



Win from Miss Ximena has Special Meaning for Ortiz Stable at Indiana Grand Racing & Casino

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



SHELBYVILLE, Ind. (Nov. 6, 2018) – It was a first start for Miss Ximena and she was carrying more on her back than jockey Alex Canchari. The two-year-old daughter of Flat Out is named in honor of Trainer John Ortiz’s sister, Karla Ximena (pronounced He-mena) Ortiz, who is afflicted with the autoimmune disease scleroderma.

Scleroderma causes chronic hardening or tightening of the skin and connective tissues. It more commonly affects women and although several treatments to maintain and ease the pain of the disease are available, there is no cure. Each time Miss Ximena races, she will carry special meaning for the entire Ortiz family.

“My dad named this filly after my sister, whose middle name is Ximena,” said John Ortiz. “Some of the winnings from this filly will go toward my sister’s medical bills, and we are also trying to raise a little awareness about scleroderma.”

The purchase of Miss Ximena was a last minute decision by Ortiz and his father, Carlos, who is a retired jockey. The younger Ortiz had gone to the yearling sales last fall in search of a colt, but nothing had caught his eye. However, Miss Ximena turned his head and as she was walking into the ring, Ortiz phoned his father and got the green light to purchase her. She was knocked down by the gavel at \$9,500 to Ortiz Training Stable of Ocala, Fla.

“My dad likes to pinhook and she was originally bought for that purpose,” explained Ortiz. “He got started on her and had to stop with a few minor injuries. Although our family is heavily immersed in racing, my sister has never really been involved, but she was able to help with small things with this filly and my dad decided to dedicate this filly to her.”

Ortiz has seen a change in his sister since she has become associated with Miss Ximena. She has become a lot stronger and has a renewed outlook. Karla, who has a degree in mass media from the University of Central Florida, has been involved with the filly from day one and was trackside to see her cross the wire as a winner in her racing debut Saturday, Nov. 3 at Indiana Grand.

Canchari sat just off the pace with Miss Ximena before making a move in the stretch and scoring the comfortable win by two and one-quarter lengths to earn the lion’s share of the \$21,000 maiden claiming event over Gift Wrapped and Malcolm Franklin in a time of 1:11.59.

The win caps off an impressive season for Ortiz at Indiana Grand. Miss Ximena was his final starter of 2018 and scored his 21st win of the meet to place him 12th on the leading trainer standings. A part-time conditioner at Indiana Grand, Ortiz has a small string in Indiana but is based out of Churchill Downs. He is now in his third season as a trainer and just eclipsed the \$1 million mark in earnings for the year, a first in his young career as a trainer.

A former assistant for Kellyn Gorder, Ortiz will split his stable this winter, sending half of his 30 head to Oaklawn Park with the other half going to Fair Grounds. He’s had a lot of support from new owners along the way but one of his biggest fans is his sister, Karla.

In addition to assisting Ortiz when she can, Karla also puts her skills to good use, documenting his wins and work through her videography and photography work. She has compiled several videos and photo albums on social media and her work is outstanding.

“She is one of my biggest supporters and she is very talented,” said Ortiz. “I tell her all the time that nothing can handicap her, including this disease.”

The 16th season of Thoroughbreds and Quarter Horse racing comes to a close Wednesday, Nov. 7. Racing will resume in April 2019 with dates expected to be released by the Indiana Horse Racing Commission in December 2018.

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



Photos by Linscott Photography
John and Karla Ortiz are pictured in the winner’s circle photo to the left of the horse (next to the man in the cowboy hat.)