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Grattan Raceway/June 5-6, 2009/NASA Great Lakes

FFR's Ride the Rollercoaster That Is Grattan Raceway

On June 5 & 6, The Great Lakes FFR's returned to Grattan Raceway to race the track that easily compares to the wildest rollercoaster ride with it elevation changes, blind corners, and off-camber turns. Brian Sanders, Peter LaRose and Lyle Riggen showed up Friday for the best two out of three challenge. As for the weather, no one could ask for anything better. It was virtually perfect.

Friday morning practice was cut short as Steve Kolrud, former FFR owner, stuffed his home built sports racer into a tree. This meant that qualifying would be attempted with no previous hot-laps. The qualifying session put Sanders on the pole followed by Riggen and LaRose. For the race, all cars in the group were gridded by qualifying times rather than class. This put a car or two between each of the Challenge racers. In the mad scramble at the start of the race, Sanders and Riggen entered turn one together but by turn three Sanders was able to claim the lead. With Riggen on a new set of RA-1's and Sanders on a well seasoned set, Sanders was able to stretch out his lead to over thirty seconds by lap twenty, when it all went horribly wrong as third gear exploded in Sanders' tranny. Over the next 3 laps Riggen motored on, turning laps fifteen seconds faster than Sanders. On the white flag lap Riggen passed Sanders to take the lead and a seventeen second victory. While Sanders struggled with 2nd and 4th gear laps, LaRose was sitting trackside after throwing a drive belt about the same time as the gear loss.

Immediately following the race a tranny swap was started. As always when a Challenge car goes down, everyone jumps in. First on the scene was Joe Gilmartin, Riggen crewman and future Series racer. Shortly thereafter he was joined by Lyle and Julie Riggen and LaRose. In short order the tranny was out and it was decided we should join in the NASA post race awards and dinner. Then it was back to the install. At this point the swap team was joined by Kolrud to button up the swap. This reporter would be remiss for not mentioning the extra effort put forth by Joe. It seems that Joe was concerned about the firebottle system on Sanders car and felt it necessary to test it (grin). It was discovered that Joe had left a wrench on a driveshaft bolt when it was decided to move the car. The wrench caught the actuation cable and discharged the system. In Joe's defense there is a little more to the story. The decision to move the car was because it was not very stable on jack stands in the grass paddock area. As Joe lay under the car wrenching on the drive shaft, the car shifted and he scrambled out from under the car. And needless to say the wrench was forgotten. Saturday qualifying went well for no one except maybe Riggen. Sanders was feeling out the new tranny making sure nothing was amiss.



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Just as he was convinced and ready for a hot lap, a GTS car exploded on the front straight and oiled down the turn one braking zone and all the way up to turn two. Session over! On the bright side, Rigger and LaRose got in a couple good laps and ended with Rigger on pole followed by LaRose.

For the Saturday races, the Race Director decided to grid the cars by class with the class with the most cars up front. This put the GTS cars in front of the FFR's. This also put Sanders right behind Rigger for the start. As the green flag waived, Rigger went to the center of the track as Sanders dove to the inside over the pit-out blend line and found no one in front of him. A car died in the outside row jamming everyone up and Sanders grabbed a 5 second lead very quickly but short lived as double yellows starting flying at every corner. This put Rigger right back on Sanders bumper as the cars were picked up by the pace car. On the restart, Sanders and Rigger took off to battle. Nearly every lap of the race had them running within a tenth of one another and nearly nose to tail except for when Rigger would poke his nose out for look going into turn one. However, Sanders was able to hold him off for victory by a mere 0.191 seconds. LaRose rounded out the field running faster and faster personal laps at this challenging track.

For race two, the grid was the same. This time Rigger got the stellar start followed by LaRose and Sanders bringing up the rear. It would stay this way over the next five laps until Sanders looked down at his gauges to see the temp gauge pegged. At this point he retired. Rigger roared on to his second win of the weekend and Peter turned even fast personal times.

Since this weekend was a best two of three race format, Rigger walks away with 200 points, Sanders 190 points and LaRose 175.

The next stop for the NASA Great Lakes FFR Challenge Series is Mid-Ohio on July 11 & 12. Joining the Great Lakes regulars will be several racers from the east coast making this the largest Regional Challenge Series to date.

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