

1985 USAC NATIONAL LATE MODEL SEASON

THE LATE MODELS FIRE UP

By: Pat Sullivan

On August 18, 1985, at Lincoln Park Speedway in Putnamville, Ind., promoter Mike Farrar was delighted to welcome a standing room only crowd to the inaugural USAC Late Model race. Among the 35 competitors on hand were a bevy of future Hall of Fame drivers including Billy Moyer, Ray Godsey, Kenny Brightbill, Larry Moore, Bob Pierce, Jack Boggs and Don Hobbs.

Grayson, Kentucky's Jack Boggs was the night's fastest qualifier, but with a six-car invert, Brightbill started the 40-lap feature from the pole. He was joined on the front row by racing auctioneer Charlie Sentman. The Waveland, Ind. driver had been forced to earn his spot in the feature via the 15-lap last chance event.

Sentman, armed with a Larry Shaw built race car, led every lap and was chased to the line by Boggs, Larry Moore, Moyer, and Bob Pierce. Sentman was \$3,000 richer at the end of the night, but his tears in victory lane indicated that this win was more than a matter of dollars and cents. He should have been proud given the quality of the field he had just topped.

The tour now headed to Glasgow, Ky. for an August 31 date at Rickie Pollock's Barren County Speedway. The total purse of over \$18,000 for the Kentucky Klassic was the highest posted in 1985. Whiteland, Ind. racer and constructor C.J. Rayburn was a driving force behind the creation of the USAC Late Model series, and on this night, he was delighted to nail down the best qualifying effort on the 3/8-mile dirt oval. In the end, he needed a win in the last chance race to bump into the show and did just that. Due to mechanical issues, Charlie Sentman was the slowest in time trials among the 33-car field but won the fourth heat to nail down a starting spot in the fourth edition of this lucrative event.

Greensburg, Ind. driver Gary Herbert, racing for owners Marion and Sue Martin, fired off from the pole but relinquished the lead to Don Hobbs with just four circuits remaining in the 40-lap race. Hobbs, managing the driving chores for famed owner Harry "Gene" Dalton, brought his mount home first while Charlie Sentman, who started in the 22nd spot, nipped Herbert at the line for the runner-up position. Phil Gregory and Eddie Pace rounded out the top-five. Hobbs, who began his Hall of Fame career in Columbus, Ind. in 1953, eventually became the first driver to pilot the C.J. Rayburn house car. This proved to be the Bloomington, Ind. driver's only series win. At this point, Charlie Sentman had a solid grip on the championship.

For the third race on the docket, the series moved to the southeast corner of the Circle City to take on the 1/5-mile paved Indianapolis Speedrome. It was an unusual choice. None of the current point leaders ventured to the hardtop. However, Charlie Sentman provided a ride for driver Steve Ellis. Promoter John Stiles had a 100-lap race in store for the Indiana Short Track Championship and many of his regular stars were on hand to race with USAC. There were some interesting additions to the field, chief among them being USAC champion and Indianapolis 500 veteran Tom Bigelow.

Qualifications were held a day in advance of the competition and found Rick Tomasik the fastest among the 46 cars in attendance. Bruce Tunny fired off from the pole position and led the first 71 tours. Charging from his seventh starting position was Speedrome regular Mike St. John. Once in front, St. John was never headed, and he was followed by Tunny, Clyde Brown, Steve Ellis and Dean Griffin. It was Mike's first oval win of the season, but he had already taken the checkered flag 20 times in figure-8 racing at the bullring in 1985. In the days ahead, Mike was an easy choice for the track's Hall of Fame.

The early October finale came during the 4-Crown Nationals at Ohio's Eldora Speedway. Qualifications and heat races were held on October 5 with the last chance and feature events slated for the following day. Future Hall of Fame driver Charlie Swartz was the fastest qualifier in the 27-car field. Johnny Parsons was making a rare late model start on this day along with Danny Milburn and Bill Rose, drivers who made their primary mark in open wheel racing. Heat races were taken by Swartz, Ray Godsey and John Lawhorn while Lee Hoffman scored the last chance event.

