

Youngest female ever to win at Senoia: Teenager Nelms is victorious in Late Model Sportsman

Hundreds of fans turned out Saturday night for the Senoia Raceway 'Fan Appreciation Night' and they were treated to a record setting night and witnessed a track first with teenager McKenna Nelms winning her first feature in the Late Model Sportsman division. Nelms became the youngest female to ever win a main event at the tough 3/8ths mile gumbo clay bull ring. The Newnan high schooler did it in grand style holding back a late race charge by former track champion Jason Williams to snag the checkered flag in front of a standing ovation in the grandstand.

Other winners on Saturday night included Columbus' Dalton Cook in the Limited Late Models; Brooks' 'Magic' Matt Dooley in Crate Late Model; Keith West of Powder Springs in the Hobby; Auburn's JJ Garrett in the Mini; McDonough's Robbie Wooddall in the Legends Cars; Lucas Pittman of Grantville in the Hot Shots and Dustin Smith in Bomber.

McKenna Nelms hammered the gas from the onset of the Late Model Sportsman feature catching fast qualifier Billy Stevenson of Locust Grove on the second lap. Nelms shot down low and stole the lead away building momentum every lap until Williams broke from the pack with eight laps remaining.

The former champion cut a near two second lead to almost dead even with a lap and half remaining. Williams and Nelms ran door to door as the white flag flew over them signaling the final circuit. Nelms held the low line while Williams ran up top. The two entered the final two turns and Williams wobbled giving Nelms all she needed to push her car out front for the final run to the finish line. Williams ended up second with Stevenson in third.

"She told me before the race that she was going to win tonight," said track chaplain Michael Coleman. "I snapped a photo of her just as she was going out of her pit area and

she smiled like always and then said this was her night."

The night also included a story line of broken track records.

A new layer of the track's signature gray gumbo clay was put down this past week and with the perfect amount of moisture creating a bit more grip, the track records fell early and often.

LaGrange's Dusty Jones broke the track record in qualifying for the Limited Late Models bettering the time set in October of last year by Senoia's Clint Smith. Jones beat that lap time by fifteen hundredth of a second. But Jones hold on the record was short lived, as only a couple of minutes later Dalton Cook surpassed his lap time by eight hundredths of a second giving him the new track record.

Cook then dominated the 30-lap main event for the Limited Late Models with Jones providing the chase the entire time. The lap times in the feature did not fall off much from the qualifying efforts which made for a very fast race. Season points champion Joey Armistead of Senoia completed the top three finishers.

The track speed records also changed hands in the Crate Late Model division. Three drivers ran faster than the previous track record set by Clint Smith in early March of this year. Douglasville's Mason Massey and Alabama's Cruz Skinner topped the speed charts with faster times than Smith before Matt Dooley posted the fastest of them all scorching the previous mark by a half second.

Dooley proved to be the fastest man in the feature race as well, as he led flag to flag to pick up the victory. Massey ran second until there was only five laps remaining and his car slowed to a stop causing a caution. Sharpsburg's Wayne Harbin used the final caution to get closer to Skinner and then made the pass to secure the runner-up spot behind Dooley. Skinner would come home



McKenna Nelms

in third place.

Track records were also broken in the Mini Stock and Legends Car qualifying rounds. Both JJ Garrett and Robbie Wooddall would go on to lead every lap of their respective features. Garrett sporting the topless body style that will be part of the Mini Stock look at the October 'Showdown at Senoia' event.

A wild wreck in the Bomber division hushed the crowd when Bomber track champion Dorough Bright tangled with Dustin Smith turn one. Bright got into Smith entering the turn with Smith spinning and then collecting Bright which sent him rolling roof first into the concrete exterior wall and then landing on his roof. Bright was extricated from his car feeling ok, but then later on taken to the hospital by his family.

Smith would recover from the skirmish to challenge for the lead. Byron's Brandon McDaniel raced hard for the final three laps of the feature and held off all attempts by Smith to cross the finish line first. But, post

race tech caught up to the middle Georgia racer as he was disqualified for an illegal body. This handed Smith the win and moved Milner's Ben Wells and Conyers Tim Harmon into the top three finishers.

Hampton's Jeff Robinson picked up his first career win at Senoia Raceway topping the Riley's Warriors Charger class. Robinson motored past previous winner Mike Abercrombie of Jackson before holding back Carrollton's Jordan Benefield for the win.

Lucas Pittman made his first appearance of the season a successful return winning the Hot Shot main event. It was Pittman's first career win at the bull ring.

The weekly divisions will now set their sights on the three-day 'Showdown at Senoia' special event on October 18, 19 and 20. The three day event will be comprised of practice on Thursday evening followed by two full nights of racing on Friday and Saturday. A full schedule of events for that weekend are available at www.senoiaraceway.com.