

Alex Bowman of Tuscon, Arizona battled two racing legends Sunday to pick up his first win of the season in the Kentuckiana Ford Dealers ARCA 200 at Salem Speedway.

The first legend was the track itself, the second was Clarksville's Frank Kimmel.

"It was tough holding on with Frank behind me," Bowman said. "He is the last guy I want in mirror when it comes to Salem. I have never seen a color standout so bright in my rearview mirror. That was about the most intimidating thing I've ever gone through. I'd probably pick having Dale Earnhardt behind me over Frank Kimmel! He is so smooth and fast, but he raced me clean and I thank him for that."

Bowman's rearview mirror was about the most heavily used piece of equipment on his car Sunday.

He led 146 laps of the 200 and really had the best car in the field.

Kimmel said the field was very competitive, but it was clear early on that they were battling for second.

"I thought the 22 was the class of the field today and probably all weekend," Kimmel said. "He was really strong. The rest of us were pretty equal. I was fortunate because the guys got me out ahead of everyone on that last pit stop and then I just ran my legs off the last 50 trying to keep up."

The stop Kimmel referred to came on lap 150.

That stop set up a 50-lap shootout with him trying to catch Bowman.

Bowman said Kimmel was able to stay closer because he was having trouble in the front drivers side of his Cunningham Motorsports St. Jude's Dodge.

"The key is forward drive because this place eats up the tires," Bowman said. "We got real tight when the right front started going away. We started losing forward drive and that's where Kimmel was starting to get us. We honestly had the perfect race car."

Kimmel, who hasn't won at Salem Speedway since 2008, said he would have liked to got the win, but said a second place is the next best thing.

"I didn't know what kind of car we had when the race started," he said. "The guys made a bunch of changes right before the last qualifying run and after qualifying they changed it again. They made the right changes, because it was really, really good all day. We are just a little behind the 22, but I think everybody was. I could see him at the end of the race, so it's a good day."

Chris Buescher of Prosper Texas looked to have the car to beat early on, but on lap 39 he got passed by Bowman and never seriously threatened for the lead again.

Buescher ended up finishing seventh.

Behind Bowman and Kimmel was a pair of teenagers.

Brennan Poole, 15, finished third and Chase Elliott, who is the 16-year old son of NASCAR legend Bill Elliott was fourth.

Bowman, who is 19, said it's pretty bad when drivers make him feel old.

Both Poole and Elliott were pleased with their finishes and considered Sunday's race a huge learning experience in the development of their racing careers.

“I was just trying to learn today,” Poole said. “I have about eight more short track races and I wanted to learn as much as I could to carry into the next race. A top five is great in our second start. We broke a clutch at Mobile, so to rebound with a top-five finish is pretty solid.

“I learned basically how these guys up front are going to race and what pace you have to run . I also learned a lot about what I want in a race car.”

Elliott echoed Poole’s thoughts.

“The track is what people says it is,” Elliott said. “It was what I expected, it’s bumpy, rough and worn out, but that’s just part of it. I think it’s important to come and learn how to race. This is a little rougher than most tracks so what you learn here is a little different than what you learn at other places.

“I am satisfied with the finish. I think we can do better. We learned a lot and that’s what we came up here to do. I feel like we can take what we learned, go back to the shop, put it all on paper and put it back in the set-up when we come back, we will do better.”

Erik Jones, Clint King and Buescher rounded out the top seven.

Other notable finishers were Darrell Basham of Henryville, who finished 17th and Will Kimmel of Sellersburg was 27th.