Swartz looked to be in command on the imposing high-banked half-mile track, but on lap 34, C.J. Rayburn muscled to the front for good. Swartz settled for the bridesmaid spot with John Lawhorn, Noel Witcher and Ray Godsey rounding out the top-five. This win underscored that Rayburn was an outstanding racer, and as late as 1995, he took a track championship at Indiana's Brownstown Speedway. Yet, today, he is best remembered as one of the most successful constructors in late model history. He was an inductee in the inaugural class of the National Late Model Hall of Fame in 2001 (oddly enough, as a car owner) and was also honored with the Sagamore of the Wabash in Indiana. Furthermore, the native of the Bluegrass State was also a Kentucky Colonel.

With a ninth-place result at Eldora, Charlie Sentman was the series driver and entrant champion. C.J. Rayburn and Gary Herbert tied for the second position among series drivers. Keeping with the tradition established by the stock car series, it was decided that a Rookie of the Year would be named. In this unusual situation, the honor was bestowed on Sentman.

Sentman credited help from builders Larry Shaw and Dave Dayton while power was the handiwork of the talented Glen Niebel.

"They said I couldn't win the big ones," Sentman said with a grin. "But I guess Putnamville kind of turned that around. I've won lots of 100 and 150 lappers before, but I've received more recognition from the Lincoln Park victory and the USAC championship than from all of my other victories combined."

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1985 USAC NATIONAL LATE MODEL RESULTS

USAC NATIONAL LATE MODEL CHAMPIONSHIP RACE RESULTS: August 18, 1985 – Lincoln Park Speedway – Putnamville, Indiana – 5/16-Mile Dirt Oval

QUALIFYING: 1. Jack Boggs, B4, Flaughner-13.886; 2. Paul Shafer, 20, Shafer-14.063; 3. Bob Pierce, 39, Ren-14.084; 4. Ray Godsey, K1, Godsey-14.101; 5. Charlie Sentman, 99, Sentman-14.140; 6. Kenny Brightbill, 19, Brightbill-14.198; 7. Larry Moore, 14, Malcuit-14.206; 8. Terry Messenger, T5, Messenger-14.230; 9. Don Hobbs, 96, Dalton-14.238; 10. Billy Moyer, 21, Moyer-14.308; 11. Steve Barnett, 89, Barnett-14.310; 12. Gary Herbert, 32, Martin-14.333; 13. Kevin Claycomb, 28, Claycomb-14.463; 14. Greg Eldridge, E1, Eldridge-14.497; 16. Edwin Anthony, 2, Anthony-14.528; 16. Mike Gibbs, 11x, Gibbs-14.679; 17. Junior Pace, 03, Bowman-14.699; 18. Ernie Barrow, 100, Powell-14.713; 19. Doug Ault, 25, Riggle-14.763; 20. Brian Boller, 05, Boller-14.772; 21. Dennis Boknecht, 22, Boknecht-14.791; 22. Larry Taylor, 9, Taylor-14.797; 23. Don Duncan, 98, Duncan-14.829; 24. Russ Petro, 155, House-14.844; 26. Bill Shaw, 10, Shaw-14.870; 26. Bobby Carnes, 15, Engle-14.927; 27. Paul Crockett, 45, Bowns-15.040; 28. Butch Sager, 54, Sager-15.050; 29. Lee Hoffman, 11H, Hoffman-15.072; 30. John Holt, 44D, Combs-15.147; 31. Dr. Tom Black, 8, Black-16.030; 32. Kyle Clearwater, 101, Clearwater-16.432; 33. C.J. Rayburn, 1, Rayburn-16.711; 34. Dusty Chapman, 98x, Chapman-NT; 35. Ed Griffin, 2G, Griffin-NT.

