

West Coast Challenge Series Take to the High Banks at CA Speedway



Six spec racers took to the track under blue, sunny skies at California Speedway Saturday morning. TC took top spot in qualifying, setting a new track record, proving he can drive the high banks, and that his new motor has ponies. With TC on pole, Karen would start outside pole, with Rick Anderson, Mike Beeler, Ron Stebles and Tom Coon rounding out the field. The group formed up behind the CMC cars, and FFR's would take the third green flag in the 47 car field in Race Group B.

At the start, TC would get a tremendous run on the field, having motored away from the FFR field and passing half of the CMC cars before Turn 3. Karen was in hot pursuit, having passed a number of the CMC cars on the oval and followed TC into the infield at Turn 3. Rick Anderson and Mike Beeler held a mighty battle throughout the race, swapping positions 4-5 times as the laps waned on. This would be Ron Stebles and Tom Coon's first trip to the high banks, and both did a great job of picking their way through traffic and learning the track.



At the front of the pack, it was Karen chasing TC and gaining ground when, at mid-race, Karen's car lost all fuel pressure, and she had to come in. At the checkered, it was TC for the win, with Rick Anderson and Mike Beeler taking spots on the podium. Ron Stebles took fourth, Tom Coon fifth, and Karen would finish last. After the race, a dive into the fuel cell in the #28 revealed the fuel pickup line had come off the fitting...Simple fix, and the 28 will be ready to go in the morning. Mike Beeler's exhaust hanger broke during a brief off track excursion, but the FFR group made a quick parts search in the local area and he was quickly repaired and ready to go in the morning.

At lunchtime, the group was joined by an awesome showing of local FFROG's who brought out their awesome FFR rides. All feasted on a great BBQ, enjoying each other's company, and appreciated the talented skills that built each one of these beautiful cars. Later in the evening, the group was joined by the crewmembers from RJ Racing and SAE students, enjoying a Tri-tip and chicken BBQ as well as many bottles of cerveza....Racer 5 was a hit!



Thanks Rich, and thanks to all FFROG's that brought goodies and shared the day at the track with us racers. Nels/Marty....The cake was awesome.

Frank and Julie Maslowski (Frankeeski) came out for the evening, and we owe a debt of gratitude to both of them for pitching in to help with the after hours BBQ....We were pretty darned bushed after a big day of racing and all the festivities, and their help was beyond gracious! Both of them stood over the hot grill and tended to the fixin's while the group visited and enjoyed a night at the track...The tri tip and chicken were delicious.....Frank and Julie....All the racers send along a big Thank You!!!!



Sunday Race Report

The morning session would serve as a qualifying race for the FFR's and the CMC racers, and all six spec cars were on grid at 10:45 AM. As is tradition in the group, the grid would be inverted for the start of the AM qualifying race, which placed Karen on pole due to her last place finish in Saturday's race. Tom Coon would be outside pole, with Ron Stebles, Mike Beeler, Rick Anderson, TC McNett and the remaining CMC cars doubled up behind.



At the start, Karen took the lead (for a minute)....That was until TC hooked up and blew by the entire field by Turn 2...It was a donney brooke for all of the Challenge Series drivers the rest of



the race, with Rick and Mike Beeler fighting it out, all the while Tom and Ron were snaking through traffic and besting their previous day's times by many seconds. Karen would chase TC for the entire race, keeping a close distance between her and the 33, all the while being chased by a relentless Rick Anderson, who set his best lap ever at CA Speedway in the pursuit. Mike Beeler kept the heat on Rick throughout the session, and everyone had a great taste of what it's like to be predator and prey all at the same time...Talk about an exercise in driving your mirrors and running in hot pursuit! Nice driving!!!

By the end of the race, TC crossed the finish line several seconds ahead of Karen, while Rick had closed the distance on Karen, who held on for a narrow 2nd place finish. Rick would finish 3rd, Mike Beeler 4th, Ron Stebles 5th and Tom Coon 6th. Everyone raced clean and fast, and the grid for the afternoon race would be set (according to fastest times in the qualifier) as:

Pole: TC McNett

2nd: Rick Anderson

3rd: Karen Salvaggio

4th: Mike Beeler

5th: Ron Stebles

6th: Tom Coon

The afternoon race would have the FFR's and CMC's taking the third green flag. At the start of the race, Karen would get a great jump and take the lead through the oval into Turns 1-2. TC got hung up behind a slower CMC car, and Rick Anderson and Mike Beeler fought for position through the field, all knowing that the crucial Turn 3 (one lane wide) was approaching fast. TC, with great driving and a ton of motor, again outclassed the field, managing to narrow all of the gap the group had eked out and passing everyone at the entrance to 3. Karen sorted into 2nd place, with Rick Anderson and Mike Beeler duking it out for 3rd spot. Ron Stebles did a great job of picking his way through traffic, and set another personal best laptime in the race.

The 33 car field, a mixture of FFR, CMC, German Touring Series (GTS), Super Unlimited, Super Touring 1 & 2, and American Iron drivers all turned in a stellar performance. There were virtually no on track incidents, passing was clean, and the entire race was run without a caution...As a matter of fact, the entire Race Group B on track sessions were run without a single full course caution during the entire weekend. Great driving!

At the finish, it was TC for a clean sweep of the race weekend, with Karen, Rick, Mike, Ron and Tom rounding out the field. TC was the class of the weekend, and it was obvious that he came with his sights set on victory. When asked about his performance, he indicated that the help he received from Mark Dougherty in setting up the car at Nationals last year had really made all the difference in the handling and performance of the car. Hats off to Mark, 'cause that's one amazing car and driver!

1st TC McNett: 1:56.647
2nd Karen Salvaggio: 1:58.602
3rd Rick Anderson: 1:58.321
4th Mike Beeler: 1:58.901
5th Ron Stebles: 2:04.417
6th Tom Coon: 2:05.793

Tom Coon and Ron Stebles had great race weekends, and showed they have the right stuff for the high banks. For anyone that's flat-footed a racecar on a big oval, halfway up the banking, in traffic, with 25-30 MPH crosswinds, you know what courage, skill, and flat out grit it takes to keep your foot in it and push through everything in your being that's telling you to let up. Tom reports that he was amazed at just how well the cars stick on the banking, and found that more and more throttle is actually better and better. Ron enjoyed the driving experience on the big track, and found he was more than up for the challenge. Both drivers deserve big kudos for awesome performances! A bit more seat time, and we'll be seeing the #36 and #21 close in our mirrors, or looking at the trunks of these two racers!

Mike Beeler earned the most improved driver of the weekend, turning a personal best laptime which was near the previous lap record, and keeping constant heat on Rick Anderson...Clean, awesome driving!!! Big hats off again to Crew Chief Marilee Beeler for keeping that red beauty track ready...What a woman!

Rick Anderson posted his fastest time ever, and virtually matched last year's lap record, which had been held by TC McNett as the racers entered the weekend. Karen Salvaggio and TC McNett both broke the track records by a second in Saturday's race, with lap times dropping into the 1:54's. TC McNett would prove that he was king of the highbanks though, and go home with 3 race victories, and re-securing the track record at CA Speedway, with a 1:54.619...An amazing weekend for sure!

Next up the Challenge Series racers will be at Thunderhill on April 24-25, 2009. See you at the track!

Full Race Report, pictures, and comments on the [forums](#).