



## Hay Little Bit Displays Big Talent in Merrillville Stakes at Indiana Grand Racing & Casino

Story by Tammy Knox - Photos by Linscott Photography (unless noted)



SHELBYVILLE, Ind. (Sept. 12, 2018) – Hay Little Bit and jockey Andres Ulloa had a lot of horsepower to dish out in the stretch run in the 24th running of the \$100,000-added Merrillville Stakes, taking home the top spot Wednesday, Sept. 12 at Indiana Grand. Although she’s been close in several stakes, including a second place finish in the 2017 Merrillville Stakes, the victory was the first stakes win for the six-year-old Indiana sired mare.

Hay Little Bit came into the race with a tall task, drawing the extreme outside post 11 in the six furlong race. With little early speed, Ulloa had no choice but to move over behind the pack in the early stages as Ever Wonder and Santo Sanjur and Carmalley Chrome and Rodney Prescott moved out to challenge each other for the lead. Whistle Stop and Marcelino Pedroza also showed early speed to stay close with a plan of attack later in the race.

Around the turn, the field began to bunch up and fan out across the track hoping to catch the leader as Whistle Stop took over at the head of the lane. Sweet N Wicked and Perry Ouzts moved up on the outside and it appeared to be anyone’s race. As the focus turned toward Whistle Stop and Sweet N Wicked, Ulloa began to shoot up the inside, passing two walls of horses along the rail and using a late surge to move past the leaders, scoring the win by three-quarters of a length over Whistle Stop. Sweet N Wicked rounded out the trifecta in the sprint clocked in 1:09.87.

“I saw the rail was clear and started asking her to move,” said Ulloa. “She passed through and never stopped. She has a big heart.”

Hay Little Bit surprised the betting public, paying \$28.20, \$10.60 and \$6.40 across the board. No one was more surprised than her connections who brought the excitement level up a few notches on their way to the winner’s circle.

“She (Hay Little Bit) hates the inside, and when I saw Andy (Ulloa) move her up the rail, I thought ‘oh no’ but she kept going,” said trainer Barbara McBride. “That is unusual for her. She doesn’t like to be around other horses and she likes the outside. We couldn’t believe it.”

Hay Little Bit earned her seventh win in her 36th outing. She has been with the McBride barn for the past four years, but her time in the barn has not been without its challenges.

“She is difficult to deal with and is mean,” said McBride. “She is difficult to saddle, she’s difficult in the barn and she’s difficult on the track. She likes to kick, so we don’t have a gate on her stall, we keep a webbing up. Wendy (Zimmer) gets along with her the best and brings her up to the paddock and my son, Jason, can work with her pretty well too. Andy (Ulloa) gets along with her too. He comes to the barn every morning and gets on her. She dictates what she does. If she wants to jog, then she jogs. If she wants to gallop, then he will gallop her. I just try to stay out of her way.”

Hay Little Bit has been difficult all of her life. She was bred and raised by Roxanne and Robert Hyden of Galveston, Ind., which is in the north central part of the state. The Hydens are both retired from the GM plant in Kokomo, Ind. and now enjoy raising and racing horses from their small farm, which includes 10 horses.

“We have a couple of foals from this mare (Shadow Vale) coming up,” said Robert, who is the owner of Hay Little Bit. “We have a yearling and her three-year-old brother BR Cooper, who just started racing. I have to say Barb (McBride) has done a great job with this mare. She’s always been tough. She’s had her since she was two and she is the best trainer an owner could have.”

The entire team behind Hay Little Bit was elated with the win, including Ulloa, whose arm went up into the air once he crossed the wire. In addition to his hard work with Hay Little Bit paying off, it also marked his first career stakes win in the United States.



The Merrillville Stakes has a rich history in the state of Indiana. It is one of only three stakes left from the inaugural season of pari-mutuel racing from the 1995 meet at Hoosier Park. The Merrillville Stakes joins the Grade III Indiana Derby as the oldest Thoroughbred stakes race in the state, followed by the Grade III Indiana Oaks, which also began in 1995 but took a one-year hiatus in 2009. All three stakes were moved to Indiana Grand in 2013 when Thoroughbred and Quarter Horse racing was moved exclusively to Indiana Grand.

The 16th season of Thoroughbreds and Quarter Horse racing continues through Wednesday, Nov. 7. Racing is conducted Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday at 2:05 p.m. with Saturday racing beginning at 6:05 p.m.

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