

The 3rd Annual Jake's 150

June 21, 2003

It was once again that time of year, a time for the mid-season classic known as the Jake's 150 for Speedrome Late Models. The race named to honor 1988 Hall of Fame inductee Jake Cohen who helped so many racers at the track during the past 50 years. The 2003 race had a little bit of everything. A record-breaking crowd pleasing special appearance from Robert Downey Jr. Jeff Shackelford brought his uncle Tommy St John, who worked with legends Kenny and Mike St John on many championship runs, out of retirement to setup his car.

Twenty-seven cars wheeled onto the starting grid with drivers ranging from 1988 World Figure 8 champion Leonard Basham, who made the longest journey to compete, to rookie David Lee Byrd who worked relentlessly overnight to get the car ready for this race.

The atmosphere was electric and so was the start of the event. A "straight-up" start saw fast qualifier Bruce Tunny bolt out of the gate for the lead. Within the first 20 laps drivers like Darrell Doty, Mark Tunny, Danny Turner, and Ronnie Rigdon were weeded out with bad luck and mechanical problems. Intense racing from the rest of the field highlighted the opening moments with the Tunny brothers, Bruce and Bill Jr, stealing the show out front. Another Tunny, Ben halted the action with the first red flag, when he spun out and found himself stuck on the third turn marker tire.

The restart was just as furious as the Tunny brothers resumed their rivalry with Jeff Shackelford, Rodney Sizemore, Doug Greig, and Curtis McMurtrey trailing. From lap 27 to 41 Bruce maintained his hold on the lead with several skirmishes brewing as cars shuffled for placing. A lap 42 restart had the pair side-by-side before Bill took the advantage. That was short lived as he came in contact with Steve Durham, spinning Bill out. That left Bruce, a hard charging George Sutton, and McMurtrey in a tight battle for first. By lap 60 Sizemore would join the lead pack.

Then on lap 62, disaster struck Bruce's #1 machine. The coil wire gave out, which killed the engine and his hopes for victory. Sutton inherited the lead with McMurtrey and Sizemore giving quick chase. 1999 track champion Bobby Douthitt and Bill Tunny Jr followed in an intense battle for fourth and points leader RJ Norton Jr loomed. Doug Greig and Steve Frost rounded out the cars on the lead lap.

At the midway mark Sutton started to build a lead by inching away from McMurtrey. With 20 of the 27 cars still running on lap 80 Bill Tunny Jr and Bill Fortner smashed in the crossover. The collision ended Fortner's night, but Tunny continued despite significant damage to his now smoking car.

Sutton edged out ahead again, but the lapped car of rookie David Lee Byrd slowed him down to bring McMurtrey and Sizemore close again. Sizemore then made his move on lap 94 and pulled in front of McMurtrey. He then focused his #51 machine on Sutton and the two engaged in some thrilling side-by-side racing.

Sizemore and Sutton began bumping through the "8". The banging resulted in a puncture to the tire of Sutton on lap 110 forcing him to leave the track. At the same time McMurtrey saw his opening and fired to the front as Sizemore recovered. The "Mac Attack" now held down the lead with "The Rocket" in hot pursuit. On the other side of the track Douthitt and Norton were involved in their struggle for third. Open pits and excellent work by his crew allowed Sutton to rejoin the fray on lap 113.

McMurtrey turned it on down the stretch to pull away from Sizemore. Norton and Douthitt caught Sizemore and the three started a fight for second. That slowed them



2003 Jake's 150 Champion Curtis McMurtrey

enough to allow McMurtrey to build an insurmountable lead. Sizemore fought off the hard challenges from Norton and Douthitt and they finished in that order. Despite damage from the earlier collision and the loss of power steering and brakes, Bill Tunny Jr put up a courageous fight and finished fifth.

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- 1 Curtis McMurtrey
- 2 Rodney Sizemore
- 3 R.J. Norton, Jr.
- 4 Bobby Douthitt
- 5 Bill Tunny, Jr.
- 6 Doug Greig
- 7 George Sutton
- 8 Jeff Hizer
- 9 Mark Murello
- 10 Donnie Garrigus III
- 11 Casey White
- 12 David Lee Byrd
- 13 Jeff Shackelford
- 14 Steve Durham
- 15 Bob Foster Sr
- 16 Steve Frost
- 17 Christopher Green
- 18 Leonard Basham
- 19 Bill Fortner
- 20 Bruce Tunny
- 21 Steve Prine
- 22 Bobby Whitaker
- 23 Ben Tunny
- 24 Ronnie Rigdon
- 25 Danny Turner
- 26 Mark Tunny
- 27 Darrell Doty