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Indiana Thoroughbred Owners & Breeders Association



Pioneer Spirit game in \$100,000 Michael G. Schaefer Memorial at Indiana Grand Racing & Casino

Story by Tammy Knox

Photo by Linscott Photography



SHELBYVILLE, Ind. (July 14, 2018) — It was a battle to the finish between Pioneer Spirit and Seeking the Soul, but in the end, Pioneer Spirit got the edge to win the 19th running of the \$100,000 Michael G. Schaefer Memorial, a Listed Stakes. The race is named in honor of the first Indiana Horse Racing Commission chairman Michael G. Schaefer, who passed away in 2011. He is also a member of the Indiana Horse Racing Association Hall of Fame.

The petite field of five was led out of the gate by Pioneer Spirit and Florent Geroux for the one mile and 70 yard event. Geroux set the tempo of the race with Lookin at Lee and Ricardo Santana Jr. sitting right to their outside. Race favorite Seeking The Soul and Brian Hernandez Jr. was wide around the first turn seeking better positioning, something that didn't happen until the backstretch.

Pioneer Spirit continued to lead the way as Seeking The Soul began to inch up toward the leader on the outside around opponents in the final turn and found himself in a battle with Pioneer Spirit for the stretch drive home. The two horses hooked up and neither was giving an inch. Seeking The Soul appeared to get a head in front but Pioneer Spirit battled back, eventually getting the best of Seeking The Soul for the win by a head at the finish line in a time of 1:39.82. Guest Suite and Robby Albarado used a late move on the outside to get the nod in a close photo finish for third over Lookin At Lee.

"We had a great trip," said Geroux. "Seeking the Soul was coming off a layoff; he hadn't run since the Pegasus. So I kind of felt he needed a race more than my horse. But my horse was very game. When Seeking the Soul came by him, he was going to fight back. Even if we were going a little bit farther, I felt like I had him. From the eighth pole to the wire, my horse put his head in front and kept on going."

Pioneer Spirit paid \$6.00, \$2.20 and \$2.20 across the board. The five-year-old son of Malibu Moon, a \$380,000 purchase at the Keeneland Yearling Sale in 2014, is owned by Steve Landers Racing LLC. Brad Cox trains Pioneer Spirit, who now has seven career wins in 15 starts. He boosted his career bankroll to more than \$320,000 with the victory, his third of the year in five starts.

"Gutsy little thing," said Rick Giannini, Brad Cox's Indiana Grand assistant. "Obviously with Seeking the Soul coming off the layoff we maybe had the fitter horse. Down the lane, when he got headed he dug in. Florent and I talked and said there wasn't much speed, let him gallop out there and get comfortable. And it worked. He got confident on the lead, and when that horse came to him, he fought on. It was a great ride and a great effort."

Seeking The Soul, last year's Grade I Clark Handicap winner, was only making his second start of 2018 and the first time since January at Gulfstream Park.

"I thought he had the horse measured," said trainer Dallas Stewart. "The horse just outfought him the last 20 yards. Maybe he got a little tired. We just have to evaluate it. We just got outrun tonight. I thought he was ready for this, but actually that horse just outran us."

John Keeler, vice president and general counsel of Centaur Gaming, made the winner's circle presentation to the connections of Pioneer Spirit. It was one of three wins on the card for the Brad Cox Racing Stable.

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.

Photos by Linscott Photography

Trophy presentation from left, by Kevin Greely, director of racing, Jon Schuster, John Keeler, vice president and general counsel for Centaur Gaming, Florent Geroux, Rick Giannini, assistant trainer.