FIRST HEAT: (10 laps) 1. Lee Hoffman, 2. Dennis Boknecht, 3. Jack Boggs, 4. Kevin Claycomb, 5. Charlie Sentman, 6. Bill Shaw, 7. C.J. Rayburn, 8. Don Hobbs, 9. Junior Pace. NT

SECOND HEAT: (10 laps) 1. Ernie Barrow, 2. Bobby Carnes, 3. Billy Moyer, 4. Paul Shafer, 5. Kenny Brightbill, 6. John Holt, 7. Greg Eldridge, 8. Larry Taylor. 2:36.86

THIRD HEAT: (10 laps) 1. Paul Crockett, 2. Bob Pierce, 3. Steve Barnett, 4. Larry Moore, 5. Edwin Anthony, 6. Doug Ault, 7. Dr. Tom Black, 8. Don Duncan. 2:32.44

FOURTH HEAT: (10 laps) 1. Russ Petro, 2. Butch Sager, 3. Brian Boller, 4. Terry Messenger, 5. Ray Godsey, 6. Kyle Clearwater, 7. Mike Gibbs, 8. Gary Herbert. 2:31.04

SEMI: (15 laps) 1. Charlie Sentman, 2. Ray Godsey, 3. Don Hobbs, 4. Kenny Brightbill, 5. Gary Herbert, 6. Junior Pace, 7. C.J. Rayburn, 8. Bill Shaw, 9. Doug Ault, 10. John Holt, 11. Edwin Anthony, 12. Don Duncan, 13. Greg Eldridge, 14. Kyle Clearwater, 15. Dr. Tom Black, 16. Larry Taylor. NT

FEATURE: (40 laps) 1. Charlie Sentman, 2. Jack Boggs, 3. Larry Moore, 4. Billy Moyer, 5. Bob Pierce, 6. Kenny Brightbill, 7. Kevin Claycomb, 8. Terry Messenger, 9. Don Hobbs, 10. Steve Barnett, 11. Brian Boller, 12. Russ Petro, 13. Ernie Barrow, 14. Bobby Carnes, 15. Dennis Boknecht, 16. Butch Sager, 17. Lee Hoffman, 18. Paul Shafer, 19. Ray Godsey, 20. Paul Crockett. 10:20.19

FEATURE LAP LEADERS: Laps 1-40 Charlie Sentman.

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USAC NATIONAL LATE MODEL CHAMPIONSHIP RACE RESULTS: August 31, 1985 – Barren County Speedway – Glasgow, Kentucky – 4th Annual Kentucky Klassic – 3/8-Mile Dirt Oval

QUALIFYING: 1. C.J. Rayburn, 1, Rayburn-13.67; 2. Edwin Anthony, 2, Anthony-13.82; 3. Don Hobbs, 96, Dalton-13.92; 4. Jeff Napper, 112, Napper-13.92; 5. Wayne Coakley, 33, Coakley-13.94; 6. Gary Herbert, 32, Martin-14.09; 7. Paul Feistritzer, 88, Feistritzer-14.10; 8. Eddie Pace, 31, Shaw-14.10; 9. Ned Lucas, 7L, Lucas-14.13; 10. Phil Gregory, 3, Sellars-14.24; 11. Terry Messenger, T5, Messenger-14.27; 12. Jim Harter, 7, Jenkins-14.31; 13. Brian Boller, 05, Boller-14.31; 14. Kevin Claycomb, 28, Claycomb-14.31; 15. Ernie Barrow, 100, Powell-14.32; 16. Fats Coffey, 101, Coffey-14.37; 17. Rick Carneal, 21c, Carneal-14.38; 16. Steve Barnett, 89, Barnett-14.38; 19. Ricky Spalding, 31s, Spalding-14.56; 20. Joe Williamson Sr., 11w, Williamson-14.60; 21. Bill Shaw, 10, Shaw-14.64; 22. Joe Williamson Jr., 353, Williamson-14.65; 23. Lee Hoffman, 11H, Hoffman-14.71; 24. Billy Woolridge, 22, Sampson-14.84; 25. Dale Atwood, 5, Atwood-14.90; 26. Eddie Carrier, 11s, Carrier-14.95; 27. Larry Hagewood, 1H, Hagewood-15.11; 28. David Thomas Jr., 98, Thomas-15.27; 29. Larry Bullington, 47, Bullington-15.30; 30. Louis Brady, 20x, Brady-15.54; 31. Wendell Bratton, 24, Bratton-16.07; 32. Glenn Andrew, A1, Andrew-16.08; 33. Charlie Sentman, 99, Sentman-16.94.

