

Kicking Up The Dirt – WSS Round 7 and Australian Open – Night 1 Joanne White

Donny Schatz remains undefeated so far in his 2014-2015 Australian tour after easily taking the win in the Preliminary A-Main last night at Archerfield Speedway. It was the first night in a big weekend of racing for Round Seven of World Series Sprintcars, that also doubles as the Australian Sprintcar Open. The event will conclude tonight, Saturday 10 January 2015, culminating in an enthralling 50-lap A-Main event that pays the winner \$20,000. Schatz has dominated this event for the past seven years and is certainly the undeniable favourite to top the podium once again. His win last night in the preliminary A-Main cements him at the top of the leader board going into tonight's events, while his main opposition is likely to come from Brad Sweet or Steven Lines, who rounded out the podium last night. James McFadden and Kerry Madsen, who without a doubt stole the show last night as they argued over the minor positions and exchanged positions several times, finished fourth and fifth respectively, and are more than capable of challenging Schatz.

Qualifying got underway with 38 cars taking to the track one at a time for two qualifying laps. Donny Schatz quickly secured the fastest time, a quick 11.956 seconds. Jamie Veal was second fastest and the only other car to make it into the 11-second bracket, stopping the clock at 11.997 seconds while Brisbane local Brent Kratzmann had a brilliant run early in the qualifying runs to secure third fastest with a 12.063 seconds. Kerry Madsen and James McFadden rounded out the fastest five. The 38 qualifiers were separated by just 1.261 seconds, the top 21 cars by less than half a second. David Murcott, Steven Lines, Kyle Hirst, Darryl Clayden, Lee Nash, Brent Kaeding, Matt Egel, Brent Aprile and Andrew Scheuerle were all separated by less than one hundredth of a second, Aprile beating Scheuerle by just three thousandths of a second. Robbie Farr beat Luke Oldfield by the same margin, while Davey Heskin beat Ian Madsen by only four thousandths of a second. Paul Morris had a brilliant run to beat Danny Holtgraver by only one thousandth of a second while Jason Sides beat Andrew Wright by just two thousandths of second. While David Murcott managed to secure seventh fastest with a 12.2122 second lap, all was not well on board the A1 racer and the crew changed engines before the heat events got underway.

Heat one started with Jason Sides and Paul Morris from the front row, with Morris securing the lead on the start. Race officials however brought the race under caution, deeming Morris to have jumped the start, and a full race restart followed. This time it was Sides who managed to take control of the race, settling quickly into the race lead. Morris settled into second while Danny Reidy and Daniel Harding raced side-by-side into turn one. Reidy, on the low line, had secured third by the end of the second corner but soon found Robbie Farr on his tail. As Farr worked the low line trying to get past both Harding and Reidy, Kerry Madsen was beginning to make his way forward. Farr and Harding both managed to slip by Reidy, with Matt Egel ready to follow as well. Egel was looking on the inside of Reidy when he got the W53 racer just a fraction sideways in turn one, leaving David Murcott behind him nowhere to go. Murcott clipped the front end of the Egel car, as did Donny Schatz as he tried to slip past.

Murcott inverted the A1 racer as Schatz was turned sideways in front of Egel, with Egel then tipping the W53 racer on its side. All drivers were uninjured with Egel out of the race and Murcott, with a badly damaged main wing, and Schatz restating at the rear of the field. Sides led the restart from Paul Morris and Robbie Farr but the restart was less than a lap old when Kevin Titman, who had an awful run of bad luck yesterday, spun the Q59 racer in turn three and brought the race under caution. Sides again led the restart from Morris and Farr with seven laps still remaining, with Kerry Madsen taking to the highline to get around Dave Fanning. Fanning however fought back hard on the low line just half a lap later and ran wheel-to-wheel with Madsen for a couple of laps before being forced on the defensive by David Murcott and Donny Schatz. A small mistake from Madsen in turn two gave Schatz all the invitation he needed, and when Madsen ran a little wide in turn four Fanning was once again right on his tail. Jason Sides went on to take the win ahead of Paul Morris, Robbie Farr, Daniel Harding and Danny Reidy. Donny Schatz raced up the inside of Daryl Clayden coming out of the final corner, the pair crossing the line side-by-side with Schatz securing sixth and just 0.035 seconds ahead of Clayden. Kerry Madsen, Dave Fanning, David Murcott and Andrew Liebke rounded out the finishers, while both Matt Egel and Kevin Titman failed to finish the race.

