

Date: July 20th, 2024**Track:** Del Mar**By Brad Free****BEST BET: Joyrider (11th race)****First Race****1. Big Buzz****2. Taishan****3. Atomic Drop**

Opening day at Del Mar, first post 2 p.m. The 9yo horse-for-course veteran **BIG BUZZ** drops in class following a two-month freshening. He is a two-time winner over the DMR track, runs well fresh, and can reel them in despite a modest pace scenario. 'BUZZ would benefit by pace to flatter his rally, but it is uncertain if he will get it. A similar comment applies to **TAISHAN**. Graded stakes-placed early in his career, TAISHAN has never raced this low, \$16k claiming. Third third last out vs. \$25k claiming rivals, he will rally late. The top pair must catch front-runner/pace-presser **ATOMIC DROP**, who stretches back to two turns after a runner-up sprint in which he led to deep stretch before being worn down. He could have a relatively easy time setting the pace in a race without much early speed. SUPERMAZEL arrives from Northern California in peak form, runner-up both recent.

Second Race**1. Dr Ruben M****2. Getaway Car****3. Rank**

A solid runner-up debut by **DR RUBEN M** gives him the edge over fast-working first-time starter **GETAWAY CAR** in this 2yo maiden dirt sprint. DR RUBEN M was favored in his debut on turf; he set a fast pace and missed by a nose while finishing more than three lengths clear of third. Since then, he worked fast, in company on dirt. His main rival is GETAWAY CAR, a Curlin colt produced by juvenile stakes winner Surrender Now. Although progeny of Curlin generally want more than five furlongs, the dam of 'CAR won her sprint debut as a 2yo, followed by a romp in a juvenile stakes. The point is, GETAWAY CARD gets precocity from his dam, and fast works suggest he is well-meant. First-time starter **RANK** worked in company with top-choice stablemate DR. RUBEN M on July 14 (viewed on XBTV.com). RANK broke slowly from the gate, recovered to duel inside, and was timed in a quick :46.40. He appears "live" first out. SMASH IT finished a creditable second in his debut, and can improve.

Third Race**1. Anmer Hall****2. News At Ten****3. Mas Rapido**

Tons of speed in this turf sprint sets it up for a winner from off the pace. **ANMER HALL** fits the description. Runner-up last out behind race-7 Oceanside contender We're in Trouble, 'HALL won his debut racing five furlongs on turf at DMR in 2021; he finished second in the one-mile Oceanside Stakes here in 2022. The point is, 'HALL likes the course and can handle the short distance. His closing style suits the pace, and matches the 2023 course profile. In turf sprints with the turf rails down last summer, four of the five winners rallied from the back half of the field. Rails are down Saturday. **NEWS AT TEN** makes his second U.S. start after a respectable comeback in which he dueled to deep stretch before tiring. His European form is solid, in his final start overseas he finished second to Cairo, who subsequently placed in a Group 1. With a prep under his belt, NEWS AT TEN should make a forward move if he can avoid a pace duel. The inside post for NEWS AT TEN is an advantage; the outside post for the top choice is a potential disadvantage. **MAS RAPIDO** will roll late in a race that should unfold at a quick tempo; PLEASE FOCUS adds speed; TIGERHON has run races that put him in the hunt. This N1X turf sprint is wide-open.

Fourth Race**1. De' Medici****2. Dark Marcus****3. Mucino**

DE' MEDICI misfired last out at odds-on, finishing third while partly compromised by a passive strategy and wide trip. He missed by nearly five lengths. But he worked fast since, a bullet drill July 12 in company with race-7 Oceanside Stakes contender Formidable Man, and switches to top rider Juan Hernandez. If 'MEDICI runs back to his two previous starts, both were highly rated wins, he can handle this N2L starter dirt mile with a forwardly placed trip. **DARK MARCUS** will be rolling from behind. He improved after being claimed in March by Steve Knapp, who enters the meet with a deep stable. 'MARCUS is only 1-for-23 with 11 two-three finishes, but he will be running late. **MUCINO** ran as if he needed a start last month. He set the pace and finished second in his return from a seven-month layoff. He was more than three lengths clear of the top choice, and eligible to improve second start back. MISCHELOF will rally late. He has multiple races that would hit the board against this cast.

Fifth Race

1. Soho**2. Where's My Ring****3. In Theory**

SOHO ran better-than-looked last out in a N1X turf sprint, and is ready to stretch to a route for the third start of her campaign. Runner-up two back in her comeback, her next start was a bad trip. She was blocked into and through the lane, found a path too late, but then galloped out in front of the field after the wire. She ran like she wants this two-turn trip. Bred top and bottom to run long, the lightly raced filly should make a forward move with clear sailing. **WHERE'S MY RING** is a G3 winner on dirt with a pedigree for turf; she is by Twirling Candy, 'RING drops from a pair of G1s into an entry-level turf allowance, and will be rolling in the lane. **IN THEORY** is speed, first start in two months and first start on turf. She probably is the one to catch, while European import SHIN JIDAI was nominated to the G2 San Clemente, but shows up in this N1X for her U.S. debut.

