

2013 points champions honored at Atlanta Dragway Banquet of Champions

Photos & story by Wanda and Tim Glover

Atlanta Dragway's finest racers enjoyed meeting again for the last event of 2013, the Atlanta Dragway Banquet of Champions, hosted by American Legion Post 127.

After the social hour when everyone got to catch up on the past few weeks, RFC chaplain Lloyd Shanks opened the evening with the blessing before dinner. Following dinner, the Jr Dragster contingent was recognized first for their accomplishments, followed by the rest of the competition classes.

A large amount of door prizes were given away, thanks to generous support from many sponsors. Doug Sherwood from Summit, Steve Moore of Autopart International, Nick Fontana and Robert Rogers of VP Fuels, K&N Filters, Bud Light, Coca Cola, Lucas Oil and Oakley were some, but not all of the supporting sponsors who helped make this evening a success.

All champions were awarded a victory cup and a special embroidered jacket.

The youngest champ, 2013 8-9 year old Jr Dragster champion Wallace Wilson was the first to get recognized. His speech was short and simple, "Thank God and

my dad." The next champ was 10-12 Jr. Dragster champion Nate "Hot Rod" Halsey (Halsey was the 2012 8-9 champ). He thanked God and his family for all their help. 13-17 Jr Dragster Champion Maddie Lee also thanked God, along with her mom and dad, and dedicated her championship to "my Daddy".

Next, Atlanta Dragway gave the Jr Dragster racers special awards that were voted on by their fellow racers. Chris Kittle won Best Appearing Car - younger Juniors, Nate Halsey won the Sportsmanship award, Cole Sheriff won Best Pit Vehicle and Rachel Flowers won Most Improved Driver. Maddie Lee won Best Appearing Car - older Juniors. Lynn Solesbee was awarded the Extra Eighth Mile Award for everything she has done to help the Junior Dragster program, and James and Cindy Rice were voted Employee of the Year by the Junior contingent.

"Big Car" special awards were then given out. Jeremy Hancock won Best Engineered Car, Don Chavous won Most Inspirational, Steve Wagner received the Bad Luck award. The entire "Wilson Gang" race team was then recognized with the Sportsmanship award, noting that part of their team was currently racing at Pomona



for the Summit National Championship. Billy Orsino was awarded Best Appearing (his motorcycle, of course). Debbie Blanton was then recognized as the Most Improved Driver, followed by her husband Stacy winning the Crew Chief Award, for fielding her car, Brian Smith's car and son Ryan's car. The last special award went to the starter, Robert Frizzell.

Mel Abney already has a few Sportsman championships behind him, his most recent being 2010, and he won the 2013 Sportsman crown by less than one round win against Steve Wagner. Abney thanked the track personnel for doing a great job, and thanked his wife Xena for making sure he has everything he needs when he leaves for a race.

2013 Street ET Motorcycle champion Jimmy "Cha Cha" Heisler apparently had trouble remembering his speech for his first time championship, so he wrote it out beforehand on what turned out to be an almost 100 foot long roll of paper. He thanked his wife Eeman (who finished eighth in the points), noting she was the number one gal in their class, and thanked all his sponsors. Super Pro Motorcycle champion Jay Rhyne has a number of championships under his belt, and thanked

the track crew along with Tim and Jennifer Sutton, noting he is planning to be out there for another 20 years.

Pro champion Chad Brewer thanked the Mayor of Hickory Flat, who has helped keep him in a good race car this year, and noted that he was finally going to have his own car, a Nova, ready for the 2014 season.

Super Pro champion Brian Smith was especially thankful to his teammates, Debbie, Ryan and Stacy Blanton. He began racing with Stacy Blanton in 1996, and mentioned Stacy taught him everything he knows. He then thanked Mike Savage and crew for an awesome facility and thanked his sponsors.

Following the awards, a moment of silence was observed for two members of the racing family who passed away this year, Mike Gunter (husband of Amy Gunter, who runs the clocks) and Amy Glover (daughter of track reporter Tim and Wanda Glover - Amy was track reporter for the 2008-2010 seasons).

After the moment of silence, Mike, Cody and Taylor Parkerson made a lot of racers and their families happy with the drawings for the door prizes donated by the many sponsors.



L-R Pro champion Chad Brewer Travis Bryant Wade Bryant Howard Warren.



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