

LITTLE THINGS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

Million Dollar Race Winner Luke Bogacki Scored Big, But He Wasn't The Only One

WORDS/PHOTOS: JOHN DIBARTOLOMEO



SPRING FLING

For the fifth straight year, co-promoters Pete Biondo and Kyle Seipel brought their patented Spring Fling brand of races to the west coast at The Strip at Las Vegas Motor Speedway, knowing full well it's the little things which make a successful event.

"Last year we took a gamble and changed the Vegas event from a standard high dollar race for both Super Pro and Pro-class cars to the Spring Fling Million," said Seipel. "We wanted to give the west coast guys who are hungry for big dollar races something really big to shoot for."

That philosophy led to the Spring Fling Million where one person could potentially walk away with a million dollar pay day, the largest amount of money ever paid to any drag racer for one race, regardless of class. While the payout itself is guaranteed, the actual winner money for the Million race held on Friday night of the four-day event, is guaranteed at \$100,000. However, the win money is tied to the car count; the more cars, the higher the dollar figure goes. The winner's purse matches the car count up until 400 cars. Over 400 cars and the winner's purse ramps

up to \$500,000, and at 550 it would pay \$1,000,000 to the winner, a great match for the city of Las Vegas where dreams do come true. In fact, the words



Besides the money, each champ walks away with gorgeously designed and heavy Spring Fling trophies.



Bracket racing is really simple: Cut a .000 reaction time and run dead-on your dial-in. At a race such as this, there are more guys and gals knowing how to do just that or at the very least, come extremely close.

"dreams come true" made its way into the winner's circle interviews of each of the Spring Fling winners.

Last year it was the Cinderella story of Virginia's Jeff Verdi who drove cross-country with his Firebird on an open trailer and old Chevy crew-cab, scoring \$270,000 for his win at the first Spring Fling Million.

This year, it was noted sportsman racer Luke Bogacki whose dreams came true when he defeated Michael Pennington from Texas to carve his name in the record books as the winner of the second K&N Spring Fling Million presented by Optima Batteries. Earlier in the week during an interview, Bogacki said, "I've won a lot in my career, but this race is the one thing I've never accomplished." Mission accomplished now.

In his winner's circle interview and also during his weekly podcast, The Sportsman Drag Racing Podcast, Bogacki said, "When I woke up that morning I told my wife that I just felt like at the end of the day, win or lose, I was going to be happy with my performance." We'd have to say he should be really happy.

SPRING FLING



The week started off good for former Super Gas world champ Dan Northrop when he scored himself a new trailer from Chris Poulsen (left) of Poulsen Trailers.



Kevin Heffington's week didn't start off so good when a fuel line leak erupted a fire on the starting line. Neither car or driver suffered any real damage thanks to the quick thinking of the LVMS crew and Heffington was able to make repairs and continue on.

"The money makes it special," he added, "but I have never been so impressed with the exposure this win has brought."

This past year, Chamber of Commerce weather greeted the racers, albeit a little "breezy," but what else is new in the desert? It doesn't matter anyway to the many who made the trip. While the City of Lights has many to dazzle the hundreds of thousands of visitors to the city, the only lights these guys and gals are concerned with are the win lights on top of the Summit or Pennzoil scoreboards.

The festivities began on Tuesday with a free Test & Tune session sponsored by Yukon Gear & Axle along with a Poulsen Trailers Shootout where 32 lucky racers faced off with the winner receiving a brand new Poulsen Trailer. Runner-up received a free entry into the 2018 Spring Fling Million race and the two non-winning (we don't like saying losers) semifinalists earn a free three-day entry into the 2018 Spring Fling ancillary races. Former Super Gas world champ Dan Northrop from Pennsylvania needed a second truck to get his trailer winnings home.



In between searching for his 100th NHRA victory, the importance of the event is never so evident when noted sportsman racer Dan Fletcher installs a delay box in his Stocker to search for a million-dollar win.



Hah, the exuberance of youth. Twenty-two-year-old Marko Perivolaris, a former NHRA national event winner, scored his first of what could probably be many Spring Fling wins in his future.

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Only two men have had the ability to hoist the coveted Spring Fling Million trophy, Jeff Verdi (left) and now Luke Bogacki.

While everyone has a tendency to look at the win money, there is much more than that at any Spring Fling brand race. Over \$60,000 in hardcore product giveaways is awarded randomly throughout the weekend. With Vegas being Vegas, on Friday morning as part of the time trial for Million Dollar Race entrants, every racer can plunk down \$100 on the "table" (don't forget we are in Vegas), place a dial-in on your car, make a perfect run (triple-zero reaction time with a dead on the dial with a "0") and immediately walk away from the "tables" with \$100,000. If no one hits the perfect run; and even if they do; the person with the best package receives a set of Brodix SR20 cylinder heads. Second place receives \$2,000 cash and third place an entry into the 2018 version of the Million Dollar Race worth another \$2Gs. The end result was no perfect runs and no \$100Gs paid out but Matt Diamond from Texas with his Mustang laid down a .002 package to take home the cylinder heads.

