

AND AWAY



a) Horse trainer (and Carlsbad resident) Peter Miller at work (photo by Michael J Marten); b) the horses leave the starting gate (photo courtesy of Del Mar Thoroughbred Club).

AY THEY GO

With a second meet added in the fall and a Carlsbad trainer, Peter Miller, to root for, the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club offers plenty of excitement in 2014.

Written by Jenna Sampson





*"Where the turf meets the surf, down at old Del Mar,
take a plane, take a train, take a car...."*



The nostalgic Bing Crosby tune saluting the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club is a familiar melody to locals, but if it's actually been awhile since you've visited the track—or you've never been—now's the perfect time to change that.

Del Mar celebrates its 75th year of racing during the summer season, which runs from July 17 to September 3. This year is also momentous for another reason: With the closure of Hollywood Park in Los Angeles, Del Mar will offer a dual racing season, with the fall meet running November 7 through 30. Plus, this season marks the unveiling of the new, wider turf course. (There are also plans to return the artificial Polytrack surface to dirt in 2015.)

The horses aren't the only attraction. The racing seasons are fairly short, "so it never gets stale," says Del Mar's P.R. guru Mac McBride. "There's always something new. We work very hard to make it more than just horse races. For example, our Ziggy Marley concert—we draw about 33,000 people to the races and the concert."

Del Mar also hosts events in the infield for families as well as Camp Del Mar for kids. Additionally, there is a Friday night band and singles event that regularly draws up to 8,000 people. "We believe that we have such a wonderfully visual sport, beautiful athlete animals, colorfully dressed jockeys who are terrific athletes themselves... we think if we can get you to the race track to watch, you'll become a fan," says McBride. "We use the music and the events to draw people here, and then they get to see our beautiful sport, and they become fans."

If you are new to horse racing, Del Mar has done an excellent job of making it easy to learn the ins and outs of the track experience. Every race day, the track offers a Newcomer's Seminar prior to the start of the races (check schedule online at dmtc.com), equipping attendees with a basic betting guide and going through every step of how it all works.

For seating tips, the tickets along the Stretch Run area are more affordable than entry into the Clubhouse and Turf Club.

Take time to stand in the breezeway before and after races to watch the jockey's parade in and out of the paddock. You'll also be privy to watching the jockey crossing and having a chance to shake hands with some of the world's finest athletes.

When it comes to wagering, you could follow the lead of one local, who claims that she likes to be a winner every time, so she bets \$2 on every horse. But another track veteran offers more sound advice. "Buy a copy of the Union Tribune and bring the Del Mar section to the track with you. The U-T consensus for the race outcomes is based on stats, so the three guys who give their two cents are pretty good." Bettors can purchase a \$20 voucher from a machine in the betting area, and simply cash out at the end of the day with a staffer at the betting windows.

Top trainer Peter Miller (see sidebar) has this advice for newcomers: "From a betting perspective, your best bet is to bet on the leading jockeys and trainers if you don't know the horses. And bet win, place and show—the best value bet with the lowest takeout. Sometimes people want to play exactas and superfectas, all these difficult bets, but I'm a believer in win, place and show and picking one horse a race, and you'll probably end up doing OK."

DEL MAR



cool as ever

For complete information on the daily racing schedule and special events, visit dmtc.com.





CARLSBAD SPOTLIGHT: Q&A WITH TRAINER PETER MILLER

Carlsbad's Peter Miller has been a mainstay in horse racing since the age of 10, when he started jockey school. He claims his hearty appetite and love of food, though, quickly changed his path from jockey to trainer, and he earned his trainer's license at age 21. For the past 26 years, Miller has been training some of the world's finest racehorses, and has been a leading trainer

at Del Mar for several years; in fact, he was the top trainer for the 2012 meet. During any given season, he has roughly 50 to 75 horses in training.

With the closing of the historic Hollywood Park, Miller moved his training operation back down to San Luis Rey in Bonsall, where he had originally trained before heading north to Hollywood. He also has a small group of horses at Santa Anita.

"We own a house in Carlsbad, my wife, Lani, and I, so we've moved back down to Carlsbad and train full-time out of San Luis Rey," he says. "They're doing a refurbish, so I'm excited to return there and train."

The dual meets this summer and fall at Del Mar will give Miller and his family plenty of time to enjoy all that Carlsbad has to offer. "We love Carlsbad," Miller says. "We love Norte's, Vigilucci's on the coast and West is probably the best steakhouse in all of San Diego."

Miller is an old-school trainer who is at the stables seven days a week. He likes to spend his free time with his family; he and Lani have a 2-year-old son, Jacob and another child on the way. "We like to walk on the seawall and along the beach," he says. "And we have a pass to LEGOLAND®, so we take our son there." But horses are Miller's life and livelihood. "The horses are the best part, working with them day in and day out. I love the competition."

"I meet a lot of very interesting people and clients that have become very good friends," adds Miller, who trains for the presidents of both MGM and Warner Brothers studios. "I get to meet very successful people from all walks of life."

Beyond the fame and prestige Miller has earned over the years, if you ask him about his most unforgettable moment in racing, a couple of them come to mind. The first took place when he was just a boy. "I'll say Spectacular Bid when he won the Santa Anita handicap in 1979 with Bill Shoemaker," he says. "I was a kid at the time, and I was there. It was an incredible performance. He won very easily but with a lot of weight. It was an amazing race to watch in person."

Professionally, he says his career highlight was training Comma to the Top to victory at the CashCall Futurity in 2010 at Hollywood Park. "There was a torrential downpour and the horse threw his shoe, and there was a lot of drama trying to get the shoe back on—there was a delay before the race to get him shod. But the horse won in spite of everything."

For more information on Miller, visit petermillerracing.com.



a) A view of Del Mar Thoroughbred Club from the beach (photo courtesy of Del Mar Thoroughbred Club); b) the final turn before the finish line (photo courtesy of Del Mar Thoroughbred Club); c) the horses and jockeys circle the paddock before heading out to the track for a race (photo courtesy of Del Mar Thoroughbred Club); d) one of Miller's horses, Renees Got Zip, at Del Mar (photo by Benoit Photo); e) Miller with Comma to the Top (photo by Michael J Marten); f) Miller's training facility in Bonsall (courtesy of Peter Miller Racing); g) star thoroughbred Zenyatta gets some love from jockey Mike Smith (photo courtesy of Del Mar Thoroughbred Club).