Andrew Wright and Danny Holtgraver shared the front row for the start of heat two, with Peter Lack and Davey Heskin right on their tail. Wright got a brilliant start and quickly secured the race lead, but it was the battle for the minor places behind him that captivated the crowd. Both Peter Lack and Luke Oldfield had great starts from positions three and five respectively, both sticking to the low line on the start, with Lack trying to run underneath Davey Heskin and Danny Holtgraver as Oldfield tried to run underneath all three. Holtgraver managed to secure second while Oldfield managed to slip past both Lack and Heskin by the end of the second corner. Oldfield quickly moved on to challenge Holtgraver for second, while Lack and Heskin fought over third. Lack came out in front while Heskin faded quickly as Lee Nash, Brent Aprile, James McFadden, Steven Lines and Jamie Veal came charging through. North Queensland based racer Aprile raced two abreast with Lines for several laps, while Tim Kaeding had a great run at the rear of the field and Peter Lack began closing in on Luke Oldfield. Andrew Wright was unchallenged for the lead and went on to take the win, leading Danny Holtgraver, Luke Oldfield, Peter Lack, Brent Aprile, James McFadden, Steven Lines, Tim Kaeding, Lee Nash, Jamie Veal, Davey Heskin and Brad Ayers across the line.

Heat three saw Callum Zizek start from pole position with David Whell alongside and hard chargers Bryan Mann and Ian Madsen ready to strike. Zizek got the first jump while team mate Ian Madsen had an impressive run on the high side to secure second. But officials brought the race under caution with Zizek warned about going too soon and a full restart followed. Whell managed to secure the race lead and while Madsen was again impressive on the high side, Mann was now pushing hard on the low line. Mann, Zizek and Madsen went three-wide through turn three, with Zizek hanging on to second ahead of Madsen and Mann. At the rear of the field Brent Kratzmann was having a brilliant run, working the highline coming out of turn four and around Brent Kaeding and Brad Sweet

before swiftly switching to the low line to slip underneath Brooke Tatnell. Unfortunately contact between Kratzmann and Tatnell saw the pair become entangled and stopped in turn two, bringing the race under caution once more. David Whell led the restart from Callum Zizek and Bryan Mann, who had managed to get past Ian Madsen. Mann quickly made his way into second running the highline around Zizek just moments after the race resumed and then set about closing in on Whell. Mann put Whell under immense pressure and the pair really put on a spectacular show for race fans as they raced for the lead. Mann was relentless, holding nothing back as he worked the high line searching for a way past. To his credit, Whell drove a remarkable, faultless race, running smooth lines and giving Mann racing room, the pair often two abreast as they argued over the lead. With the high line not quite paying off for Mann he switched to the low side with only a couple of laps remaining. The battle was fierce but there was not stopping David Whell as he went on to take the win with Bryan Mann in second. Andrew Scheuerle had a solid run to finish third after initially starting sixth, and while Ian Madsen and Callum Zizek exchanged positions several times over the course of the race, Madsen crossed the line in fourth ahead of Zizek, with Kyle Hirst, Brent Kaeding, Brad Sweet, Brooke Tatnell, Trent Pigdon, Darren Jensen and Brent Kratzmann rounding out the finishers.

