

ANOTHER FLING IN THUNDER VALLEY



When Peter Biondo and Kyle Seipel (left) chose last year to run the inaugural K&N Spring Fling 1,000' Compromise event, they did so based on their past experiences to take care of their customers. Shaking as many hands as they could to thank racers for their involvement is just one way they accomplished their goals.



Tight racing was the order of the day regardless of whether it was a door car or dragster. Clearly marked was the 1,000' finish line.



The decision to keep door cars separate from dragsters for the first three rounds of competition was met with great enthusiasm from the door car contingents as over 70 of them showed up to do battle.

BRISTOL DRAGWAY HOSTS THE K&N SPRING FLING 20s

BY JOHN DiBARTOLOMEO

After last year's inaugural K&N Spring Fling 20s presented by Sparco, promoters Peter Biondo and Kyle Seipel had to take a real hard look at what had transpired.

As national event and bracket racing winning racers, the pair who have been friends since what seems like eternity, had decided to try their hand on the other side of the tower. Last year, Biondo said, "Having raced at a number of high dollar bracket races, both Kyle and I saw things we liked and things we didn't. We would always talk about one day running our own race."

And that they did.

Now of course, as we pointed out in the report of last year's race, more than just one racer has always thought they had a "better idea." Unfortunately, few are ever able to really pull it off. Understanding that, it didn't deter Biondo and Seipel from trying.

Running under the guise of the "1,000' Compromise," the pair wanted to be able to interest racers who run on both the eighth- and quarter-mile. And so, other than a few keystrokes in the Compulink timing system, the 2010 version of the event was a simple concept. Except for one thing...

"We had a great time last year," Seipel said, "but even though we had close to 200 racers take part, because of the inordinate amount of work required to promote the event, along with guaranteeing the purse, we lost quite a bit of money."

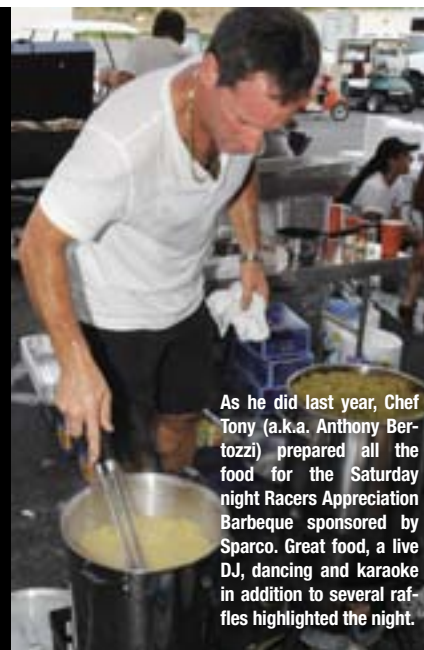
Last year's event also featured a Saturday night barbeque, which paid tribute to the infamous Jim Harrington, who had passed away a few months earlier.

Biondo said, "We really questioned whether the effort was worth it. I still can't get over how much work is involved to promote an event of this caliber."

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Derek Denney was just one of the door car contingent who turned on a number of win lights. Denney went rounds almost every day with his best finish a runner-up performance in Sunday's JEGS-sponsored race.



As he did last year, Chef Tony (a.k.a. Anthony Ber-tozzi) prepared all the food for the Saturday night Racers Appreciation Barbeque sponsored by Sparco. Great food, a live DJ, dancing and karaoke in addition to several raf-fles highlighted the night.



Though suffering from a sore throat, Jared Pennington still took to the microphone every day to call the ac-tion with his own brand of comedy and song.



Bracket racing is truly not a spectator sport but that didn't stop announcer Jared Pennington from detailing to the online Internet audience that they had better hurry to the track because "there's only 37,623 seats left and you don't want to get left out!"



And how could we resist not running this photo? After Peter Biondo adored Curt Smith's own cowboy hat, Smith awarded Biondo his very own.

However, after last year's event, the cards, letters, phone calls and e-mails came pouring in from racers and crew

who loved the event and couldn't wait for the next one. If there was even going to be one...

"The two of us took a vote," Seipel said, "and we decided to give it another try."

Without the requirement of pre-en-trees, it's a pretty bold move to secure the funding to guarantee a purse along with lining up the track and all of its relat-ed expenses. In addition to K&N Filters and Sparco, a slew of other manufactur-ers who believe in the concept of the race and understand the need to support their customers joined in on the fun.

Race Tech Race Cars, DRE Engine Dia-pers, JEGS, ATI Performance, AltaCom, Altronics, Auto Meter, BLP Racing Prod-ucts, Brodix, Digital Delay, Dragon Rac-ing Fuels, Dynatech, Goodyear, Hoosier and McCarty Auto Parts all combined to make the 2011 version of the "1,000' Compromise" a reality.

However, tensions still had to be running high before the gates officially

opened for parking and tech inspection on Wednesday prior to the event.

Seipel said, "You bet we were con-cerned, but by the time trials started on Thursday, we had close to 300 cars entered and our next concern was being able to even run them all. But that's a good problem to have. We eventually had racers from 23 states and Canada and as far away as California."

It's a sure bet that once Thursday's Race Tech Warm-Up race was over somewhere around 11:00 at night, both Biondo and Seipel were able to sleep a little better that night.

Falling back to their days behind the wheel (not that those days are over just yet) Biondo and Seipel chose to allow door cars and dragsters to stay separated for the first three rounds of competi-tion. Obviously the door car contingent welcomed this, as over 70 door cars were entered in competition. On Saturday night, a special McCarty Auto Parts Door

Car Shootout took place to the first 32 door cars to enter.

