

# INNOVATION

The 'Fling Brand Of Races  
Brings True Innovation

Words/Photos John DiBartolomeo



**F**or the eighth straight year, the 'Fling brand of big dollar bracket racing visited famed Bristol Dragway in Tennessee, only this year was different.

Citing questionable weather issues over the past seven years, co-promoters Peter Biondo and Kyle Seipel looked to place the race at a better time of year. Moving the event to September from its May home seemed to be an easy answer but it left the May date open, easily filled by the Spring Fling Galot at GALOT Motorsports Park in North Carolina (see *Making A Move*, *Drag Racing Edge*, *September 2017*). But it still left questions as to whether racers would accept the change.



**FLING**



For the eighth straight year, the Bristol Dragway pits were packed for the now Sparco Fall Fling presented by Optima Batteries. The move from May to September proved to be good one as the weather was absolutely beautiful.



As has been the custom since day one of the east coast 'Fling races, MotorManiaTV.com was on hand to broadcast the entire event online thanks to sponsorship from JEGS and Hoosier Tires.



"You may now kiss the bride." Racers will always be racers and Stephen and Kimmy Marinchek chose to exchange their wedding vows in front of family and friends at the 'Fling.

By the time the smoke had cleared in September, the resounding answer had to be: YES!

Almost 400 cars attempted each day to take part in eliminations goaded on by a weather forecast you could never have ordered. Sunshine, blue skies and temperatures ranging from a high of 92 to 75 was enjoyed by all. With the 'Fling rule that a car can only go down the track once per round, it assures that indeed there were 400 cars making the trek.

But quite possibly, the attendance could be because of a simple word: Innovation.

Over the past eight years, Biondo and Seipel have built the franchise based on that one word. The first to race at 1,000-feet, the first to separate door cars from dragsters until the ladder round of 16 or less, the first to use TruS-TART; the worst red-light rule; along with other "firsts," has made the 'Fling brand the model event all others seem to emulate. All due to the many races and championships the pair have won over the years in building an event that they would want to race at themselves.

In addition to the winner's share along with round money, there are thousands of dollars in prizes handed out for Best Losing packages along with simple random draws. And these aren't simply gift certificates, but rather, the actual product a person can accept and in some cases immediately install on their car.

Relayed to us by 'Fling announcer Nate Hirschi was this tale: "A couple of years ago at the end of the event, a racer came into the tower and explained that in four days of racing, he had not seen one win light which included buying back every day and losing each time. He then proceeded to thank us because he said he had the greatest time at the event. And we've heard that story from a number of people over the years."

Each year though, Biondo and Seipel concern themselves with assuring that each of their customers continues to have the best time ever. "After another very smooth event and listening to our racers opinions," said Biondo in his Saturday morning address to the crowd, "we have come to realize that our East Coast 'Fling events are growing rapidly. In order for us to continue to give our racers an optimum experience, we have

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The big winner of the week was South Carolina's Joe Gary, not only for his \$20,000 win on Thursday followed up with a runner-up performance on Saturday coupled with several other late round finishes earning him the Todd's Extreme Paint MVP Award which included a custom painted helmet and \$1,000.



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68482	BBC, Clears Rocker Shaft Assemblies, Pockets on both intake & exhaust sides	3.875"	
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## FLING

made the decision to limit the amount of entries for our 2018 Spring Fling at Galot, and 2018 Fall Fling at Bristol through a pre-entry program.”

In reality, pre-entries are rare in bracket racing. For whatever reason, bracket racers are not willing to part with their money sometimes months ahead of time, as opposed to NHRA sportsman racers who have to pre-enter months ahead for a national event. A long time ago, an enterprising race promoter attempted pre-entry at his long run series of bracket championships. The experiment didn't last long as no one responded. However, in the past two years, it appears bracket racers are starting to warm up to the pre-entry idea and as such, the 'Fling will attempt to institute it for their two East Coast races. Details as of this writing are being finalized but Biondo said, "Anyone who has attended any of the 'Fling events will have first preference to pre-enter."

Much more than simply a "race," the "Fling has turned into a gathering of like minds, a family reunion of sorts where complete families of racers come together to visit and of course, race. Never was this as evident as this year's Fall Fling where Stephen and Kimmy Marinchek from Latrobe, Pennsylvania, chose to exchange their wedding vows in front of family and friends at the 'Fling.