Heat four started with Danny Holtgraver and Jason Sides from the front row and while the pair raced wheel-to-wheel through the first corner, it was Holtgraver who managed to secure the lead coming out of turn two. Sides settled into second with Davey Heskin in third, while Brent Aprile and Danny Reidy argued over fourth. Aprile made his way underneath Reidy and started challenging Heskin for position, but Reidy fought back hard on the top side as Steven Lines tried to run underneath both Reidy and Aprile as they rounded turn four. Half a lap later and the race was brought under caution for the spun NQ42 racer of Brent Aprile in turn two. Holtgraver lead the restart with Sides and Heskin still on his tail and eight laps left to run. Lines and Reidy both quickly made their way past Heskin, while Andrew Liebke had a brilliant run from the rear of the field, battling the likes of Tim Kaeding, Brent Aprile, Robbie Farr and Jamie Veal and really trying to make the high line work. A small mistake in turn four saw him loose a couple of positions late in the race, and Liebke spent the final few laps battling with Dave Fanning at the rear of the field. Kerry Madsen had a brilliant run through the field, while Jason Sides challenged Danny Holtgraver for the lead. Sides did manage to get the job done in the end and went on to take the win with Holtgraver forced to settle for second ahead of Steven Lines, Danny Reidy, Kerry Madsen, Davey Heskin, Darryl Clayden, Robbie Farr, Tim Kaeding, Brent Aprile, Jamie Veal, Andrew Liebke and Dave Fanning.

Heat five started with Paul Morris and Callum Zizek from the front row with Morris getting the jump on the start and Bryan Mann, from position four, having a breath-taking run on the highline. Mann ran around the outside of both Daniel Harding and Callum Zizek to secure second by the end of turn two, while Brooke Tatnell tried to follow him on the high side and David Murcott worked the low side. Donny Schatz began to work his way forward, but the race was brought to a stop for the Q59 racer of Kevin Titman who had spun in turn two. Paul Morris

led the restart with six laps left to run and Bryan Mann and Callum Zizek right on his tail. When the lights went green Mann took to the high line in a beautiful run on the outside to challenge Morris for the race lead. Mann did not hesitate and quickly raced around Morris into the race lead, but drama unfolded mid-field that brought the race back under caution. Matt Egel had been trying to go underneath David Murcott, who in turn had been looking on the inside of Brent Kaeding. Contact between Kaeding, Murcott and Egel could have ended in disaster for all three, but Kaeding was able to drive away from the incident while Egel climbed over the front end of Murcott, and Daniel Harding made contact with both Egel and Murcott as he desperately tried to avoid the tangle. Like Kaeding, Harding was able to drive away from the incident, while Matt Egel was able to restart at the rear of the field. Unfortunately for Murcott his run of bad luck continued and his A1 racer suffered enough damage to end his race. The stoppage came at just the right time for Paul Morris who regained his lead for the start, a racing lap not completed since Mann stole the lead. Morris made the most of this advantage and got a brilliant start, pulling away slightly from Mann as the lights went green once more. Mann stayed with him and ran a solid second, while Brooke Tatnell, on the highline, and Callum Zizek fought over third. Zizek did a great job against his more experienced rival and had the crowd enthralled, but there was no stopping Paul Morris out in front. Morris took the win ahead of Bryan Mann and Brooke Tatnell, with Callum Zizek officially fourth. Brad Sweet technically crossed the line in fifth but was penalised two positions as race officials deemed he completed a pass on the infield. Brent Kaeding officially finished fifth ahead of Donny Schatz, Brad Sweet, Matt Egel, Daniel Harding and Darren Jensen. David Murcott and Kevin Titman both failed to finish the race.

