May 5th 2018

By Mike Weber

River City Speedway kicked off its 34th season of stock car racing with the 2018 season opener May 5 at the Columbia County Fairgrounds facility in St. Helens. Drivers who recorded impressive Columbia County Racing Association main event wins included Dan Smith, Shawn Dorie, Terry King, Don Jenner, Chris Gaboury and Trenton Brogan.

Smith of Scappoose, started on the pole position of the Sportsman Division main and he led the 40-lap race from start-to-finish in his Alliance Automotive/Eaton's Tire & Auto Repair sponsored 2007 Chevrolet Impala. Defending champ Clyde White of Longview was second, followed by St. Helens drivers Bernie Lujan, Brad Beehler and Devon Reed of Longview.

Smith, 48, took fifth place in the 2017 series standings and clearly showed with his dominating performance that he'll be a contender for the title this year. It marked the first Sportsman main event win since 2016 for Smith, a former two-time CCRA Modified champion (2005, 2008).

"We had a good race with Clyde and it was lots of fun and it was a good night of racing," said Smith. "I want to say thank you for all the help from my pit crew chief Shawn Etheredge and also to my wife Val. We're going to race at Madras Speedway next week (May 12) in the Bill Mills Memorial Race and then we're going be back here and enter the Sam Brittain Memorial Race on June 9."

Kelso's Joel Davis, the defending champion in the Four-Cylinder Division, proved that he'll definitely be a frontrunner again this year. Davis, 57, led the first five laps on the quarter-mile clay oval track in his Economy Auto Wrecking 1996 Nissan Altima. Former series champion (2016) Bob Berg of St. Helens, then drove his Cozy Lawn Maintenance 1997 Dodge Neon alongside Davis and maneuvered past him on the back straightaway to take over the lead on lap six.

Berg, 54, led the next seven laps until he spunout in turn one on lap 14, bringing out a yellow caution flag. Gaboury, 48, took over the lead on the lap 14 restart and quickly gained a sizeable straightaway advantage over Berg by lap 20. Gaboury, of Battleground, continued to gain momentum, while zooming around the track very fast to extended his lead and win the 40-lap race by a half lap over runnerup Berg. Davis took third place, followed by Dan McDonald and Thane Landis. It marked the first race at the speedway in five years for Gaboury, a former Four Cylinder Division champion (2013).

"This is the first time ever this new car has even been on the track and it's a really fast car," said Gaboury, who was a two-time winner since he also won the Trophy Dash. "It's been a long time (five years) since I've competed in a stock car race, so I felt a little nervous and I had some butterflies. But then when you get into the car and get back on the track it just brings back the memories of how much fun I had in the past. The track conditions were pretty good and we sure had lots of fun. We might try to pursue the championship this year, but it all depends on what my dad (Dick Gaboury of Rainier) wants to do, because he's the car owner and co-driver too."

Longview's Josh Rodgers led the initial lap of the Dwarf Car main event, but it didn't take long for Shawn Dorie of St. Helens, to overtake him for the lead. Dorie moved up front on the second circuit and led the remainder of the 40-lap race with his Family Fun RV sponsored open-wheel Chevy Sedan two-third scale replica dwarf car. Doug McVae of Scappoose was a close second just one car length back. Rodgers took third, followed by Justin DeMars of Sandy and Guy Williams of Portland. Longview's Steven Schreiner was sixth and Teagan Fischer of Warren, finished seventh in her TFT Construction/Finish Line Graphics 1934 Ford Sedan Dwarf Car. Fischer, the defending series champion, won Heat Race 2 and she celebrated her 17th birthday May 6.

"It felt great to get a sweep, so I was pretty happy because it was the first time I've done that in a long time," said Dorie, who also won the Trophy Dash and Heat Race 1. "I had a little problem with the motor, but I held off McVae at the end of the race to get the win. I had lots of fun and so that's all that matters. This is just my second year driving Dwarf Cars and I love it. They're just as fast as the Modified Division cars that I've competed with in the past, but they're a lot more affordable."

Terry King of Warren was a two-time winner as he won the 40-lap Street Stock main event and Heat Race with his Ross Diesel & Auto 1987 Buick Regal. Portland's Randy Nutting was runnerup in the main, followed by Tom Zywicki of Portland and defending champ Greg Brumbaugh of St. Helens, took fourth. King, 47, was one of the top contenders in the series last year with one main event win and six top-five's, while taking fourth in the point standings. King demonstrated that he'll be a frontrunner again this season while he's hoping to have shot at the division title.

"It's good to start out the season with a win since it puts you up at the top of the point standings, so I'm pretty happy about that," said King, a third-year driver, who recorded his second main event win of his career. "I hope to win a few more races this year too. Everybody always tries to get that first win right off the bat in the season opener. I made some changes on the car in the suspension that seem to be working out pretty good. I just changed the whole setup on the car and so it's a better handling car in the corners, which is really important. Hopefully we'll have lots of good competition and some close racing which is what the fans want to see."

Former CCRA Modified Division champion Don Jenner (2012) of Vancouver showed that he's still a frontrunner at the speedway as he won the Modified main event and the Trophy Dash. Defending champ Stephen Kaptur of St. Helens, won the Heat Race and took fourth in the main with his Malar Performance Engines/Discount Race Car Parts sponsored race car.

Longview's Trenton Brogan, 14, had a clean sweep in the Tracer Division (youth's age 13-16). Brogan drove his Economy Auto Parts 1996 Nissan Altima to victory in the Dash, Heat and Main Event.

The second event on the 15-race schedule is Saturday at 5 p.m. at the Fairgrounds motorsports facility.