



ITOBA



Indiana Thoroughbred Owners & Breeders Association



Operation Stevie wins \$100,000 William Henry Harrison Stakes at Indiana Grand Racing & Casino

Story by Tammy Knox - Photos by Linscott Photography (unless noted)



SHELBYVILLE, Ind. (Aug. 22, 2018) – He’s been close in several stakes races but his win in the 15th running of the \$100,000 William Henry Harrison Stakes Wed. Aug. 22 was the first career stakes victory for Operation Stevie. Owned by Earl J. Trostrud Jr. and Contreras Stables, Operation Stevie and jockey Emmanuel Esquivel timed the wire just right for the win.

Starting from post 11 in the bulky field of 12, Operation Stevie broke well but didn’t have many options in the six-furlong race, floating over to follow along behind the pack as Walden Forest and Rodney Prescott pressed to the lead from the center of the track, accompanied by Its Just Fate and Fernando De La Cruz from the outside. The two horses matched

each other stride for stride down the backstretch and put some distance between themselves and the rest of the field. In the turn, the pack began to close in with Still Chief and Marcelino Pedroza making a bold move four wide. Right behind him was stablemate Operation Stevie, and Esquivel was waiting for the stretch before tipping even further out for the stretch drive home.

In the stretch, Double Tuff and Alex Canchari, who had been sitting third, moved up to join Walden Forest for the top spot and eventually got the lead. The closers were gaining ground quickly and it was Operation Stevie who had the best stride late in the race, nabbing the win by one-half length over Double Tuff. Still Chief was game on the outside for third.

“He (Operation Stevie) broke with the rest of the group,” said Esquivel. “I just let him settle in and waited. I saw the horses stopping in front and thought it would be best to take the long way around, and it worked out for the win.”



Operation Stevie was the favorite of the field, paying \$7.60, \$4.20 and \$3.00 across the board. The time of the sprint was 1:09.70, just missing the stakes record set by Son of a Nut in 2015 in 1:05.49.

Trained by Cipriano Contreras, Operation Stevie now has 10 career wins in 36 career starts with in excess of \$350,000 in career earnings. The six-year-old son of Lantana Mob was bred by Larry Smallwood, who was in attendance to watch the horse win his first stakes race.

Contreras saddled three in the race, Still Chief, Supreme Justice and Operation Stevie. All three were acquired by claims by Contreras.

“When they turned for home, I saw him making a move,” said Contreras. “I actually thought Supreme Justice had the best shot at winning because he won this stakes race last year. I was just hoping one of them could get the win.”

Contreras, who is currently in fourth place in the trainer standings this season, shifted his operation to Indiana three years ago from Chicago. Since his arrival, he has continued to fare well, especially in the claiming ranks.



“We claimed Operation Stevie for \$10,000 a couple years ago and he has done very well for us so far,” said Contreras. “The other two (Still Chief and Supreme Justice) were claimed for \$6,250, so we’ve been very lucky. All three have been doing really well so I thought we would give all three of them a shot.”

With three in the race, Contreras was in search of a third jockey, so he contacted his nephew, Emmanuel Esquivel, who is currently in fourth place in the standings at Parx Racing. Contreras knew Operation Stevie was the best fit for Esquivel.

“He (Esquivel) has ridden this horse in this stakes race the past two years,” said Contreras. “This horse is great to be around. He is as kind as they come. He’s all class and I’m real blessed to have him in the stable.”

The 16th season of Thoroughbred and Quarter Horse racing continues through Wednesday, Nov. 7. Racing is conducted Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday at 2:05 p.m. EST with Saturday racing beginning at 6:05 p.m. EST. A special Thursday racing program will be held Sept. 6 with a 2:05 p.m. post time.

Indiana Grand Racing & Casino, which is owned and operated by a subsidiary of Caesars Entertainment Corporation (NASDAQ: CZR), holds multiple awards for customer service, entertainment, gaming, dining, and diversity. Located in Shelbyville, Ind., Indiana Grand features 2,200 of the latest slots and electronic table games in addition to a one-mile dirt race course and a seven-eighths mile turf course offering live Thoroughbred and Quarter Horse racing each year. Simulcast wagering is also offered year-round at Winner’s Circle Brewpub & OTB located on the casino floor as well as a Winner’s Circle OTB located in Clarksville, Ind. For more information, please visit www.IndianaGrand.com. Must be 18 or older to wager on horse racing at racetracks and 21 or older to gamble at casinos. Know When To Stop Before You Start.® Gambling Problem? Call 1-800-9-WITH-IT (1-800-994-8448) ©2018 Caesars License Company, LLC.

Trophy Presentation from left Kevin Greely, director of racing, Joysse Bannister, Indiana Thoroughbred Breed Development, Esquivel, Cipriano Contreras, and Jon Schuster, vice president and general manager of racing at Indiana Grand.