



LIFE CHANGER

**THE FOURTH RUNNING
OF THE LAS VEGAS
SPRING FLING OFFERED
EXCITEMENT...
AND MONEY**

WORDS/PHOTOS John DiBartolomeo

It was billed as a life-changing experience and for one person, that's exactly what it was destined to do.

After a number of years building the Spring Fling brand of races in Bristol, Tennessee co-promoters Peter Biondo and Kyle Seipel chose to add a west coast version three years ago. Naturally concerned over the investment to be made, they decided to run the Las Vegas Fling with two classes of competition; Super Pro and Pro; or Box and No Box (no delay boxes) for those who prefer those terms. The west coast racers supported it whole heartily.

Enter the K&N Spring Fling Million presented by Optima Batteries for 2016.

"Since Kyle and I started the Spring Fling brand in 2010," said Biondo last year, "our goal was to grow it into the biggest and most prestigious bracket race in the world, and we believe the Spring Fling Million in Vegas has the potential to be exactly that."

What better place to celebrate the greatest drag race in the world than the city of lights, Las Vegas? While there are high dollar races held almost every weekend somewhere in the country, very few could compare to the type of event Biondo and Seipel have built. Forgetting the actual purse money paid, the ability to award not only winning racers, but just about anyone with round prizes in addition to random awards to racers chosen throughout the weekend.

SPRING FLING

If you've never been to one of the Spring Flings on either coast, there's no way to explain to you how exciting it is. We've tried over the years but the full effect can only be had by your attendance. Words just don't do it justice, although we'll try to convey it here. It is truly a happening event where a drag race materializes. It is what has made the event so popular and the announcement last year of the Spring Fling Million had the drag racing community talking. Racers who would not normally make the trek west were suddenly scheming ways to car pool together to be a part of an historic event.

"I've never been to the west coast racing," says Tennessee's Greg Coffman, "but I figured if a million dollars was going to be paid out to the winner of a drag race, this would be the place to do it. Because of that I just knew I had to be here. After all, this is Vegas."



Prior to the gates opening up, the line to purchase entries was long. In the end, over 500 race cars took to the track on each of the three support races and 270 entries alone made the first round of the main event, the Million Dollar Race.



Top Fuel pilot and long-time bracket race/sportsman competitor Shawn Langdon brought out this door car and a dragster to compete. Going several rounds each day, in Saturday's final race, he lasted until the quarterfinals with both entries before bowing out with the door car and losing in the semifinals with the dragster.



Yes, it does take money to race here but the payouts are commensurate to the entry cost.

This event was also the official rollout of the new TruSTART timing system whereby the worst red light offender gets the lose ticket regardless of leaving first or last. The system; a product of Compulink and the Spring Fling; takes a little to get used to seeing but it ends the debate and eliminates some of the advantage of the faster car; instead of the slower car being the first to leave but also first to go red.

"I was a little concerned over the look of the 'tree,'" says co-promoter Peter Biondo. "With it, if the slower person should red-light, his green light will still shine until the faster car leaves the line. At that point the driver must pay attention to the win light at the finish line. My partner Kyle [Seipel] then explained to me that even when you're the slower car, you still have to wait until the faster car leaves before you can make a finish line decision."

In all, the TruSTART came into effect 13 times all weekend whereby in a double red-light race, the person red-lighting the least amount was the winner.

The event has truly become a happening over the course of the three previous years and this year with the addition of the possibility of a million dollar winner, it has become even bigger.

"We've been here before because it's such a great race," says Dean Karns, whose son walked away with a \$20,000 win on Saturday. "But this one was even bigger. It's just like that movie, 'build it and they will come.' And they certainly did."

With competitors from 39 states and three countries, The Strip at Las Vegas Motor Speedway became a home for five days where friends from all parts of the country met to attempt



It seemed like every big block Chevy dragster in existence was here and while they might be the best tool for the job, the door car contingent had quite a bit to say on their own.



Promoters Biondo and Seipel instituted a special Pro 32 car field made up of footbrake racers. They raced each other until a winner was chosen after which that person was seeded into the sixth round of the Super Pro class.

SPRING FLING

to pick up some big money. And of course, just like previous 'Flings, Racer Appreciation Giveaways totaled over \$60,000 apart from any of the purse money which was all guaranteed.

