By J M Hallas

Pleasanton, Tx.,(July 7th, 2012) As part of I-37 Raceway's Independence Day celebrations, the track hosted the 2nd Annual Warrior Fest, Salute to the Troops. Started last year by Andrew and Victoria Hesler, the race supports the Wounded Warrior Foundation and Center for the Intrepid through donations by drivers and fans. Several drivers once again opted to start at the rear of their features, put on a show for the troops and fans, plus donate their winnings.

Hesler, a 14-year veteran before being discharged after an IED injury, was on the charge in his Limited Late Model feature until expiring his motor. Jarrett Payton choose the tail of the Pure Stock race, made his way up to sixth, spun and went to the back again, and finished sixth despite being on seven cylinders.

The IMCA Modified class saw another new winner, the third of the season, with Carson Bednarz holding off a former champ, Bill Pittaway at the finish. In the IMCA Southern Sportmods, two brothers Talon and Robby Minten put on the best show, of the perhaps the year, as they swapped the lead seven times during the 20-lap feature. Talon edged out Robby by about two feet at the checkers.

Jensen Pray returned, after a tech infraction cost him last week's main, and redeemed himself taking the Limited Late Model honors. Karaline Campbell was on her way to possibly becoming a first time Pure Stock winner until losing the axle under yellow giving way to eventual winner, Adam Torres.

Last week's hard luck award winner Wade Jones, who had a tire go down under yellow only two laps from the finish, made up for it grabbing the Street Stock win. Dillon Gaither, once again put it on the Front Runner field going flag to flag.

Bednarz Bests Modified Field for First Ever Win
Carson Bednarz ran the race of his young career and it paid off as he scored his first ever IMCA Modified victory. Bednarz got out front at the start of the 20-lap, 13-car main event, with three wide racing behind him for third. As the field sorted out it was Bednarz ahead of last week's winner, Dennis Taylor, Chuck Chesler, Jason Borlace and Pittaway.

By halfway Bednarz was still holding point ahead of Taylor, while Pittaway made his way to third and Rick Green cracked the top five behind Chesler. In the latter stages, Pittaway got around Taylor for second, with Darin Leonard, coming from the back taking fifth from Green. No one had anything for Bednarz, in the A+ Boat Parts, Custom Classic Upholstery, Janke Race Engines, Qwik Chassis as he took his inaugural checkers.

"It was great," said Bednarz. "It all finally came together. It feels good to finally get it(first win) under my belt. Now we check the car out, put it back together and try again next week. I could hear them coming. There are a lot bigger motors out here than mine. I learned that if you don't spin out, you finish better than if you did. It's a learning experience as I go."

"I'm glad to see the car count going up. This was probably the biggest field this year. I get a lot

of help from Jamie Campbell and Dennis Taylor. I've had a lot of good friends help me put this car together. It's a good team thing. We're friends during the week and friends on the track."

"The only thing going through my head this weekend was keeping the front wheels in front and the rear wheels in back. If you keep it on the track things usually turn out pretty good. I prefer the dry slick tracks. When you have low horsepower you can get away with it. Plus it makes you a better driver and have more car control."

IMCA Modifieds
16 Carson Bednarz, 137 Bill Pittaway, 49 Chuck Chesler, 26 Darin Leonard, 87 Dennis Taylor, 82 Rick Green, 21 Jason Borlace, 37b Don Banker, 77 Cory Lovell, 10b Ellis Tracy, 10r Robert Walton, 14x Kevin Schelling, 31 Marlin Samford, 24 Tracy Fink---DNS, 29 Jamie Campbell---DNS

IMCA Modified heats
Heat 1; 82 Rick Green, 31 Marlin Samford, 37b Don Banker, 26 Darin Leonard, 24 Tracy Fink
Heat 2; 87 Dennis Taylor, 137 Bill Pittaway, 16 Carson Bednarz, 10b Ellis Tracy, 10r Robert Walton
Heat 3; 49 Chuck Chesler, 21 Jason Borlace, 14x Kevin Schelling, 77 Cory Lovell, 29 Jamie Campbell

Sportmod Main Sees Sibling Rivalry go to Talon Minten
In certainly the most hotly contested race of the night, and perhaps the year, LaCoste young guns, Talon and Robby Minten put on a show for the fans as they battled each other tooth and nail for the IMCA Southern Sportmod trophy. At the start of the 20-lapper, Hunter Flanagan grabbed the early lead but gave way to T. Minten on lap 3. In the meantime, brother R. Minten was working his way to the front catching him before halfway.

Using the high side, R. Minten got the bumper out front at halfway ahead of T. Minten, Flanagan, Tommy Grimes and JJ Jennings. Unphased, T. Minten, in his uncle Ray Doyon's car, retook the lead on lap 11, only to give it back to R. Minten on lap 13. T. Minten, having to run a near perfect lap on the bottom got the spot back on lap 15.

