



SPEEDWAY RACERS SAVE THE BEST FOR LAST

Article By: Richard Haight
Photos By: Chuck Null

We've written about Speedway before, one of the fastest and most exciting forms of motorsports on earth. It was "Drifting" before people started incinerating tires for fun and money! There are Speedway leagues around the world, and teams that race teams from other cities and countries from around the world. But the reality is that the pandemic more or less killed most motorsports for almost 2 years. After a two-year enforced "Hiatus", the show goes on, and people and racers are loving it! In California there are tracks from the north, Auburn, California to the south coast, Costa Mesa, all with a strong following! Weekly events from May to September.

One of the best venues is Industry California's "Industry Grand" which hosts races every Wednesday night for enthusiastic fans and racers alike. Each year one of the most watched and awaited events is the annual Connor Penhall Memorial

Championship. Connor was the late son of 4-time World Champion Bruce Penhall. Penhall, who was the first man to bring the World Speedway Championship back to America after 44 years of European domination. Not only did he win the Championship, but the season Finale was held on American soil for the first time, at the Los Angeles Coliseum.

It was Bruce's second World Singles Title, and he won it at home! It wasn't until 1981 and the revival of "Class-A" or Speedway Racing in America, that the Title returned to these shores, when Bruce won the 1981 Individual World Title at London's Wembley Stadium. He repeated in 1982 at the Los Angeles Coliseum, and added the World Pair's Championship (with Bobby "Boo Ga loo" Schwartz) at Chorzow Poland, and the World Team Cup at London's White City Stadium, with Kelly Moran, Scott Autrey and Bobby Schwartz- All total? 4 World

championships! Bruce is one of the nicest guys you could meet, and takes the time to meet and greet as many of the fans as possible.

The Speedway Racers normally save the "Best for last", as the season's Championships wind down, and are decided at the end of the season, but there is one more round left this year. Nevertheless, last Wednesday night saw some of the best racing of the year. Normally, the Connor Penhall Memorial is by invitation only, to the top Division 1 riders racing at one of the many tracks in America. However, California's Broc Nichol, who grew up here, but now races for the Glasgow Tigers in Scotland, traveled back to compete for the victory and the beautiful hand-painted Troy Lee Designs helmet that comes with it! This year, both the California and the AMA National Championships have featured the best known and best riders from all over. But the reality is

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that in spite of all of the best being in the hunt every week, it has been almost a "One Man Show", with a young Californian named Max Ruml, better known as "Mad Max", winning (almost) every event since May. Mad Max used to race in the "Pair's" Championships with his older Brother Dylan. But this year Dylan chose to go to Europe to gain more International experience, and now rides for the Oxford (UK) Cheetahs.

In his absence, from the weekly shows at different tracks, to all three rounds of the National Championship, Mad Max has won every final except one! And to honest, that was kind of a "Fluke" as Mad Max threw away the Main Event Final by accidentally rolling through the starting gate tapes, which is an automatic "Penalty" and so he was excluded from the re-start! Very uncharacteristic, especially for "Mad Max"!

Nevertheless, coming into this event, as a result of his near perfect record, many people thought that Max would simply run away with this event as well... In spite of being near perfect all season long, Wednesday was full of surprises and up-sets. "Mad" Max Ruml and others, including 10 Time National champ Billy Janniro, 2016 Connor Penhall Memorial Champ, Austin "On The Throttle" Novratil, Main event winner Gino Manzares, 250 National Champ Slater Lightcap, and Aaron Fox, suffered upsets along the way. No one turned in a perfect 15 point score for the night!

Billy Janniro's only victory of the night came at the expense of "Mad Max" in their heat race match-up. But other than that, Billy was trying so hard that he crashed twice! The second time was in the Semi-Final where he took out Aaron Fox, and as the rules called-for, got himself excluded for causing the accident. Scratch one of the top 5 riders in California! Names that you don't see all that regularly in the win column, Louie Mersaroli,

Slater Lightcap, and 60+ year old Shawn "Mad Dog" McConnell, all had wins, and Aaron Fox had 2 wins and 3 seconds on the night for a 12 point score to get him into the semi-finals. To no one's surprise, Broc Nichol had a near perfect 13 points from 4 wins and a 3rd, and he hadn't traveled from Scotland to lose.

After 20 4-man heats, and 2 four-man semi-finals were finished, the final came down to "Mad Max" Ruml, Broc Nichol, young Louie Mersaroli and Austin Novratil, who won the last (Pre-Pandemic) Connor Penhall Memorial in 2019.

After the usual track inspection and kicking of the surface that riders do to get the maximum grip off of the line, Broc and Mad Max chose to line up at opposite sides in the #4 and #1 positions, with Austin Novratil and Louis Mersaroli between them. When the gate went up it was Mad Max with his usual great start. Broc was a little slow out of the gate, and was in third behind Austin Novratil, but only for 2 laps. He ran Austin down in just under 2 laps and set off after Mad Max.

The spectators were on their feet cheering as Broc charged forward. By the white flag, less than a wheel length separated the pair. Entering the 4th lap, Broc went to the outside to carry more corner speed, which is normally "Mad Max's" usual game, but it was not to be, and in the last 50 yards Broc nearly got caught by Austin Novratil coming around to the inside.

At the finish you could have covered the first three of them with a "California King" sized sheet. At the line, it was Ruml, Nicol, Novratil and Mersaroli. Max is serious about his racing, but when he wins a big one, and this year that has been ALL of them but one, the joy is genuine. Like a kid with a triple scoop ice-cream cone, "Mad Max" was glowing with an ear-to-ear grin. Immediately after

taking the flag, Max was on fire! However, just as quickly as he won, Max rode over to Broc, stopped his bike. and then gave him the biggest hug and a high-5!! On track, they will cut you off, push, shove and elbow past you to get to the front, but afterwards they are genuinely joyous to have the great competition. Stick around, next week's season final event should be crazy!







