

Derby drivers deliver thrills

Whiskey Gulch Gang holds first pickup derby

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

It came down to Jason Ward of Burns and Tyler Nodine of John Day, clashing to the bitter end at Saturday's 27th annual Whiskey Gulch Gang Demolition Derby.

Nodine's '74 Chrysler went down in flames, literally, after Ward, in his '76 Cadillac, delivered a final blow.

A crew jumped quickly into action to extinguish the fire, and Ward was declared derby winner.

A total of 10 vehicles took part in the first and second heats, with eight returning for the Main Event, including an '88 Mercury Topaz, driven by Sam Glerup of Baker City, which took second place in the first heat.

Announcer Mark Bagett dubbed the relatively smaller car "the little Topaz with a great big heart."

The event was organized by Whiskey Gulch Gang members Hugh Farrell and Dave Traylor, with a lot of behind-the-scenes help.

Several people said the derby had the largest crowd they've seen in quite a while, with the grandstands overflowing.

New this year was a pickup truck heat, held during intermission before the Main Event.

Five pickup drivers entered that event, and Steve Patterson of Prairie City picked up the win.

The Main Event payout increased from \$1,500 last year to \$2,000.

Ward came away with not only the top prize for winning the derby, but also \$250 for Most Aggressive Driver and \$250 for winning the second heat. He also won \$250 in cash from True Value in a random drawing at the start of the event.

Ward said he's competed in demolition derbies for most of his life. This is his fifth straight year of bringing home an award from the John Day derby, he said, including second place last year.

When asked what his key to winning was, Ward said it's simple.

"Have fun," he said. "That's the main deal, and if luck's on your side."

He added, "My front wheel was busted up, and I lost my starter wire — you can't tell me that's not luck."

Demolition Derby results:

Main Event
Jason Ward of Burns, first (\$2,000 and trophy)
Tyler Nodine of John Day, second (\$1,000, trophy)
Kurt Hills of Baker City, third (\$500, trophy)

First Heat
Wayne Saul of Mt. Vernon, first (\$250, trophy)
Steve Patterson of Prairie City, second
Anthony Ellis of Burns, third

Second Heat
Jason Ward of Burns, first (\$250, trophy)
Craig Yekel of Burns, second
Sam Glerup of Baker City, third

Pickup Truck Heat
Steve Patterson of Prairie City, first (\$250, trophy)
Tim Nodine of Canyon City, second
Mike Patterson of Meridian, Idaho, third
Most Aggressive Driver: Jason Ward of Burns (\$250, trophy)
Hard Luck: Dustin Ränge (free entry for 2017 derby)

Beauty Contest: Tim Nodine
Door prize winners
Wayne Saul, \$100 Ace Hardware gift certificate
Craig Yekel, Ace Hardware air compressor
Mike Patterson, Ace Hardware ATV winch
Jason Ward, \$250 cash True Value



Craig Yekel of Burns, No. 20, is chased down by No. 12 Sam Glerup of Baker City at the derby.

Eagle photos/Angel Carpenter



Derby cars emerge from the smoke during the Main Event.



Tyler Nodine of John Day waits just moments for a crew to extinguish a fire from the final blow of his derby car. Nodine finished second at Saturday's Whiskey Gulch Gang Demolition Derby at the Grant County Fairgrounds in John Day.



Winners of the Main Event at the Whiskey Gulch Gang's 27th annual Demolition Derby are, from left: Tyler Nodine of John Day, second; Jason Ward of Burns, first; and Kurt Hills of Baker City, third.



Tim Nodine of Canyon City in No. 00 is chased down by Steve Patterson of Prairie City in the truck derby.



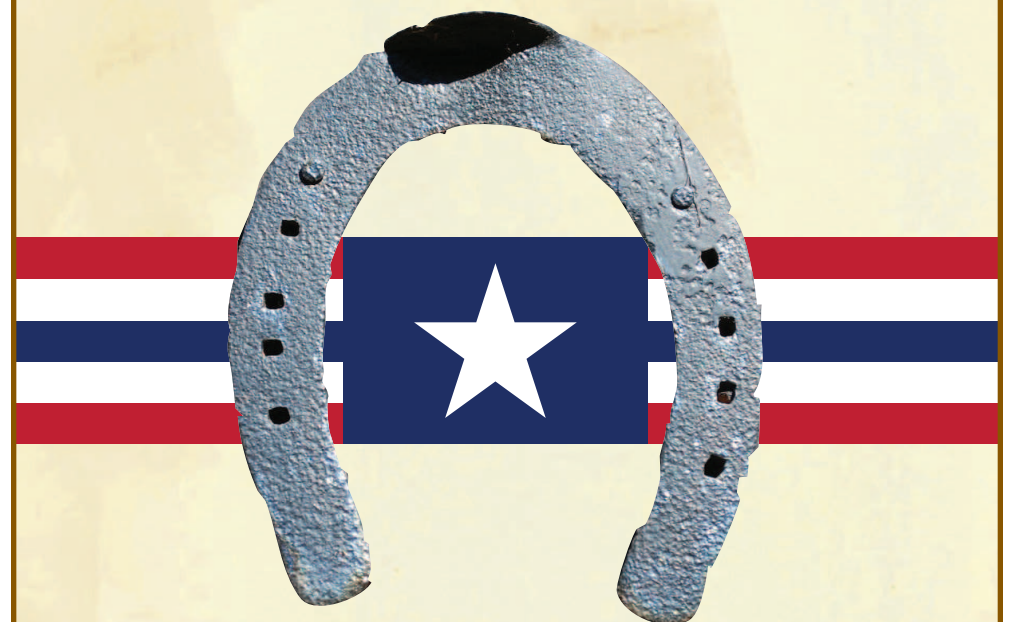
Steve Patterson of Prairie City is awarded for winning the pickup truck heat of Saturday's demolition derby.

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