Sixth Race**1. Pavel's Etoile****2. Empress of Grace****3. America's Mark**

PAVEL'S ETOILE is sitting on a maiden win third time out. The 2yo filly broke slowly and finished second in a promising debut; next out she finished third in an unrestricted juvenile maiden race in which race-2 selection Dr Ruben M finished second. Logical choice at potentially low odds, dropping into a maiden race restricted to Cal-bred 2yo fillies. **EMPRESS OF GRACE** makes her debut for Knapp, who won two Cal-bred maiden races this spring with 2yo fillies also by Stay Thirsty. 'GRACE gained seasoning in a three-way team drill July 11. She took back behind a pair of rivals, split them on the turn, and worked well after negotiating the traffic. She is ready to fire first out, it appears. **AMERICA'S MARK** is a Cal-bred by American Pharoah, produced by a mare who won her career debut and a stakes as a 2yo. 'MARK is trained by Northern California-based Steve Specht, whose five-year win rate with all 2yo first-time starters is 11-for-46 (24 percent). First-time starter JUST A LITTLE CYNN, a Stay Thirsty filly also trained by Knapp, worked evenly with EMPRESS OF GRACE on July 11. CAYUCOS might be ranked too low; she worked in company with older stakes winner Ruby Nell. CAYUCOS is a must use.

Seventh Race**1. Scatify****2. We're in Trouble****3. King of Gosford**

SCATIFY faced good company throughout his career (stakes winners Nysos, Imagination, Parenting); his only subpar race was due to a bad start/bad trip. The multi-surface Justify colt ran well his only start on turf, runner-up with trouble. He has a versatile running style, and enters as arguably the "best horse" in the field. Trainer John Sadler won this stakes race five times from the 12 years in which he had a starter. But this is no easy spot, and **WE'RE IN TROUBLE** might be any type if he transfers his sprint form to one mile. He faced older allowance horses last out in a hillside sprint, broke it open in the lane, and held by a head. Now he faces 3yos, and if he can stay two turns he could be gone. **KING OF GOSFORD** is 3-for-3 in the U.S., all sprints. His trainer Phil D'Amato won this race a year ago with stretch-out sprinter Conclude; indications are 'GOSFORD will handle a two-turn mile. Stakes-placed FORMIDABLE MAN won a maiden turf route here last summer, and drops from tougher races in the Midwest.

Eighth Race**1. Mirahmadi****2. Santarena****3. Wayne the Brain**

MIRAHMADI, runner-up last summer in the G1 Del Mar Futurity, is still a maiden after five starts. But he returns from a layoff with a series of fast (solo) workouts, he ran well fresh last spring. He and **SANTARENA** are the high-figure entrants. **SANTARENA** finished second in three straight, all three races were relatively fast. **WAYNE THE BRAIN** worked in company with stablemate **SANTARENA**, 'BRAIN was hounded by his mate in the work, held his own, and worked another furlong past the wire while his mate eased up. Solid workout by 'BRAIN, who could upset the top pair if he runs like he trains. **DAGGER RANCH**, stablemate of top choice **MIRAHMADI**, adds Lasix for his first start since last summer.

Ninth Race**1. Medoro****2. Iscreamuscream****3. Zona Verde**

Undefeated in four stars, stakes winner **MEDORO** returns from a freshening to race over the turf course where she began her career with a debut win. G3 winner last out at a mile and one-eighth, she benefits by the freshening and cutback to one mile in this G2 for 3yo turf fillies. She looked smooth in her final work last week, and can come back firing. **ISCREAMUSCREAM** attempts an ambitious class hike, from allowance turf sprint win to graded route. She was dazzling in the allowance win, she drew away by more than three lengths and ran like she will have no trouble with two turns. She certainly is bred for it, sired by Twirling Candy and produced by a graded stakes-winning turf mare. **ZONA VERDE** is 2-for-2 on DMR turf including a G3 last season as a 2yo. Freshened more than three months, she will be rolling late. **LOTERIE** is a stakes-placed filly who also will rally while moving up from a maiden win to G2. She should start at a price, and could easily slip into the trifecta.

Tenth Race**1. Thorne House****2. Navy Man****3. Yellow Brick**

Horse-for-course **THORNE HOUSE**, 2-for-2 at DMR, ran well in his runner-up comeback on turf, but he probably is better on dirt. He posted fast works since raced, he has speed and versatility. His runaway Cal-bred win over the DMR track two summers ago would be fast enough for this open N1X. **NAVY MAN** returns from a layoff as a first-time gelding, with a series of fast works that suggest he is a better horse since the "equipment change." **YELLOW BRICK** shortens back to a dirt sprint; the best race of his career was his dirt-sprint maiden win three back. **MONEY RUN** is a five-win veteran with speed, making his first start in California after a decisive Churchill Downs victory from which he was claimed for \$40k.

Eleventh Race**1. Joyrider****2. One Time Mark****3. Fausto**

JOYRIDER ran super in his fifth-place debut; the effort stamps him a likely winner running back at the same mile turf trip. A colt by Kitten's Joy, **JOYRIDER** broke slowly in his debut, lagged at the back, angled outside and galloped out super past the wire. He ran every quarter-mile faster than the previous (:24.97, :24.48, :24.10 and :23.62). He looks like the most probable winner on the opening-day card. **ONE TIME MARK**, runner-up all three starts since returning from a layoff, is an eight-start maiden who will get there one of these days. He'll probably be positioned in front of the top choice turning for home. **FAUSTO** is racing into condition, making the third start of his career and second turf route while switching to Edwin Maldonado. **BROHEIM** ran well in his runner-up comeback. He might be ranked too low. No knocks on the stretch-out.