

OPENING NIGHT OF THE SUMMER NATIONALS BELONGS TO GREG HODNETT AND THE POSSE!

Greg Hodnett has been working and working on getting his Mike Heffner No. 27 sprint car faster.

It seems to be working.

Hodnett, of Thomasville,drove by Joey Saldana following a lap 15 restart and would go on to win the World of Outlaws main event Friday night at Williams Grove Speedway.

His second Grove win of the season and 13th against the Outlaws was worth \$8,000.

“The double-file restarts helped us tonight,” said Hodnett. “I had been trying the bottom and middle a couple of times through the night and I got a good down the frontstretch off the bottom on the restart. I got under Joey enough to keep moving him up to get a good, clean run off the bottom.”

Saldana’s top line was the fast way around early.

“Sooner or later, you have to be able to run somewhere besides the top,” said Hodnett. “The top was so good and you didn’t move off of it until you had to. We were fortunate to be able to run anywhere. We could be last tomorrow, but we’ll take today.”

Saldana started on the pole and jumped into the lead at the start of the 25-lap A-main and streaked away from the field.

Brent Marks put a slider on Justin Barger in turns three and four and would move into the runner-up spot with 10 laps completed. Fourth starting Hodnett would also get by Barger and into third.

Marks immediately began to close on the leader. In only two laps, Marks cut Saldana’s 3.5 second lead in half.

Saldana switched to the bottom lane, while Marks and Hodnett both closed running the cushion.

The red flag would interrupt the battle for the lead when Cody Darrah and King’s Royal winner Kerry Madsen crashed on the frontstretch with Madsen’s car tipping over.

The double-file restart showed Saldana picking the inside lane with Marks to his outside.

Saldana got a good run off the inside of turn four and led down the frontstretch. Hodnett would get under Marks in turn one and take the second spot.

Saldana went to the top on the next lap and Hodnett went to the bottom and drove by Saldana off the second turn and into the lead with 17 laps completed.

Hodnett pulled Saldana off turn two and began to increase his lead as Marks drove into second.

A wild race was going on for the fifth spot between Shane Stewart, Daryn Pittman, Brian Montieth and Paul McMahan.

Marks began to close on Hodnett over the final laps, but settled for second as Hodnett scored the win by .426 seconds. Saldana settled for third as Stewart and Pittman won out in the battle for fourth and fifth.

"I wish we would have got to lapped traffic a little sooner because I was right on his bumper at the end and wanted to try and throw one last slider," said Marks.

"I was pretty good way too soon," said Saldana. "To win these races, you have to be good at the end, not at the beginning."

McMahan, Montieth, Lucas Wolfe, Donny Schatz and Stevie Smith completed the top 10.

Wolfe set fast time over the 45-car field with a lap of 16.893.

Ryan Taylor, Barger, Marks and Hodnett won the eight-lap heat races.

Ryan Smith won the C-main. Saldana won the dash. Brad Sweet won the B-main.

Sprint Car Feature (25 laps): 1. Greg Hodnett. 2. Brent Marks. 3. Joey Saldana. 4. Shane Stewart. 5. Daryn Pittman. 6. Paul McMahan. 7. Brian Montieth. 8. Lucas Wolfe. 9. Donny Schatz. 10. Stevie Smith. 11. Steve Kinser. 12. Logan Schuchart. 13. Brad Sweet. 14. Justin Barger. 15. Ryan Taylor. 16. Lance Dewease. 17. Steve Buckwalter. 18. Curt Michael. 19. Doug Esh. 20. Donnie Kreitz. 21. Gerard McIntyre Jr. 22. David Gravel. 23. Cody Darrah. 24. Ryan Bohlke. 25. Kerry Madsen. 26. Ryan Wilson.

Did Not Qualify: Aaron Ott, Danny Dietrich, Donnie Kreitz, Austin Hogue, Dave Blaney, Chad Layton, Ryan Smith, David Gravel, Adam Wilt, Tim Shaffer, Pat Cannon, Jason Sides, Nicole Bower, Cory Haas, Glenndon Forsythe, Kraig Kinser, Troy Fraker, Alan Krimes, Jacob Allen, Rodney Westhafer, Brock Zearfoss.