

By: Don Gilchrest

IMPERIAL, CALIF.-Feb.28th- Starting outside the front row, Mike Sweeney, kept his Frank Lewis Direct Store Computer Systems Special in front of the 20 car, 30 lap main event, in the opening race of the Parnelli Jones/Firestone CRA Series on the 3/8 mile dirt oval at the Imperial County Fairgrounds to open up the 1987 California Mid Winter Fair with a win.

Sweeney racked up win number three at the fairgrounds, he won in 1979 his first CRA win and in 1984, while car owner Frank Lewis made it a repeat of his opening race win last season with Ricky Hood the driver.

"I kept feeling a hard bump the last 12 laps and thought it was my cousin Steve Ostling (who started inside the front row)," Sweeney grinned in winners circle. Wrong, it was defending CRA champion Brad Noffsinger and his Curb Motorsports Skoal Bandit knockaing on the door and running side by side with the winner until he got in the marbles in turn one on the last lap and chased Sweeney to starter Brian Howards checkered flag.

The patient Sweeney waded through a red for Gary Howard who flipped in turn one on the start, yellows for right rear flat tires for Ken Cope, Eddie Wirth and Wally Pankratz on the dry slick daytime track. It was a now to tail win for Sweeney with Noffsinger second, Ostling, with his best CRA finish, third, Jerry Meyer, who had fast time, with a new track record, and won the torphy dash third, Bobby George fourth and Bubby Jones fifth.

Meyer, with his second fast time in a row on opening day, out-qualified the 39 car field while Sweeney, Noffsinger, Terry Singleton and Dan Lewis won the ten lap heat races with Walt Kennedy winning the 12 lap semi main.

The only mishap of the day was a wild end over end flip by last years feature winner John Redican in his heat. He was not hurt.

QUALIFYING-1. Jerry Meyer, Meyer #28, 17.361 (NTR);2., Kirk Alexander, Alexander #33, 17.528;3. Walt Kennedy, Kennedy #14, 17.696; 4. Ken Cope, Cope #42, 17.891; 5. Eddie Wirth, Morales #5, 17.895; 6. John Redican, Simpson #55, 17.963; 7. Bobby George, Bright #79, 18.010; 8. Rip Williams, Vermeer #37, 18.027; 9. Mike Sweeney, Lewis #91, 18.035; 10. Steve Ostling, Ostling #75, 18.040; 11. Brad Noffsinger, Gardner #1, 18.086; 12. Kim Craft, Braman #45, 18.131; 13. Keith Chrisco, Gaffney #47, 18.143; 14. Clark Drake, Fite #77, 18.186; 15. Alan Wexler, Wexler #97, 18.200; 16. Duane Feduska, Roa-Rockert #38, 18.226; 17. Gary Howard, Bartosh #26, 18.363; 18. Bubby Jones, Bromme #2, 18.364; 19. Brad Marvel, Lancaster #71, 18.560; 20. Wally Pankratz, Kurtz #30Jr, 18.766; 21. Scott Beck, Campbell #43, 22. Terry Singleton, Singleton #94, 18.934; 23. Ray Keil, Keil #3R, 18.952; 24. Jim Lauri IV, Hicks #00, 19.077; 25. Mark Sokola, Sokola #27, 19.084; 26. Brad Manners, Finlay #54, 19.122; 27. Don Miller, Miller #68, 19.223; 28. Dan Lewis, Pratt #11, 19.223; 29. Dan Schuck, Schuck #16, 19.302; 30. Herb Crawford, Crawford #53A, 19.413; 31. Dan McLeod, McLeod #41, 19.501; 32. Mike Crawford, Crawford #99A, 19.526; 33. Dan Moore, Germo #25, 19.850;34. Steve Rogers, Rogers #83, 20.001; 35. Jeff Howard, Grub #78, 20.071; 36. Mike Gaugler, Gaugler #93, 20.373.

TROPHY DASH (3 Laps) Jerry Meyer, Walt Kennedy, Kirk Alexander, Ken Cope. Time 1:00.20.

FIRST HEAT (10 Laps) Mike Sweeney, Eddie Wirth, Gary Howard, Jerry Meyer, Mark Sokola, Keith Chrisco, Scott Beck. Time 3:18.15.

SECOND HEAT (10 Laps) Terry Singleton, Bubby Jones, Steve Ostling, Kirk Alexander, Brad Manners, Clark Drake, John Redican. No Time.

THIRD HEAT (10 Laps) Brad Noffsinger, Brad Marvel, Ray Keil, Bobby George,

Walt Kennedy, Alan Wexler, Don Miller. Time 3:20.41.

FOURTH HEAT (10 Laps) Dan Lewis, Jim Lauri IV, Duane Feduska, Rip Williams, Wally Pankratz, Ken Cope, Kim Craft. No Time

CONSY (6 Laps) Dan Schuck, Herb Crawford, Mike Crawford, Dan McLeod, Dan Moore, Roger Newell, Steve Rogers, Jeff Howard, Scott Beck. Time 2:00.33 (NTR)

SEMI (12 Laps) Kennedy, Cope, Pankratz, Sokola, Shcuck, H. Crawford, Manners, Beck. Time 3:47.43.

FEATURE: Sweeney, Noffsinger, Ostling, Meyer, George, Jones, Singleton, Pankatz, Sokola, Alexander, Lauri, Williams, Kennedy, Marvel, Keil, Feduska, Wirth, Lewis, Cope, Howard. No Time.