

Lebanon Valley Closes Book on '05 Season

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West Lebanon, NY: In order for Lebanon Valley Speedway to open the door to their 54th Season, they first had to close the door on the 2005 season. And they did it in fine fashion, as the drivers and teams gathered to celebrate this past season with a two day extravaganza held at Herbert's on Birch Hill banquet facilities in Castleton, NY on Friday and Saturday night.

The drivers in all divisions shared in yet another record point fund this year, reaching over \$87,000.00, with the lions share banked by legendary Brett "the Jet" Hearn in the Big Block modified division.

Friday night saw the Pure Stocks, Limited Pro Stocks, and Pro Stocks get their honors from this past season, with Pete Wiegand taking home the big trophy and commemorative point Champion Jacket in the pure Stock division.

The previously titled Rookie division, now named the Limited Pro Stock class was captured by Jim Cronk in 2005.

The Pro Stocks saw Rob Yetman capture his 2nd consecutive title in '05, driving his Beer Belly Bob's #7 to over a half dozen times in 2005. Additional awards in the Pro Stock included the "Most Improved Driver" award captured by Mike Middleton, and the "Driver of the Year" was awarded to Kevin Arnold.

On Saturday night, the Sportsman, 358 Modifieds and Big Block Modifieds shared the stage for their honors. With just about all the teams on hand to share in the honors, the night was filled with a couple of surprises, and a couple of hard farewells.

The Sportsman class were on the stage first with the top ten in points getting honored, leading up to the champion, "Alligator" art Collins taking to the stage to receive his check and trophies. And as no surprise during his speech, he reiterated the words he spoke at the end of last season stating that he had no plans for 2006 and is looking forward to taking some time off.

Also on hand was the 2005 Point Champion in 358 modified division, Andy Bachetti. The driver of the Old Forge Powersports #4 stated he was honored, but his goals for 2006 is to be at the head table in the Big Blocks come the time next year!

The Big Block Modifieds were up next, with the "Jet" taking center stage for his 2005 honors. After posing with Howard Commander for the ceremonial photo and receiving his lion's share of the point fund, the driver of the Gable Auto

Stores, and Gable Motorsports #1 spoke to the audience on hand about his tenure at the Valley, and the people that got him to the head table. "Jody Gable is one of the most committed owners I have ever race for.", explained Hearn. "To come in here, in someone else's territory and be as prepared as we were... with what seemed like a nearly brand new car every week, what more could a driver ask for." He later stated that he was honored to work with his team over the past 4 years, especially Jocko (Marterer) and Scottie (Blair) who were just a pleasure to work with.

Hearn capped off his remarks to say that he was returning one more time to the Valley on a Saturday night to try and capture his first Opening Night victory, Saturday April 15th, driving for his new owner, the Madsen Overhead Doors #20.

In addition to those accolades, there were other additional awards given out during the festivities. The Lebanon Valley "Board of Directors" Awards given to the driver, owner, sponsor or fan that has supporting racing above and beyond. This year's award was given to Mike Thoma, of Thoma Tire of Nassau, NY. With support and sponsorship on cars in every division at Lebanon Valley, as well as the fan and driver favorite Road Side humorous sign displays every week placed next to his business on Rte 20 for all to see on their way to the speedway every Saturday, he is a big supporter of the speedway and the drivers.

The other driver awards dished out this year were the prestigious Jeff Yasinsac "Mr. Excitement" Award. This year's recipient was Jeff Watson, a second generation driver of the famous #22, currently running in the Sportsman division. Also the Sportsman Rookie of the year was handed out to yet another 2nd generation driver, Neil Stratton in his familiar #87.

With the conclusion of the 2005 season behind us, now we look to 2006 with a lot of action just waiting to be uncorked. Next on the agenda for the cars and stars of the "Valley of Speed" in the annual Rolling Thunder Car Show coming Saturday and Sunday March 25th and 26th at the Latham Circle Mall, in Latham, NY. Then the doors of the famed "Valley of Speed" open for their 54th Annual Season Opener, Saturday April 15th, 2006!

For more information visit our website at www.LebanonValley.com, or call the speedway offices at (518) 794-9606, or (518) 794-9965.

With the 2005 season coming to a close, the staff and management from Lebanon Valley Speedway would like to thank the following for making the Points Banquet possible: Carquest Auto Parts, New England Racing Fuels, Ackner Racing Equipment, Boomer's Performance, DMC Racing Products, Area Auto Racing News, Gator Racing News, Kustom Keepsakes, Thoma Tire, WJ Blueprint & Digital Design, the 50/50 Raffle Team, the Lebanon Valley Board of Directors, and of course Heather O'Dell.