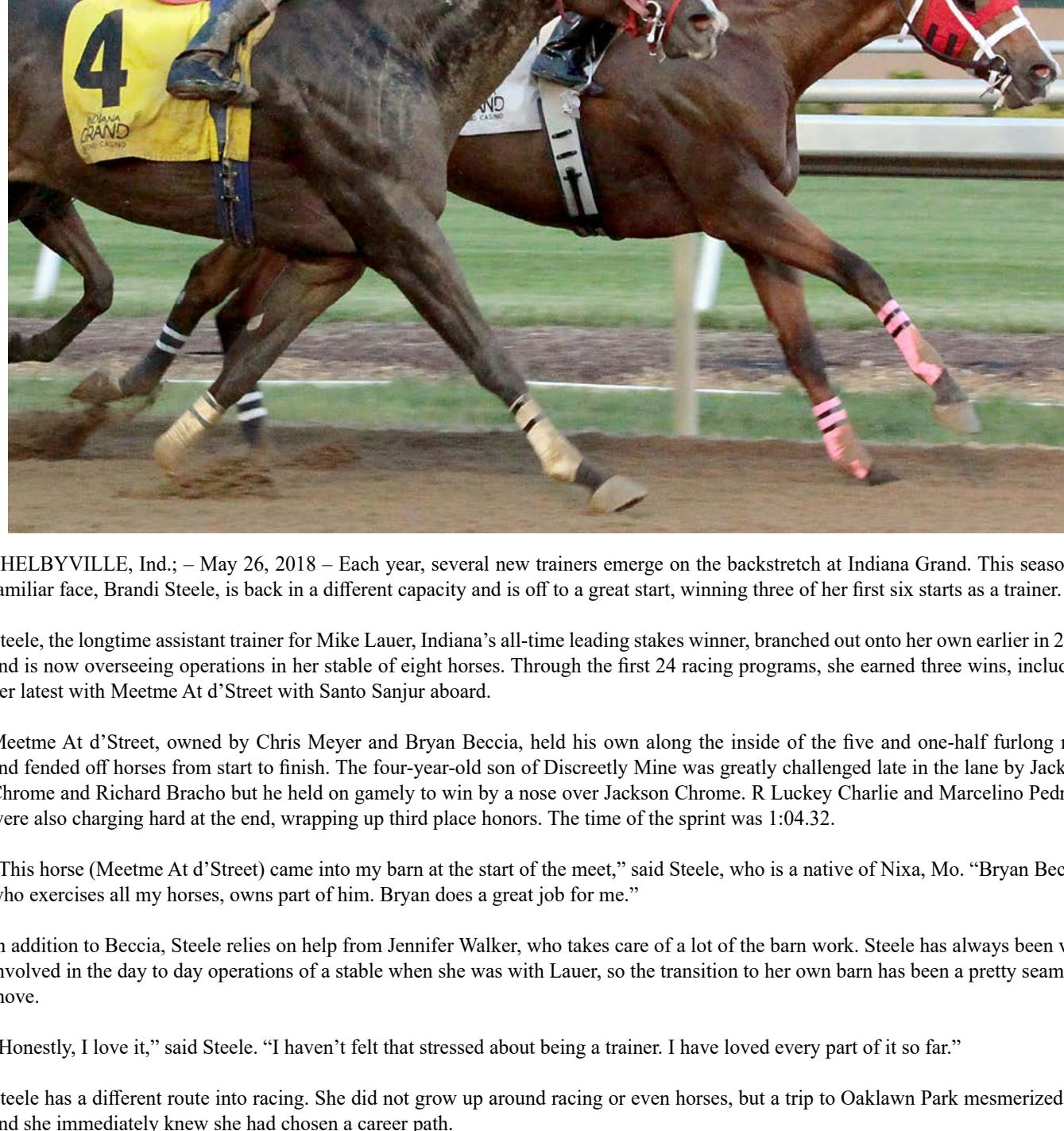


Brandi Steele off to winning start as a trainer at Indiana Grand Racing & Casino

Story by Tammy Knox
Photos by Linscott Photography



SHELBYVILLE, Ind.; – May 26, 2018 – Each year, several new trainers emerge on the backstretch at Indiana Grand. This season, a familiar face, Brandi Steele, is back in a different capacity and is off to a great start, winning three of her first six starts as a trainer.

