

**Ortiz, Irad, Jr.:** Born: Aug. 11, 1992. From: Trujillo Alto, Puerto Rico.

Grandfather, uncle and brother were and/or are all jockeys. Attended Escuela Vocacional Hipica, a Puerto Rican school for prospective jockeys, following in the footsteps of his grandfather, Irad, and uncle, Ivan, who also were riders. He began his career in early 2011 in Puerto Rico and got off to an impressive start. He won with 76 of 357 mounts there before coming to the United States in June 2011.

Enter Efraim "Pito" Rosa, a peace officer who works in the jockeys' room at New York Racing Association tracks. Pito knew the Ortiz brothers' grandfather, Irad Ortiz, and because of that relationship he watched Irad ride in Puerto Rico and then referred him to agent Tony Micallef.

Ortiz, Jr. notched his first win on US soil very quickly, on June 24, 2011 with Millennium at Belmont Park. He finished the year ranked 11th among New York-based riders with 70 wins. Pito also introduced Irad to retired Hall of Fame jockey Angel Cordero Jr., a fellow Puerto Rico native, and Irad's idol. Cordero soon became a mentor and a friend to Irad. Irad's younger brother (by one year) Jose followed him to New York soon after.

Ortiz, Jr.'s career got off to a phenomenal start, with nearly 500 winners and purse earnings of over \$23 million in his first two and a half years in the saddle.

He and his brother, Jose, have earned the majority of the New York leading rider honors since shifting their tack to the U.S. and in nearly every case the brothers finished 1-2 in the meet's standings.

In 2018 Ortiz, Jr. won the **Eclipse Award** for Outstanding Jockey.

Family: Partner: Meliza Betancourt. Ortiz, Jr. met Meliza when he attended jockey school in Puerto Rico. They have 3 children. Irad and Jose's parents moved to New York in 2016 but I believe they have since moved back to Puerto Rico.