

National Dragster Article 4

SALT LAKE SKY ON FIRE

5 24 08 Rocky Mountain Raceways. The cool spring air was heated up by the afterburners of jet dragsters and funny cars at RMR for the Jet Car Spring Nationals. The husband and wife team of Brad and Heather Janishewski (residents of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada) along with Utah native Ken Marley appeared to be the crowd favorites. The rivalry between the husband and wife over who's fastest and who's quickest is a lot of fun. These two love what they do and show a tremendous amount of love for the fans. They may not have the fastest jet cars on the planet, but they have the most fun. And oh, by the way, Heathers' car is faster! Tony Francos' Terminal Velocity jet dragster put down the quickest and fastest run at 5.79@267MPH.

The crowd was treated to a large dose of fast cars with the West Coast Top Sportsman series and RMRs Top Dragster and Top Sportsman series as well. The WCTS featured a 16 car qualified field but after qualifying mechanical problems knocked the field down to eleven entries. They may have been short a few cars but not on action. By virtue of qualifying number one Jeff Gillette earned a first round single and carried that momentum to the final. Local favorites Chad Demler in his goergues '37 Chevy roadster and Ken Ratzloff in his wild '53 Studebaker were sidelined leaving it up to Kim Fredrick to carry the banner. Unfortunately Kim broke after taking out WCTS #2 man John Campoy in the first stanza. In other round two action Jerry Tittles' '68 Camaro defeated a red lighting Ken Terrels' '37 Chevy. The '08 Mustang of Tyler Polley put a huge holeshot on the '68 Camaro of Dave Matson for the win. Keith White in his '98 Ford Ranger had a single while Jeff Gillette took out the '66 Chevelle of Steve Grow. Semi final action saw Gillette strap a .011 light to a .070 against a closer to the dial running Tyler Polley but it wasn't enough to overcome the reaction advantage of Gillette. In the other Semi Keith White faced off with Jerry Tittle. Tittle had problems launching the car (.213 reaction) then to add insult to injury broke out 7.761 (7.77). Keith had just come off a perfect light in round two and again displayed his prowess with another great light combined with a 7.94 (7.91) in the final Keith dialed a 7.92 to Jeff Gillette's 7.57. Both drivers were away clean and green .021 for White, .019 for Gillette. When the win light came on it showed Jeff Gillette had coupled the small hole-shot to a dead on 7.57 to get the win.

The Top Dragster category proved to be a crowd pleaser yet again. Contested for the first time this season the competitors were chomping at the bit to see who would carry the day. In the semi finals Gordon Turner paired up with Rod Haarbrink. Rod had a .001 starting line edge but Turners' .015 over the 8.03 dial ran him down and tripped the beams first. In the other Semi it was old vs. new. Jed Dubach, in his '69 front engine dragster, went up against the beautiful new '08 rear engine car of Trent Stevens. Jed dialed a 7.61 to Trent's 8.20. When both cars were away Jed tied a 7.62 ET to his .013 reaction to defeat the break out run of Trent (8.165 and a .042 light). In the final, the age of the cars was made up by the age of the drivers. Gordon Turner proved old age and tenacity theory again. The dial-ins were 8.03 for Turner, 7.61 for Dubach, the reactions were Turner .026, Dubach .030. At the finish line Gordon ran closer 8.05 (8.03) than did Jed 7.67 (7.61). By defeating last years Top Dragster champion Jed Dubach, Gordon Turner also received an extra point putting him solidly in the lead with one race in the books.

Three of the competitors that qualified for the WCTS regularly compete in RMR top sportsman class also. Ken Ratzloff and Chad Demler made an early exit in round one of the WCTS, but faced each other in the Semis of RMRs top sportsman. Chad ran an 8.28 on the 8.26 but it was all for not as he left the red bulb

on (-.020) handing the automatic trip to the final to Ratzloff. On the other side of the ladder Pocatello Idaho native Dave Kvanicka matched up with Andy Crosby. Less than two hundredths separated the drivers at the tree, but when Dave had to shut it down Andy streaked to the win 9.43 (9.43). The final looked to be a show down between the '94 Probe of Andy Crosby and the '53 Studebaker of Ken Ratzloff. Andy got the head start 9.41 to Kens 7.83 but left .026 on the starting line. Ken was forced to let out of the throttle and Crosby, slowing to 9.47 at an off pace 132MPH, took the win.

The Summit ET Series race #4 proved action packed as well. In Super Pro, Jed Jones in his first final round, faced long time bracket racer Bob Seamons. Jed was away first with a great .002 reaction to Bobs' .039. Jed slowed to an 8.64 (8.58) while Bob made up Jeds' starting line advantage running a two over 8.54 (852) to score the win. Both racers and their rear engine cars performed very well all day. Pro Bracket had no shortage of great runs either. In the final it was Steve Kruger in his '72 Vega gaining a huge starting line lead over the '90 Mustang of Brett Winberg. In Sportsman, Dan "THE MAN" Pratt scored yet another win with his '72 Vega in a holeshot win over Dennis Michelson. The Motorcycle/snow class had two of the toughest bike riders on the property line up for the final. Jeff Zogg aboard his '79 Kawasaki got the head start (9.50 to 8.93) coupled it to an .005 reaction and forced Mo Rider to run too quick (8.92). Congratulations to all the winners and runners up on a great night of Fire and Thunder at the Jet Car Spring Nationals.

Steve Schoenfeld