

PRESQUE ISLE DOWNS

RACING NOTES

By Kevin Decker

Monday, October 12, 2026

Just Ruthless Drops the Gavel in the H.B.P.A. Stakes

Jockey Antonio Gallardo was having a very good day. He won his first race on Monday in the fifth race with Ryu Mo in a six-furlong claimer. In the next race, he won again, this time aboard Trail of Roses in an allowance race.

Could Gallardo capture a natural hat trick with his mount in the third consecutive race, Just Ruthless, in the 20th running of the \$100,000 guaranteed H.B.P.A. Stakes for fillies and mares three-years-old and upward at one mile and 70 yards?

Yes, he could.

In his first two wins on the day, he had the experience of riding each one in at least one previous race, but with his stakes mount, he was coming in cold with the call for trainer Riley Mott. What is a jockey to do to prepare for such an assignment?

"I watched a lot of replays of her, and in her last start (third in the Ellis Park Turf Stakes), she seemed like she might have been too close and never really relaxed and never got clear," said Jockey Antonio Gallardo.

There was one previous race replay at Indiana Downs that piqued his interest. It was in a turf allowance three starts ago in May.

"In that race, she came from off the pace then in the middle of the track she exploded again. That was the race I wanted to run," Gallardo added.

He got what he wanted.

Starting from post one, Gallardo got Just Ruthless in a good spot early winning the sprint from the gate along the rail. This allowed positional protection as well as working into a good spot to get a trip behind the early leaders.

As the field went into the first turn, longshot Cairosa (jockey Gaddiel Martinez) took the early lead just ahead of Souper Williwaw (Charlie Marquez) with Princess Attitude (Teshawn Hazelwood) and the betting favorite Fantastical (Edwin Gonzalez) setting just behind the two leaders. Gallardo kept Just Ruthless tucked along the rail as planned. The first quarter went by in 23 4/5 seconds.

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The top four continued their paired battles for position down the backstretch past a half mile in 47 seconds. In the turn, the Cairosa and Souper Williwaw were caught by Fantastical and Princess Attitude, who went four and five wide respectfully past the fading pair. Six furlongs went by in one minute and 11 1/5 seconds.

However, while Fantastical and Princess Attitude went wide, Gallardo saved ground with Just Ruthless, who then split rivals three wide closing in the stretch. She would pull away from Fantastical for a two and a quarter length victory. Fantastical was second, holding off Princess Attitude late by a neck. Keepthedreamalive (Israel Rodriguez) came with a strong late surge to finish fourth, a half-length behind Princess Attitude.

Gallardo was very pleased with how she raced.

"She was willing to be patient, and we were able to take our time. She was able to relax, and we were able to let the race come our way, said Gallardo.

Riley Mott trains the four-year-old filly for owner Rock Ridge Racing LLC. Rock Ridge Breeding LLC bred her in Kentucky. The win was her fourth in 16 career starts. The race was her first career stakes win. She is by Justified out of the Sprightstown mare Notorious R B G. For jockey Antonio Gallardo, the win was his 61st of the 2026 meet at Presque Isle Downs.



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