

“Speedweeks” – New Smyrna Style

Sumter Express
Tuesday, Feb. 24, 2009
By Gerry Hafer

New Smyrna Speedway’s version of Speedweeks – officially known as the “World Series of Short Track Racing” – featured nine straight days of intense competition at this imposing half-mile concrete oval. More importantly for Sumter County, though, it also featured solid appearances by Wildwood’s famed Anderson family. Competing in the series’ premier Super Late Model class, the Andersons made their presence known repeatedly throughout the grueling nine-day schedule, taking on the strong competition offered by a field of Central Florida standouts like eventual World Series champion David Rogers, Tim Russell, and Jeremy Colangelo, along with former Floridian and now North Carolinian Jeff Choquette, 2007 ASA Late Model Series Champion.



Wayne Anderson turned in the most consistent performance for the Sumter County contingent, compiling a finishing average of 4th in the eight Super Late Model features. His results included third place finishes in the first four features and a commanding win in the seventh race, with a lowest finish of 8th. As a contender in every event, Anderson’s black No. 84 provided a constant measure of pressure for the rest of the field.

Although not experiencing as strong a performance as his son, family patriarch Dick Anderson (a.k.a “The King of the Florida Short Tracks”) also turned in a solid run during the World Series. His two entries – the No. 84x driven by Mt. Dora’s Matt Bowers and the legendary No. 92 driven by NASCAR Nationwide series driver Cale Gale – also made their presence known during the nine-day stretch. Gale posted an average finish of 7th for the two events he ran, while up-and-coming young star Bowers compiled an average 9th place finish for the four features in which he competed.

So, with all three Anderson cars averaging finishes in the top ten, it was a respectful World Series for the Wildwood delegation. The elder Anderson approached the series as a shakedown session for his recently re-built No. 92 entry, and as a training and experience session for his 17 year old protégé, Bowers. But Dick is a proven winner, and the absence of a win for either of his cars left him, in his words, “Totally frustrated.” Bowers was a bit more philosophical about the experience, calling it “An enlightening week for all of us, with a lot of struggles and ups and downs.”

As racing fans in Florida know, Dick Anderson may be frustrated right now, but he will be back in the Winner’s Circle in no time!



From left, Matt Bowers, Cale Gale, and Dick Anderson.

Gerry Hafer