R. Minten, staying in the more forgiving high groove, got back on point for lap 16. Try as he could, R. Minten couldn't shake his brother, who kept plugging along on the low side. Behind them Grimes and Jennings had their own battle for third, while Jason Kelly moved into a top five spot. T. Minten gave his big brother one last run as the white flag flew and with a good run off turn 4, beat him back to the line in the 3-D Landscaping, Doyon Motorsports, Rising Star Bodies, CD Tire, Spreen Race Engines, Express by 89 Chassis.

"I thought for sure he(Robby) had me the last lap," commented T. Minten. "I guess my car had enough bite off the bottom to pass him coming back to the line. We ran side by side for almost half the race. Yes, I race him like he's my brother. I race him harder and want to beat him more than the others."

“Driving my uncle’s car made it easier to run the bottom. When you hit the brakes in his car it pitches it in, unlike my car that pushes more if you hit the brakes. Ray(Doyon) told me if I won I’d get to run his car at the Aaron Hudgeons Memorial in Edna next weekend.”

“I planned on using the bottom and it worked out. My friend Hunter(Flanagan) pushed up and I was able to get under him for the lead. “

IMCA Southern Sportmods
9(14t) Talon Minten, 4r Robby Minten, 26g JJ Jennings, 22t Tommy Grimes, 57 Jason Kelly, 2r Michael Hernandez, 37 Cody Leonard, 58 Hunter Flanagan, 18 Larry Jernigan, 2g Greg Lackey, 60 Pat Lyon, 14t(35) Eddy Ross, 11 Tom Grothues, 21 Barry Codling, 118 Anthony Gordon

IMCA SSM Heats
Heat 1; 26g JJ Jennings, 58 Hunter Flanagan, 2r Michael Hernandez, 57 Jason Kelly, 2g Greg Lackey
Heat 2; 118 Anthony Gordon, 9 Talon Minten, 18 Larry Jernigan, 14t Eddy Ross, 60 Pat Lyon
Heat 3; 22t Tommy Grimes, 37 Cody Leonard, 21 Barry Codling, 11 Tom Grothues, 4r Robby Minten

Pray Preys on Limited Late Model Field
After a disappointing disqualification last week for a technical infraction(wheels), McAllen’s Jensen Pray returned with one thing in mind, win legal. That’s just what he did. Ron Sprayue was first out front as green waved on the 20-lap feature, but gave up the lead to Pray on lap 6. As Pray started to pull away, Hesler who was on a charge from the back blew up to bring out a yellow.

Once back to green flag racing Pray wasted little time rebuilding his advantage over Sprayue who now had defending track champ, Trey Votion on his tail. Votion was finally to get the runner-up spot, but was far behind Pray who was on cruise control making his way to the finish in his McAllen Automotive, Tim Pray powered, CJ Rayburn Chassis.

“This makes up for losing the win last week,” stated Pray. “It’s great to go home with a win after driving three and half hours to come race with these guys. We wanted to come back and prove to everyone we could win legally, plus we’re trying to help build the class and support the troops. We try to come here when we can and the track in Corpus is off.”

“We got lucky today with the track. I love dry slick and our car turns real good and rotates on them. We had a good show tonight. I came up here hearing there were some fast cars up here. There’s not a lot of set up difference between here and Corpus. Basically all we had to do was change some air pressure.”

Limited Late Models
1* Jensen Pray, 99 Trey Votion, 42 Ron Sprayue, 6 Craig Crawley, 23 Richard Schelling, 7 Richard Bartosh, 10 Chris Brock, 14 Gary Hunter, 1x Andrew Hesler, 117/13 Howie Marcx

Limited Late Model heat winners; 1* Jensen Pray, 99 Trey Votion

Street Stock Scramble Goes to Jones
After seeing victory snatched from his hands the previous week in the final laps, Jourdanton's Wade Jones returned with a vengeance and took it out on a stout Street Stock field. Richard Wells got out front as the 20-lap, 16-car event began. Wells ceded the lead to AJ Wernette on lap 4, but after Wernette spun battling with Wells, both were sent to the tail.

This gave the lead to Curtis Opiela who had Jones challenging as the race went back to green. Jones was just making the pass when Dathan Faulkner and Rick Schroat slapped the wall to bring out a yellow and erase the pass. Jones wasted little time back under green getting by Opiela, driving Jones' championship car from previous years.

Last week's benefactor, Brain Becka got second from Opiela and closed to Jones' rear bumper under caution. But history would not repeat itself as Jones kept all four tires under him as was able to ease away to grab the win in his Opiela Mechanical, SABFI Transportation, Mission Race Engines, Mobil 1, Swenson Racing, 74 Ranch Resort, Cowgirl Creations, Camaro.

"I needed the win," replied Jones. "It eases the pain of last week's loss. I know now not to groove my tires so deep. I really didn't take that easy on Curtis(Opiela) in the heat race. He was running the groove and had the line. He beat me fair and square. He's ready to win his first feature. Maybe next week I'll let him run out front a little longer."

