

Quite clearly the January 2009 Scott Darley Memorial \$50,000 to win sprintcar race at Tyrepower Parramatta City Raceway was the finest race at the track in recent memory, perhaps ever. It certainly pays dividends to import the best there is in the world of sprintcars. I have watched racing all over the world for many years, but Parramatta certainly served up something special for Scotty's memory. The track conditions were outstanding over both nights, with the second having the widest, smoothest and fastest racing line I think I can ever recall at PCR. You could simply not have had any better.

Arriving at the venue on **Friday January 2nd, 2009** for night 1 it was encouraging to find the raceway curators had worked through the night to completely rip and slash the clay. Congrats to everybody, in particular Wayne Baines and Steve Rhind who worked 18 hour days and nights to get it right. However the dramatic temperature fall in the late afternoon took everyone by surprise and the thousands of gallons of water dropped on the track were still there when hotlaps were due to commence.

There was no choice but for all the drivers to partake in the longest wheel packing session in living memory. The unusual January temperature made it feel like the \$50k had been relocated to Warrnambool!! As things were to pan out on night 2, the 71 track packing laps that **Steve Kinser** did proved to be highly beneficial for him. Eventually the track came in and after hot laps and qualifying, we had the first heats at 8.10pm on a surface that surely couldn't get any better.

After a poor Speedweek experience Daryn Pittman would have welcomed his win in Heat 1, whilst PCR's latest hero Ian Madsen came from 7th to qualify directly into that night's A Main. The surprise of Heat 2 was the relegation of likely WSS champ Brooke Tatnell to the B, while pint sized Brad Sweet, USAC's 2008 Belleville Nationals midget champion, (no pun intended) showed his class in Heat 3. But it was the last heat that took the "best of" honours with **Kraig Kinser** showing his class in a great drive out of 4. The surprise was New Year's Day victor Danny Lasoski failing to qualify.

Steve Kinser and Jason Meyers started adjacently on the front of the first dash and we were about to experience the intensity of what happens nightly in the US. **Kinser** got the jump but Meyers was that close he could have read the manufacturer's name on the King's tail tank. I think **Kinser** must run the only sprintcar in the world which has a rear view mirror, because at no time did he not know exactly where Jason wanted to go. Either that, or his ears have eyes. Schatz was to experience that phenomenon 24 hours later as well.

The second dash saw a side of Jason Sides that we hadn't seen since his memorable slide job battle with Trevor Green at ODU 1. After qualifying 2nd, to fast time man **Kinser snr**, Sides blitzed the favourite in the Pick 'N Payless J&J in the dash. And it was good to see, as although Jason enjoys his time out of the seat, he hasn't had much success on track lately with his last Outlaw feature win coming in Canada in 2007. Back in the pack, **Kraig Kinser** received a helping hand from Robbie Farr on the back straight, with **Kinser Jr** displaying his displeasure to his Dad's East Coast Pipeline team mate at the end of the race. Perhaps he was reminding Farr that he has a long memory, should Robbie ever contemplate a World of Outlaws career.

The B Main was a Lasoski benefit from Tatnell and Green who drove his heart out from 10 to sneak in at possie #24 for the A. From there Trev improved his points tally significantly by earning the hard charger honours (if there was one) to come home a highly commendable 11th in a feature that saw 24 cars start, 24 finish and went flag to flag. Donny took the money tonight after **Steve Kinser**, the early leader, was passed by in turn, by Schatz, Sides and Meyers. These four were now locked in to the dashes on the second night. Was this a sign for the \$50k? Will Schatz simply be too good yet again? Was Sides good value at near \$13.00 odds on Sports Bet? Could Meyers win one for "Young" Harry Delamont? Did **Kinser** run out of puff and could he go 10 more laps for 40 to take the cash? All was to be revealed after one more sleep.

Saturday January 3rd, 2009 dawned overcast again and stayed that way all day without any real threat of the forecast showers. The fans knew that too and turned up in droves to give the Speedway its biggest box office return of the season. After paying their hard earned, most fans head for the Pit Stop shop or the American T Shirt sales or the well stocked canteens, but the addicts amongst us make a bee line for a track inspection. Could it possibly be as good as last night? Yet again it looked like a beige topped billiard table and we knew we were in for a treat of some sort.

