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Indiana Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association



## Operation Stevie attacks in Gus Grissom Stakes at Indiana Grand Racing & Casino

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Pictures By Linscott Photography (unless noted)



SHELBYVILLE, Ind. (Oct. 2, 2018) – Operation Stevie was on a mission once again, scoring his second stakes victory of the 2018 racing season at Indiana Grand in the 18th running of the \$100,000-added Gus Grissom Stakes Tuesday, Oct. 2. The six-year-old Lantana Mob gelding weaved through traffic to pick up the victory with Jockey Emmanuel Esquivel aboard.

Starting from post three, Operation Stevie is not known for his early speed and wasn't in the mix early as Mystery Unbridled and Orlando Mojica drove out for the early lead from the outside of the 12-horse field. The top duo was joined by It's Just Fate and DeShawn Parker, who were also pursuing the lead from the outside of the starting gate. Mystery Unbridled set the tempo of the race as the field began to close in behind him heading into the second turn of the one and one-sixteenth mile race.

In the turn, several horses were advancing, including Operation Stevie, who chose to save ground along the inside. Traffic troubles midway through the turn stopped his bid for the top spot, but the gelding regrouped and came back running. Finding his way through traffic, Operation Stevie emerged as one of the top contenders as the field straightened out for the stretch drive. Here Comes Doc and Rodney Prescott had a short advantage before Uphold and Declan Cannon joined Operation Stevie in running down the leader. At the wire, Operation Stevie was the strongest, grabbing the win by a neck over Uphold. Here Comes Down held gamely for third.

"They stopped right in my face (around the turn)," said Esquivel. "But I got lucky. The horse on the outside of us went on and I was able to get out right behind him and follow him. When he got in the stretch and got a little lead, he let up a little because he was waiting on the other horses. I had to get after him a little and he dug right in. He is an older horse and he is a kind horse to ride and I'm very fortunate to come out here today and get these two wins, and it's especially nice to get two winners for Cipriano."

Esquivel, who is currently among the top five riders at PARX outside of Philadelphia, has made a few trips to Indiana this summer to ride for Contreras, who is his uncle. Operation Stevie gave Contreras and Esquivel their second stakes win on the card, also connecting with Expect Indy in the Richmond Stakes.

The heavy favorite of the field, Operation Stevie paid \$3.20, \$2.40, \$2.10 across the board. The gelding completed the race in a time of 1:44.85 for trainer Cipriano Contreras, whose Contreras Stables co-owns the horse with Earl Trostrud Jr.

"He got stopped in the turn pretty bad, but he was able to come back and get through," said Contreras, who claimed the horse a couple years ago for \$10,000. "I like this horse a lot. He not only wins, he's just a really nice horse to be around and he's got a lot of heart. My main goal now is to just keep him healthy for the last stakes of the year and we hope to do it again."



Operation Stevie will most likely return for the \$150,000 To Much Coffee Stakes set for Tuesday, Nov. 6. The race, slated for one and one-sixteenth miles on the dirt, will be joined by the \$150,000 Frances Slocum Stakes that day, which is the day before the final racing program of 2018 on Wednesday, Nov. 7.

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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