We mentioned this earlier, but when it comes to a successful event, it's the little things which make the most impression on attendees. For the second straight year, the event has hosted a limited field of bottom bulb, Pro class racers. Those raced against one an-



After turning 21-years old earlier in the week, Rayce Kidd received the birthday present of a lifetime when he turned on the win light in Racepak Thursday's \$20,000 race.



Former NHRA world champion Justin Lamb was in the house and made his presence known. Running in the Pro 32 class off the bottom bulb, Lamb went several rounds each day and even became the first Pro 32 class driver to make a final round in 'Fling history with his runner-up finish on Maytag Wednesday.

BOXSCORE

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

Poulsen Trailer Shootout

W-Dan Northrop, Pipersville, PA
R/U-Paul Nero, Eugene, OR

Maytag Silverstate Refrigeration Wednesday

W-Blu Hayball, Fort Hall, ID
R/U-Justin Lamb, Henderson, NV

Racepak Thursday

W-Rayce Kidd, Twin Falls, ID
R/U-Gordon Boven, Boise ID

Spring Fling Million Friday

W-Luke Bogacki, Carterville, IL
R/U-Michael Pennington, LaVernia, TX

FTI Saturday

W-Marko Perivolaris, Petaluma, CA
R/U-Brian Cireddu, Brunswick, OH



Reaction Time Challenge Winners

Steve Hayes, Aurora, CO - \$1,000.
Chris Borges, Roseville, CA - \$100.
Kurt Gross, Oregon City, OR - \$100.
Christopher Northrup, Boise, ID - \$100.

Brodix Run For The \$100,000

1st - Place-Matt Diamond, Amarillo, TX
2nd - Place-A.J. Thomas, Chowcilla CA
3rd - Place-David Beedy, Wilton CA



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Fling officials brought in technical advisor Paul Brandner to assist teching cars and check electronics.



We said it was the little things and Daniel McClelland's girlfriend Shirley Ti was our "hat model" for the hats each Pro 32 racer received with their name embroidered on them.



Safety is a big concern regardless of the event and even though any sanctioning body's cars were allowed in, officials followed NHRA rules and at times stopped drivers on the starting line for not wearing the proper safety gear.



Brian Cireddu from Ohio became the second Pro 32 driver to make a Fling final round when he scored a runner-up finish on FTI Saturday. Unfortunately, our thoughts go out to him as on the ride home, his entire rig was stolen in Colorado, but later found.



Part of Bogacki's winnings was a special limo ride and two nights in a luxurious suite at the Cosmopolitan Resort.



Sharing the wealth. When Luke Bogacki turned on the win light for his Spring Fling Million Dollar win, he also put a smile on Sam Northrup's face as Northrup scored a cool \$106s as part of his Last Man Standing Calcutta.



SPRING FLING

other until a winner is crowned after which that person is seeded into the next round of the Super Pro action. Each of the select Pro 32 racers were also give special Pro 32 hats with their names embroidered. There's also the Spring Fling Reaction Time Challenge for 20 randomly selected drivers. Like we said, it's the little things which count.

In addition, there was also the Last Man Standing prize where the names of only 200 of the Million Dollar entrants were placed in a bucket. For \$50 anyone can have the chance to pull a name out of the bucket. The person holding the name of the racer who went the furthest earns themselves \$10,000.

When Bogacki turned on the win light on Friday night, he wasn't the only one jumping joy. That win light put \$10,000 in Sam Northrup's pocket.

Alluding to the fact of the \$2G entry money, for the season of National Football League games in addition to NCAA college games, standard office-type pools were held for an entry into the race. Once the gates were open, raffles were offered for a chance to win their way into the race.

"It's our goal to try and allow as many racers as possible to enter the Million Dollar race," says co-promoter Pete Biondo. "Our rule is that a car go only down the track one time. That means that when we have 400 cars showing up for first round, there are really 400 different cars. As for the Spring Fling Million main event on Friday, this year we had 230 entries, 230 separate cars. We're very proud of that fact."

Co-promoters Pete Biondo and Kyle Seipel are both champion racers in their own right. They've learned their lessons well from the racing side of the fence, lessons that they have transferred over in their promotional end of the game; and their success shows.



This year with Easter falling on Sunday, all the kids were invited to a typical Easter Egg Hunt prior to Saturday's eliminations. Two golden eggs were hidden with cash inside. Needless to say, the kids were thrilled and so were the parents.

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