The sixth and final heat of the night started with Queenslander David Whell from pole position with Andrew Wright alongside and Ian Madsen and Peter Lack from the second row of the starting line up. Whell and Wright raced wheel-to-wheel into the first corner, with Madsen going with them, and Whell securing the lead coming out of turn two. Unfortunately chaos unfolded further back in the field, when Lee Nash and Brent Kratzmann came together in turn one, with Kratzmann climbing over the front end of Nash as they entered the first corner. Trent Pigdon, in a separate incident at the tail of the field, also heading into turn one, inverted the S62 racer and brought the race to a stop. Kratzmann, Nash and Pigdon all restarted at the rear of the field as David Whell and Andrew Wright once again led the start. Whell got a great start and while both Wright and Madsen fought for the lead, it was Whell who secured the position. Madsen quickly slipped underneath Wright as they rounded turn two, and set out after Whell, working the highline and putting enormous pressure on the local racer. Further back in the field Andrew Scheuerle was running the bottom, with Peter Lack sensational on the high side, the pair holding nothing back as they raced wheel-to-wheel. Brent Kratzmann managed to slip past Kyle Hirst and challenge Lack for position, only for Hirst to fight back and regain his position. Kratzmann is really in impressive form this season and didn't hesitate to slide back underneath Hirst as they exited turn four. Back at the front of the field Madsen kept the pressure on Whell but Whell held his own, putting in another strong performance before going on to take the win. Ian Madsen finished a very strong

second ahead of Andrew Scheuerle, who had run around the outside of Andrew Wright in the closing stages of the race. Wright was fourth to greet the chequered flag and led Peter Lack, Kyle Hirst, Luke Oldfield, Brent Kratzmann, James McFadden, Lee Nash, Trent Pigdon and Brad Ayers across the line.

Eighteen cars lined up for the start of the 12-lap Preliminary B-Main event. The quality of the field was second to none and one could be forgiven for mistaking the event for any A-Main race. Luke Oldfield and Paul Morris shared the front row for the start but the depth of talent behind them was impressive. Robbie Farr and Jason Sides started from the second row with Danny Holtgraver and David Murcott out of row three. Brent Aprile, Brooke Tatnell, Lee Nash, Danny Reidy, Peter Lack, Andrew Wright, Daniel Harding, Matt Egel, Davey Heskin, Callum Zizek, Tim Kaeding and Darren Jensen rounded out the field of starters and with only the top four finishers to transfer to the A-Main, it was set to be a frantic 12-lap affair. Oldfield got the jump on the start, with Robbie Farr racing underneath Morris in turn one and then Oldfield in turn two to steal the lead with barely half a lap completed. Oldfield fought back hard on the low line, while Sides and Holtgraver argued over the minor places. David Murcott and Brent Aprile both had impressive runs on the high line, while Danny Reidy impressed on the bottom as he raced under Tatnell and Morris. Nash followed Reidy on the bottom, slipping straight past both Tatnell and Morris in turn two, while Davey Heskin and Peter Lack began to fight their way forward. Heskin quickly made his way past both Morris and Wright, leaving Lack to battle with Morris, with Daniel Harding close behind. Lack ran the high line and raced side-by-side with Morris, until Daniel Harding and Callum Zizek came between them. Darren Jensen soon joined the battle just as the race leaders were catching the rear of the field. Oldfield now had control of the race, with Farr right on his tail as they carefully navigated lapped traffic. Luke Oldfield went on to take the win ahead of Robbie Farr and Jason Sides, with Danny Holtgraver securing the fourth and final transfer to the Preliminary A-Main. David Murcott crossed the line in fifth and goes into tonight's event with a big job ahead and hoping the bad luck is now behind him. Danny Reidy finished sixth in the preliminary B-Main event last night and led Brent Aprile, Lee Nash, Tim Kaeding, Davey Heskin, Andrew Wright, Daniel Harding, Callum Zizek, Darren Jensen, Matt Egel, Peter Lack and Paul Morris across the line. Brooke Tatnell pulled out of the event with just six laps completed.

