

# Inside Racing Editor, Mike Cearley June 16 & 17, 1999 Dirt Track

**Mike Cearley** 

Racing Editor



### **Lincoln County** suspends season

Fans and drivers who went to Lincoln County Speedway last Friday expecting a night of racing were surprised to find the gates locked.

Co-owners Forrest and Steve Carpenter decided to close the track last week for the rest of the season. Low turnouts in both car and fan categories prompted the move.

Steve Carpenter said the track will reopen next season for Saturday night racing.

Last year the Carpenters were forced to shut down in June, while promising to return this year.

After a fairly successful opening night in April, the Friday night crowds began to dwindle once again. On May 14, so few cars and fans turned out that the Carpenters cancelled the program.

They kept the track closed for the next two weeks because of NASCAR events at Lowes Motor Speedway in Charlotte.

The Carpenters rolled the dice and scheduled a big Thunder & Lightning and Pure Stock 8 card for June 4. The T&L main offered a first-place prize of \$1,100. The purse was increased in other divisions as

But only four T&L cars showed up to run.

"Friday nights just aren't happening," Steve Carpenter said. "I've seen it at other tracks too. For the past three years, there has been a steady decline in dirt track racing."

Lincoln County is one of the best tracks in the area. The surface is smooth, and the 1/3mile oval is wide enough for three-wide racing in most

When the Carpenters first opened the track in the late 1980s, it overflowed with cars and fans. There wasn't enough parking space inside or outside of the track to accomodate all the traffic.

At that time, Lincoln County and Carolina Speedway were the only tracks running in Gaston and Lincoln Counties. As the sport's popularity grew, and more tracks opened, Lincoln County's staff found it was becoming harder to pay a competitive purse..

Five years ago, Metrolina Speedway in Charlotte opened for Friday night racing, drawing some of the region's top late model cars. The exodus had

begun. This year, Thunder Valley Speedway in Lawndale started running on Fridays, then Carolina Speedway switched to

Friday nights last month. By switching to Saturdays for next season, Lincoln County will still face stiff competition by running at the same time as

East Lincoln Speedway. "I still think Saturday nights are better than Friday nights for racing," Steve Carpenter said. "I think more people will come out for racing on Saturday. Families today have so many different options when deciding where to spend their entertainment dollars, and the competition for a night out on the town has become very tough."

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## Oliver proves his point completes weekend sweep

By Mike Cearley Racing Editor

Jerry Oliver drove away from East Lincoln Speedway two weeks ago, suffering in the agony of defeat.

Oliver had won the Modified Four main event, but was disqualified after secondplace Darrell McLaughlin filed a

There was no need to submit to the post race engine inspection, because Oliver knew he wasn't exactly legal.

"It was just a misunderstanding of the rulebook," Oliver said. "I didn't have a purely stock engine, I had a 3/4-blend.

"One paragraph in the rule book says you can have a 3/4blend, and another says it must be straight from the factory.

'Anyway, I went home and made it right. I had to go back and prove a point."

Oliver and McLaughlin staged another bumper-tobumper battle last Saturday at East Lincoln. Oliver held on for his 16th win of the season, and this time he submitted to the engine inspection after McLaughlin filed another protest.

It was Oliver's second straight win. He also won the Mod 4 main at Carolina Speedway on Friday.

Winning back-to-back races is nothing new to Oliver, who resides in Crowders Mountain.

He is one of the area's winningest drivers. Since 1992, Oliver has won a track championship every year.

He has won two titles at Lincoln County Speedway and two at East Lincoln Speedway.

Oliver also won championships at Metrolina Speedway and Carolina Speedway.

"We've had a good run this year," he said. "We won nine out of 10 races, and finished second in the one we didn't



DOUBLE TROUBLE — Jerry Oliver, the Double Deuce, was a double winner last weekend. Oliver won the Mod 4 main at Carolina Speedway on Friday, and dominated the field for the win at East Lincoln on Saturday. Oliver was protested and declared legal. He won at East Lincoln a week earlier, but refused to tear down following a protest.

## LOCAL TRACK ROUNDUP

#### Hav-A-Tampa: Southeastern Triple Crown

The Hav-A-Tampa Dirt Racing Series recently wrapped up its Southeastern Triple Crown before heading to the midwest for a six-race tour.

Lady Luck was watching over Earl Pearson of Jacksonville, Fla. as he won the \$10,000 top prize in the 75-lap final jewel of the triple crown at Rome (Ga.) Speedway.

