

## LES TURNER SOAKS THE FIELD AT THE MILWAUKEE BEER 100



Thursday June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Story by Ed Sutcliff

Located just minutes from Lake Michigan, the Milwaukee Mile racetrack in West Allis, WI was the site of this week's Red Sox Racing League race, "The Milwaukee Beer 100". Originally used as a 1-mile horse track in 1876, the facility began hosting various forms of auto races in 1903. It is located on the Wisconsin State Fair Grounds and has been used for other sporting events throughout its storied history. The Green Bay Packers played two games a year on the track's infield during the 1930s, and the track was the site of the 1939 NFL Championship game between the Packers and the New York Giants. RSR drivers were excited to join the track's history as they prepared for their 100 lap race.

Dark clouds which threatened rain cooled the atmosphere to a cool 75 degrees before race time. Like the weather, a cool and confident Les Turner entered the race as the reigning RSR points champion, the current season point leader, and the winner of the last five RSR races. He left the event with an even larger points lead after driving to his sixth victory in a row.

Bill Hadden earned the pole by posting the fastest qualifying lap (26.735). Darren Kersey grabbed the second position with a qualifying lap of 26.758. Rows two through five were filled by Les Turner (26.808), Jeff Thomas (26.848), Terry McCuin (26.865),

Ed Sutcliff (26.874), Jeff Sharp (26.893), and Eric Porterfield (26.905). Kevin Kyle, Andrew Feldman, David Holzwarth, Barry Blocker, Michael Baley, Jim Albertson, Divina Galica, William Kabela, Dennis Heaney, Wilbur Gildersleeve, Jr, Robert Latuga, David Pyner, Bill Pawluckie, Tony Cook, Chad Tracy, and Kermit Gentry completed the starting grid.

Although most of the RSR drivers looked fast during pre-race practice, jittery nerves caused by the pressure of tight traffic and high speeds forced eight cautions which caused thirty of the 100 laps to be run behind the pace car. The pace of the race was constantly impacted as the cautions occurred early and often. Kyle was forced to retire after just one lap, and Baley's car was involved in an early spin which eventually forced him to retire on lap 9. Pyner was the next driver to retire, followed closely by Galica who had electrical problems. Early favorite Kersey retired after suffering wheel damage while scraping the wall on lap 33. His pit crew tried to keep Kersey in the race during a pit stop, but the car was too damaged to repair. Sharp, who had kept pace with the lead group during the first half of the race, retired from the race on lap 53.

Avoiding trouble and seizing on the few passing opportunities offered on the oval track, Turner worked his way into the lead spot after just ten laps. Despite constant pressure from McCuin, Turner would not relinquish the lead as he consistently outgunned the field on restarts. If Turner's confidence coming into the race was high, it had to have climbed to new levels once he realized the race might be his to lose. McCuin tried every trick in the book to spook Turner into an error, but Turner did not flinch as he kept McCuin's car behind him. Turner spoke highly of his competition after the race. "It was a great run by Terry McCuin tonight, he was having some electrical problems on the restarts, but it was firing on all cylinders once we went green. I tried everything to shake him on the restarts, but he was having no part of it. Great run for JT right behind him too!" McCuin finished the race just .153 seconds behind Turner. "Les ran a great race. There was no getting by him. I was on his rear wing waiting for a mistake, but he didn't make any. It was another great run for TeamDraft taking the top three spots. I'm happy with that."

Thomas finished in 3rd place, just ahead of Sutcliff. Their race produced an extremely close finish with both drivers posting identical average lap times of 37.981. "I was worn out at the end... pressured all night by Ed Sutcliff, I think I had my head in my mirror more than what was going on in front of me, so I concentrated and did my best to hold Ed off as I just didn't have anything for Les and Terry." Sutcliff was frustrated at missing the podium. "I came into tonight's race with a goal of keeping pace with Turner in the point battle, but Les was just too strong. It was almost impossible to make passes at this track, but Les once again found a way to do it. I was fortunate to have climbed two

spots tonight. I'm pretty sure Thomas has ice in his veins because I was trying everything I could to distract him and he never wavered from the pressure.



Feldman (5th place) and Holzwarth (6th place) both took advantage of late race passes to earn their finishing positions. Feldman's race strategy worked as he held off Holzwarth. "For the first half of the race, Wilbur, Holzy and I fought for 9th or 10th place. Around lap 40 I was ahead of them as they fought for position. I tried to save my tires in the middle section of the race. At around 3/4 of the distance, Barry, Eric and Bill Hadden had worse tires than me and I was able to pass them one by one with Holzy close on my tail. I ended up in 5th spot, just behind Sutcliff. Holzy was charging hard and had saved his tires even more than me. He took a look inside a few times but I was able to keep him behind me."

Holzwarth echoed those comments when interviewed about his battle with Feldman; "I qualified in 11th and managed to climb into the 6th spot" "I had a really great race with Andy and Wilbur, and had to wait for Wilbur to make a mistake before I could get by him as we were so equal. I needed a longer run to do well as I was getting passed early on at every restart. I just left the car in 5th and ran with it. Don't think I ever flat footed a lap as I was saving rubber for the ending laps but the timing of the last caution messed me up in my strategy to get by Andy. Don't know that I had anything for him any way as he was saving tires too. I was lucky enough to keep it off the wall and get a great finish. I was looking for a top 5 but some nights you got to take what you can get."

Gildersleeve turned a poor starting position into a top-10 finish as he climbed from the 18th grid position to finish 7th in the race. "I'm not sure what happened, but I never could get the car dialed in during practice", said Gildersleeve. "My crew kept working on the chassis right up to the starting grid, and I was confident their effort would help me make some passes in the race. I'm looking forward to getting back to the road courses next week."

Blocker also clawed his way to a top 10 finish after a disappointing qualifying run. "We thought the car was faster than it showed in qualifying, but the field was extremely strong so we just had to trust that our setup would hold up during the race. Finishing in 8th place was a decent outcome, but I'm expecting to be on the podium soon."

Tracy won the race "Hard Charger" award by finishing in 9th place after starting in the 23rd starting position. "It took me almost 75% of the race to work my way into 11th place. I managed to avoid the spins and incidents that caused each of the cautions, then just kept focusing hard on cracking into the top 10. Our team was very happy with the result tonight."

Hadden was not as enthused about his 10th place finish. "I started on the pole and had a fast enough car to have remained in the hunt for the win tonight, but we just did not have any luck. We slipped down to 4th place soon after Les passed us for the lead, but then I got back into 3rd place and thought I would be able to battle for the lead again. Unfortunately, the tires went away late in the race. I was just hanging on for the last 30 laps. We'll be back in the hunt at Laguna Seca."

Albertson (11th), Cook (12th), and Kabela (13th) were the only other drivers still on the lead lap when when Turner took the checkered flag.

RSR drivers head to California for the Laguna Seca "Damn it's hot in Cali Grand Prix" next week.