

Fitzpatrick claims first sprint win at Lincoln Park Speedway
Former sprint track champion, Brian Hayden, returns to win modified feature

By CAREY FOX
 Times Sports Editor

PUTNAMVILLE: There was a little bit of nostalgia flowing Saturday night at Lincoln Park Speedway. The pits were nearly overflowing with cars and drivers ready for action on the 5/16th oval while a couple of winners who visited victory lane at the end of the night, conjured plenty of memories from the track's former heydays.

Forty-one sprint cars and a total of 130 cars set themselves for competition as temperatures hovered in the 90s for much of the afternoon. As the sun slowly set for the evening, the action on the track began to heat up.

Youth was served during heat race action for the sprint cars as a trio of young hotshoes claimed victory as their own. Blake Fitzpatrick, Todd Kimmel and Chase Stockon all took wins along with Kenny Carmichael Sr. and Chad Branson.

As the feature lined up it was Fitzpatrick on point alongside Stockon with Kimmel and Branson in tow.

From the drop of the opening green, Fitzpatrick had his eyes on the prize. Coming off a strong early showing during Indiana Sprint Week before a crash sidelined him for a time, Fitzpatrick was looking for sprint car win number one.

He led early in the race, building a small lead as Stockon had his hands full with both Shane Hollingsworth and Brent Beauchamp going wheel-to-wheel. Behind them, Kimmel was mashing the cushion and weaving amongst Shawn Krockenberger and Danny Holtsclaw.

The veteran Hollingsworth stayed tied to Fitzpatrick's tail tank lap-after lap stalking the youngster and looking for an opening. He nearly got it near the mid-point of the feature as Fitzpatrick climbed over the turn four cushion, but managed to maintain enough momentum to stay up front.

Stockon maintained third-place as Beauchamp worked the very top of what developed into a multi-line racing surface. Holtsclaw held down fifth-place. Behind them, Billy Puterbaugh was holding down a top-10 spot and Kent Christian, who won his B-main along with Seth Parker, was picking off competitors one-by-one on a high-flying charge to the front.

With just a few laps remaining, Fitzpatrick and Hollingsworth headed into lapped traffic with Blake Nimee and Kenny Carmichael Jr. Coming off turn two, Fitzpatrick went high off the corner with Carmichael on the bottom. Hollingsworth chose to shoot the gap between

the two heading down the backstretch and high right rear tire clipped Fitzpatrick's front left with Hollingsworth briefly getting airborne before righting himself and grabbing the lead with one lap to go. On the final circuit, Nimee and Hollingsworth swapped spots coming out of turn two and banged wheels heading into turn three.

Fitzpatrick, riding the cushion as he had done all race, had all the momentum coming out of the final corner and flashed by Hollingsworth to claim the first sprint car win of his promising young career. Stockon stayed in third ahead of Beauchamp, Holtsclaw and Puterbaugh and Christian, who came forward from his 17th starting spot.

Troy Link took eighth ahead of Ricky Williams and Casey Shuman.

Fitzpatrick's win came in the First Financial Bank, Indy Race Parts, Forsythe Brothers Concrete No. 10 sprinter.

While youth was served in the sprint car feature, the modified feature was

won by a LPS veteran that returned to the track where he was the 1990 Rookie of the Year in sprint cars and was the 1995 track champion.

Approximately five years after undergoing brain surgery following an accident, Hayden returned to victory lane with his first modified win to plenty of applause from the fans.

Hayden's win was far from easy as he came forward from a 10th-place starting spot and took on veteran track champion, Paul Bumgardner over the final handful of laps.

The early stages of the race were marred by a nasty crash that saw Mark Auler barrel roll down the backstretch, bringing out the red flag. He was removed from the car and taken to the hospital where he was given an MRI for a possible back injury. According to reports, Auler was expected to be released from the hospital by today.

Brad Barrow led much of the first half of the race as Bumgardner stayed glued to his bumper as Hayden moved up to third ahead of Rodney Harris Jr.. Bradley Sterrett, who had to come from the back after an early spin, advanced into the top-five and Jimmy Hayden marched back from an early trip through the infield to get into contention.

The battle for the lead developed into a three-way standoff between Barrow, Bumgardner and Hayden. With Barrow and Bumgardner working the top, Hayden was able to make the bottom work and moved underneath Barrow. One lap later, Barrow hammered the turn two cushion, which sent him off course and ended his evening with a 12th-place. Hayden took over the lead and held off Bumgardner in a tight battle for the win.

Sterrett and Harris put on a show for third-place that Sterrett ultimately won. Jimmy Hayden rolled to a top-five ahead of Carlos Bumgardner Jr., Michael Purtlebaugh, Chase Sterrett, Garry Ricketts and Doug Bryan Jr.

Hayden's popular win came in the Cyclone Custom Products, Ottawa Instant Homes and Indiana Open Wheel sponsored No. 2H.

In the super stock feature, Jim Moore, who won his first ever feature at LPS back in a figure-8 race in 1973, returned to victory lane for the first time in 10 years. His win came in the Coffman Machine, John Holifield Auto Parts sponsored super stock.

Moore, was able to get by Slick Griffin, who led the first half of a caution filled feature. Moore then held off a charging Doug McCullough over the last several laps to claim the feature victory. Steve Hollars took third-place coming from the back of the field in his starting position. Jake Byers claimed fourth ahead of Joe Whisler, Tony Erdly, Joe Starks, Michael Conner, Steve Raney and Jamie Adams.

Thirty-five bombers unloaded Saturday night, but the winner was a familiar one. Dustin Shoulders went door-to-door with C.J. Bryan for nearly the entire feature before getting by and pulling away for his third consecutive feature win.

Jared Litton came home third ahead of Chuck Walden, who came up from 12th. Josh Settles placed fifth ahead of Chad Nolte, Ryan Freeland, Jordan Almanza, Charles Catt and Barry Hicks.