

Date: November 23rd, 2024**Track:** Del Mar**By Brad Free****BEST BET: J B Strikes Back (4th race)****First Race****1. Blissterinthesun****2. Cyprus Moon****3. Miss Mandalay**

Six-start maiden **BLISSTERINTHESUN** shortens to the turf distance of her best recent effort, a five-furlong Del Mar runner-up finish two starts back prior to finishing off the board racing six furlongs at Santa Anita. She chased a fast pace and paid the price in that race, but now meets a field with less speed. She could get a cozy trip positioned second or third behind front-runner **CYPRUS MOON**. The latter finished in the money all four tries at five furlongs; she was unplaced her only other start going six furlongs. Depending on how much pressure is applied by the pace rival directly to her outside, 'MOON has a shot to wire the field. **MISS MANDALAY** goes route to sprint and will rally from the back; **SPARROW** is the aforementioned pace rival drawn outside **CYPRUS MOON**.

Second Race**1. Rodriguez****2. Romanesque****3. The Last Straw**

Bob Baffert debut 2yos **RODRIGUEZ** and **ROMANESQUE** top this maiden dirt sprint. The call is **RODRIGUEZ**, who toyed with an overmatched workmate Nov. 16 and went out super after the finish wire of the five-furlong drill. Although progeny of Authentic have won only 8 percent first out according to Formulator, the dam of **RODRIGUEZ** has produced two debut winners. Drawn outside, with a big recent work, the colt can come out firing. His stablemate **ROMANESQUE** is stuck on the rail but worked well in company and is by a sire whose juvenile progeny have won 14 percent first out. **THE LAST STRAW** appears to have worked well for his debut; the Into Mischief colt is the second runner produced by G1 winner Bast. Her first runner, Quick Brown Fox, finished second in her only start. **STARGELL** is an Uncle Mo colt who has worked well. **POST GAME** finished nowhere in his debut in August, but fast recent works suggest he will improve second time out.

Third Race**1. Crazy Cavalier****2. Certitude****3. Osage Creek**

Runner-up at six furlongs in a similar maiden-50 turf sprint, **CRAZY CAVALIER** is the obvious choice shortening to five. He has speed to be forwardly placed; he "won" a race at this class level in spring but was disqualified for interference. 'CAVALIER can win with a pressing trip. The filly **CERTITUDE** is an eight-start maiden, but she raced only twice vs. maiden-50 rivals and finished second in both including her most recent start. She will be rolling late as the only filly in the field. **OSAGE CREEK** squandered a length-and-one-half lead in the stretch last time racing six furlongs; she benefits by the cutback to five furlongs. Second-time starter **OCALA KID** faced tougher his only start in summer 2023; he returns as a first-time gelding adding Lasix and facing maiden-claiming rivals.

Fourth Race**1. J B Strikes Back****2. Coalinga Road****3. Speed Grazy**

The speed of the field, up in class to N1X after a runaway starter allowance over the DMR track, **J B STRIKES BACK** looks tough to catch. He worked a bullet five-eighths since raced, figures to make the lead, and can be long gone as "best bet" on the card. **COALINGA ROAD** is the "class" of the field. A stakes winner who won or placed in eight Cal-bred stakes, 'ROAD will rally from behind and would have been the top choice if there was more speed to go with the top choice. **SPEED GRAZY** scratched from a \$32k claiming route Friday (3-1 second choice in program) to run instead for a \$40k tag in this starter allowance/optional claiming race. 'GRAZY has natural speed to keep the top choice in his sights.

Fifth Race**1. Rexford****2. Lonesome Stew****3. Gregory's Pride**

This N3L starter turf sprint is the deepest race on the card. Last-out runner-up **REXFORD** gets the call shortening from six furlongs to five, over a DMR sprint course on which he ran two of his best races (career-high figure two back, maiden win fall 2022). He has speed, but he can rally from behind, which is the likely strategy. **LONESOME STEW** dusted a N2L starter on dirt in his comeback, and he should handle turf based on pedigree. He is sired by Grazen, and produced by a dam who won on turf and produced a turf winner. 'STEW

is a better horse now than the first time he tried turf in 2023. **GREGORY'S PRIDE** will rally from the back; he won a DMR maiden turf sprint here three summers ago. **KID AZTECA** finished only a half-length behind top choice **REXFORD** last out; **WITHOUT BORDERS** has speed to keep the pace honest. Lots of contenders in this deep field.

