



SPEEDWAY PRODUCTIONS
712 Cherry Blossom Court
Delmont, PA 15626
724-461-7135 (Office)
412-999-6625 (Cell)
don@speedwayproductions.biz

www.speedwayproductions.biz

Remember When: Lernerville Speedway's 40th

Lernerville Speedway is celebrating the 40th Anniversary. The tracks history is incredible. I was racing in the Cadet (Stock Class) at **Schmucker's Speedway** and our team decided to visit Lernerville to see what it was like. We planned to run late model since that was our only option...bad decision since we were really out of our league. The good part of the story is that I had a chance to race at Lernerville and see first hand what would turn out to be one of the premier racing facilities in the country.

The new Lernerville Speedway ran its second program of the year on Friday night May 17, 1968 with **Ed Murphy, Dave Thompson** and **Frank Gorichky** taking their first wins. Murphy of Coraopolis took the Sportsman feature, his first in a short but very promising career. Action in the race started on the first lap as Jack Milford of Parker, driving his first race, was shoved into the wall on the backstretch. Jack was OK but the car had to be towed to the pits. When racing resumed Murphy moved his blue and white #10 through the traffic and into the lead. From then on he was never headed as last week's winner **Johnny Axe** tried in vain to close the gap. Trailing Murphy and Axe were **Al Shaffer, Bill Thompson** and **Carl Murdick**.

The Super feature also had enough thrills for any racing fan. On the third lap young **Lynn Geisler** of Coraopolis spun in front of the pack and was hit hard by **Wayne Hughes**, a visitor from Ft. Wayne, Indiana. The impact flipped Geisler with Hughes landing on top of him. The fuel tank on Geisler's sprint was ripped open and was pouring fuel over the driver. Both drivers escaped any serious injuries and the race was continued. Then near the half way mark **Billy Banick** and **Hank Jacoby** tangled with Jacoby going over the fence. While all this wild action was taking place Gorichky had moved into the lead and was pulling away from the field. **Lou Blaney** moved into second but could not get around **Gorichky. Buddy Cochran, Andy Phillips** and **Ralph Quarterson** rounded out the top five.

Once **Dave Thompson** put the #00 into the lead in the Late Model main there was no catching him. **Don Luffy**, running second, moved right behind the 00 on the restarts but just couldn't match the speed of the 427 Ford. **Dick Swartzlander, Jim Minton** and **Frank Choura** followed to the line.

Seldom does a track running three different classes of cars come up with a second straight winner in all three classes, but that is just what happened at Lernerville on May 31st as Murphy, Gorichky and Thompson all took their second straight. It wasn't all that easy for the winners; however, as the competition was tough and the breaks were often against them. Gorichky started off the repeat performances as he and arch rival Ralph Quarterson put on a stirring duel

over a rain rutted track. Several times Quarterson would pull along side of Gorichky but he could never get by. At the finish it was Gorichky, Quarterson, **Andy Phillips**, Jacoby and **Dick Bailey**, back in the #213 Ford Sprint.

The Sportsman main was another thriller as **Ron Riddle** spun on the slick second turn on the 2nd lap and was hit by **Frank "Doc" Harmon** who then took a hard high roll. Harmon was then hit by **Sharp Davidson** and before things got stopped nine cars had piled up. Starter **Jack Freeman** threw the green out once more but it only lasted one lap as four cars again tangled on turn two. By this time Murphy had moved into second and quickly took the lead from Dick Swartzlander on the restart. Murphy then moved away to a commanding lead and looked like a sure winner.

But things were not to be that easy as Murphy started to develop engine trouble in the latter stages of the race. **Carl Murdick** had really been moving and started to cut the distance on Murphy. The last two laps were bumper to bumper with Murphy getting the win by about a foot. **Johnny Axe**, **Bill Thompson** and **Don Wigton** trailed the leaders.

Even though **Dave Thompson** had the fastest car in the field, for a while it looked like his chances were very slim to keep the two in-a-row streak going as he spun into the infield of the first lap. By the time he recovered he was a half lap behind leader Dick Swartzlander. But lady luck was riding with Thompson as Swartzlander spun his '60 Ford on the third lap. **Bert Stanley** took the lead on the restart but he only lasted two laps before he spun. As Stanley spun, Thompson sped by second place **Henry Long** and into the lead. From then on it was just a "Sunday drive" to the checkered. Swartzlander moved back up to take second followed by **Popeye Radabach**, **Dale Hafer** and **Keith Morrow**.

Swartzlander and **Bob Wearing** put on a classic duel for the Late Model feature at Lernerville June 7th. The race was such a thriller that it practically overshadowed the fact that Don Wigton of Butler won his first feature event in Sportsman action and Ralph Quarterson finally got a Lernerville win. In the Late Model main Swartzlander, driving the #26 1960 Ford took the early lead from his fourth starting spot, while Wearing was moving the Jim Minton #83 up through the traffic. Once Wearing caught up with Swartzlander the two popular area veterans put on a race that won't be soon forgotten. Lap after lap Wearing tried to move his Chevy past the #26 Ford but each time Swartzlander held him off.

Then finally on the 19th lap Wearing got by but he was not able to pull away. Swartzlander held on doggedly and passed the Evans City pilot on the 23rd time around and went on for the win. **Yip Robinson**, in Bert Stanley's #11, took third followed by Dave Thompson and **Buddy O'Connor**.

Don Wigton of Butler, in his second season of stock car racing, started on the pole and went all the way to win the Sportsman feature. Don had built up a big lead when a restart put veteran Johnny Axe right up on his bumper. However Don's 327 Chevy "Thomas Special" was really running and he never gave Axe a shot at the lead. Yip Robinson, running his new car in its first

feature, was really running at the end as he moved in for third followed by Bill Thompson and **Jimmy Pitkavish**.

A special thank you to Walt Wimer for his archives from Cavalcade of Auto Racing News.