Steele, the longtime assistant trainer for Mike Lauer, Indiana's all-time leading stakes winner, branched out onto her own earlier in 2018 and is now overseeing operations in her stable of eight horses. Through the first 24 racing programs, she earned three wins, including her latest with Meetme At d'Street with Santo Sanjur aboard.

Meetme At d'Street, owned by Chris Meyer and Bryan Beccia, held his own along the inside of the five and one-half furlong race and fended off horses from start to finish. The four-year-old son of Discreetly Mine was greatly challenged late in the lane by Jackson Chrome and Richard Bracho but he held on gamely to win by a nose over Jackson Chrome. R Luckey Charlie and Marcelino Pedroza were also charging hard at the end, wrapping up third place honors. The time of the sprint was 1:04.32.

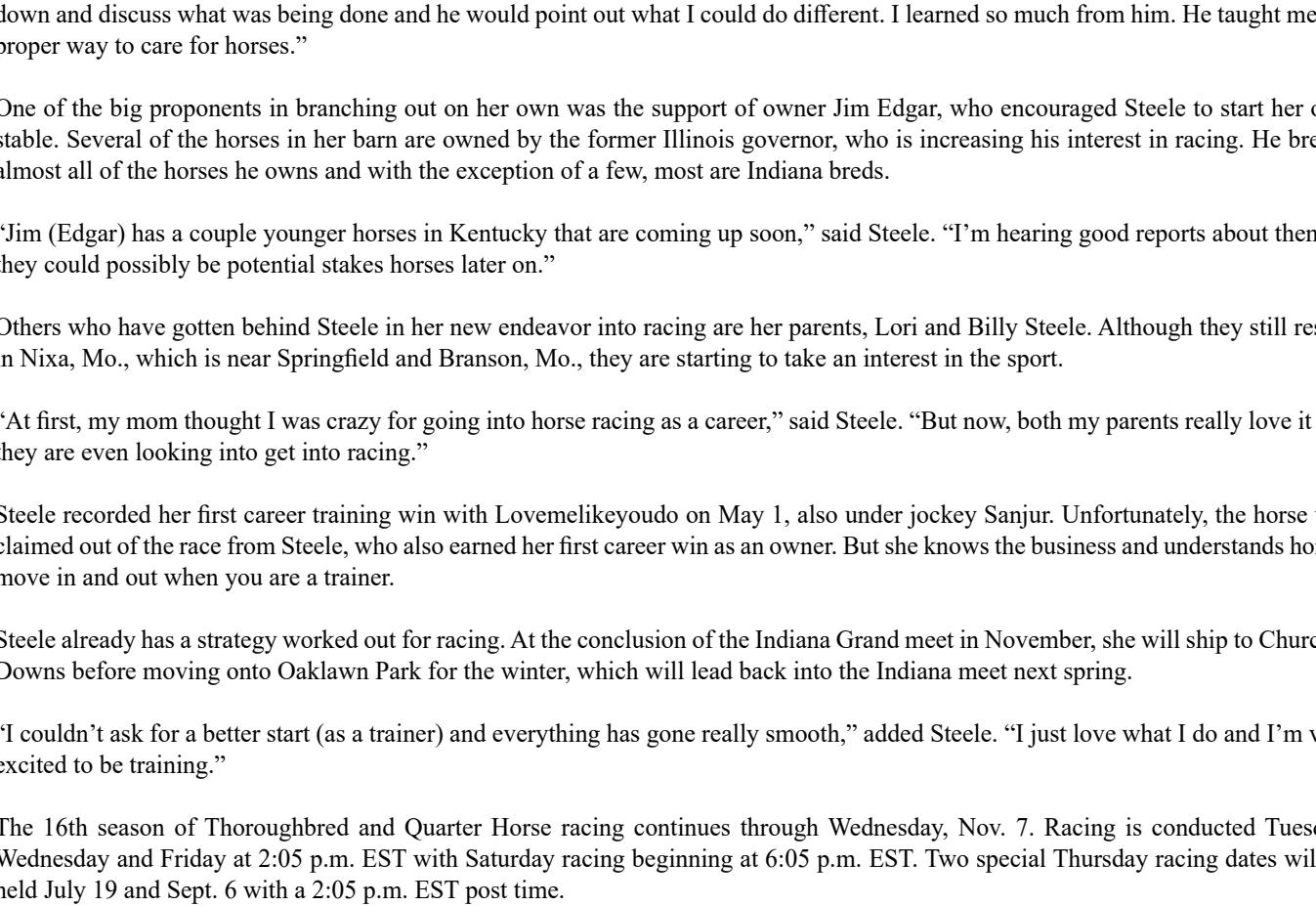
"This horse (Meetme At d'Street) came into my barn at the start of the meet," said Steele, who is a native of Nixa, Mo. "Bryan Beccia, who exercises all my horses, owns part of him. Bryan does a great job for me."