William Daniels made the 2,700-mile trip from North Carolina to be a part of the experience. "This is Vegas. It's just exciting to be here and to be able race for some really good money. They put on such a great race that you don't want to miss it."

The Entertainment Capital of the World usually sees about 310 days of sunshine a year. The previous weekend saw roughly two-inches of the wet stuff fall on the track which bode well for Spring Fling week. And Mother Nature didn't disappoint... except for Friday where 40 and 50 mph winds hovered throughout the track. Still the show went on.

The first year saw close to 400 racers make the trek to Sin City and each year thereafter the number increased, with Pro class cars accounting for roughly 40-percent of the field. With the expected turnout, Biondo and Seipel chose to run only Super Pro at the Million. Concerned they wouldn't be able to complete all the races; it was the only legitimate way to not race 24 hours a day.

At typical high dollar bracket racing events, only one class of competition is contested, that being Super Pro. Not wanting to disappoint the Pro class racers who have supported the Spring Fling Vegas event the last three years, their solution was an elite Pro class field made up of 32 pre-entered racers who had raced the Pro class at the 'Fling any of the previous years. The concept was to have each of the Pro class racers run one another after which the winner would be directly seeded into the sixth round of the Super Pro field, and the concept worked well.

Each of the four nights, the Pro 32 cars battled well, but neither made it too much further than the seventh round of eliminations. Wednesday's Pro 32 winner was Tibor Kadar who bowed out in the sixth round. Thursday, Tony Marconi was on fire in the Pro 32 eliminations but lost in the seventh round of the main event. Friday's Million Dollar race found Paul Russell from Alabama bowing out in the seventh round to eventual Million winner Jeff Verdi. Russell didn't make



Superior Quality Custom Team Apparel Made Just for You!

Dress Like a Pro!

Why ProThings.com Custom Apparel?

- More custom fit options to tailor each shirt to you and your crew.
- Men's, Women's, Children's and Baby Sizes.
- Darkest black color in the industry! Others black are reddish in color.
- We are able to meet rush deadlines that others can not.
- Buy Factory Direct, We are the Factory!
- Highest quality apparel construction and finish.
- No Minimums.

Lowest Price Guarantee
We will beat any price by 10%
Use Promo Code DRE2016
Call today! 909-581-4288

PROTHINGS.COM
CUSTOM APPAREL

Cleanable Re-Usable Oil & Fuel Filters Oil Pumps Billet Remote Mounts & Block Adaptors



SYSTEM 1
Filtration Products
Made in USA

INTRODUCING OUR NEW BILLET SPIN ON OIL FILTERS

(559) 687-1955

CHECK OUT OUR NEW WEBSITE
www.system1filters.com



PRO IGNITION

State of the Art Test & Repair Facility
Complete Blueprinting - Rotation Changes
Point Box & Coil Testing - Circuit Board Repairs

MSD SALES SERVICE REPAIR
MALLORY

Full Line of MSD Pro Mag Inventory
(559) 687-0288



SPRING FLING

out all that bad though as by losing in that round he received \$25,000 as part of the purse for his efforts. On Saturday, Tim O'Moore beat all comers in the Pro 32 class but bowed out in the sixth round of the main event.

There is little doubt that a dragster is the correct tool for the job, but never count out a door car. Naturally from the outside, it would have appeared that just about every big block Chevy dragster in



The importance of this event wasn't lost on the Discovery Channel's Street Outlaws crowd as David "Bird" Jones made an appearance driving Mitch Clary's OK Motorsports pick-up truck.



Everybody loves "Cowboy" Curt Smith (the guy with the hat) who came out to keep the staging lanes under control.



Yes, it does take money to race here but the payouts are commensurate to the entry cost.

the world was here, but door cars spoke well for themselves. A number of years ago, Biondo and Seipel instituted a door car vs. door car policy where dragsters and door cars are run separate for as long in eliminations as possible, a policy that most certainly has brought the door cars back to big time bracket racing.

"At the Fling events in Bristol, roughly about 30-percent of the field are door cars," says Biondo. "Here in Vegas though, the field was just about split in half with door cars versus dragsters."

