

## Jason Martin is the RaceSaver IMCA Sprint Nationals Champion!

By racesaver  
by Greg Soukup



When you have 111 sprint car drivers who have come to the middle of the nation for the biggest 3-day event in the sport, and only 18 of those have locked themselves in for the finale, you want a day like Sunday. If you're a fan who came in from California, Pennsylvania, Texas, Minnesota or wherever to watch that finale, you want a nice, warm and sunny afternoon that turns into a cool evening just right for making horsepower.

Well, the biggest crowd in the 5-year history of the Racesaver IMCA Sprint Nationals, presented by NMC/Cat Rental Store and Precise Racing got what they were looking for. They saw 6 preliminary features, with drivers who knew they had to get their elbows up and get to the front if they wanted to be one of the 9 racers who would make up the final 3 rows on the starting grid of the 3-wide start of the A Feature.

Unfortunately, when the prize is big and the challenge is monumental, you will sometimes have serious incidents. In the F Feature, Greg Black went for a ride in turn 3. Shayle Bade's mount got loose in the E Feature and made contact with Nate Weiler. As sometimes happens, that contact collected Taylor Courtney, Darren Berry and Mike Moore. Brandon Anderson gets into the back of Trevor Grossenbacher in the D Feature in turn 4, collecting Chad Koch. Next, in the C Feature, Nate Berry hit the front stretch wall and went flipping. Finally, Jerald Harris went for a wild ride in turns 3 and 4 in the B Feature. None of the drivers were seriously injured. The winners of the first 5 preliminary features for the Racesaver Sprints were Scott Meisner, Mike Moore, Nate Berry, Luke Cranston and Blake Dacus.

And, the ones who had the nerve, drive and heart to battle their way into the Big Show through the B Main were Ethan Barrow, Blake Dacus, Andy Shouse, Shon Pointer, Dusty Ballenger, Luke Cranston, John Ricketts, Kaleb Johnson and Chase Weiler.

In the support class, heat races for the Valentino's IMCA Hobby Stocks went to Albert Kiihne and Roy Armstrong.

The A Feature for the Hobby Stocks saw Brett Saathoff use his starting spot on the pole to lead lap 1 with

Albert Kiihne, Jeff Watts and Dave Carter rounding out the top 4. Watts moved up to second on lap 3 and Ben Becher passed Carter for fourth. Watts grabbed the lead from Saathoff the next time around. With 7 to go Roy Armstrong got past Becher to take over the fourth position. 3 laps later Armstrong moved up to third. The last 2 laps saw the battle for first intensify and Saathoff pulled off a huge move on the last lap, diving low out of turn 4 to take the win. The top 4 ended up being Saathoff, Watts, Armstrong and Kiihne.

“I drew bad for the heat races, 9 out of 100. So, that was kind of tough, but when I went back for the redraw there was only 1 and 10 left and I got the 1. I said to myself ‘I’ve got to get back and get this car set up the best that I can and go do what I need to do’. It was good racing, clean racing and a caution free race. The track was good tonight. It had grip in spots and was slick in spots, so you had to just pick your lane. I was kind of going on the low line, but when Watts got around me I knew that wasn’t where I was supposed to be. I started getting closer and finally made my move. It came down to the last straightaway, and I think I got him by a fender. I need to thank my brother Corey, my Dad and my whole family, as well as the Robertus family”.

Saathoff’s sponsors include Bock Concrete, WC’s Bar and Big Daddy Machine.

Finally, what so many fans and so many drivers had been anticipating for an entire year was about to happen.

The Finale, the Big Show, the last race of the biggest sprint car event in the country moved to the track. The competition that, when it was first announced was declared to be impossible to pull off was taking place. The 3-wide start on a dirt track, with the fastest 27 Racesaver IMCA Sprint Cars in the country took center stage in the racing world.

John Carney II snagged the lead on lap 1 with Jason Martin, Jack Dover and Toby Chapman in hot pursuit.

Martin, who started on the pole retook the top spot on lap 3. With 20 circuits left the leaders caught lapped traffic and the top 3 could have been covered by the proverbial blanket. High on the cushion and low on the berm went Martin and his pursuers. 3 laps later Kevin Ramey got past Chapman and started to close in on the top 3. 9 laps remained when Dover made a big move and got past Carney for second. There were just 5 circuits left when Kaleb Johnson hit the Armco guarding the outside of turns 1 and 2 and brought out the only caution of the race. Dover took to the infield on the restart, moving Jake Bubak into the fourth position. From there to the finish, with no lapped traffic to interfere, it was Martin’s race to lose. But, try as they might, no one could catch him; leaving the top prize of \$2,500 and the right to call himself Champion of the 2017 Racesaver IMCA Sprint Nationals to Martin.

Martin has participated in all 5 Sprint Nationals at Eagle Raceway, and has led the race before, only to have a flat tire or an engine problem dash his hopes. This year he was not to be denied, and despite the exhilaration that he had to be feeling, he was soft-spoken and humble in his post-race interview.

“I’ll tell you what; a lot of people say that the track owes you because you’ve been there in situations like this and something happens, but I don’t think that Eagle Raceway owes me anything. I just keep coming back and doing the best that I can. We did the exact same thing that we’ve done the last 3 or 4 years and finally got the job done. It’s kind of a relief and an accomplishment for my whole race team. We’ve had a flat tire while leading, and had a motor go bad, but that’s just part of it. You can’t linger on things like that; you have to keep coming back. We’ve been the fastest car here for the last 5 years, but we haven’t been able to win it all until now. My crew gave me the best car, and it showed. Tonight the track was a little heavier than I expected it to come back to. Maybe it was the humidity tonight but it didn’t get as slick as it did last year. It sure did make for a fun race though. You’re wide open as fast as you can go, and whoever makes a mistake is going to get beat. So, I didn’t make very many obviously. It was just awesome to be able to prove that our race cars are fast, our engines are strong and I can steer the thing. I’m sure the fans enjoyed a really good show, and I want to go back and watch it myself!! I’ll probably be replaying this whole race in my sleep” stated Martin. Martin’s sponsors include Infinity Excavating, Bybee Electric, Trucks Plus, Midwest Linings, Myers Racing Engines and Eagle Chassis.