

Kasey Kahne Takes Laps in the #6 Nicotra Racing Supermodified

By Dan Johnson

Oswego Speedway – August 7, 2009 - On the eve of her 60th birthday, the old girl shined brighter than ever. Thursday night Thunder was brought to the popular lakeside oval this week as the "Thunder and Lightning division" of USAC, the Silver Crown series, brought their light weight, high horsepower machines to the fast 5/8's, with Sprint Cup driver Kasey Kahne playing Master of Ceremonies for the "Kasey Kahne Steel Palace Classic 100." This weekend, we have a special Pinner's BnG and facebook edition of "In the Groove", looking back at the USAC special.

To borrow a saying from baseball, "They hit this one out of the park!". I'm not privy to actual numbers, but I can safely say it was the largest non-International Classic crowd Oswego Speedway has seen since probably the heydays of the 70's and 80's. Fans came out in droves. They parked everywhere. People in the grandstands were asked to squeeze in and make room, as it was a SRO crowd. Fans were sent pitside after a while, as there were no more seats in the grandstands available.

The lure of Kasey Kahne and Ryan Newman were the magnets. There's no doubt about it. Kahne showed he is as good a promoter as he is a driver. He signed every autograph, took every picture, and did any interview asked of him, all with that familiar smile on his face. I even asked him if he was having fun with the night, and he told said he was having a blast.

Ryan Newman was Kasey's guest for the night, and during the racing program was there to race, but said he would greet the fans and sign every autograph after the races were over. And did he. Both these guys were shown how popular they are with the CNY fans, as fans raced to meet them after the 100. Even into the early hours of Friday morning, they both stood in their pit area talking with fans, as well as signing die casts, t-shirts, and programs.

Possibly the highlight of the night was when Kasey Kahne hopped in the backup Otto Sitterly supermodified for an exhibition. Earlier in the day, Ryan tried to get fitted in the Nictora #6. Ryan is an open wheeljunkie, and really wanted to get some laps in the supermodified. Only problem was, he didn't fit just right. Other options were given to Ryan if he ever would like to try a super.

Trying to fly under the radar later on, Kasey went to the Sitterly pit area to check out the fit on the blue supermodified #6. The car fit like a glove, and Kasey decided he wanted to give it a whirl. After the SBS race, which Brian Sobus won, Kahne and Sitterly brought the immaculate Nictora team cars on the surface.

After a few warm up laps, the guys started to step on it. With in just a few laps, both cars were in the 17.4 range, which mirrored the laps the leaders turned in the Mr. Supermodified race just a few days previous. Kahne wheeled by Sitterly, making the two time track champ chase him.

Kahne adapted to the supermodified faster than anyone I have ever seen in the sport. In just a few laps, he was running consistent 17.3 and 17.4 laps, smooth as glass. On the last lap, Otto made a daring inside pass, thrilling the frenzied SRO crowd. Kahne hopped out of the car, with the biggest smile he had all night. He knew he just came out of a car that gave him quite a thrill. Years ago, Darrell Waltrip took the Flyin's 5 out for an exhibition, but I have to say, Kahne gave no exhibition, he was wheelin' the thing! He blew the DW exhibition out of the water. Honestly, KK enjoyed it so much, I wouldn't be surprised to see him find time in his schedule someday for another shot at a supermodified.

The 100 lap USAC race was a decent show. True, there wasn't a lot of action up front, but when you start the fastest cars up front, you'll have that. Longtime USAC wheelman Brian Tyler started outside pole and got the jump at the green. He was never headed, and went on for the win.

Josh Wise and Tracy Hines(not Haynes) traded second spot, but made contact just before the halfway point, sending Hines to the rear. That's where the passing was, as Hines, wheeled and dealed his way to an 8th place finish.

Just before the Hines-Wise tango, supermodified driver Mike Lichty had the throttle on the #94 hang open, sending the personable Canadien into the turn one boilerplate at fullsong. Mike pulled himself out of the mangled mess quickly. Red came over the speedway as track safety officials had their hands full cleaning up the mess. Back racing, it was all Tyler. Nobody came close, as the rout was on. Tyler took the checkered a comfortable margin ahead of Wise, but only a late race caution flag kept this one close. Kahne had the steering break on the #67 late in the race, while Newman raced his way to an 11th place finish.

Before I go any further, I would like to thank Kasey Kahne, Steve Pegrarn and the staff of Kasey Kahne Enterprises and USAC for having the faith in Oswego Speedway and the race fans for hosting this event. Hopefully this will be the first of a long list of partnerships in the future.

The Brian's, Tyler and Sobus weren't the only winners on Thursday night. If there was ever any question if the Oswego Speedway had the luster still in the old girl, we sure showed 'em. The buzz was definitely back, and everything was so upbeat, it was an instant adrenaline rush. It was quite a night at the speedway, one where everything clicked. We had stars in the show, a full house, a chamber of commerce day, and a rowdy bunch of race fans. While the race was ok, the show was great! How cool it was, for the old girl to show the fight she still had in her just hours before turning 60! All in all, while we have had outstanding action on the racing surface this year, this event was one that stole the show! Everyone left Oswego Speedway Thursday night/Friday morning grinning from ear to ear. They knew they were just part of something really special!

Here's hoping to keep the momentum going, and this was the jump start to push it back up and over the top shelf again!

See you at the races.