

# Back Home Again

As Harrah's Hoosier Park prepares to host its second Breeders Crown, *Hoof Beats* looks back at the 2017 edition of the championship series

story by **Rose Flood**

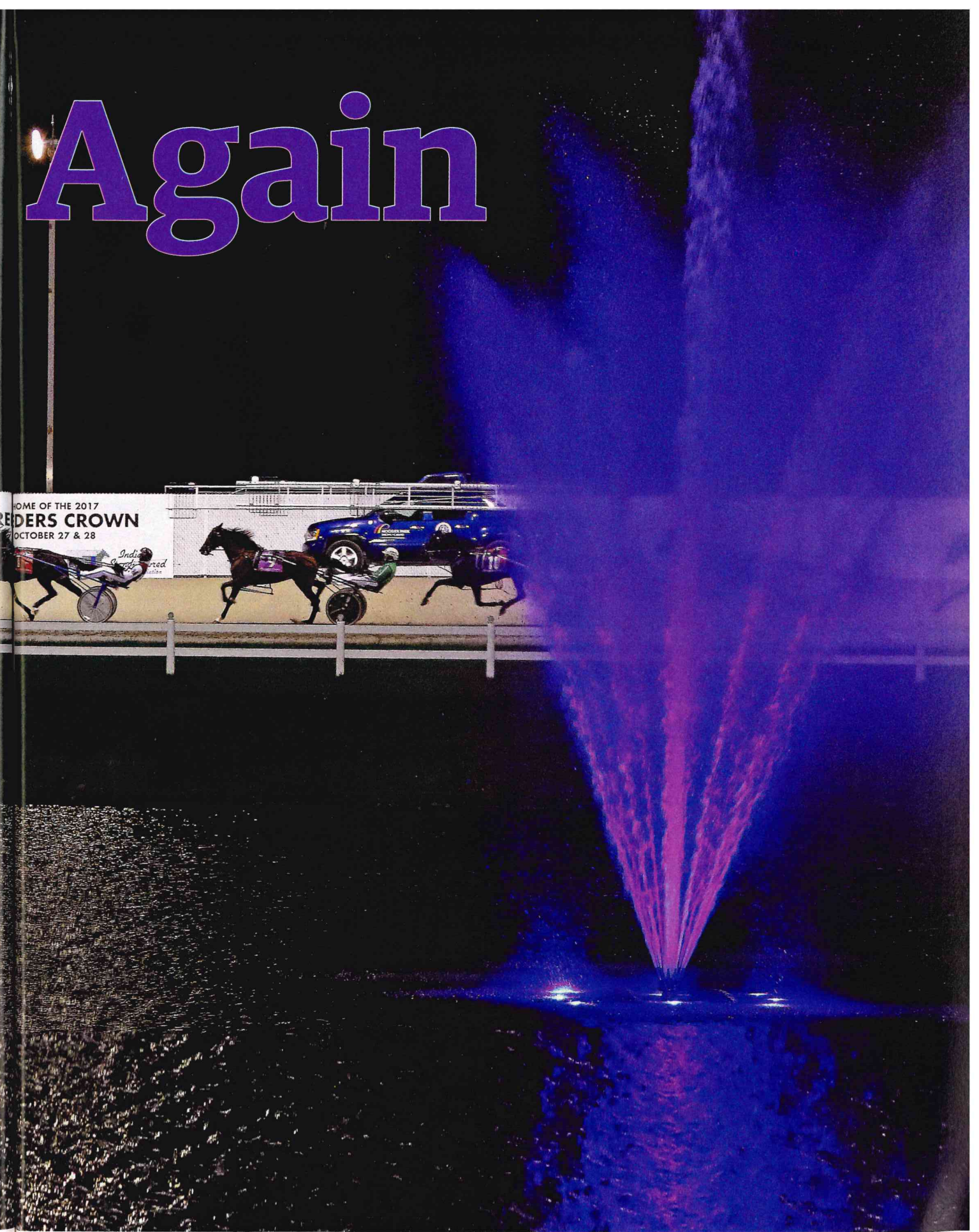


**T**he prospect of having large shoes to fill might be intimidating to some, but Harrah's Hoosier Park is taking it in great stride when it comes to the Breeders Crown. Hoosier Park hosted the event for the first time in 2017 and the Crown returns to Indiana for the 37th edition. The 12 championship races will be conducted on Friday, Oct. 30, and Saturday, Oct. 31.

With the state of the world as it is due to COVID-19, the task of hosting and executing a Breeders Crown is that much more

daunting. When dreaming up the potential for a Breeders Crown weekend, people probably did not believe they would be wearing masks and winner's circle pictures would include social distancing. Harrah's Hoosier Park is up to that challenge, and still charges forward with plans for the championship event.

As the track prepares for the 2020 Breeders Crown, its staff can't help but feel a little nostalgic when remembering the event conducted in 2017. Here's a look at what the facility's employees felt were some of the top moments from that year's edition.







## A Winning Night for Indiana

THE FACT THAT HARRAH'S HOOSIER Park had a record handle of more than \$4 million isn't the only badge of honor the state earned in 2017. Of the six championship races Saturday night, three of the winners were Indiana-sired competitors: Hannelore Hanover, Fiftydallarbilla and Beckham's Z Tam.

