

The “Blast”...A Legend Returns to the Track

Citrus County Speedway, Inverness, Florida: The second annual “Blast from the Past” race car drivers’ reunion, held Sunday, March 7 at Citrus County Speedway, was a tremendous success, with an estimated 100 cars on display, 400 spectators, and a host of Florida’s all-time great racers on hand to share memories of one of the state’s biggest sports. Personalities like Bobby Brack, Will Cagle, Cush Revette, Buster Burt, Dumont Smith, Buddy Pearce, LeRoy Porter, and many other ambassadors of the old days on such legendary tracks as Sunshine Speedway, Palm Beach Speedway, Hialeah Speedway, and Eau Gallie Speedway graciously reminisced about their on-track—and off-track—exploits during the early days of racing in the Sunshine State. In so many ways, it was a great spring-like day at the track, and those who made the trip took advantage of the opportunity to meet their heroes of decades gone by.

Despite the greatness of the event, there was a note of sadness at the start with the passing of veteran race car driver Billy Hancock, well known for his racing success at Golden Gate Speedway and other Florida racing venues as far back as the 1960’s. Hancock had completed several warm-up laps at the start of the day, but suffered a massive heart attack and died while returning to the pits. Although casting a pall over the morning, the incident prompted a resolve to honor his memory during the remainder of the day’s events.

For many long-time Florida stock car racing fans, perhaps the high point of the day came in the early afternoon with the start of the race featuring Late Model cars in a 15 lap duel. In this event,



The Legendary Anderson Climbing Aboard His No. 92 Super Late Model entry

Wildwood’s Dick Anderson—“King of the Florida Short Tracks”—ended his three-plus year retirement from competitive racing, taking his famous No. 92 Super Late Model out for competition in what spectators knew would be a highly spirited outing. Starting on the pole, Anderson led the first 11 laps, and appeared to be the dominant car in the event. A minor miscue on lap 12 caused him to momentarily lose momentum, but that was all it took for Lakeland’s Perry Lovelady to grab the lead. The final four laps turned into a furious sprint as Anderson fought to regain the top spot, tangling repeatedly with Lovelady on the track where passing is known

to be difficult. With one lap to go, Anderson and Lovelady made contact on the backstretch, allowing Pat Bresnahan to slip by both and take the win. Although finishing third, it was an impressive showing for the veteran Anderson, and showed that the 45-year racing legend has still got what it takes as a wheelman!

In addition to the great day of old-time racing, fans were treated to a wide-ranging display of antique and present-day racing machines, many of them provided by the Daytona Antique Auto Racing Association (DAARA). In addition to DAARA's roughly 50 cars, one of the highlights of the display was the 1937 Ford owned by Al Jurkowski and John Fodrowski of Spring Hill, Florida. Race fans and racing historians alike recalled this as the actual race car driven by International Motorsports Hall of Fame member and NASCAR Grand National driver Everette "Cotton" Owens in the 1960s in the Carolinas. The car was restored in the 1990s and is now exhibited by Jurkowski and Fodrowski, both of whom took turns wheeling the classic race car around the Speedway to the delight of fans.



The Restored 1937 Cotton Owens Ford

Event organizer Joyce Lankford is not one to rest on her laurels, and in fact has already begun to lay the groundwork for the next edition of this annual event. Stay tuned to the local racing community for details as they are developed. You won't want to miss it next year.