

Sitterly Grabs First Win of Season

By Dan Johnson

Oswego Speedway, NY - Row three was the place to start at Oswego Speedway this past weekend, as both Otto Sitterly and Dave Gruel wheeled their machines from third row starting spots to Victory Lane at the lakeside oval Saturday night. Sitterly grabbed the lead from Tim Snyder on lap 24 and drove off for the impressive victory, to become the third different driver in three weeks to take the checkered flag in the supermodified class. Gruel picked up his third win in three features and he continued his undefeated streak in the SBS series at Oswego.

After the supermodifieds paid tribute to fallen driver Tim Timms driving the pace laps in the "missing man" formation, Tim Snyder and Stephen Gioia led the 19 car parade to starter Bruce Lee's green flag. Gioia raced out to the lead when the race started, as the field shuffled for racing room on the fast 5/8's. Otto Sitterly and Jerry Curran pulled their machines to the low side of the speedway to advance, while Greg Furlong and Doug Didero elected to go to the high side of the speedway.

The race wasn't a lap old, when Jason Spaulding pulled the #23 pitside with a dangling right front tire. Gioia, Pat Lavery, Snyder, Jerry Curran, Otto Sitterly, Greg Furlong, Didero, Ray Graham, Joe Payne and Todd Stowell paced the field in the early laps.

Sitterly showed early he had the car to watch, as he shot by the Curran 24 on the inside of the fourth turn to take over fourth place on lap 6. Didero showed he was a player too, as he shot by Furlong, then Curran as he joined the top five by lap 9. The next time around, we had the first pass for the lead of a feature all year, as Tim Snyder shot the 0 on the outside of the Gioia 9 on the front straightaway for the point.

Sitterly knew it was time to go, as he went to work. He navigated the blue #7 to the high side of the speedway to test the waters in the outside groove. The car stuck in the money groove, as he passed Lavery along the front straightaway on lap 14 for third. The next few laps, he worked on the Gioia car, making the pass for the runner up spot on lap 18 on the high side of the back straightaway. He immediately closed the gap on leader Snyder, who was flying upfront clipping off times of 17.53 and 17.51 in his re-worked supermodified.

At the halfway point of the still green flag race, the scoreboard read Snyder, Sitterly, Gioia, Lavery and Didero. Lap 24 we had a new leader, as Sitterly exited the back straightaway with the top spot, after disposing of the Snyder 0. Sitterly quickened the race pace immediately, as he set the pace in the 17.4 range. In just a pair of laps, Sitterly built a 2.46second advantage ahead of the 0, 9, 2, and 3 cars.

Lap 31, the first yellow flag of the supermodified feature flew, as Ray Graham, the previous week feature winner, ended up with the 90 resting against the fourth turn hubrail with a popped radiator and front end damage. His race was over, ending against the wall, when just seconds before he was running in seventh place.

Sitterly wasted no time getting his lead back, as he put distance between himself and the rest of the pack quickly. He wheeled the 7 around the speedway at 17.36 and 17.39 laps, as laps wound closer to the end. Lap 35, Doug Didero's race ended against the back straightaway outside wall. The car came around on Doug, and he slapped the wall with a vicious hit on the Classic winning mount. Doug was slow to come out of the car, but was uninjured. The 3 was severely bent, and was hooked off the speedway.

Back to green, Sitterly shot out quickly and didn't give Snyder a chance to challenge. The field settled in position, with a few lengths separating the top five. Sitterly cruised around the track at consecutive 17.4 laps, and pulled out to a comfortable advantage. As the double checkered flags waved, Otto Sitterly crossed under them 4.185 seconds ahead of Snyder. Gioia had his best run of the season with a third place run, with Pat Lavery grabbing fourth and Dave McKnight fifth.

"This one was long overdue," the defending track champion said of his victory. "It's been over a year since we won a feature, and this one feels really good. I would like to dedicate this win to Tim Timms. I didn't really know him all that well, but he seemed like a really nice guy and he'll be missed here."

Jason Simmons and Dave Danzer set the field for the Small Block Supermodified feature event to kick off the A Mains for the night. As the 91 and 52 set the tone, fans kept watch of two time feature winner Dave Gruel, as he started his night back in row three, on the outside.

Danzer wheeled the family owned 52 to the lead as the race commenced, with the field forming behind, two and three wide, looking for racing room. Gruel pulled the 50 to the right, as he went to the outside lane looking to move forward. At the end of the first lap, ht made his way to fourth spot.

He stayed on the high side, and picked of Stan Gates, then Simmons before they completed the second circuit to move the Barbeau 50 behind Danzer. Simmons, Gates, Kevin Knopp, Tim Barbeau, Mike Bond, Russ Brown, Dave Cliff and Brian Sobus played follow the leader in the early laps.

Caution flew over the speedway for a third turn spin on lap 4. The restart played a critical part of the race, as Gruel went back to work in the outside, and pulled the car side by side with Danzer's 52 for the race lead. Lap 6, the 50 nosed out in front, with Knopp and Bond starting to track Simmons and Gates for third.

A few laps later, top contender Russ Brown's night was over in a plume of smoke. With Gruel staying ahead of Danzer, Mike Bond began his march as he shot by Gates to fourth place, bringing Dave Cliff with him. Bond and Cliff rode nose to tail as they weaved their way to the third and fourth spots by Gates, then Simmons.

The pair then went to work on second place Danzer on lap 16, and moved into second and third, .62 seconds behind leader Gruel, who circled the facility at 19.34 and 19.29clips.

It was a three car breakaway at the front with the show to be decided between the 50, 26 and 06 cars. Bond looked to the lowside on lap 26, but didn't win the drag race to turn one. He then shifted to the high side, but wouldn't make the pass.

Gruel had his hands full, but held back the 26 and 06 cars enroute to his third win in three races in the 50 car this year. "The car has been perfect, and it's been fun to drive said Gruel. "We started out the year with a goal of winning all the races, and just chucked at that really. It's been a great start for us."

News and Notes....20 supermodified and 23 SBS cars were pitside. Tim Barbeau, Dave Danzer and Dave Gruel won SBS heat races, with Doug Didero, Pat Lavery and Tim Snyder taking the checkered flags in supermodified heat races. Drivers went through the grandstands to pass the helmet for Shawn Muldoon, injured in a vicious accident two weeks ago. The drivers collected more than \$4200, and would like to thank the fans for their support. Rookie Canadian driver Tim Timms was honored by the teams by lining up in the missing man formation during the pace laps. Timms unexpectedly lost his life early last week. Racing this week is a regular night, with SBS and supermodifieds on the race card. Gates open at 4:30pm, with the first heat race at 6:30pm.

Supermodified 45 finish

1)Otto Sitterly 7, 2)Tim Snyder 0, 3)Stephen Gioia 9, 4)Pat Lavery 2, 5)Dave McKnight 08, 6)Jerry Curran 24, 7)Joey Payne 99, 8)Bob Bond 25, 9)Todd Stowell 89, 10)Keith Gilliam 87, 11)Lou Levea 03, 12)Hal Latulip 56, 13)Doug Didero 3, 14)Ray Graham 90, 15)Greg Furlong 72, 16)Bob Reis 88, 17)Lou Levea Jr 04, 18)Bob Magner 22, 19)Jason Spaulding 23