"We had met at the races," said Kimmy, "and as such wanted to have a race track wedding. Steve then mentioned what a great time it would be to go to the 'Fling and have the ceremony there. He got in touch with Peter Biondo who put us in touch with Sally Martini who set everything up and performed the service. Steve was right. It was a great time!"

Rory Wene's experience at the event turned out to be his "Last Fling before the Ring," as he would be exchanging his wedding vows later in the year but chose to have his bachelor party at the 'Fling. One of his groomsmen, Matt Schapiro said, "All of the groomsmen are racers and we talked about having a bachelor party but when we figured what we were going to spend, we made the choice to at least have it at the 'Fling and enjoy some racing too." None of the group made any final rounds, but they still had a great time. The event is just a happening.

Another one of those "good stories" to come out of the race was the Brodix



**Williams received his baptism of sorts by way of some adult beverages after pulling into the winner's circle following his \$50K win on Friday.**



**Following his Saturday win, Shane Maddox said in his winner's circle interview, "This is the greatest bracket race ever. I have been to a lot of big dollar bracket races including every one of the 'Flings and I won't miss a 'Fling event in the future." A sentiment shared by many.**



**Just another reason any of the "Flings run so smooth is the staging lane prowess of "Cowboy," Curt Smith. Along with the rest of the Bristol Dragway staff, they keep the show running like a fine watch.**

## FLING



**LEFT: One of the early leaders for the MVP Award was Troy Williams Jr. with a win in the American Race Cars/RaceTech Dragster shootout on Tuesday along with his \$50,000 win on Friday.**

**RIGHT: Two-time Million Dollar Race winner Jeff Verdi showed up with two potent Pontiac entries, always vowing to be the first door car in eliminations. Unfortunately, he didn't last long with either of his entries.**





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Twenty randomly selected drivers were chosen for the patented Fall Fling Reaction Time Challenge. One shot at the 'tree and a perfect light got you \$1,000 cash. None were recorded, but three drivers received \$100 for a double-O light.



One of the very first events where door cars were run separate from dragsters until the ladder round of 16, the 'Fling events are partly responsible for the increase in door cars showing up at high dollar races.



Bracket racing is always tough and gets even tougher when big money is on the line. Win lights are always separated by inches and thousandths of a second.

Best Package Award. The person with the best door car package versus the best dragster package faced off Friday night for a chance to win a set of Brodix SR20 cylinder heads. "Nasty Nick" Hastings logged a .004 package in his Mustang to lock up his spot in the one-race deal, while T.C. Smith used a .002 with his dragster for his part. Once it went down, it just proved never to count out old age and treachery as 74-year old Smith took the win over the 30-year old Hastings, and the crowd went "wild."

Were there any controversies or problems? Probably, and sometimes we hate just publishing a "goody-two-shoes" type story, but in the overall aspect of the event, there are few which have gone any smoother. Any concerns were far and few, and it really is because of the lead of Biondo and Seipel along with their staff and the staff at Bristol Dragway. Every race should run so well. If you've never been to a 'Fling event, you owe it to yourself to put it on your bucket list.

**FLING**

**BOXSCORE**

**SPARKO FALL FLING**  
presented by Optima Batteries  
**Bristol, TN**



**American Race Cars/  
RaceTech Dragster Shootout**

W-Troy Williams Jr.,  
Daytona Beach, FL  
R/U-Shane Maddox,  
Piedmont, SC

**Yukon Gear & Axle Wednesday**

W-Chris Stine,  
Silver Lake, IN  
R/U-Cody McDaniel,  
Corryton, TN

**Racepak Thursday**

W-Joe Gary, Greenwood, SC  
R/U-Nick Hastings,  
Shelby, OH

**Biondo Racing Products Door  
Car Shootout**

W-Jeremy York, Muncie, IN  
R/U-Vinny DiMino,  
Maspeth, NY

**ATI Performance Friday**

W-Troy Williams Jr.,  
Daytona Beach, FL  
R/U- Jeremy York,  
Muncie, IN

**JEGS Saturday**

W-Shane Maddox,  
Piedmont, SC  
R/U-Joe Gary  
Greenwood, SC

**Reaction Time Challenge**

Leon Tynes Sr. \$100.  
Travis Laster \$100.  
Jerry Brewer \$100



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