Sixth Race

1. Mayacama

2. Pondicherry

3. Uptown Preacher

An improved second start by **MAYACAMA**, runner-up behind the even-money favorite, stamps her the one to beat in this Cal-bred maiden-50 sprint. **MAYACAMA** has speed, an outside post (5 of 7), and looks formidable in the third start of her career. **PONDICHERRY** flashed speed and tired in his debut on turf; she was claimed by Doug O'Neill and switches to dirt with a race under her belt. Win or lose, she will keep the pace honest. **UPTOWN PREACHER** finished a creditable third in her debut in the same race the top choice exits. The inside post is no bargain for 'PREACHER in her second career start.

Seventh Race

1. Devil Be Me

2. Geezer

3. Double Jab

Claimed for \$40k from a highly rated dirt win, **DEVIL BE ME** can win right back against Cal-breds if he transitions to turf. His only previous turf start was an okay fourth-place route two back. Sired by Grazen, turf should be fine. He has speed to press, and versatility to rally from behind. **GEEZER** tailed off in winter and is making his first start in nearly nine months. He ran races last year fast enough for this. **DOUBLE JAB** wired a similar field of Cal-breds on the hill last out, but was curiously disqualified for interference. He adds speed, and he does like the DMR course. Also-eligible **MCGREGOR LAKE** will rally late, first off the claim.

Eighth Race

1. Ultra Power

2. Mixto

3. Skinner

After a misfire at SA, lightly raced **ULTRA POWER** returns to the DMR track on which he romped in a summer allowance. If he reproduces that highly rated win, 'POWER can win this G3. He reportedly did not care for the SA surface last out when third at even-money in a N2X. But he posted two solid works since; his versatility should allow him to be positioned midpack behind the speed. If he pops another 104 Beyer like he did in summer, he can run away late. **MIXTO** won the G1 Pacific Classic two back at DMR, then finished nowhere at long odds in the Breeders' Cup Classic. He drops in class and drew the outside post (6 of 6) where he figures for a pressing trip similar to his Pacific Classic. **SKINNER** finished second in a sprint early this month; it was his first start since he was second in this stakes one year ago. The G1-placed colt always threatened to develop into a top horse, but his career has been interrupted by scratches (2023 Kentucky Derby, 2023 Affirmed Stakes) and layoffs. He worked well since his comeback, and will rally from behind. **TARANTINO** is speed; he defeated top choice **ULTRA POWER** last out. **TARANTINO** will keep last-out maiden winner **MIRAHMADI** honest. **SALESMAN** had a bad trip at Fresno; his dirt-marathon win a year ago at SA puts him in the hunt.

Ninth Race

1. Just Before Dawn

2. Over the Ocean

3. Dairago

JUST BEFORE DAWN can make amends in this maiden turf mile after an eighth-place odds-on debut in a dirt sprint. 'DAWN worked well into his first start, but got run off his feet by the winner and faded. 'DAWN trained well since; the pace of this turf route is likely to be softer than the fractions he chased in his debut sprint. Sired by multi-surface stallion Justify, the switch to grass is reasonable. 'DAWN can win with an up-front trip second time out. Kentucky shipper **OVER THE OCEAN** arrives off back-to-back thirds at Indiana Grand and Keeneland. His second start was better than his first, the two-start gelding might not need much more to handle California competition. **DAIRAGO** got bottled up behind a slow pace last time, he was rank and steadied, and never had a fair shot. That slow-pace race won by the pacesetter was a mile and one-eighth; this shorter race could unfold at a quicker tempo which would allow **DAIRAGO** to take back early and blast late. **DIVISIBLE BY** ran well both starts at DMR in summer; he also will rally. **ENGLISH ICON** stretches out and could keep top-choice **JUST BEFORE DAWN** honest up front.a