FIRST HEAT: (10 laps) 1. Dale Atwood, 2. Rick Carneal, 3. Wayne Coakley, 4. Larry Bullington, 5. Bill Shaw, 6. Brian Boller, 7. Ned Lucas, 8. C.J. Rayburn. NT

SECOND HEAT: (10 laps) 1. Eddie Carrier, 2. Steve Barnett, 3. Gary Herbert, 4. Phil Gregory, 5. Edwin Anthony, 6. Joe Williamson Jr., 7. Wendell Bratton, 8. Kevin Claycomb. NT

THIRD HEAT: (10 laps) 1. Ricky Spalding, 2. Terry Messenger, 3. Don Hobbs, 4. Glenn Andrew, 5. Larry Hagewood, 6. Lee Hoffman, 7. Ernie Barrow, 8. Paul Feistritzer. NT

FOURTH HEAT: (10 laps) 1. Charlie Sentman, 2. Eddie Pace, 3. Billy Woolridge, 4. Fats Coffey, 5. Joe Williamson Sr., 6. Louis Brady, 7. Jim Harter, 8. David Thomas Jr., 9. Jeff Napper. NT

SEMI: (15 laps) 1. C.J. Rayburn, 2. Jeff Napper, 3. Rick Carneal, 4. Edwin Anthony, 5. David Thomas Jr., 6. Louis Brady, 7. Lee Hoffman, 8. Paul Feistritzer, 9. Bill Shaw, 10. Brian Boller, 11. Joe Williamson Sr., 12. Joe Williamson Jr., 13. Jim Harter. NT

FEATURE: (40 laps) 1. Don Hobbs, 2. Charlie Sentman, 3. Gary Herbert, 4. Phil Gregory, 5. Eddie Pace, 6. Ned Lucas, 7. Rick Carneal, 8. Louis Brady, 9. Ricky Spalding, 10. C.J. Rayburn, 11. Paul Feistritzer, 12. Jeff Napper, 13. Billy Woolridge, 14. Dale Atwood, 15. Joe Williamson Sr., 16. Fats Coffey, 17. Terry Messenger, 18. Wayne Coakley, 19. David Thomas Jr., 20. Eddie Carrier, 21. Glenn Andrew, 22. Larry Bullington, 23. Steve Barnett, 24. Edwin Anthony. NT

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USAC NATIONAL LATE MODEL CHAMPIONSHIP RACE RESULTS: September 21-22, 1985 – Indianapolis Speedrome – Indianapolis, Indiana – Indiana Short Track Championships – 1/5-Mile Paved Oval