All three paid their dues in the Indiana Sire Stakes program, not seeming too shy to use their home-court advantage. Hannelore Hanover triumphed over her male competitors in the Open Trot, taking home her second Breeders Crown win in 1:52.1. Fiftydallarbilla (left, with connections above) dug in gamely in the stretch in the 2-year-old colt trot on his way to becoming one of the big upsets of the night, crossing the wire in 1:55 and paying \$17.20 to win. Beckham's Z Tam rallied late to best heavy favorite Downbytheseaside in the 3-year-old colt pace in a tight photo finish in 1:51.1.



## Manchego Digs in for a Historic Victory

GOING INTO THE 2-YEAR-OLD TROTTING filly event on Friday, everyone had their eyes on the undefeated Manchego, wondering if her winning streak would remain intact. Facing a tough field including rivals Seviyorum and Phaetosive, Manchego had her work cut out for her from the start. While she grabbed the lead from post four when the gate opened, Phaetosive took it by the half-mile marker and held it through the stretch where the two matched strides. With the wire in sight and Manchego's unblemished record on the line, the undefeated filly kicked it into overdrive, surging past her competitors. She crossed the wire 4¼ lengths to the good and made history as the first undefeated 2-year-old trotter to win a Breeders Crown. The victory was also driver Yannick Gingras' first of three Breeders Crown victories on the night and one of four over the full weekend.







## Pure Country Provides Biggest Upset of the Weekend

FAVORITES DIDN'T RULE THE SHOW by any means at the 2017 Breeders Crown—they took home only half of the titles over the weekend, leaving the other six up for grabs for the rest of the finalists. While most of the upsets were still considered slight upsets, Pure Country bested a competitive field of pacing mares and paid \$31 to win. Maintaining a mid-pack trip for most of the mile, Pure Country rallied with a final quarter of :27.4 and crossed the wire only 1¼ lengths ahead of Bedroomconfessions with Lady Shadow in third. Upsets ruled that division, in fact, with the favorite, Nike Franco N, placing ninth.





## Hannelore Hanover Beats the Boys

THE 2017 HORSE OF THE YEAR solidified her place in the history books, besting nine top trotters that happened to be older stallions and geldings rather than fellow mares. After coasting through her elimination the previous week, the betting public was backing Hannelore Hanover as she looked to become the first mare to win the Open Trot since Moni Maker in 1996. Grabbing a pocket trip behind Marion Marauder for much of the mile, Hannelore Hanover charged ahead of the field with a final quarter of :26.4, leaving the pack in the dust.

"Hannelore winning the Breeders Crown was the thrill of a lifetime," co-owner Frank Baldachino remembered. "It was a great moment for the other owners and for Ronnie (trainer Ron Burke) as well. It's always thrilling to come back to Indiana. Harrah's Hoosier Park does everything first-class and we've won some big races there."

The Swan For All - High Sobriety mare retired with a lifetime bankroll of \$3,069,857 and a lifetime mark of 1:49.2. Hannelore Hanover was another competitor with the home track advantage as she dominated in Indiana Sire Stakes as a sophomore. She now resides at Hanover Shoe Farms, ready to begin her second career as a broodmare.

"I know the circumstances are not ideal," Baldachino said. "But it's fantastic that Harrah's Hoosier Park got the Breeders Crown back. If anyone can pull it off, it's them. I'm looking forward to it and think they will do as well as they did in 2017."







## Beckhams Z Tam Grabs Team Macomber's First Breeders Crown Win

SPEAKING OF HOMETOWN HEROES, Beckham's Z Tam wasn't the only one with Indiana ties. His heart-charging victory, where he also bested Indiana Sire Stakes rival Rock N Tony, provided the first Breeders Crown victory for the husband-and-wife duo of driver Ricky Macomber Jr. and trainer Jamie Macomber.

The win was the cherry on top for a dynamite season for the pair as Ricky scored 152 wins at Hoosier Park, ending the season in the top five of the driver standings. He also could finally add Breeders Crown-winning driver to his resume.

On the training side, Jamie tied for the leading trainer title with 92 wins during the Hoosier Park season. The Breeders Crown winner's circle is certainly an emotional place, but this win felt like a true victory for the entire state.

"The Breeders Crown had such a positive impact on Indiana, and Harrah's Hoosier Park did not disappoint in any way," Jamie said. "Per-

sonally, it was amazing that Beckham, Ricky and all of us got to enjoy the win on our home turf. I'll never forget it."

Beckhams Z Tam is still racing today and has competed in such events as the Prix D'Ete and the Dan Patch Stakes. Despite the pacer playing an important part in the Macombers' record book, Jamie still has her sights set on future superstars.

"When you're staking your colts this year, you wonder if one of them could come back and do it again, maybe for 2020," she said. "You're constantly watching for that one good start that makes you think they might be able to be in the Breeders Crown."

"This is such a weird year—you can't take anything for granted. You can just keep your fingers crossed and hope everything works out and everyone stays healthy."

So, Harrah's Hoosier Park is a spot for Breeders Crown history: making Indiana's mark in racing in 2017 and overcoming challenging circumstances in 2020. *HB*

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