

OPENING DAY AT OAKLAND VALLEY
1987 Grand Nationals Host Unveils New Track

Article by Al Bender, Photos courtesy of Foster Racing Photos

Northeast racers had to wait for eight weeks; technical difficulties were doing their devilish best to disrupt plans. But finally, on the sunny Sunday of August 3, 1986, drivers and fans alike flocked to Oakland Valley Raceway to see the new track that will be the home of the 1987 I.K.F. Sprint Grand Nationals. By the end of the day everyone agreed it was well worth the wait.

Oakland Valley Raceway, located in the beautiful Catskill Mountain setting of Cuddebackville, New York, has been developing through careful management. When Bruce Giumarra and James (Big Jim) Mahaffey took ownership in February, 1985, they knew exactly what it would take to turn a mere racetrack into a complete facility. After all, Bruce, though only 31 at that time, had been a Karter for almost 20 years and had raced at the very best - and the very worst - tracks in the country. Oakland Valley, Bruce and Jim vowed, ^{would} have the best of everything. And the results sound like something from a travel brochure: 65 acres of lush green, manicured lawns - surrounded by mountains and trees - bordering on the crystal-clear, trout-filled Neversink River. Yes, it's a raceway and not a summer resort.

As for the tracks that are contained within this spectacular scenery, they have been designed, built, and maintained to perfection. The speedway, a 1/5 mile clay/dirt oval, is the finished product of countless meetings with racers, excavators, and construction engineers, all whose suggestions Bruce and Jim used in grading the track to the proper angle and then mixing the clay and dirt to the proper consistency. Now, under the watchful eyes of track operations manager Ross Giumarra, the surface is watered daily

to keep it just tacky enough for maximum performance, The sprint track, a 1/2 mile road course, is 25-28 feet wide throughout and features a 700 foot straightaway, several S's, high-comp corners, and chutes that rise to an elevation of 10 feet. If that sounds like a lot of asphalt, it was. Over 1600 tons went into the construction, but so did a whole lot more. The invaluable advice of I.K.F. president Charlie Cressi and the design suggestions of Lynn Haddock greatly influenced the eventual end result which, after the racing on that opening Sunday, got rave reviews:

Jim (J.R.) Rooney (Kerhonkson, NY) - "I've been in Karting since 1959, and I can say this is one of the finest tracks ... it would make a great track for any Grand National."

Jeff De Polo (Lansdale, PA) - "Very nice--it'll make a great Grand Nationals track."

Dawn Croner (Wantagh, L.I., NY) - "Great--you can get good enough speed because the straightaway is so big. They did a great job preparing the track."

John Carfello (Haskell, NJ) - "Great--a real driver's track--a lot of places to pass, laid out for horsepower and driving technique."

Doug Cressi (Glen Cove, L.I., NY) - "Real smooth--nice long straightaway--enough room to pass and good corners to outbrake people--a fine Grand Nationals track."

George Salvato (Irvington, NY) - "Beautiful--unbelievable! Very smooth and fast--along with Jacksonville this is the nicest racetrack on the East Coast."

Dan Schmidt (Morristown, NJ) - "Really nice--smooth, fast, a lot of passing area--great layout, excellent for the Grand Nationals."

Eric Schweinberg (Roseland, NJ) - "Especially well laid out--fast, lots of room to pass--it's the best track on the East Coast."

Tom D'Amico (New Milford, CT) - "Nice and smooth, great for passing, plenty of room--one of the best tracks in the country."

But two of the participants of Opening Day, announcer John Strawser (Mc Alisterville, PA) and racer Joe De Polo (Lansdale, PA), touched on something equally as important. Commenting on next year's host for the Grand Nationals, John called Oakland Valley "a perfect showcase for ANY Grand National event--great track and great facilities" and Joe added "it's definitely a Grand Nationals track, and really nice, courteous, and professional people run the facilities." Great facilities and great people in charge; they include venerable Jim Rooney, pit steward, who supervises activities in the spacious, newly-paved pit area and enclosed pits, which have electricity, compressed air, and running water. Or Joe Gryczko, manager of the separately housed restaurant which also contains private hot and cold showers along with sunlamps. Joe dispenses delicious food and drinks, and always with a ready smile. And, of course, flagman Cliff Mitchell who busily controls the racing so that all drivers get a fair shake.

So, Karters everywhere, take notice. If you can make it to Oakland Valley Raceway for any of the remaining season, you and your whole family are in for a treat. But even if you can't, get ready for next August's I.K.F. Sprint Grand Nationals. Perhaps racer Kyle Mey (Stoneville, NY) sums it up best: "There couldn't be a better place. I know I'LL be here-- I wouldn't miss it."

Racing Results
August 3, 1986

Novice Light:

Group A

1. Tim Hauser
2. Mike Iovino
3. George Elephonte
4. Tom Alexander
5. Rich Fragola

Group B

1. Mike Horton
2. Gregg Lee
3. Dennis Turk
4. Chris Foster
5. Ivan Hills

Super Stock Light:

1. Eric Schweinberg
2. Joe De Polo
3. Kyle Mey
4. Dan Schmidt
5. Matt Visconti

Super Stock Heavy

1. Christopher Robson
2. Gary House

4-Cycle Heavy:

1. Brian Carlson
2. Bill Bitting
3. Noel Vasquez

4-Cycle Light:

1. Jimmy Ayre
2. Jill O'Hara
3. Hank Croner

Unlimited:

1. Dan Schmidt
2. Doug Cressi

U.S. 820:

1. Charlie Cresso
2. Lou Smiley
3. Bruce Leach

4-Cycle Junior:

1. Dawn Croner
2. Timothy Murphy
3. Chris Dundon
4. Matt Titterington
5. Ed Lukach

4-Cycle Rookie:

1. Kevin Furlong
2. Mike Reed
3. John Beatty
4. Chris Morganti
5. Todd Van Sickle

Novice Heavy:

1. Jim Hauser
2. Ed Topak
3. Larry Long
4. Fred Carucci

100cc Stock Light:

1. George Salvato
2. Eric Schweinberg
3. Christopher Robson
4. Paul Menge
5. Rich Dunwell

100cc Stock Heavy:

1. John Carfello
2. Keith Hills
3. John Baio
4. Mike Morganti
5. Gary Gross

100cc Junior:

1. Jeff De Polo
2. Tom D'Amico
3. Derrick Kosnosk
4. Joe Kushman
5. John Burroughs

Photos

1. Bruce Giumarra (3rd from L) cuts the ribbon to open the new asphalt track at Oakland Valley Raceway. Helping Bruce hold the ribbon are Charlie Cressi, Jim (J.R.) Rooney, and Jim (Big Jim) Mahaffey.
2. Flagman Cliff Mitchell directs the traffic as ceremonial "first lap" officially starts the day of racing.
3. Kyle Mey leads the field as racers in the Controlled Light class make the turn onto the 700 foot straightaway.
4. Racers negotiate high-comp turn at the end of the long straightaway.