

Salvaggio Wins West Coast and So Cal Championships; McNett Sweeps Race Weekend

A hat-trick of victories, two championships on the line, and one Asp-end up in smoke....

The awarding of the 2010 Championship for the West Coast Challenge Series would all come down to this one final event. Five intrepid racers would make their way to the remote and twisting turns of Buttonwillow Raceway for the last race weekend of what had become a very long season.

Rick Anderson would be the sole Northern California racer to compete in all eight race events that comprised the 2010 West Coast Challenge Series. Rick's drive down Interstate 5, skirting some of California's most beautiful Central Valley farmland on his way to the track, would be a long one, but one of great satisfaction knowing that he had overcome the many challenges facing him after his last race at Infineon less than a month prior. Rick and his car



roll!

had sustained serious damage on the final lap at the last race, pancaking into the front straight wall at well over 90 mph after a safety vehicle had inexplicably entered the track directly ahead of the racers, and everyone had scattered like quail to avoid. Rick had spent the last three weeks virtually reconstructing the rear end of the car, and healing his own body in preparation for the last race. After a damage assessment that looked more like a parts list for an entire suspension system, he had spent the time replacing the rear end housing, both axles, differential, shocks (front and rear) A-arms, as well as "Band-Aiding" the body back together to make the one last race. Rick had already secured the Northern California Championship though, and he was ready to

Karen Salvaggio would be the sole Southern California racer to compete in all eight of the Challenge Series events this year. In her quest for the 2010 Championship, she had already logged more than 4,500 miles in her journey up and down the great State of California, competing at Infineon, Thunderhill, Willow Springs, California Speedway and Buttonwillow Raceway over the previous ten months. After a disappointing showing at NASA Nationals, Karen had come back to secure three victories at Infineon in October, as well as setting a new track record. She held a solid 95-point lead going into the final weekend, and needed to take the green and finish all three races to secure the championship.



The Southern California Championship would also be on the line this weekend, and it was shaping up as head-to-head battle between Nationals podium finisher, and 2007 West coast Champion TC McNett, and the reigning West Coast Champion Karen Salvaggio. A mere 40 points separated the two racers, and each had to bring

their A-Games if they were going to take home the championship. Rick Anderson and Mike Beeler were poised to battle it out for the remaining podium position, and all four racers were well-prepared for the challenge. The group was very pleased to have Series competitor Ron Stebles return to the race circuit for the weekend. Ron and his lovely wife Charlene had been attending to the planning of their daughter's wedding over the last few months, and it was very good to see them back in action at the track.

Friday evening found the racers enjoying a wonderful BBQ chicken dinner hosted by Diane and Rick Anderson, and of course, a few bottles of vino helped celebrate the eve of the final race weekend. Racers were met with clear skies on Saturday morning, but a looming forecast of rain had everyone looking to the north and east, hopeful that their 2:05 PM race would be run prior to the skies opening.

The group took to the track for the early morning warm-up, and it wasn't long before disaster struck. Rick Anderson had taken the green flag, and was a mere ¼ of a lap into his first run of the day, when he found himself inexplicably spinning at the top of Magic Mountain, and coming to rest at the crest of the hill, sideways across the track, facing oncoming traffic. He soon discovered that he was helplessly stuck there, as his car was completely un-moveable, and he was at the mercy of a flagger wildly waving the caution flag to his fellow competitors, who all (thankfully) avoided his disabled car, and managed to snake safely by the wounded #6 FFR. It would seem like an eternity for Rick as he sat there at the top of the hill, waiting for the safety crew to collect him from the track. His session would end unceremoniously with his treasured #6 swinging from the back of a tow vehicle, and carefully coming to rest on two jackstands (butts-up) in his pit.

All the way back to the pits, Rick was running through the Rolodex of baffling thoughts and linear lists of things that could have gone wrong, and it wasn't long before Rick had a sinking feeling.....After all of the valiant work, the tireless effort to repair the car, he had forgotten to fill the differential with fluid.....What was worse yet, was the fact that he had carefully written a detailed list of needed repairs and associated tasks on a white board in his shop, and a check of the list upon his return home would find a big, unchecked circle for "fill the diff".While all of the racers racked their brains with ideas of how to "fix it" (this is a can-do, never say die group you know), it soon became abundantly clear that Rick's race weekend was over before it began....Truly disappointing.

With Rick on the sideline, the four remaining racers would qualify without incident, and the grid was set for the afternoon race.

