

Jeff gets Governor's Cup reelection

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From series and staff reports

Two former winners of the famed Florida Governor's Cup at New Smyrna Speedway joined forces earlier this season, and the results have been fantastic for Jeff Choquette in Dick Anderson's car.



Jeff Choquette (92) takes the lead in the 2007 Governor's Cup at New Smyrna Speedway.

The tandem continued to thrive at the 41st edition of the Sunshine State's signature Super Late Model race, as Choquette scored his second Governor's Cup win in four years. The victory allowed the young driver to match Anderson's win total in the event; the veteran known as the "King of the Florida Short Tracks" won it in 1988-89 when the historic race moved to New Smyrna.

"This one's just as important as the first one. That was my first win at New Smyrna and the second win of my asphalt career," said Choquette, who won in a family-owned entry in 2004. "This one here's the first for Dick as a car owner, and now I've tied him and his son Wayne Anderson with two. This one meant so much."

In seven starts in the familiar black No. 92, Choquette now has won five times and placed second once. His most recent run in the Andersonmobile was when he won the Cecil Williams Memorial Oct. 13 at Columbia Motorsports Park. This was the second win for the pair in the FASCAR Sunoco Sunbelt Super Series; the first came in their first race together April 28 at New Smyrna.

The Governor's Cup presented a new challenge for them, as this was the first race that they entered together where live pit stops were a part of the event. Choquette, from Loxahatchee, Fla., came with his regular crew from when he runs Super Late Model and ASA Late Model Series events throughout the year.

He also came to the half-mile with a plan, which was put into action on lap 72 of 200. Running third behind Tim Russell and race-long leader Travis Cope, Choquette ducked down pit road for fresh tires and fuel.

"We knew we were going to come in early," said Choquette, the ASALMS Southern division champion. "We were going to change tires really early because the track just doesn't wear the tires that much. We just stayed right there in contention, and we came in there to pit, and we came out and rode in the back. We knew that eventually everybody had to pit, so we were the first car in line. We made our pit stop, and then everybody else made theirs. We knew that we'd rather stop early and have them have to pass us rather than us having to pass them."



Wayne Anderson (84) gets the right hand corner of the race on lap 100 during the 2007 Governor's Cup at New Smyrna Speedway.

"I was surprised that there weren't more guys pitting there. Wayne pitted with us and was on the same strategy as us, so we knew we were doing something right since he's one of the best at that here. I'm pretty sure that having us win like that with an early stop, that for the next Governor's Cup, that'll be in the back of everybody's mind."

Just after halfway, everyone except for Patrick Conrad had made stops. Choquette knew Conrad still had to pit, so he didn't put too much pressure on the new leader. When debris on the track forced another yellow with 65 laps remaining, Choquette inherited the point, and the gamble to pit early had paid off.

Behind him for the last 50 laps were Cope and Russell, who had set fast time earlier in the night. Their later pit stops left them with fresher rubber for the second half, but that didn't give them enough speed to threaten Choquette, especially with the frequent cautions.

"Short runs weren't good for us," runner-up Cope said. "In the middle of the race, we were actually catching Jeff, but that last caution really messed us up. The car was very drivable on the long runs, and I felt like we were the fastest ones there. I just thought that there would be a lot more long runs in the race."

The longest green run of the race ended as Dusty Cornelius spun with 13 laps left. That didn't leave Cope enough time.

"On short runs I'd get away from him and I'd get out and get a big lead," Choquette said. "Other than that, it was basically just me and him, although Russell worked his way up."

Russell picked up two spots in the final 40 laps, passing Wayne Anderson and Sam Watts. A third-place finish, or just a start, was enough to let Russell wrap up the Sunbelt championship, but he wanted to leave with the elaborate trophy that Choquette took home.

"I wish we could've won the race," Russell said. "I had a real good car in the beginning, but the stagger closed up with that first set of tires and it just started getting tight. After we put the second set on, we came all the way up through there ... and we just tightened up again there toward the end."



Jeff Choquette, victorious for the second time in the Governor's Cup, emerges from the car, fielded by Dick Anderson.

The handling was almost perfect on Choquette's car, which used a Five Star body, a Progressive engine, and Penske shocks and is sponsored by BDH Construction. Anderson gets most of the credit for the car's success, as this is one of the cars with his new design on a Port City chassis.

"It's called Anderson Elite," Choquette said. "Hopefully we're making a good name for his chassis. I know they've sold quite a few of them."