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ROYAL BLESSING SCORES WIN IN \$30,000 DON K. MEMORIAL STARTER AT INDIANA GRAND RACING & CASINO *Story By Tammy Knox, Photos By Linscott Photography*



SHELBYVILLE, Ind.; – Oct. 4, 2017 – Royal Blessing and Alonso Quinonez rallied home in the stretch to win the 10th round of the \$30,000 Don K. Memorial Starter at Indiana Grand Wednesday, Oct. 4. The duo covered the seven and one-half furlong turf race in a time of 1:31.28.

Starting from post nine in the 10-horse lineup, Royal Blessing showed just enough early speed to find a nice spot in the center of the pack. Lanier and Marcelino Pedroza Jr. set the early pace from the inside with Logan Creek and Leandro Goncalves sitting right to their outside. Rhythm Park and Ricardo Santana Jr. also stayed close through the early stages of the race on the inside. Quinonez was aboard Royal Blessing for the first time, so relied on insight from trainer Brendan Walsh prior to the race.

“Brendan (Walsh) told me to let him out of there and let him relax and find his stride and go from there,” said Quinonez. “He then told me to ride my race. This horse is push button so he was easy to ride. He carries his head low when he runs, and Brendan had mentioned that. But he also said when I ask him, he will go, and he was right.”

Around the final turn, Royal Blessing began to make his move toward the leaders and had moved up to challenge Lanier at the top of the stretch. The duo continued to battle it out down the lane before Royal Blessing was able to pull away for the win by a margin of two and one-half lengths over Lanier. Rhythm Park settled for third.

“At the top of the stretch, we were holding our line,” said Quinonez. “When I asked he gave me another gear and went by the other horse so quick. I want to thank Brendan (Walsh) for giving me this opportunity to ride him. He is a very nice, classy horse.”

Royal Blessing was the second choice of the field, paying \$9.20, \$4.20 and \$3.00 across the board. The win in the Don K. Memorial was the 11th trip to the winner’s circle for the eight-year-old veteran son of Kitten’s Joy. His earnings increased to more than \$368,000 for Joseph Strazzanti’s Premier Stables Unlimited. The Graded Stakes placed Royal Blessing was claimed by Walsh in the spring of 2015. Since that time, he has won seven races for his new connections. Royal Blessing is now four for 10 in 2017.

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. Additional racing days will be held Thursday, Oct. 19 and Thursday, 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.