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## **Great Lakes Factory Five Racers Brave the Elements at Putnam Park**

Friday, May 13

Great Lakes racers Brian Sanders – 49, Gregg Wellinghoff Sr. – 29, Gregory Wellinghoff Jr. – 77 enjoyed a pleasant Friday at Putnam Park. Sanders took a few practice laps on a fast track in the morning, before it began to slow down in the afternoon. The Wellinghoff's spent the day getting used to their, new to them, two car trailer. The small group of Great Lakes regular racers retired from the track early in order grab dinner and be fresh for what looked to be a long Saturday.

Saturday, May 14

The racers anticipation of a long day definitely came true. The morning was cool and dry and practice went well for the racers. Fast practice time was set by Gregory Wellinghoff Jr. – 77 at 1:22.543, although all 3 racers were within .3 seconds of each other. Qualifying again saw the 3 racers setting very similar times with the 77 on the pole at 1:22.178 followed by Gregg Wellinghoff Sr – 29, and Brian Sanders – 49, who battled a left rear showing excessive wear on him.

The racers had almost 4 hours to relax before their race and this gave them a lot of time to watch the weather radar. Rain showers popped up above and around the track throughout the afternoon, with skies threatening to open up on the track. As race time approached a large cell could be seen on radar moving towards the track and an ominous looking sky prompted the Wellinghoff's to both change over to rains, while Sanders chose to stay on slicks, but change his left rear tire. As race time grew closer, radar showed the cell starting to break up, but other cells forming around the area. The sky started to clear as well. This prompted Wellinghoff Jr. to change back to slicks for the race. As the racers sat on the grid with a light sprinkle falling on them it was Wellinghoff Jr. on proven Toyo slicks, Wellinghoff Sr. on Toyo full treads, and Sanders on a mismatched set of Toyo slicks that he hoped would be the right choice. It looked as though Wellinghoff Sr. may have made the right choice with rain threatening to come down hard at any time. As the green flag fell on a dry track Wellinghoff Sr. pulled out in front of Wellinghoff Jr., who missed a shift on the green, thus Sanders received yet another lousy start by virtue of the car in front of him. The racers flew down into turn 1 and Wellinghoff Jr. managed to get around Wellinghoff Sr., who backed out of the throttle a little earlier than he needed to, due to concerns over whether the turn would be slick. The racers came through turn 2 nose to tail and as they came into turns 3 and 4 things got hairy in front of them as the AI pack got together with multiple cars going off track and effectively shutting down the outside lane. As the Factory Five racers came through turn 4, Wellinghoff Jr. checked up concerned that the AI car of TJ Bain was spinning back onto the track, Wellinghoff Sr. gave a slight bump to the rearend of Wellinghoff Jr. and Sanders barely avoided doing the same to Wellinghoff Sr. The racers got through 5 and 6 without incident but found more AI cars off track in turn 7. As the racers came across the line for the first lap it was Wellinghoff Jr., followed by Wellinghoff Sr. and Sanders. The field began to spread itself out and Wellinghoff Jr. took advantage of the dry track while it



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lasted to open up a large lead over his father on the full treads and Sanders on his untrusted slicks. On lap 8, the rains came and the track became slick in a hurry. Wellinghoff Sr. spun off track on laps 8 and 9. Sanders pulled into the hot pit on lap 9 to see if the shower would blow over. Wellinghoff Jr. slowed his car way down and had his hands full trying to keep it on track. Wellinghoff Sr. began catching up with Wellinghoff Jr. very rapidly from lap 10 forward, but ran out of time as the checkers were thrown early amid numerous off track excursions by other racers. Wellinghoff Jr. came across the finish line in first, followed by Wellinghoff Sr. Sanders finished third following his early exit from the rainy conditions.

The racers pulled their cars straight into their trailers and proceeded to swap stories around all the activity seen during the race. As some of the other cars were towed into the paddock it was apparent how severe some of the body contact was. The racers were grateful that their cars were in one piece and retired from the track for the evening.

Sunday, May 15

A steady rain greeted the racers following breakfast on Sunday morning. Brian Sanders and Gregory Wellinghoff Jr. took advantage of a brief lull before practice to change over to their full tread rain Toyo's. Wellinghoff Jr. decided to go out for morning practice while Gregg Wellinghoff Sr. and Sanders sat in the trailer under a blanket. As Wellinghoff Jr. pulled onto the wet track, he wished he was back in the trailer under a blanket. Wellinghoff Jr. worked on educating himself on where the wet line is around Putnam when Sanders pulled onto the track in front of him and Wellinghoff Jr. dropped in behind Sanders to watch his line around the track. Unfortunately Wellinghoff Jr. only got to see 8 turns of wet line before Sanders spun off track. Having had enough fun Wellinghoff Jr and Sanders both pulled back into the paddock.



Qualifying saw Wellinghoff Jr. go out to get more practice in the rain, while Wellinghoff Sr. and Sanders chose to stay dry. The starting grid was set with Wellinghoff Jr in front followed by Wellinghoff Sr and Sanders.

None of the showers had moved out of the area prior to race time and the racers were greeted with a wet racing surface for the race. As the green flag flew, Wellinghoff Sr. again took off to an early lead followed by Wellinghoff Jr. and Sanders. The wet conditions led to Sanders retiring to the trailer on the first lap, leaving the Wellinghoff's to figure out who the better rain racer was between the two of them. Wellinghoff Jr. fell in behind Wellinghoff Sr. during the race, hoping to keep up with him and hoping he would make a mistake, as the wet conditions would make trying a pass risky. On lap 9, Wellinghoff Jr. finally found an opportunity coming out of turn 7 as Wellinghoff Sr. bobbled and Wellinghoff Jr. was able to take the lead going into turn 8. Wellinghoff Jr. held the lead into the closing laps of the race, increasing his lead a little each lap. With 2 to go, Wellinghoff Sr. pushed hard to catch up and was able to close the gap as



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the two Factory Fives took the white flag. Going into turn 1 the two cars were nose to tail again and a slow ST1 car on the outside of turn 2 caused a tight squeeze for the racers to get through the corner. Unfortunately Wellinghoff Sr. bobbled in the corner causing Wellinghoff Jr. to spin off track giving up the lead and win to Wellinghoff Sr. Wellinghoff Jr. was unable to catch back up and finished second.

The racers pulled their cars into their trailers and headed for home.

Next up for the Great Lakes Racers is Grattan Raceway in Michigan.

**Series Director Note:** Congratulations to Greg Wellinghoff Jr. on his first series victory!

Gregory Wellinghoff – 77

For complete results and a list of lap records, please see [www.nasagreatlakes.com](http://www.nasagreatlakes.com) or [www.nasamidwest.com](http://www.nasamidwest.com)

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