At last year's event, bracket racing kingpin George Rupert entered the final round of the Warm-Up race with a gor-geous '69 Camaro to disprove once and for all that door cars can win. Unfortu-nately he ran into the red hot John Lab-bous Jr. who began a tear at the event, winning three days in a row.

Roy St. Denis tried to pull off that same feat in the Warm-Up event this year with his '87 Thunderbird. Wyatt Colbert from Virginia wasn't going to have any of that though, as a .001 reaction time in the final was enough to hold off St. Denis.

Long days were the order of the event with that many cars, but Friday's DRE feature event had a great storyline in the final, as Kevin Brannon and Shane Mad-dox are two young racers who travel, park and race together and have been doing so since their Jr. Dragster days. When Maddox fouled away his chances

BOX SCORE

K&N Sping Fling 20s
Bristol, Tennessee

Race Tech Thursday

W-Wyatt Colbert, Mechanicville, VA
R/U: Roy St. Denis, Oxford, MI

DRE Friday

WIN: Kevin Brannon, Boiling Springs, SC
R/U: Shane Maddox, Piedmont, SC

JEGS Saturday

WIN: John Labbous Jr., White House, TN
R/U: Johnny Labbous Sr., Goodlettsville, TN

JEGS Sunday

WIN: JP Hickman, Bradenton, FL
R/U: Derek Denney, Pleasant View, TN

McCarty Auto Parts Door Car Shootout

WIN: John Labbous Jr., White House, TN
R/U: Jeg Coughlin Jr., Delaware, OH

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The Masters Entertainment crew was on hand to film the event for posterity as well as a 30-minute program that aired in June on the Fox Sports channel.



Several manufacturers helped to support the event as ATI Performance's Eric McClung was on hand with the company's Race Support Trailer to assist racers with their transmission needs.

in the final at 12:45 a.m. on Saturday morning, their friendship might have been in jeopardy, but the winner's circle photos would show nothing of the kind.

Friday morning also marked a different kind of Race for the Dragster event. Typically, a dragster is put up for grabs with a limited amount of entrants putting up a hefty entry fee and the winner taking home the new dragster. In order to make it more affordable, this Race for the Race Tech Dragster featured a maximum of 160 entrants putting up \$100 each. Each dialed in their car and was afforded a qualifying pass on Friday morning with the first four best packages according to their respective dial-in and reaction time earning the right to race in a special four-car shootout for the dragster.

Earning berths into that elite field were TJ Coughlin, Brian Folk, Bobby

Johns and Tommy Plott. Even at only 20 years old, Coughlin has a boatload of experience, which includes an NHRA national event win. Add in the coaching he's received from his father and famous uncles, and he's certainly become a tough racer. Unfortunately, forgetting this special four-car shootout, there were probably at least 299 other "tough" racers here.

Over the course of four days of racing, Coughlin "only" managed to turn on three win lights all weekend, but two of them were in the four-car shootout, which meant that the mono-shock Race Tech dragster was making its way back to Delaware, Ohio.

Saturday's JEGS event final was another great storyline with John Labbous Jr. defeating John Labbous Sr. for the \$20K win. Labbous Jr. said in the

winner's circle, "I don't know how to feel 'cause I really wanted my Dad to win, but I couldn't just give it to him." And we're sure Senior wouldn't have wanted it any other way.

Speaking of winner's circle, the Saturday night version had to be postponed slightly as Labbous Jr. was entered in the McCarty Auto Parts Door Car Shootout driving Brandon Jarrell's S-10 pick-up truck. As if to reaffirm his knowledge of Bristol Dragway, Labbous met another Junior in the final, this time one named Jeg Coughlin. If you don't think door cars are tough, check out these numbers: Labbous is .005 on the tree, Coughlin is .007. Labbous runs .011 under his dial and Coughlin matched that with his own .011 under run, all of which adds up to give Labbous a two-thousandths victory and another \$5,000 to add to his weekend winnings.

On Sunday, Derek Denney drove Jason Lynch's Cavalier to the final round to reiterate that door cars can win, but JP Hickman had something to say about that. Neither driver was stellar on the tree, but it didn't matter, as Hickman prevailed and took his \$20K back to Florida.

Biondo and Seipel also arranged for a live audio and video feed on the Internet as well as live timing, which if you weren't there, had you feeling as if you were.

With all in attendance, we never spoke with anyone who wasn't happy. Daryl Pinder said it best when he posted on an Internet board about his experiences.

"Wednesday after going through tech, I discover I have no alternator belt. No biggie. Fixed it.

"Thursday, after getting the win in first round, I proceed to slide in my own water from my overflow tank in the shutdown area. A bent spoiler, wheelie bars, and flat spots on all four tires was the damage.

"Friday, I suck it up and put new tires on all four corners. Stage for my first time shot and the car backs out of the beams. A trans adjustment gets me ready for first round. Car backs out of the beams again. Damn....suck it up (again) and pull the trans out for a rebuild.

"Saturday and the first and only time shot, I hit the starter button... Zing! Zing! Tow it back to the pits to find broken teeth on the flywheel. Screw it! I'm going home. Ten minutes later my friend and I are underneath the car again changing the flywheel. Make it in time for first round. Run out by .007 and the loss. Enter the Door Car Shootout. Lucky enough to defeat Scotty Richardson first round. Second round I run out by .033 on the brakes.

"Sunday... I woke up with a hangover. I can't wait to do it again next year! What an awesome race."

DRA



In Friday's DRE-sponsored feature, a great story unfolded when two racers who have run together since their Jr. Dragster days made it to the final, where Kevin Brannon defeated Shane Maddox. Both shared the winner's circle but it's doubtful they shared the \$20,000 top prize.