

Saul takes first at demolition derby

Rodeo queen beats mom in barrel race

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

A three-way collision literally knocked two top competitors out of the arena near the end of the main event and gave Wayne Saul of Mt. Vernon the edge he needed to win the 29th annual Whiskey Gulch Gang Demolition Derby held at the Grant County Fairgrounds July 14.

Steve Patterson of Prairie City, who has competed in more than 20 demolition derbies, said he recalled seeing Tyler Moodenbaugh of Long Creek coming at him hard and fast. The next thing Patterson knew, his car was going up and over one of the big logs that enclosed the arena.

But at roughly the same time, Saul's car rammed Moodenbaugh's, pushing his car up onto a nearby log and leaving it there high-centered. Moodenbaugh couldn't move, but Patterson's car was still running, and he ended up tied for third place even though he was outside the arena.

Ten vehicles entered the derby, including five locals and several drivers from Idaho. Nick Stiner of Mt. Vernon, last year's winner, was a favorite, but he faced stiff competition. Moodenbaugh had equipped his car with "tractor tires" to help him pick up speed in the muddy arena, and he was voted most aggressive driver.

Under demolition rules, the cars could be stripped down and reinforced to protect the driver. For safety reasons, a five-gallon gas tank is installed where the back seat would be, but the radiator has to remain in the stock position.

Following the two heats, pit crews hurried to repair their damaged vehicles. Saul's crew struggled to stem a major cooling water leak, while Mike Patterson, Steve's son from Pendleton, used a sledge hammer to beat out a crushed fender. Stiner's crew welded a ball joint mount that was broken when two cars ganged up and knocked his car and a big log about eight feet out of the arena. Nine of the 10 original cars were back for the main event.

The crowd in the grandstand was entertained through half-time by Simmie Waddel and her daughter Trinity Hutchison, who competed in the barrel racing event driving their pickup backwards. Hutchison, the Grant County Fair and Rodeo Queen, beat her mom's time by a fraction of a second. The two then rode together driving forward, but Tristen Stevens had a faster time for the prize money.

A shortage of vehicles eliminated a third heat and a special heat for pickups and full-size SUVs. Some of the drivers recalled seeing more than 30 vehicles enter the arena in past derbies, not leaving much room to maneuver but lots of action.

Main event

First, \$2,000: Wayne Saul, No. 2282
Second, \$1,000: Chris Folger, No. 17
Third, \$500: tied and split the winnings, Tyler Moodenbaugh, No. 22, and Steve Patterson, No. 66

Heat No. 1

Winner, \$250: Steve Patterson, No. 66
Second, free entry: Chris Folger, No. 17

Heat No. 2

Winner, \$250: Tyler Moodenbaugh, No. 22
Second, free entry: Wayne Saul, No. 2282

Beauty contest

Winner: Paul Stuart, No. 8

Most aggressive driver

Winner, \$250: Tyler Moodenbaugh, No. 22

Hard luck driver

Winner, free entry: Mike Kilby, No. 38

Halftime barrel racing

Winner, \$50: Tristen Stevens



Wayne Saul, Mt. Vernon, right, and his pit crew work to stem a radiator leak before the start of the main event at the 29th annual Whiskey Gulch Gang Demolition Derby held at the Grant County Fairgrounds on July 14. Saul won the derby.

Eagle photos/Richard Hanners



The winners of the 29th annual Whiskey Gulch Gang Demolition Derby held at the Grant County Fairgrounds are, from left, Steve Patterson and Tyler Moodenbaugh, tied for third place; Chris Folger, second place; and Wayne Saul, first place.

Contributed photo



Wayne Saul, Mt. Vernon, far right, joins family and friends at the start of the 29th annual Whiskey Gulch Gang Demolition Derby. Saul won the derby held July 14 at the Grant County Fairgrounds.



Mike Patterson, Pendleton, beats on a crushed fender before the start of the main event at the 29th annual Whiskey Gulch Gang Demolition Derby held at the Grant County Fairgrounds on July 14. His father, Steve Patterson, Prairie City, watches.



A pit crew works on a car with a broken ball joint before the main event of the 29th annual Whiskey Gulch Gang Demolition Derby at the Grant County Fairgrounds on July 14. The weld was made, and the car went back in action.



The grandstand at the Grant County Fairgrounds was full July 14 for the 29th annual Whiskey Gulch Gang Demolition Derby.



Vehicles from across Oregon and Idaho compete in the first heat of the Whiskey Gulch Demolition Derby.

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