

Turner continues domination with win at the New York Grand Prix



Thursday June 10th, 2010. Story by Ed Sutcliff

The Watkins Glen International race track is surrounded by lakes, scenic mountain views, and beautiful national forests. While the tranquility of the terrain creates an atmosphere perfect for quiet vacations, its rolling hills also provide the base for a track layout which has consistently produced some of the most exciting road racing in North America.

Known to race fans as “The Glen”, the famous road course race track has a rich 50 year history of hosting exhilarating events populated by some of the most successful race drivers in the world. The United States Grand Prix was run at the track for twenty straight years between 1961-1980, and over fifteen professional racing series still utilize the track’s challenging layout to measure the road course skills of their drivers.

Twenty-five members of the Red Sox Racing League returned to The Glen on Thursday evening to test their skills on North America’s fastest road course. Race fans lined the 3.4 mile course, eager to watch last season’s points champion and this season’s points

leader, Les Turner, defend his position against a pool of talented drivers hungry for a win.

Although Turner was quick in the practice and qualifying sessions, several RSR drivers served notice they were up to the challenge as they bested him for positions on the starting grid.

Darren Kersey led the field after posting an impressive qualifying lap of 1:45.307. Terry McCuin started the race in second place with a lap time of 1:45.481. Barry Blocker (1:45.494), Scott Husted (1:45.566), Les Turner (1:45.754), Ed Sutcliff (1:45.825), Jeff Thomas (1:46.166), Robinson Shields (1:46.185), Kevin Kyle (1:46.221), and David Holzwarth (1:46.287) filled rows two through five on the starting grid. Jim Kepford, Jeff Sharp, Bill Hadden, Divina Galica, Mike Montesi, William Kabel, Robert Latuga, Eric Porterfield, David Pyner, Bill Pawluckie, J. Paul Jones, Chad Tracy, Michael Baley, and Kermit Gentry completed the grid.

McCuin was forced to pit with electrical problems almost immediately after the race went green. Most of the field drove conservatively on the first lap, but early mistakes by six drivers almost ended the night for several teams. Early favorite Montesi was out of the race on lap one, then race leader Kersey was forced to retire on lap six. Blocker led a group of six cars which were able to avoid mistakes and slowly pull away from the field. Their racing produced heated battles which looked as though they could last the entire race.

A over-aggressive effort at turn ten of lap 11 muddied the waters however, as race leader Blocker and the 3rd place car of Husted collected a group of cars while sliding into and across the entry of turn eleven. Shields was forced to retire from the race due to damage suffered in the accident. Turner inherited the lead as he cleared the accident scene without damage, then spent the rest of the race watching Sutcliff's car get smaller in his rear-view mirror. Turner eventually won the race with a 2.6 second lead over Sutcliff.

With the battle for first and second all but decided after the lap 11 mishap, the remaining RSR drivers fought hard to secure top-10 finishes. Kyle (3rd) and Thomas (4th) finished

within a second of each other after Thomas was able to pull off a daring pass of Holzwarth on lap 17. Holzwarth kept his composure after the pass and finished in 5th place. Kepford finished in 6th place, while Sharp managed a late race pass to claim the 7th position. Tracy (8th place), and Blocker (9th place), were the only drivers still on the lead lap when Turner took the checkered flag. Pawluckie completed the top-10.

Galica (11th place) missed a top-10 finish after she was forced to pit for repairs on lap 13. Cook (12th), Kabela (13th), Pyner (14th), Latuga (15th), and McCuin (16th) were the only other drivers still on the track when the race ended. McCuin validated his second place starting position by posting the fastest single lap of the race (1:46.177), and the fastest overall lap average (1:46.959). But for the unexplained electrical issues, McCuin could have been the first driver to challenge Turner's win RSR streak.

Although his continued success over the other RSR drivers is beginning to leave fans with the impression Turner and Teamdraft will not be satisfied until they have achieved world domination, Turner was both humble and gracious in victory. "I was not the fastest car this week at the Glen, I just took advantage of other's mistakes and brought home another win for Teamdraft". "I couldn't shake Sutcliff like I did the last time we ran here, so either he is stealing my team's setups, or someone with real road course talent has been coaching him. I suspect the former, but our internal security has not yet detected any breaches of the vaults containing our setup documents."

Sutcliff, Kyle, and Thomas were all just happy to have finished the race in one piece. "The lap eleven incident between the leaders unfolded like a slow motion movie" said Sutcliff. "One car was sliding through the grass on my right as I exited turn ten, and another car was sliding into the outside wall in turn eleven. I saw Turner slip through the carnage unscathed, so I just aimed for the gap and tried to keep pace with him as we got onto the front stretch. I felt badly for Shields. He was all over me before getting tangled up in that incident."



Kyle tried not to watch his rear view mirror as his teammate chased him down in the final laps. “Luckily I saved my tires because I ran my fastest lap of the race on lap 30 to keep Thomas behind me.” Kyle’s finish vaulted him 11 positions in the points race, placing him into the number 5 spot after two races.

Thomas echoed Turner’s earlier comments about the team, saying “I am really proud of my team. We took 4 of the top 5 positions, an outstanding event for Teaddraft and some great racing!”

Turner holds a twenty point lead in the championship race as RSR drivers travel to Wisconsin for the Milwaukee Beer 100 next week.