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Indiana Thoroughbred Owners & Breeders Association



RHINESTONE ROMEO UPSETS IN \$100,000 A. J. FOYT STAKES AT INDIANA GRAND RACING & CASINO

Story By Tammy Knox



SHELBYVILLE, Ind.; – Sept. 6, 2017 – It was emotional for friends and family associated with the Holden family of Greenfield, Ind. The group gathered in the winner’s circle to celebrate the victory by Rhinestone Romeo in the \$14th running of the \$100,000-added A.J. Foyt Stakes Wednesday, Sept. 6 at Indiana Grand. The stakes was the first of four on the card for Centaur Stakes Day, showcasing state’s best Indiana bred three-year-olds and up on an afternoon card that boasted purses in excess of \$700,000.

Rhinestone Romeo was taking a big step up in class, his first try against stakes company. Owned and bred by Arven and Jay Holden, the homebred son of Colonial Colony proved he could hold his own in the field of 11. Starting from post nine, jockey Sammy Bermudez didn’t have a lot of options at the start but to grab hold and follow along from the back as Logan Creek and Leandro Goncalves grabbed the top spot to set the early fractions. Race favorite Derby Express and Malcolm Franklin were tracking the early progress on the outside as Thank You Kisses and Rodney Prescott sat between horses.

Down the backstretch of the one and one-sixteenth mile turf race, Logan Creek still claimed the top spot moving into the final turn. Several horses from the back of the pack began to advance up and Rhinestone Romeo followed suit. However, he still had a lot of horses in front of him to catch at the top of the stretch.

In the stretch, Logan Creek still held strong with Country Minister and Florent Geroux moving up on the inside to get good positioning for the stretch drive. Retrospection and Fernando De La Cruz also moved up and appeared to be in striking position. Bermudez kept after Rhinestone Romeo and he was slowly inching up with every stride. He kept chipping away at the leaders and never gave up, getting up in the last stride of the race to win by a head over Logan Creek. Aristomaches and Tommy Pompell also moved in late to snag third in the three horse photo. The time of the race was 1:42.63.

“I’ve been working with this horse in the morning, so I knew how much horse I had,” said Bermudez. “When I made my move, he went on. Thank God I got it (the win).”

The win marked the biggest victory in Bermudez’ career. It also marked his second career stakes win. Bermudez has been a mainstay in Indiana in recent years, but his arrival was delayed this year after he chose to follow the circuit from his winter base at Mahoning Valley to Mountaineer Park earlier this summer.

“I knew we were in better shape when Sammy (Bermudez) came back because he knows this horse better than anyone,” said Jay. “He has worked with him a lot in the morning and really rides this horse well.”

Completely overlooked by the betting public, Rhinestone Romeo paid a whopping \$130.80, \$59.40, and \$22.40 across the board for his victory. The win, only his second of the year in six outings, more than doubled his career earnings to \$112,000 for the Holdens.

“We raised and raced this colt’s mother (Diamond Dayjur) and she got one win for us in Colorado,” said Arven. “We also own Colonial Colony, so that makes it even more special. This colt has been a real pain. He’s gotten scratched a few times for going over in the gate and he’s been nothing but trouble. But Jay kept working and working with him and he’s made a race-horse out of him.”

The win in the A J Foyt marked a first for the Holden family. It was the biggest career win for everyone, and the race came along at a time when the Holden family has had a rough summer. Jay’s wife, Dawn, recently passed away rather sudden at a very young age, leaving a big hole in the family dynamics. A memorial service is planned at their farm just east of Greenfield, Ind. later this month.

“This win meant a lot to me today,” said Jay. “It’s extra special because I know she (Dawn) is looking down on us and smiling right now.”

Family is also on Bermudez’ mind. The native of Puerto Rico has family back home and they are bracing for the arrival of Hurricane Irma.

“I called home earlier today and it (Hurricane Irma) hasn’t arrived yet, so they are all still okay,” said Bermudez. “I’m going to call them again when I get done riding today and check on them again.”

The 15th season of Thoroughbred and Quarter Horse racing continues through Friday, Oct. 27. Racing is conducted Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday at 2:05 p.m. with Saturday racing beginning at 6:05 p.m. A special Thursday program will be held the final week of action on Oct. 26 beginning at 2:05 p.m.

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.

