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Indiana Thoroughbred Owners & Breeders Association



MELALEUCA MAKES STAKES DEBUT A WINNING ONE IN BRANDYWINE STAKES AT INDIANA GRAND RACING & CASINO

Photos by Linscott Photography



SHELBYVILLE, Ind.; - July 19, 2016 - Melaleuca turned in a gate to wire performance to win her first ever attempt in stakes action in the second running of the \$75,000 Brandywine Stakes at Indiana Grand Tuesday, July 19.

Ridden by Jon Court, the six-year-old grey daughter of Half Ours showed tremendous speed throughout to pull away for the victory by one and three-quarter lengths at the finish of the five furlong race on the turf.

Melaleuca is known for her early speed and starting from post two just enhanced her chances of getting to the top spot early. Court rallied the mare out of the gate and was in contention for the lead along the inside of Fancy Madelyn and Richard Bracho down the backstretch. Puntsville and Victor Santiago attempted to be among the pace setters early, but chose to drop back and avoid any speed duels through fractions of :21.38 and :44.69 seconds.

Around the only turn of the sprint, Melaleuca had a firm hold on the lead and Puntsville made her move halfway through the turn, rallying up three wide, but she could not reach Melaleuca, who straightened up and continued to show her speed. She maintained her momentum through the finish line with Puntsville finishing second. Fancy Madelyn finished third.

"Going into the race, Brian (Michael) was very informational about this mare the first time I rode her so I utilized it the first time and we were fortunate enough to make it to the winner's circle," said Court. "I used that information along with what Brian told me today and knew we needed to be on the lead. However, I didn't want to use her too much down the backside, but she was able to show up down the front side today for the win. Brian really has her on her game right now. She is a joy to ride and coming up to win the Brandywine Stakes today makes it that much sweeter."

Melaleuca is trained by Brian Michael, who co-owns the mare with Robert Ritchie Jr., the breeder.

"I actually had her mother (Fleeting Melody) given to me from another farm in Bourbon County (Kentucky)," said Ritchie, who has a small operation that includes two broodmares. "This is the only horse I have running right now."

Melaleuca paid \$14.20, \$7.40, \$4.60 across the board as the third favorite in the nine-horse field. The final time of the sprint was :57.28, which is a new stakes record, besting last year's inaugural running winner Richies Sweetheart and E.T. Baird who turned in a time of :58.71 seconds. Melaleuca now has four career wins in 15 career starts and increased her career bankroll to nearly \$200,000 with her first stakes win.

"We wanted to race her through her conditions first," said Michael, in reference to her making her first start in stakes company. "We just don't want to ask her to do too much before she's ready. She is a hard trier and right there every time. We wanted to see how we did in stakes company, and we'll discuss where she goes next. We want to stay local if we can and not get too far from home."

Michael is currently stabled at the Thoroughbred Training Center in Lexington, Ky. He has eight horses in training and has raced several at Indiana Grand throughout the meet.

Live Thoroughbred and Quarter Horse racing is conducted Tuesday through Friday at 2:05 PM EST with Saturday racing beginning at 6:05 PM. The 120-day season runs through Saturday, Oct. 29.

About Indiana Grand Racing & Casino: Indiana Grand Racing & Casino holds multiple awards from industry publications for customer service, entertainment, gaming and dining. 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 an off-track betting facility located in Clarksville, Ind. For more information, please visit www.IndianaGrand.com.

