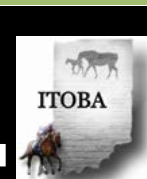




ITOBA



Indiana Thoroughbred Owners & Breeders Association



WESTERN RESERVE WINS \$100,000 WARRIOR VETERANS AT INDIANA GRAND RACING & CASINO

Story By Tammy Knox



Photo by John Engelhardt

SHELBYVILLE, Ind. (Saturday, July 15, 2017) — It was a gate to wire performance for Western Reserve in the eighth running of the \$100,000 Warrior Veterans Saturday, July 15 at Indiana Grand Racing & Casino. The stakes was the second of six on the card leading up to the state's richest horse race, the Grade III \$500,000 Indiana Derby.

Starting from post seven in the eight-horse lineup, Western Reserve and Florent Geroux rallied out quickly and settled nicely on the lead as Chocolate Ride and Shaun Bridgmohan tracked his progress from the outside. One Mean Man and Brian Hernandez Jr. kept positioning on the inside as this trio pulled away from the rest of the field heading down the backstretch.

Chocolate Ride continued to pursue Western Reserve from the outside but Western Reserve had just that – too much reserve left. In the stretch, the Indiana Charlie gelding moved ahead to a three length advantage as the back of the pack began to close in for the final strides. In the end, Western Reserve was an easy winner, passing under the wire during the one and one-sixteenth mile turf race by three and three-quarter lengths. One Mean Man maintained ground along the inside to finish second, just a neck ahead of a hard charging Special Ops and Julien Leparoux who had to settle for third.

"I was expecting Chocolate Ride to go out but to be honest I think my horse is a little quicker," said Geroux, who scored his second of three wins on the program at Indiana Grand. "I was not trying to get the lead but I took it when it was there. This horse is pretty sharp. I let him go out and then when we got in the final turn, I took it from there. He had a really nice kick in the stretch.

Owned by Turf Stable Racing of Louisville, Ky., Western Reserve scored his first win of the year and his fifth lifetime in 20 career tries. The Kentucky bred Graded Stakes placed gelding was claimed out of his last start at Churchill Downs by trainer Kent Sweezy. He now possesses more than \$300,000 during a career that began in England. Western Reserve paid \$10.80, \$6.20, \$4.60 across the board. The time of the race was 1:41.83.

"It's the first stakes I've ever run in," said Sweezy, who is a former assistant for Trainer Jimmy Jerkens. "My step dad (Rusty Jones) and some friends of his claimed the horse for me (for \$62,500). They picked the horse out and we claimed him."

With the \$58,000-plus that Western Reserve picked up by winning the Warrior Veterans, he has almost paid for himself in one start for his new connections. Sweezy noted they had to win a "shake" for Western Reserve as there was more than one claim in on him.

"That's what Florent said, 'You got a free horse,'" continued Sweezy. "Yeah, it's a team thing. I've got a really good crew at the barn. Credit Tyler Pizarro. He rides the horse in the morning, and who actually rode my horse in the first race today and gave him a really good ride. It was really cool. First stakes to run ever. We ran fourth in the first race, and I would have been real happy to hit the board, splitting the field, something like that."

In addition to working as an assistant for Jerkens, Sweezy also worked under Eoin Harty in California. He recently went out on his own this past spring at Keeneland, and Western Reserve marked his sixth starter as a trainer. He now has 15 horses stabled at Keeneland, but is relocating to Louisville's Trakside training center.

"We were happy to get him. He's a really cool horse," said Sweezy. "Knock on wood he stays sound and we'll have some fun with him. (This race) It's big. I won a lot of races, but with Jimmy Jerkens, but this is pretty cool."

Jones also noted how excited he was to score the victory with Western Reserve. He's also excited to help get Sweezy's training career off to a good start.

"It worked out good," said Jones. "I couldn't be any more proud of him than I am right now. He's done a great job. He works hard. That's all you can ask. We wanted to get him a Saturday horse, we were able to do that. It worked out."

The 15th season of Thoroughbred and Quarter Horse racing continues through Saturday, Oct. 28. Racing is conducted Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday at 2:05 p.m. EST with Saturday racing beginning at 6:05 p.m. EST. Thursday racing will be held July 6 – Aug. 24 at 2:05 p.m. EST.

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.



Photo by Linscott photography