Hav-A-Tampa points leader. Dale McDowell of Rosville, Ga. dominated and led the first 74 laps of the race, but cut a tire down taking the white flag, giving the victory to Pearson.

"I'd rather be lucky any day," Pearson said as he climbed from his Monte Carlo in the winner's circle. "I hated to see that happen to Dale because he had us covered, but as tough as this series is, I'll take

a win anysay I can get it." Pearson didn't know how lucky he was until after the race was over. As his car sat in the winner's circle, Pearson's crew discovered the rear end of the car was broken. Pearson was glad the race wasn't 76 laps long, while McDowell wished

the race was just 74 laps. After starting on the outside front row in his Monte Carlo, McDowell took the lead from pole sitter Brian Birkhofer of Muscatine, Iowa, coming off the second turn of the opening lap. Pearson shot from the inside of the third row for second. McDowell kept at least a twosecond lead on Pearson throughout the race.

On lap 909, Donnie Barnhart of North Little Rock, Ark. blew and engine in turn three. As McDowell negotiated the turn, he ran over the sharp engine pieces dropped on the track.

"When I drove into turn three, I saw the oil on the track, and it was right in the groove I had been running in," McDowell said. "As I was coming down the front straightaway for the white flag, I felt the left rear tire go down.'

Pearson suddenly came up quickly on the driver he had been chasing all night long, drove by McDowell in turn one, and on to the checkered flag.

Skip Arp of Georgetown, Tenn. finished second for his second straight top three finish of the Triple Crown weekend. The 1997 Hav-A-Tampa champion Billy Moyer of Batesville, Ark. finished third. The defending and three-time Hav-A-Tampa champion Scott Bloomquist of Mooresburg, Tenn. took the fourth spot after a losing a position to Moyer on the final lap. McDowell was fifth, while

Smith finished 10th. Marshall Green of Dalton. Ga. won the first two races of the triple crown at Volunteer Speedway in Tazwell, Tenn. at

Kings Mountain native Freddy

at Dixie Speedway in Woodstock, Ga. The series returns to action on-June 18 for a 75-lap \$10,000to-win event at Kentucky Lake Motor Speedway in Calvert City, Ky. On June 19, the series

visits Paducah (Ky) International Raceway for a 75lap \$10,000 to win event.

#### Yarborough rebounds at East Lincoln

Dan Yarborough bounced back from second-place finish at Carolina on Friday to win Saturday's Late Model feature at East Lincoln Speedway.

Yarborough held off Tim Sigmon and Wayne Dellinger. Billy Bishop got his first win

of the season in the Pure Stock 8 main. Billy Thompson was second and Tim Walker third.

#### Sprint series to invade Carolina on June 24

The American Sprint Car Association will visit Carolina Speedway for the first time this season on June 25.

The ASCA tour features some of the best sprint car drivers in the nation. Billy

## Area dirt tracks

Carolina Speedway, Highway 274 South (Union Rd.), Gastonia 704-869-0313 Promoter: Dewey Stump Racing: Friday nights, . Admission: \$10 grandstand, \$15 pits. Divisions: late model, thunder & lightning, limited sportsman, super stock 8, modified

4, pure stock 4. Thunder Valley Speedway 248 Old Statecoach Rd., Lawndale 704-538-9666 Promoter: Ernie Elkins Racing every Friday night. Admission: \$10 Grand Stand; \$16 Pit. Divisions: super late model, late model, thunder & lightning, UMP modified, limited

sportsman, mod 4, stock 4, rookie 4. East Lincoln Speedway, 1873 Mariposa Rd., Stanley 704-263-5347 Promoters: Boyd Knight, Richard Meabon Racing every Saturday night. Admission: \$10 grandstand, \$15 pits. Divisions: late model, thunder & lightning, pure stock 8, open mod 4, mod 4, pure stock 4, sprints.

Wilburn, who is the right front tire changer on Rusty Wallace's Winston Cup team, won last weekend's ASCA race at East Lincoln Speedway. Cherryville's Johnny

Bridges is another rising star in the ASCA.

Another good Weeks(end)

Ricky Weeks has been unbeatable the past two weeks.

The Super Late Model driver won at feature races at Cherokee Speedway on Friday and at Thunder Valley on Saturday. It was the second straight weekend sweep for Weeks.

On June 4, Weeks snapped Dennis "Rambo" Franklin's two-race win streak at Cherokee Speedway, then held off Chris Madden to win at Thunder Valley the following night.

#### Sprint cars return Thunder Valley

The American Sprint Car Association will return to Thunder Valley for the second time this season on Friday.