To the credit of all, 52 of the 54 cars from night 1 returned. Last night the wing manufacturers made no money and everyone wanted to enjoy the same conditions again tonight. Heat 1 saw a great battle between local stars Madsen I and Dumesny M (Mitchell that is). Both have displayed exemplary form of late and their desire to get a starting spot on the feature grid was intense. Ian eventually took 5th but both were to start in the big one anyway and interestingly, both were to also later flip in the big one. Kerry Madsen won this heat going away. The big question for his supporters was whether he had improved the car speed sufficiently to catch and then pass Schatz and co. Since Boxing Day, he had been unable to do that.

Max Dumesny easily took heat 2, Robbie Farr did the same in the third and Heat 4 went to **Kraig Kinser**. The C Main was a corker with Martin Lawes and Garry Rooke making the transfer to what Steve Raymond described as a "gold plated" B main. Some big names had to get through from here and make it they did when Skip Jackson, Mitch Dumesny, Ian Madsen and Roddy Bell-Bowen took the final four spots in the 24 car field. But it was the dashes which would well and truly set the night up.

The first was to determine the inside row and **Kinser** and Schatz were instantly at each other's throats. When Donny attempted an outside pass coming out of 4 at full noise, the King heard him coming and moved over to block. Any lesser driver than Schatz would have ridden the **Kinser** right rear and finished up in the stands with us. But no, like Meyers the night before, Donny's reflexes prevented a disaster. The second saw Danny Smith towed off on the hook before a lap had been done when his axle appeared to snap. Jason Meyers went on to win handsomely from the "wildcard" Jason Sides.

And so, after the points had been added and subtracted, no matter which way the qualifying format was devised, the cream had risen to the top once again with the visiting US drivers holding 11 of the first 17 positions. The 4-wide salute to the fans adopted the missing man formation to honour the memory of the late Scott Darley who had been killed at the track on October 18th 2008.

Words can't adequately describe what happened in the A main after **Steve Kinser** got the early break and raced off into the sunset. Schatz fell back to 5th or 6th at one stage before it appeared that he realised how far behind he was. With a reducing fuel load, he stood on the gas taking Farr and Meyers and had Sides in his sights when Ian Madsen took care of that problem for him when he turned it round and took out Sides in the process. Mitchell Dumesny then flipped on Turn 2 of lap 23 to bring on the reds and as Schatz pulled to a stop on the back straight, excess fuel, or oil, ignited under the car and it appeared probable that the right rear may have melted. The crash crew rolled the car forward and fortunately all was well after an inspection by the Rush crew under the open red.

And then it was on. **Kinser** maintained a miniscule advantage, both in clean air and in traffic until lap 38 when, for whatever reason he chose a different line going into turn 1 and Schatz was through, presumably to go on and take his eighth \$50k and his sixth in a row. **Kinser** however must have switched the turbo charger on and his speed down the back straight to recover lost ground was simply extraordinary.

He could not possibly have lifted going into 3 and surely he just held on for dear life, hoping like hell it stuck as he flew underneath a startled Schatz who could not possibly have expected a challenge. The final lap was memorable as these two champions were line abreast appearing to be totally oblivious that there were even any other cars on the track with them. They sliced and diced through traffic with once again Schatz appearing to have the edge until **The King** pulled ahead by a car length at the line.

The noise of the remaining 19 cars at full speed could not even drown the staggering crowd reaction to **Kinser** taking the chequered flag. Despite his legendary status, he was certainly the underdog in this race considering Schatz's eight year reign, and don't the Aussies love seeing the underdog get up in any sport.

It was **Kinser's first ever win in Australia's highest paying race** and his emotion upon emerging from the #11 exceeded that of the fans in the stands. Paying due credit to his crew of Peter Murphy and his brother Randy, the King stood back and genuinely basked in the adulation of his fans. Something he has done nearly a thousand times but this writer detected something different about him this time. There is no doubt that securing victory in this race had remained an unfulfilled ambition and challenge for him.

Meanwhile Steve Green reached for an eraser to remove the already inked in D Schatz on the cheque