Saturday Qualifying : TC McNett, 2:11.227, Karen Salvaggio, 2:14.006, Ron Stebles, 2:19.905, Mike Beeler, 2:20.076

TC McNett held the track record coming into the race weekend, and he would prove once again that he owns this track in the #1 configuration. TC would be at or near the track record with each session, and virtually left the remaining racers in the dust every session, easily driving to victory.

In the main race, Ron and Mike would battle each other for several laps, before Mike finally

pulled into a comfortable lead. Karen would hold a steady 2nd place throughout, and Ron would best his qualifying time by almost a full second. A spectacular lightning storm was brewing to the east and south, but the rains held off, and the race was run in dry conditions.

Saturday Race Results: 1st: TC McNett , 2:13.093, 2nd: Karen Salvaggio, 2:16.317, 3rd: Mike Beeler, 2:18.104, 4th: Ron Stebles, 2:19.198

As is the tradition at the final event of the year, racers headed out to the Willow Ranch restaurant with the Camaro-Mustang Challenge folks for an evening of fun, camaraderie and some good eats on Saturday evening. Racers found the restaurant in complete darkness, as was the entire town of Buttonwillow due to a lightning strike that blew out a transformer. The group festivities were not to be way-layed though, as the good folks at the Willow Ranch fired up a generator, and a few candles, and the party went on.....Lots of fun!!!!

2010 West Coast Championship

- 1st Karen Salvaggio
- 2nd Rick Anderson
- 3rd Tom Coon
- 4th Jeff Awender
- 5th Ron Stebles
- 6th TC McNett
- 7th Tim Konkol
- 8th Mike Beeler
- 9th Sern Clementson
- 10th Rich Norgrove



Sunday Race Report

Following a good night's rest (and an extra hour of sleep), racers were ready to go Sunday morning. The weather had cleared overnight, with only high clouds remaining. Rick had spent the better part of Saturday afternoon hammering, tweaking, and generally persuading the differential into submission, finally extracting the C-clip pin late Saturday afternoon so the gears could be removed.....With the assistance of his fellow racers, Rick's car was loaded into the

trailer early on Sunday morning, and he would roll out of Buttonwillow to make the long trip home.

The Warm-up session was uneventful, and the qualifying session would be run as a Qualifying Race, with an inverted field based on Saturday's race results. Ron Stebles would lead the FFR group to the green flag, and it would be a drag race to the first turn for all the racers. Ron and Mike led the group into the first turn, with TC in third. Karen dropped back to fourth place, and as the group sped into the esses, it was TC taking the lead, just inching by Ron and Mike, with Karen giving chase at the rear. TC was again out of sight within a lap, and Karen managed to get by Ron and Mike, and settled into 2nd place.

TC would not look back, and in the process, would set a new track record at a smoking fast 2:10.931. Congratulations TC!! Mike clocked a 2:19.141 in the qualifier, with Ron posting a 2:21.914 in the qualifying session. The racers would be again be running with the Camaro-Mustang Challenge cars, as well as the German Touring Series and Super Unlimited/Super Touring cars, and the mix was interesting.

In the qualifying race, Ron and Mike would do great battle on track, but would find themselves also battling to avoid the many off track excursions by racers from other groups. At one point in the race, there were four caution flags on course, all for four separate incidents of off-track adventures. The off-track excursions were so extensive, that the race director cautioned racers at the driver's meeting that they would be DQ'd in the afternoon race for dropping wheels (or full cars) off track.....In the end, it was TC for the victory in the qualifying race, with Karen securing 2nd place, Mike crossing the line in 3rd, and Ron taking 4th place.



Grid for the afternoon race would be set from best times in the qualifying race. With TC on pole, the green flag fell and the #33 was gone. Karen, Mike and Ron would give chase, but TC took a quick and comfortable lead. Mike's car developed overheating issues within a few laps, forcing him to retire from the race, and bringing his season to a close earlier than anticipated. TC, Karen and Ron would persevere, and run the remaining laps without incident. In the three laps he was on track, Mike Beeler would set his best time of the weekend.

Sunday Race Results

- 1st TC McNett 2:12.454
- 2nd Karen Salvaggio 2:13.649
- 3rd Ron Stebles 2:20.772
- 4th Mike Beeler 2:17.418

2010 Southern California Championship

- 1st Karen Salvaggio
- 2nd TC McNett
- 3rd Mike Beeler
- 4th Rick Anderson
- 5th Ron Stebles
- 6th Tom Coon
- 7th Tim Konkol
- 8th Jeff Awender



Congratulations to all of the West Coast Challenge Series racers for a great season! The 2010 schedule is in the works, and will be posted as soon as it's finalized. Best wishes for a restful and enjoyable winter!