QUALIFYING: 1. Rick Tomasik, 7, Wessel-13.482; 2. Wayne Arnold, 1w, Love-13.558; 3. Clyde Brown, 28, Brown-13.965; 4. Mike St. John, 1, Stone-14.008; 5. Steve Ellis, 99D, Sentman-14.013; 6. Charlie Reed, 41, Reed-14.129; 7. Earl Brown, 94, Brown-14.140; 8. Tom Bigelow, 44, Franklin-14.181; 9. Ronnie Clontz, 19, Clontz-14.247; 10. Bruce Tunny, 4, Graham-14.254; 11. Bob Poole, 43, Poole-14.263; 12. Billy Arnold, 25, Arnold-14.266; 13. Bobby Ellett, 6, Ellett-14.268; 14. Bill Frazer, 5, Frazer-14.354; 15. Jerry Carter, 117, Carter-14.369; 16. Rich Fenwick, 9, Fenwick-14.398; 17. Jim Wampler, 12, Wampler-14.427; 18. Fred Deal, 95, Deal-14.505; 19. Bill Tunny Jr., 8, Tunny-14.591; 20. Kenny Sizemore, 88, Sizemore-14.600; 21. Dean Griffin, 10, Taylor-14.602; 22. Jack Dossey Jr., 7x, Dossey-14.636; 23. Herb Rose, 99, Jones-14.653; 24. Donnie Garrigus, 15, Garrigus-14.680; 25. Bob Coffey, 07, Rick-14.703; 26. Jeff Hizer, 18, Hizer-14.761; 27. Steve Brown, 68, Tarter-14.802; 28. Gene Huston, 9J, Huston-14.882; 29. Jerry Gordon, 75, Gordon-14.926; 30. Guy Strobe, 30, Strobe-15.007; 31. Andy Douglass, 32, Douglass-15.017; 32. Charles Coles, 76, Coles-15.019; 33. Kevin Phegley, 85, Phegley-15.040; 34. Joe Lowe, 20, Lowe-15.192; 35. Al Spears, 80, Spears-15.391; 36. Rance Harmon, 16, Peters-15.480; 37. J.R. Harris, 16x, Harris-15.602; 38. Dave Gardner, 37, Gardner-15.641; 39. Steve Ridener, 64, Ridener-15.663; 40. Manny Aguilar, 31, Aguilar-15.704; 41. Richard Schaefer, 51, Schaefer-15.845; 42. Herb Shears, 89, Bowles-16.026; 43. Chris Clark, 83, Clark-16.180; 44. Ray Joe Fager, 0, Byrd-17.091; 45. Steve Black, 45, Black-NT; 46. Johnny Johnson, 89x, Johnson-NT.

FIRST HEAT: (10 laps) 1. Herb Rose, 2. Bob Poole, 3. Bill Tunny, 4. Steve Brown, 5. Al Spears, 6. Andy Douglass, 7. Steve Ridener, 8. Jerry Carter, 9. Chris Clark. NT

SECOND HEAT: (10 laps) 1. Billy Arnold, 2. Rich Fenwick, 3. Donnie Garrigus, 4. Rance Harmon, 5. Kenny Sizemore, 6. Manny Aguilar, 7. Ray Joe Fager, 8. Charles Coles, 9. Gene Huston. NT

THIRD HEAT: (10 laps) 1. Kevin Phegley, 2. Jerry Gordon, 3. Jim Wampler, 4. Bobby Ellett, 5. Dean Griffin, 6. Bob Coffey, 7. J.R. Harris, 8. Richard Schaefer, 9. John Johnson. NT

FOURTH HEAT: (10 laps) 1. Bill Frazer, 2. Joe Lowe, 3. Jack Dossey Jr., 4. Fred Deal, 5. Dave Gardner, 6. Herb Shears, 7. Jeff Hizer, 8. Guy Strobe. NT

FIRST SEMI: (25 laps) 1. Jerry Carter, 2. Bill Tunny, 3. Steve Brown, 4. Al Spears, 5. Donnie Garrigus, 6. Andy Douglass, 7. Chris Clark, 8. Steve Ridener, 9. Rance Harmon, 10. Manny Aguilar, 11. Kenny Sizemore. NT

SECOND SEMI: (25 laps) 1. Bobby Ellett, 2. Jim Wampler, 3. Dean Griffin, 4. Jack Dossey Jr., 5. Dave Gardner, 6. Herb Shears, 7. Fred Deal, 8. J.R. Harris, 9. Jeff Hizer. NT

FEATURE: (100 laps) 1. Mike St. John, 2. Bruce Tunny, 3. Clyde Brown, 4. Steve Ellis, 5. Dean Griffin, 6. Ronnie Clontz, 7. Tom Bigelow, 8. Bobby Ellett, 9. Steve Brown, 10. Bill Frazer, 11. Joe Lowe, 12. Jim Wampler, 13. Bob Poole, 14. Herb Rose, 15. Jerry Carter, 16. Bill Tunny, 17. Rick Tomasik, 18. Jerry Gordon, 19. Charlie Reed, 20. Earl Brown, 21. Kevin Phegley, 22. Rich Fenwick, 23. Wayne Arnold, 24. Billy Arnold. NT

FEATURE LAP LEADERS: Laps 1-71 Bruce Tunny, Laps 72-100 Mike St. John.