Local favorite Johnny Bridges of Cherryville will have another shot at winning on his home track. Bridges dominated the last Sprint race at Thunder Valley in April, only to fall out with mechanical problems.

Thunder Valley will also host a \$2,000-to-win Mod 4 race this week as a tune-up for the World Four Cylinder Championships scheduled for this Sept. 22-Oct. 2.



PHOTO MIKE CEARLEY

STRUGGLING — Greg Barker is one of the area's top four-cylinder drivers. The former baseball star for Hunter Huss High School and Gastonia American Legion Post 23, Barker has won track titles at Carolina Speedway and Lincoln County Speedway. But a series of wrecks and mechanical proBlems has him struggling this season.



WINNING ADVICE — Pure stock 8 driver Keith Patterson talks with a crew member before heat races at Carolina Speedway last Friday. Patterson grabbed the pole and went on to win the main event.

## McLaughlin making noise at Carolina

Could a new late model king be emerging at Carolina Speedway?

Rookie late model sensation Rob McLaughlin won for the second time last Saturday. In just four races in a late model car, McLaughlin has two wins and two second place finishes. Last Saturday, McLaughlin

took the win over Dan Yarborough and Gene Pittman.

But he needed an assist from Tim Sigmon.

Sigmon dominated the main event until smoke started billowing from his engine late in the race. With nearly a half-lap lead on the the field, Sigmon pulled into the pits. But his crew could find nothing wrong under the hood.

Sigmon returned to the, but not in time to catch the leaders.

.Keith Lee

Pure Stock 4
......Travis Childers

...Chris Dunlap ...Matt Sigmon

..Terry Fennell

.Scotty Smith

....Rick McKenzie Mod 4

.....Jerry Oliver Darrell McLaughlin .....Jonathan Warlick

Sprints

### Results for Racing June 11 & 12

**Hav-A-Tampa Point Standings** . Dale McDowell Brasstown, NC. Rossville, GA..... ..Wendell Wallace Batesville, Ark......2,041
3.....Rick Eckert

York, Pa..... .....1,0986 ...Steve Francis Carolina Speedway

.....Joe Robinson Brian Robinson Ronnie Chastain Pure Stock 8 ......Keith Patterson ......Billy Greenway

Thunder Valley Speedway

Super Late Model
Ricky Weeks
Dennis Franklin
Mike Duvall
Petey Ivey
Limited Sportsman
Ronnie Vasser
Bobby Howard
Andy Clark
David Clay
Mod 4 Mod 4 ......Barry Self ...Brian Conard ...Scott Tessner .Mike Ledford

...Ray Cook ...Scott Bloomquist 7......1,898 Morresburg, Tenn......1,898 .. Bill Frye Greenbrier, Ala.... ...Skip Arp Georgetown, Tenn......1,858

......Robert Lane Jamie Gray Mod 4 Mod 4

Jerry Oliver

Tiger Miller

Danny Freeman

David Rush

Pure Stock 4

Chad Abester

Henry Duffield

Charlie Lunceford

O'Dell Harris

Stock 4 Steve McIntyre
...David Blanton
...Jeremy Leagon
....Shawn Cook

Stock 8

Marvin Pope

Kelly Pearson

Jason Green

Steve Bailey Rookie 4

Allen Franklin

David Wells

Scott Greene
Wayne Laws

East Lincoln Speedway Late Model ....Dan Yarborough .......Tim Sigmon ...Wayne Dellinger ...Everette Dunlap Thunder & Lightning Mike Walker Shawn Martin

.Rob McLaughlin ......Kevin Black Pure Stock 8 Billy Bishop Billy Thompson Tim Walker Doug Patterson

Super Mod 4
.....Wayne Lunceford
......Damon Crump

Cherokee Speedway

Super Late Model Ricky Weeks ..Mike Duvall Dennis Franklin
Petey Ivey
Limited Late Models .... Ron Parker ...John Pursley

Doug Sanders
Roger Hamrick
Thunder & Lightning
Todd Revis
Ronnie Sewell ......Kyle Davis .Jamie Mattison Limited Sportsman ....Billy Randolph .....Jeff Cooke

...Jerry Farlow .....Mike Ward .. Brian Roseman .. Bo Mace ......Chris Steele Mod 4 Scott Childress .....Jeff Cooke Brian Conard ......Scott Tessner Stock 4 .David Blanton Jeremy Leagon .....Marc White .Alan Pringle

Rookie 4 ookie 4 ......Franky Neal ..Butch Chapman ......Justin Reid ....James Jameson