

# Sitterly Third in Exciting Modified Race

By Dan Johnson

**Oswego Speedway, NY** – Last weekend, Oswego Speedway very easily could have been featured on the old ABC show, Wide World of Sports. That race night certainly had the “Thrill of Victory, and the Agony of Defeat”.

Starting with the Thrill of Victory, last Saturday was one of the most entertaining and exciting feature races in recent memory. The three car battle for the win between Ray Graham, Doug Didero and Otto Sitterly is one that will keep fans buzzing for quite a while.

The set up was perfect as well. Ray was gunning for his long awaited first Oswego Speedway feature win. He led the first half of the opening day race, until having to pull to the pits while leading for electrical problems. Doug has been lightning quick since debuting the Xtreme #3 Classic Sunday last year. Add to it, Otto is the track champ, and came off a nasty wall shot of his own opening day.

Graham took control of the race when the green came out. Didero pulled inside, and went from ninth to fourth in two laps. Sitterly tag teamed on the bumper of the 90 early, and the three car shootout was on from lap 10. From a lap 11 caution flag, we had 25 consecutive green flag laps of the three cars going high and low, with Ray running the perfect line, just far enough off the inside hubrail so Doug couldn't go low.

Otto went for it on the outside, but the outside groove was green at best, and the 7 fell back about 8 lengths or so. Otto knew there was no traction out there, but he's a racer and knew that was his only chance to get by, as these guys weren't going to make a mistake.

Bumper to bumper, wheel to wheel, the 90, 3, and 7 had fans on their feet as they drove as hard and as clean as possible. These three are very determined guys, neither giving an inch, but neither placing a bumper on each other.

Caution flew over the speedway late, setting up a late race shootout. Ray timed his restarts perfect, and ran the optimum line. Doug ventured to the outside, but like Otto earlier, it didn't stick. Doug set him up, and set him up for a late race pass. Coming out of four with the checkered waving, Ray protected the inside out of four, and Doug went for it, along the outside wall. If there was ever going to be a “Days of Thunder” finish, it would be here. Ray protected the line, and raced to the checkered for the win.

Fans knew they witnessed an instant classic, and roared their approval, not only for the new feature winner, but for the professional and wildly entertaining show they just witnessed.

Otto and Doug were gracious in defeat, both knowing they gave 100%, and were happy to be part of the fun up front. Ray and his guys had the biggest smiles though. Ray Graham received membership to the most elusive club at Oswego Speedway, the \$1000 Club. You can't buy your way into it, and you can't sweet talk your way in. You have to earn your way in. To gain membership, you have to win an Oswego Speedway supermodified feature. Ray Graham became the 85<sup>th</sup> driver to join the gang, and ironically, the second entrant in two weeks.

Ray came to Oswego in 1993, the second year of the limiteds. It took him three years to get his first limited feature win, as he turned the trick June 22, 1996. He has six limited wins, and even a limited track championship(1998).

He came to the supers, and has knocked on the door on many occasions, just to have defeat snagged from victory more times than he would like. Just two weeks ago, Ray led the MSA race, then a mechanical gremlin surfaced, once again putting the dark cloud over the 90 pit. That cloud was shattered in a big way last weekend, as Ray's dream came true, he finally picked up that elusive checkered flag. It came in the best way possible too, as he had to work and earn the win. He did it against two of the best the class has in Doug and Otto, and wasn't handed the win. He earned the win, the hard way. Ray, Buck, Dave, Kody and all the guys and gals of the 90, a big congratulations on the win!

The Agony of Defeat came in practice, as 2002 track champ Shawn Muldoon took as vicious a hit as you'll see. Shawn was running practice laps, then all of a sudden the throttle hung open on the 1, as he ran across the start finish line. Shawn did everything possible in a couple of seconds, then the car slammed in the first turn

steel wall at full song. The car flipped, and quickly rested on all four tires. The track safety crew was at the scene instantly, assessed the situation, and began to free Shawn from the mangled mess.

It took a bit to get him out of the car, as there isn't a lot of room in the cars to start with, let alone shortening the front end considerably in the crash. Shawn was injured as well, and couldn't push out of the car himself. The safety crew gingerly pulled him out of the car, and placed him on the stretcher. He was transported to the hospital, with numerous injuries.

Shawn's year at the track is over, both because of his injuries and the damage to his race car machine. The 1 was destroyed, as there weren't too many straight pieces on the supermodified after the crash. He will have a lengthy road to recovery, first healing then with rehab.. Shawn is in good spirits, considering what he has been through. Cards can do so much to someone's spirits, so come on race fans and send Shawn a card to let him know we're all thinking about him and thanking him for all the hard work, time and dedication he has given to the track and division. Cards can reach him at Shawn Muldoon 395 County Route 20, Oswego, NY 13126.

I'm usually not too big of a fan of internet message boards, but this week, a great idea came from someone on Pinner's BNG board, that the speedway, Eagles Fan Club and drivers took and ran with. Someone suggested drivers to go through the stands for a "Helmet Pass" this weekend, to help with some of Shawn's medical bills. Race fans are generous, and will no doubt come through tonight for this great cause. I'd like to say a big thanks to everyone involved!

This was a long one this week, but we had a lot to cover from last weekend. Come on out and check out the action at the speedway. If the first two weeks have been something special, we should be in for quite a treat as 2009 winds along.

See you at the races.