While dragsters looked the best early in the week, by the time the semifinals of the Million Dollar main event came about, it was door car versus dragster in both halves. That didn't guarantee there would be a door car in the final, but certainly Jeff Verdi had something to say about it. As it turned out, a .008 red-light by David Beedy's gorgeous GTO in the semis might have been the only thing stopping an all door car final. If that wasn't surprising enough, it very well could have been an all Pontiac final too.

Verdi towed his Firebird on an open trailer all the way from Glen Allen, Virginia to become the very first winner of the main Million Dollar race at what is hopefully a long run of K&N Spring Fling Million events.

"Unreal," is about the only thing Verdi could say afterwards. "I've got to thank the Lord. I was praying every round and thanking Him each time. I don't even know what to say. It's just unbelievable."

As unbelievable as it was for him, in nine rounds of eliminations; forgetting round three when his opponent broke in the burnout; Verdi used stellar reaction times and a great running car to claim his victory.

"Back in January," said Seipel, "I had a conversation with Jeff over which car he was going to bring as he also races a GTO. I told him 'You just need to bring the car that you can envision pulling into the winner's circle with' He chose the 'Bird and his vision turned out to be very good."

Always on the lookout to get as many people involved in the event as possible, Biondo and Seipel chose to add a Last Man Standing lottery to the Million Dollar race. Two hundred drivers who had entered the Friday main Million race had their names placed in a hat. For \$50 any racer, crew, fan, etc. could pull a



To keep everything legal, Joe Oplawski from Hyperactive Performance Solutions was brought in to randomly check for any electronic driving aids.



Friday night was reserved for the Sparco Racer Appreciation Barbeque. Everyone enjoyed the superbly cooked beef and pork dinner. It's just another way to bring everyone together to have a good time.



Once the pictures were taken and the hardware handed out, Million Dollar winner Jeff Verdi and his crewman extraordinaire, Jerry Loan, were loaded in a limo and taken to the Cosmopolitan Hotel to enjoy a suite for two nights on the house.



Finish line driving takes finesse. Tightening up the strip to avoid breaking out is an art that wasn't lost on Street Outlaws' David Bird Jones (near lane) as he took another round win.

SPRING FLING

name out of the hat. If their racer went the furthest in eliminations, the holder of that name would earn themselves a \$10,000 prize. Jim Climer from Idaho at least owes Verdi dinner (as if after a \$270,000 win he needs someone to buy him dinner). Climer held Verdi's name all throughout eliminations and we're certain he was jumping for joy when Verdi's win light came on in the final.

After thousands of runs down the track all week long, the fourth version of the Vegas 'Fling, forever now named as the K&N Spring Fling Million presented by Optima Batteries was in the books.

"Since day 1," explained Biondo, "our business model has focused on the racers' experience along with one on one customer relations. We're thrilled that this was such a successful event, but success for us is defined as everyone having a good time and being able to finish each and every race, which we did. By those standards, yes we are thrilled.

"We can't thank enough all of the racers and our family of friends who have supported our dream here in Las Vegas," said Biondo. "It's definitely our pleasure and we can't wait for next year's K&N Spring Million when we'll be able to do it all again."



Dragsters such as Saturday's \$20K winner "Disco Dean" Karns seem to be the right weapon to bring to a gunfight but door cars accounted for almost half the field.



Team Mexico is always well represented at the 'Fling, this year bringing with them 11 cars to compete.

BOXSCORE

K&N Spring Fling Million
presented by Optima Batteries
Las Vegas, Nevada

Poulson Trailer Shootout

W-Scott Lemen, Gallatin, TN

R/U-Dustin Hentges, Olympia, WA

Maytag Silverstate Refrigeration Wednesday

W-Tim Markoglu, Staten Island, NY

R/U-Allen Wickell, Saraland, AL

Optima Batteries Thursday

W-Luke Bogacki, Carterville, IL

R/U-Kevin Brannon, Boiling Springs, SC



Maytag Silverstate Refrigeration Friday Million

W-Jeff Verdi, Glenn Allen, VA

R/U-Lane Dicken, Long Grove, IA

Madcap Racing Engines Saturday

W-"Disco Dean" Karns, Fairborn, OH

R/U-Steve Casner, Sheridan, CA