Sam Brittain Memorial Race June 16th

By Mike Weber

With the largest crowd of the season in River City Speedway's grandstands, the June 16 Sam Brittain Memorial Race definitely proved to be one well worth remembering with exciting racing and thrilling finishes throughout the evenings special Columbia County Racing Assciation (CCRA) event.

Local drivers Clark Tenney, Terry King, Bob Berg, Joel Beehler and Dennis Liebig certainly showed that they were inspired by the memory of Brittain as they each drove to main event victories on the quarter-mile clay oval track. The wins by the trio of dad's Tenney, Liebig and Berg undoubtedly made it a very happy Father's Day weekend for them.

Tenney won the Modified Division main, King captured the Street Stock Division main and Beehler won the Sportsman Division main. Berg, a former Four-Cylinder Division champion (2016), won the Four-Cylinder main and Dennis Liebig captured the Dwarf Car main event.

Vancouver's Chris West led all the way to win the main event in the new Super Stock Division main, along with earning a $500 prize. Craig Loomis was second, followed by Cody Smith of Scappoose and Bernie Lujan of St. Helens. Lujan celebrated his 49th birthday Saturday at the speedway. Broc Ross of Deer Island won the trophy dash, with Steven Nusom and Loomis winning the heats.

Tenney, 52, started on the pole position of the 13-car main and he took the early lead with his 21st Century Towing/David's Automotive sponsored open-wheel style race car. Doug Davenport was a close second throughout the race and the two frontrunners drove side-by-side for several laps midway through the 40-lap event. Davenport passed Tenney on lap 32 and seemed to have the advantage as he led the next two circuits around the oval.

Tenney regained the lead on lap 35, but then had some bad luck with a right front flat tire. Tenney exited to the pits and quickly made a change and returned to the front of the lineup as the race was under a yellow flag caution period. Tenney was in front on the lap 36 restart, but Davenport was close behind as their two cars were bumper-to-bumper for the last four laps. Tenney held on to win by just half a car length for the thrilling victory, including a special $500 first place prize.

Davenport was second, followed by the father/son duo of Brad Martin, Jeremy Martin and defending series champ Stephen Kaptur. Four of the top-five drivers were former CCRA Modified champs, including Jeremy Martin (2007) and Davenport (2011). Brad Martin won the trophy dash, with Davenport and Robert Jenner winning the heats.

"I had a good starting position on the pole and the car ran really well the entire race," said Tenney, a former Modified Division champ (2013). "Davenport probably had a faster car, but I was able to hold him off. I'm pretty excited to win the first annual Sam Brittain Memorial Race, which was something that I really wanted to do. Davenport was able to get ahead at one point, but then he got into some trouble with lapped cars and then I was able to regain the lead."

King, from Warren, started third in the 10-car Street Stock main and he took the lead on lap three after passing frontrunner and defending series champion Greg Brumbaugh of St. Helens. King led the remainder of the 30-lap race in his Ross Diesel & Auto 1987 Buick Regal to get the win by a straightaway length over Portland's Randy Nutting.

Brumbaugh took third, followed by Portland's Tom Zywicki, Herb Thomas of St. Helens and former three-time Street Stock champion Justin McMullin of St. Helens. Trevor Lively was seventh and Natasha Rye took eighth place in her first race this year. King was a two-time winner as he also won the trophy dash. McMullin and Nutting won the heat races.

"I can't be any happier with this car because everything is working out really well with it," said King, who earned a $500 first place prize. "It's handling really great, things are going well and I'm leading the point standings. It sure was nice to have a large group of fans attending the race and it's nice that we had lots of cars (79 total) participating in the Sam Brittain Memorial Race. Having more cars and more competition is always better."

Liebig started on the front row of the 16-car Dwarf Car main and led all the way to get the win in his TFT Construction open-wheel race car. There was a high intensity battle going on throughout the race for the runnerup spot as Jake VanOrtwick of Scappoose, Sandy's Justin DeMars and Jake Tupper of St. Helens, each moved into second at different points of the 30-lap event.

DeMars, 17, was in second on lap 23 and Tupper, 18, was in second on lap 24. Liebig remained in front throughout though to get the win by a straightaway length over VanOrtwick, with Tupper third and DeMars fourth. Tupper was a two-time winner as he won the trophy dash and heat with his TFT Construction/Freightwest Global Dwarf Car. Van Ortwick, DeMars and defending champ Teagan Fischer of Warren, also won heat races.

"This is only the second time that I've competed with the car, because it's a new one that I just recently bought and I felt pretty good to be driving it so well today," said Liebig, of Scappoose, who was competing in his first race this year at St. Helens. "It was sure a good race with VanOrtwick and Tupper. Those guys are both good drivers who are really hard to beat."

For Dan Smith of Scappoose, it appeared that he was well in control of winning the 40-lap Sportsman Division main with his 2007 Alliance Automotive Chevy Impala. Smith, 48, started on the pole position of the 13-car, 40-lap event and he led a majority of the race. Smith was well in control while building a 10-car length lead over runnerup Chris West by lap 25.

Smith, a former two-time CCRA champ (Modified 2005, '08) then encountered bad luck on lap 31. Smith and West were both trying to pass a lapped car on the front straightaway. Smith was inadvertantly bumped by another lapped car, which caused him to spunout near the end of the straightaway before heading into turn one. What happened next was a rather bizarre situation, as the Eaton's Tire & Auto Service 1978 Chevy Camaro driven by Smith's son Cody, then collided with his car, severely damaging both vehicles as the father/son duo were unfortunately unable to continue racing and exited to the pits.

"It was just bad luck and now we've got two badly damaged race cars that we'll have to repair, but that's just part of stock car racing," said Smith. "We'll get the cars fixed and we'll be back racing again later in the season. I had a good race with Chris West for most of the main and he did a good job."

West took over first place on the lap 31 restart and led for four laps until Beehler passed him on lap 35. Beehler, of St. Helens, led the final five laps to get his first ever Sportsman Division main event win with his CLT Trunking 1999 Chevy Monte Carlo. West took second, followed by Woodland's Devon Reed in third. West was a two-time winner as he took the checkered flag in the trophy dash and heat race. Sean Fox and Brad Beehler also won heat races.

"I've been competing in the Sportsman class for three years, so it felt good to finally get my first ever main event win," said Beehler, 25, a former CCRA champ (2011 Four-Cylinder Division). "I was in the back for awhile, but then I just kept working hard in the corners and trying to move towards the front. I knew that I had a faster car than West, so I felt confident that I could get past him."

Berg, of St. Helens, started up front in the eight-car Four-Cylinder Division main and he led all the way to get the win in his Cozy Lawn Maintenance/Eaton's Tire & Auto Service 1997 Dodge Neon. Berg had a sweep of the division as he also won the trophy dash and heat.

"I would like to thank my sponsors Green Lion and Eaton's Tire, because they've both helped me out a lot this year," said Berg. "My wife Tiffany is a big part of our race team as well. It was nice to get a sweep too, so I had a very good night and it was a lot of fun."

The sixth round of the 14-race CCRA series is June 30 at 5 p.m. at the Columbia County Fairgrounds facility in St. Helens.