

ZACON GIO WINS 41ST INTERNATIONAL TROT
BY FRANK DRUCKER, Publicity Director, Empire City @ Yonkers Raceway

YONKERS, NY, Saturday, October 12, 2019—If the boisterous Italian contingent who found their way to Westchester Saturday afternoon (Oct. 12th) could have lifted Zacon Gio onto their shoulders, they would have.

The 4-year-old survived nine world-class rivals and an inquiry, winning Yonkers Raceway's \$1 million International Trot.

The 41st International—fifth after a two-decade hiatus—was truly ‘Viva Italia,’ as the favored Zacon Gio (Roberto Vecchione, \$4.30) won by three-and-a-quarter emphatic lengths, the mile-and-a-quarter going in 2:24.1.

At the outset, after a break by France's mare Bahia Quesnot (Junior Guelpa), it was another 4-year-old—American lass Atlanta (Yannick Gingras)—making the lead. Directly outside of her, the third ma'am, Swiss miss Uza Josselyn (Erik Adielsson), also left, poking about a neck in front of Atlanta.

If Adielsson had to do it over again, he probably would have kept his charge marching forward. Instead, Uza Josselyn found herself parked through fractions (:28.1, :59 flat) usually reserved for qualifiers.

Denmark's Slide So Easy (Ake Svanstedt) left from the pole, protecting the pocket, while Zacon Gio—from post position No. 5—was content to work from second-over. Behind him was the other American entrant, Guardian Angel AS (Tim Tetrick).

Meanwhile, Atlanta waltzed through a 1:28 three-quarters, a lap standing between herself, pomp and circumstance.

Nope.

Zacon Gio went wide around Uza Josselyn, perhaps pushing an underway Guardian Angel AS wider...or not.

Regardless, Zacion Gio met no resistance from Atlanta, blitzing by after the 1:55.4 milepost and widening from there. It was horse and whip-in-the-air-driver all by their lonesome.

Slide So Easy slid out for second, with Canada's Marion Marauder (Scott Zeron) a ground-saving third. Guardian Angel AS wound up fourth, while last season's upsetter, Cruzado Dela Noche (Brian Sears), picked up this season's final pay envelope.

Uza Josselyn and Atlanta tired to sixth and seventh, respectively, ahead of misbehavers Lionel (Goran Antonsen), Norton Commander (Conrad Lagauer) and Bahia Quesnot.

After an lengthy inquiry of what turned out to be the winning move, the result stood.

Four Zacon Gio, a son of Rusty Grif owned by Franco Giuseppe and trained by Holger Ehlert, the perfect season (9-for-9) season continues with a 12th consecutive win overall dating to last season. The exacta paid \$68.50, with the triple returning \$793.

Zacon Gio's first race away from was Italy was that country's third International win, joining Delfo (1977 at Roosevelt Raceway) and Twister Bi (here in 2017, a stakes-record 2:22.1).

It was also the 56-year-old Vecchione who earned the winner's circle lifting.

"I was happy when I saw Uza Josselyn didn't make the lead, because I could race behind her," Vecchione said, with some translation help from the trainer's wife, Anne. "I was in a good spot. He has been good over (half-mile) tracks, setting records. He never gets tired, except at the end today."

He was allowed.

"I was very concerned about the slow times by the leader," Ehlert said. "I always had confidence in my horse, though."

As for Atlanta, "I knew at the three-quarters, when I tapped her to go, I was in trouble," Gingras said.

Trainer Ron Burke, while very gracious to the winner, thought Atlanta may have had some dehydration issues related to the pre-race detention. "That's not Atlanta at her best," he said. "When she hits three-quarters off those fractions, she's gone. We're sorry we didn't represent the U.S better, but she's going to bounce back."

This day, though, the bouncing was done by Roberto Vecchione, ecstatically thrown up in the air after he and Zacon Gio took down the world.