

SPECIAL REPORT The 43rd Florida Governor's Cup 200

November 22, 2008



With the temperature dropping rapidly into the 40s at race time, the contingent of speed fans from The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club proved to be a hearty bunch as they eagerly awaited the start of the 43rd Annual Governor's Cup 200 event at New Smyrna Speedway. They warmly greeted the club's driver—Matt Bowers—during a half-hour autograph session in the stands, sending him off to do battle with a field of tough, seasoned Super Late Model veterans on the Speedway's high banks. This was designed to be a learning

experience for Matt in a field full of “teachers” and an event scheduled to be the longest of his young career. At age 17, this young driver is considered a rising star on Florida's stock car racing scene, with a great future ahead of him as he studies at the hand of one of the true “masters” of the sport, Dick Anderson.

Qualifying for the event produced no real surprises, as eventual winner Wayne Anderson set a fast lap of 17.364 seconds around the half-mile oval, with Tim Russell second at



17.368 and Bowers third at 17.395. Last year's winner Jeff Choquette was the fifth fastest qualifier at 17.453. The 26-car field took the green flag in their qualifying order, and Bowers in the #92 (“our car”...see hood photo at left) held third place in the running order for the first 21 laps, slipping to fourth on lap 21 when Choquette powered by. Then, on lap 27,

disaster struck the New Dixie Racing team entry when Bowers slipped out of the racing groove on turn four, slapped the outside retaining wall and ultimately blew a tire going into turn two. With heavy rear-end damage, his night was over, and he was credited with a 23rd place finish. As they say, “that's racin'”, but it was indeed a valuable learning experience for the highly regarded Bowers. All was not lost for the Anderson family, though, with Dick's son Wayne—one of the top drivers today in Florida—going on to dominate the event, leading the final 155 laps enroute to his third career win in The Governor's Cup series. He's now one up on his dad, who won the event



in 1988 and 1989 as a driver (and last year as car owner with Choquette at the wheel).

All-in-all, not a great night for the club, but certainly not a bad one. Our two busloads of race fans had another exciting trip, a good (but chilly) tailgate party, and a chance to spend time with our new driver. Matt continues to impress all of us with his poise and his personality, as well as with his prospects for the future. Without question, 2009 is looking more and more as a pivotal year for Bowers, especially as he reaps the benefit of Dick Anderson's careful guidance. We'll look forward to following his progress in the coming year and beyond that, and someday we'll be able to say "We knew him when..." As an example of Matt's already-established credibility, note that he finished third in the Sunbelt Super Late Model championship points race, a mere 88 points behind series champion and perennial favorite Tim Russell.

Here are some more photo highlights from the November 22 trip...



If it wouldn't have been so cold, you would see a lot more yellow in the stands!



Matt qualifying the #92



The #92 pit stall...the classiest on pit road!



Matt receiving pre-race instructions

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That's as close as you'll get to a smile from Buster



It just looks fast!



The field gets set to go



Wendy got pretty excited, until she found out it was just a show car!



The tailgate party starting up



Race fans enjoying the balmy weather!