



## Fireball Baby wins Indiana Stallion Stakes at Indiana Grand Racing & Casino

Story By Tammy Knox  
Pictures By Linscott Photography (unless noted)



SHELBYVILLE, Ind. (Oct. 9, 2018) – It's been a big week for Jockey Fernando De La Cruz. Fresh off his repeat win with Bucchero in the Grade II \$200,000 Woodford Stakes at Keeneland, the Indiana Grand-based jockey added a second stakes win to his credentials, guiding Fireball Baby to a victory in the 21st running of the \$100,000-added Indiana Stallion Stakes for two-year-old Indiana sired fillies. The daughter of Noble's Promise dug in gamely in the final strides for the victory in a time of 1:11.20.

Starting from post two in the field of eight, Fireball Baby was not the first to the lead. She Da One and Eddie Perez took over from the center of the track followed closely by Nina's Promise with Sammy Bermudez aboard on the outside. Fireball Baby quickly moved up along the rail to join the top two and had a head in front by the quarter mile marker.

Around the turn, Fireball Baby took control of the top spot. As the other early leaders began to fade, Stormy Lives and DeShawn Parker had saved ground along the inside in the turn and had momentum to join Fireball Baby on the lead near the top of the stretch. The two fillies matched each other stride for stride through most of the stretch before it appeared Stormy Lives would move on out for the win. However, Fireball Baby had other intentions. She dug in gamely for De La Cruz and came back on Stormy Lives to grab the win by a neck at the finish line. Pretty Assets and Alex Canchari closed late for third in the six-furlong contest.

"It takes her a few steps to get going, but once she does, she is strong," said De La Cruz. "It helped a lot today the inside was clear and she got right up there. And in the stretch, when that other horse came at her, she dug in and came fighting back. She's a nice filly."

Fireball Baby was the second choice of the field, paying \$5.60, \$3.20, \$2.40 across the board. She increased her career bankroll to nearly the \$100,000 mark with the win.

"This win today is a little bittersweet," said Trainer Philip Bauer. "The owners, Richard and Tammy Rigney, raced this filly's mother and sire. Noble's Promise (the sire) took them to several big stakes, including the Kentucky Derby and they had the opportunity to stand him here in Indiana at stud. Unfortunately, we lost Nobles earlier this year, but this win brings back a lot of good memories of him and it gives us the chance to make some new memories."

Fireball Baby is now two for four in her brief career. She has turned in all four of her starts at Indiana Grand and has shown promise for the Rigney's and Bauer since the beginning.

"The mare, Bubbles and Babies, was also a homebred for the Rigney's and she was one of the first horses in training for me. In the boys race (Crown Ambassador Stakes), their colt (Snicker Cookies) ran really well to finish second and I also trained that mare, Cookie, which was our first win together, so it's sort of a family day for us."

Following the trophy presentation to Fireball Baby in the Indiana Stallion Stakes, Bauer was immediately on the phone to the Rigney's, who are currently vacationing in Bali. It was a great wake up call to receive about the success of both of their horses at Indiana Grand.

Since the Rigney's formed their current stable, Rigney Racing, in 2013, Bauer has been their private trainer. The former Ken McPeck assistant currently oversees the conditioning of 18 horses located at Churchill Downs. Rigney Racing along with Richard's day job, Clarendon Flavor Engineering, is based out of Louisville, Ky. Noble's Promise was Rigney's first venture into owning a stallion. Prior to his death in August 2018, he stood at Breakway Farm in Dillsboro, Ind. in the southeastern portion of the state.

The 16th season of Thoroughbreds and Quarter Horse racing continues through Wednesday, Nov. 7. Racing is conducted Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday at 2:05 p.m. with Saturday racing beginning at 6:05 p.m.

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