

Green flag set to drop Sunday on 2014 racing season at Salem Speedway

Written by George Browning
Tuesday, 01 April 2014 00:00 -

Salem Speedway Fueled by the Hoosier Lottery kicks-off its 68th year on Sunday afternoon, April 6th with the ICA Dumpsters Short-Track Festival.

The O'Reilly Auto Parts Pure Stocks and Portland Recycling Front Wheel Drive Stocks are set to share the track for a full slate of racing action, including the first ever front wheel drive figure 8 race at Salem.

"We're anticipating a great afternoon of racing," said Salem track manager Richard Deaton. "The infield short-track produced some very close and spirited racing in 2013 and we are expecting more of the same this season."

The ICA Dumpsters Short-Track Festival marks the season opening event for both the O'Reilly Auto Parts Pure Stocks and Portland Recycling Front Wheel Drive Stocks.

Travis Rogers of Charlestown, Ind., and Mike Kestler of Louisville top the list of drivers expected for the O'Reilly Auto Parts Pure Stock portion of the Short-Track Festival. Rogers is the defending track champion and Kestler took home the division title in 2011 and 2012.

"I was very excited to finally win a championship," said Rogers, who finished runner-up to Kestler the two previous years. "Now I just have to back it up."

Rogers said the key to making that happen will be to get off to the same kind of fast start as he did in 2013.

"I have to go out and get off to a good start and win some races," said Rogers.

Ethan Dunn finished second in the 2013 Pure Stock standings, with Joseph Hillebrand third and Nick Wilkerson fourth.

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Louisville Manual High School student, Austin Baum of Shepherdsville, Ky., is set to return to Salem looking for his third consecutive title in the Portland Recycling Front Wheel Drive division.

“(Winning back-to-back championships) is a pretty big deal,” said Baum. “Our family has been racing up there (Salem) for 30 or 40 years. It means a lot to me and my family to be able to race up there as much as we can and to also have some success. It’s pretty exciting.”

Baum knows that winning another Salem championship will not be easy, as the competition level is getting tougher each year.

“The cars get faster every year as people learn more about them,” said Baum.

Some new drivers, including six that have already registered as Papa John’s Rookie of the Year candidates, are also expected to impact the division in 2014.

James Blanchard finished second in the 2013 Front Wheel Drive Standings, with Jason Adams third, Cliff Pennington fourth and Tracey Nicholson fifth.

Salem Speedway Fueled by the Hoosier Lottery will be giving away Hoosier Lottery prize packs to several lucky fans, age 18 and older, during the Short-Track Festival. Prize Packs, with a value of \$10 each, include scratch-off tickets and draw game coupons.

Spectator gates open and practice begins at 11:30 a.m. on April 6th, with qualifications at 12:45 p.m. and the first race at 1:30 p.m. (EDT).

Advance tickets, priced at just \$8 for adults and \$3 for children (age 7-12), can be purchased by visiting the Salem Speedway office or by calling 812-883-6504 or toll free 1-888-246-7223.

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Tickets are also available on-line at www.salemspeedway.com.