In addition to Beccia, Steele relies on help from Jennifer Walker, who takes care of a lot of the barn work. Steele has always been very involved in the day to day operations of a stable when she was with Lauer, so the transition to her own barn has been a pretty seamless move.

"Honestly, I love it," said Steele. "I haven't felt that stressed about being a trainer. I have loved every part of it so far."

Steele has a different route into racing. She did not grow up around racing or even horses, but a trip to Oaklawn Park mesmerized her and she immediately knew she had chosen a career path.

"I wasn't interested in the betting or anything else about racing, I was just interested in the horses," recalled Steele. "I stood on the fence and watched and I knew this was exactly what I wanted to do. I fell in love with the horses and racing."



Steele is quick to credit Lauer for giving her a big break into the business and for teaching her the proper way to care and race horses.

"Mike (Lauer) gave me an incredible opportunity," said Steele. "He let me work the shedrow and every day after training, we would sit down and discuss what was being done and he would point out what I could do different. I learned so much from him. He taught me the proper way to care for horses."

One of the big proponents in branching out on her own was the support of owner Jim Edgar, who encouraged Steele to start her own stable. Several of the horses in her barn are owned by the former Illinois governor, who is increasing his interest in racing. He breeds almost all of the horses he owns and with the exception of a few, most are Indiana bred.

"Jim (Edgar) has a couple younger horses in Kentucky that are coming up soon," said Steele. "I'm hearing good reports about them so they could possibly be potential stakes horses later on."

Others who have gotten behind Steele in her new endeavor into racing are her parents, Lori and Billy Steele. Although they still reside in Nixa, Mo., which is near Springfield and Branson, Mo., they are starting to take an interest in the sport.

"At first, my mom thought I was crazy for going into horse racing as a career," said Steele. "But now, both my parents really love it and they are even looking into getting into racing."

Steele recorded her first career training win with Lovemelikeyoudo on May 1, also under jockey Sanjur. Unfortunately, the horse was claimed out of the race from Steele, who also earned her first career win as an owner. But she knows the business and understands horses move in and out when you are a trainer.

Steele already has a strategy worked out for racing. At the conclusion of the Indiana Grand meet in November, she will ship to Churchill Downs before moving onto Oaklawn Park for the winter, which will lead back into the Indiana meet next spring.

"I couldn't ask for a better start (as a trainer) and everything has gone really smooth," added Steele. "I just love what I do and I'm very excited to be training."

The 16th season of Thoroughbred and Quarter Horse racing continues through Wednesday, Nov. 7. Racing is conducted Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday at 2:05 p.m. EST with Saturday racing beginning at 6:05 p.m. EST. Two special Thursday racing dates will be held July 19 and Sept. 6 with a 2:05 p.m. EST post time.

About Indiana Grand Racing & Casino: Indiana Grand Racing & Casino 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.