"I was glad to see seventeen cars tonight. This class just continues to grow. The more cars the better. Starting further back in the field is fun, but tearing up cars isn't. I had no idea what groove to run ahead of time. I thought the bottom was going to be good, but it was slick. The top felt real good."

"We'll be running the Street Stock Shootout in Edna next weekend and I hope it goes dry slick." added the defending Shootout champion. "I won down there last year and another win would be awesome. We use a little less roll out down there than here, and we use a lot more brake."

Alamo Hot Rod Parts Street Stocks
41 Wade Jones , 9 Brian Becka, 141 Curtis Opiela, 99 Frank Okruhlik, 15 Tommy Casey, 37 AJ Wernette, 7 Justin Henley, 18 Shawn Moore, 31 Jeff Hendricks, 2x Dennis Hilla, 1 Tator Mason, 10 David Grobe, 82 Richard Wells, 11w Dathan Faulkner, 5 Rick Schroat, 40 Mike Lyon---DQ(Unsportsmanlike conduct)

Street Stock heat winners; 7 Justin Henley, 141 Curtis Opiela, 37 AJ Wernette

Torres Tops in Pure Stocks
San Antonio's Adam Torres was best of the bunch again as he backed up last week's win in the 24/7 Towing, Tator Plumbing, Screen Pro Graphics, Chevy. At the start Karaline Campbell, coming back from a hard crash the previous race, jumped to the lead, while Payton made his Wounded Warrior charge from the back.

With Campbell still holding the point, Payton made his way to sixth before looping his ride trying to get fifth. Torres worked up to second behind Campbell and during a caution got the lead

when the axle from Campbell's car slid out in turn 4 ending her chance for a first win. Torres was able to get away from former champ, Janel Hilla back under green, while Payton marched his way back a sixth place finish.

"It was tough out there tonight," said Torres. "There was a different line in each turn. I almost lost it by myself twice, but got ahold of the wheel and kept on trucking. That was a bad break for Karaline(Campbell). She's tough. I tried to get past under her, but she was running the (fast) line."

"I run everyone the same. We have three ladies in the class and I run them like anyone else. I'm just looking to finish in the top three and get those points for the championship. Without having Johnny(Torres) in his Sportmod out it kind of hurts me because we help other out on which line to run. But I came home with the win tonight."

"I'm leading the points and just want to stay ahead in case I break or have a bad night. We get to drop our worst two races so it doesn't hurt our points as bad as the IMCA cars that can't drop any races."

Pure Stocks
66 Adam Torres, 7x Janel Hilla, 5 Ryan Doyon, 95 Jerry Jones, 6p Jeremy Hernandez, 9s Jarrett Payton, 117 Devin Adler, 15 William Cavender, 14 Trey Heald, 83 Kary Scott, 88 Brandy Ramzinski, 10c Karaline Campbell, 1c2 Dustin Blessing, 28 Darrin Blevins, 60 Adam McKinley, 57 Ben Franke

Pure Stock heat winners; 88 Brandy Ramzinski, 1c2 Dustin Blessing, 10c Karaline Campbell

Gaither Goes Green to Checkers
Adding to his championship bid, Dillon Gaither(Floresville) once again showed the Front Runner field nothing but the rear bumper of his First Choice House Leveling, Rohmer Racing, CNC Grafix, Rays Auto & Truck, Earnhardt & Sons Automotive, TJ Hopper, Tiburon. Gaither made a quick start and was out front as the 12-car, 15-lap Front Runner feature took the green flag. Gaither, who lost the heat race to Landon Sowder in traffic, sliced through slower cars as he put distance on Sowder, Jordan Sandoval and Trevor Bettis.

"I just tried to get to the front and go," commented Gaither. "That was pretty much my plan on the start. I didn't really think I jumped the initial start, but I saw Steve(Ramzinski) shaking his finger at me. I was right there with them at the flag stand and didn't think I passed too soon."

"I didn't know how close anyone was to me. I just get out there and drive my own race. If Landon(Sowder) got around me, then he got around me. I just try to do my own thing. I took it a little easy in heat race with slower cars, just see how the car would be for the feature."

Front Runners
5 Dillon Gaither, 08 Landon Sowder, 69 Jordan Sandoval, 57 Trevor Bettis, 8k Bill McCall, 17 Kirstin Blevins, 05 Taylor Collins, 113 Hailee Marcx, 67 Jimmy Carroll, 82 Sam Markgraf, 4 Jeremy Witt, 8t Thomas Franklin

Front Runner heat winners; 4Jeremy Witt, 08 Landon Sowder

Go Karts
Jr. Division; 93 Cavin Leddy, 48 Isaiah Lambert, 60 Chase Schanen, 07 Lauren Wells

Sr. Division; 60 Logan Schanen, 37 Aaron Trevino, 11 Caitlyn Leddy, 9 Camryn Leddy, 07 Duell Arnold, 82 Andrew Garcia