out to finish fourth. But he worked twice since and should like this one-mile distance. **AURATIUM** is racing into condition; his third last out in a similar turf mile was his best yet. Trainer Michael McCarthy has won 15 races this year with 10 different 2yos. **ELLIE MOORE** goes long after a troubled sprint comeback. Her first two starts in the U.S. were off-slowly off-the-board finishes in sprints. She might prefer this two-turn trip.

Fourth Race**1. Sheza Girly Girl****2. Spoiled Rotten****3. Equilove**

SHEZA GIRLY GIRL scored the ninth win of her career last out in a low-level claiming race on synthetic; she moves up slightly to \$10k claiming while returning to the DMR surface on which she has won 3 of 6. The veteran can mow them down late. **SPOILED ROTTEN** drops to the lowest level of her career, and shortens to her preferred one-turn distance after fading in a route. Her recent figures are higher than the top choice; **ROTTEN** also has more early speed. No knocks on an obvious contender. **EQUILOVE** has more speed than the top pair, and benefits by the shorter distance of this five and one-half furlong race after tiring at six. She drops one class level, and is expected to the pace. Seven of the eight dirt sprints at this short distance last fall were won by the pacesetter.

Fifth Race**1. Kissed by Fire****2. Runninwiththeboyz****3. New Collection**

Speedster **KISSED BY FIRE** has her work cut out in this N2X turf sprint, facing at least two rivals with the same up-front style. Despite the challenging pace scenario, **FIRE** gets the call while seeking her fourth straight win. She dominated both recent starts; she is quick from the gate. The challenge is coping with fast pace rivals to her outside. Tepid choice, regardless. **RUNNINWITHTHEBOYZ** has the perfect sprint style for this speed-laden turf race. In sprints, she rallies from slightly off. That style could be ideal if the pacesetters go nuts out front. **BOYZ** makes her first start in three months; she won twice this year returning from three-month layoffs. Obvious contender. Lasix-

on **NEW COLLECTION** makes her U.S. debut with creditable European form including a pair of stakes wins in Italy. Although imports from this stable generally race into condition rather than fire first start back, 'COLLECTION is third preference. **RUFA RED KNOT** and **QUEEN MOLOTOV** are the aforementioned speedsters the top choice must cope with.

Sixth Race

1. Habeas

2. Memes

3. Diamonds Preferred

This maiden-20 is the softest chance yet for **HABEAS**, who finished in the money his last four starts including runner-up finishes both recent at SA and Los Alamitos. Either of those starts would be fast enough to win this bottom-level sprint. On paper, the 10-start maiden is a low-odds standout. His trainer Keith Craigmyle runs primarily at Los Alamitos, where his maiden favorites are 13-for-16 the past five years. **MEMES** shortens to a sprint after he pressed and faded in his comeback following a layoff of nearly a year. He posted typically fast works following his return, and he sprinted fairly well as a 3yo early last year. **DIAMONDS PREFERRED** tailed off in summer, but may have benefitted from a short recent layoff. The truth is, quality drops significantly after the top pair.

Seventh Race

1. Dolce Zel

2. Turnerloose

3. Yerwanthere

A pair of graded winners trained by Phil D'Amato top this restricted filly-mare turf stakes, a race that has not been kind to chalk. Favorites are 0-for-7; winning payoffs include \$36.60, \$28, \$39.40 and \$67.80. While it seems anything goes in the Kathryn Crosby Stakes, **DOLCE ZEL** is a logical choice over stablemate **TURNERLOOSE**. 'ZEL has not raced in nearly a year, but she runs well fresh, recent works appears decent, and the presence of jockey Flavien Prat hints positive intent. 'ZEL won graded races vs. 3yos last year while making her first start back from layoffs; she should be ready to fire first start since changing trainers. **TURNERLOOSE** has a recency edge over her stablemate, dropping from graded races in summer and fall including a G2 runner-up the last time she ran on the DMR turf. She has a forwardly placed running style; her stablemate rallies from behind. The D'Amato pair are the field's only graded winners. **YERWANTHERE** scored a visually impressive N1X win two weeks ago, and must have come out of the race in top shape because she was supplemented to this stakes. It is a big jump from N1X to restricted stakes, but **YERWANTHERE** won last out with plenty in the tank. She is sharp.

Eighth Race

1. Will Be

2. Devil Be Me

3. Oviatt Class

WILL BE returns to the DMR surface on which he scored a highly rated sprint win in summer; this will be his first route. Bred top and bottom to route, working well following a recent misfire in a fast-pace sprint, **WILL BE** might be the speed of the field. He is trained by D'Amato, who also entered **DEVIL BE ME**. The latter won three straight in spring and summer, then broke poorly and was eased his most recent start two months ago. The Cal-bred gelding is proven at two turns, and his versatile style could lead to a comfortable trip right behind the pace likely to be set by his stablemate. **OVIATT CLASS**, a late-runner, makes his first start since being compromised by an Aug. 12. speed bias over this track. 'CLASS is a better horse than either summer start suggests; he should be rolling late. **HARD TO FIGURE** stretches out with speed to press the pace.

Ninth Race

1. Park City

2. Birth of Cool

3. Never Seen Before

In a wide-open N3L claiming turf route, **PARK CITY** just might post an upset. His N2L claiming win on dirt two back was relatively fast, he was compromised by traffic last out when fourth in a N3L claiming route on dirt. He was a turf horse early in his career, running well his first two starts on the surface. This is his first turf route in more than a year, facing a modest field. He can upset with a clean trip. **BIRTH OF COOL** should be one of the favorites, returning to the DMR turf on which he ran a career-best race in summer when second in a starter allowance. He goes first off the claim by Craig Dollase, and drops from open \$25k claiming to N3L. The challenge is distance; he might want farther than one mile. **NEVER SEEN BEFORE** is reunited with Juan Hernandez, who rode him to victory in spring. Off since late August, 'BEFORE drops into a restricted claiming race and will be running late. **COMRADERY** was good enough in spring, and has a right to improve stretching back out following a dirt-sprint comeback.