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USAC NATIONAL LATE MODEL CHAMPIONSHIP RACE RESULTS: October 5-6, 1985 – Eldora Speedway – Rossburg, Ohio – 4-Crown Nationals – 1/2-Mile Dirt Oval

QUALIFYING: 1. Charlie Swartz, 1s, Swartz-17.355; 2. Gary Herbert, 32, Martin-17.764; 3. C.J. Rayburn, 1, Rayburn-17.922; 4. Charlie Sentman, 99, Sentman-17.951; 5. Steve Dailey, 49x, Klemfelter-18.030; 6. Kevin Claycomb, 28, Claycomb-18.162;

7. Don Seaborn, 77JR, Wood-18.174; 8. Larry Scott, 49, McComas-18.227; 9. John Lawhorn, 41, Lawhorn-18.228; 10. Noel Witcher, 1w, Witcher-18.369; 11. Ray Godsey, 14, Sloan-18.526; 12. Kenny Moore, 2m, Moore-18.762; 13. Joe Doty, DO, Doty-18.784; 14. Johnny Parsons, 67, Minglin-18.788; 15. Steve Barnett, 89, Barnett-18.825; 16. Lee Hoffman, 11H, Hoffman-18.839; 17. Larry Yantis, 59, Keller-18.868; 18. Danny Milburn, 11, Grillot-18.928; 19. Dusty Chapman, 98, Chapman-19.031; 20. John Whitney, 7up, Whitney-19.075; 21. Glenn Andrew, A1, Andrew-19.244; 22. Jim Fleming, RV, Sauber-19.286; 23. Rick Tomasik, 81, Stanbrough-19.584; 24. Steve Ellis, 99s, Sentman-19.821; 25. Bill Rose, 75, Rose-19.866; 26. Bobby Carnes, 15, Engle-19.899; 27. Terry Pearson, 43, Franklin-20.010.

FIRST HEAT: (10 laps) 1. Charlie Swartz, 2. Jim Fleming, 3. Noel Witcher, 4. Charlie Sentman, 5. Dusty Chapman, 6. Don Seaborn, 7. Lee Hoffman, 8. Bill Rose, 9. Joe Doty. 3:02.58

SECOND HEAT: (10 laps) 1. Ray Godsey, 2. Johnny Parsons, 3. Gary Herbert, 4. Larry Yantis, 5. Larry Scott, 6. John Whitney, 7. Rick Tomasik, 8. Steve Dailey. 3:03.43

THIRD HEAT: (10 laps) 1. John Lawhorn, 2. Steve Barnett, 3. C.J. Rayburn, 4. Kevin Claycomb, 5. Steve Ellis, 6. Danny Milburn, 7. Terry Pearson, 8. Glenn Andrew. 3:05.91

SEMI: (10 laps) 1. Lee Hoffman, 2. Joe Doty, 3. Rick Tomasik, 4. Terry Pearson, 5. Glenn Andrew, 6. Steve Dailey, 7. Bill Rose. 3:20.70

FEATURE (40 laps) 1. C.J. Rayburn, 2. Charlie Swartz, 3. John Lawhorn, 4. Noel Witcher, 5. Ray Godsey, 6. Gary Herbert, 7. Dusty Chapman, 8. Jim Fleming, 9. Charlie Sentman, 10. Danny Milburn, 11. Johnny Parsons, 12. Steve Barnett, 13. Lee Hoffman, 14. Steve Ellis, 15. Larry Scott, 16. Larry Yantis, 17. Terry Pearson, 18. Rick Tomasik, 19. Joe Doty, 20. John Whitney, 21. Don Seaborn, 22. Kevin Claycomb, 23. Glenn Andrew, 24. Bill Rose. 19:22.85