Donny Schatz and Steven Lines led the field to the green for the start of the 20-lap Preliminary A-Main, with Kerry Madsen and Andrew Scheuerle from the second row of the starting grid. Schatz got the jump on the start and while Madsen had a look on the inside, and Lines tried to run the high line, there was simply no stopping Schatz as he secured the race lead. Lines managed to stay with him, heading into turn three, the pair already a couple of car lengths ahead of Madsen and the rest of the field. Behind Madsen, James McFadden and Andrew Scheuerle fought over the minor places while the field behind them ran two and three-wide as they each negotiated track position. Brad Sweet led the mid-field pack into turn three, with Kyle Hirst slipping straight underneath Sweet through turn four, as both Ian Madsen and Jamie Veal tried to run underneath Brent Kaeding as Brent Kratzmann ran the high line through turn

four. Ian Madsen and Brent Kaeding managed to pull ahead of Jamie Veal, but contact between Veal and Kratzmann sent Kratzmann into the wall heading down the main straight. Kratzmann, with the front end torn from the Q4 racer, slowed to a stop in turn one and brought the race under caution with 19 laps left to run.

Donny Schatz led the restart from Steven Lines and Kerry Madsen, with Andrew Scheuerle ahead of James McFadden and Kyle Hirst. Madsen had a look underneath Lines but couldn't quite get the job done, while McFadden patiently worked the high line to try and find a way past Scheuerle. Luke Oldfield and Jamie Veal battled mid field for a few laps before Veal moved on to join the battle between Brent Kaeding and Ian Madsen, spending just a few laps getting past both before going after Kyle Hirst. McFadden had found his way past Scheuerle and had set his sights on Kerry Madsen. The battle between Madsen and McFadden became one of those battles that were hard to tear your eyes from, both holding nothing back and exchanging positions several times as the race wore on. McFadden slid underneath Madsen in turn three, with Madsen sliding straight back past in turn four, only for McFadden to again slip underneath Madsen in turn three once more. Madsen chased hard and a slight contact between the pair on the main straight unsettled McFadden long enough for Madsen to slip by as they rounded turn one. McFadden quickly recovered and set out after Madsen again, sliding underneath him in turn three, with Brad Sweet right on their tail. Madsen of course fought back hard again, but McFadden had managed to pull away ever so slightly. Meanwhile further back in the field Robbie Farr, Bryan Mann and Luke Oldfield were embroiled in their own tight battle, with each exchanging positions with the others several times, as they tried to advance and hold off Jason Sides who was fighting hard from the rear of the field. Back towards the front of the field and the battle between Madsen and McFadden was only starting to heat up, only Brad Sweet had well and truly joined the fight. Madsen made his way back in front of McFadden, with Sweet quick to follow, with Sweet and Madsen having a close battle as they tried to navigate around the lapped car of Darryl Clayden. Sweet managed to find his way past both Madsen and Clayden, leaving Madsen and McFadden to battle it out once more. McFadden slipped underneath Madsen through turn one on the very last lap, with Madsen fighting back hard on the low line through turn two. They ran two abreast for the rest of the race with Madsen almost getting the advantage through turn four. McFadden however had a brilliant line on the top side and was able to beat Madsen to the line. Donny Schatz was unstoppable and untouchable in the lead and took the win, with a margin of almost four seconds over Brad Sweet in second. Steven Lines finished an impressive third to round out the podium while James McFadden finished fourth after a spectacular race with Kerry Madsen who finished fifth. Jamie Veal crossed the line in sixth and led Andrew Scheuerle, Ian Madsen, Kyle Hirst, Brent Kaeding, Bryan Mann, Robbie Farr, Jason Sides, Luke Oldfield, Danny Holtgraver, David Whell and Darryl Clayden across the line. Brent Kratzmann was the only driver who did not finish the event.

With the first night done and dusted, all teams are busy preparing for night two, scheduled for tonight at AusDeck Patios Archerfield Speedway. Will Donny

Schatz continue to dominate and remain undefeated? Or can someone, anyone, beat him to the line? There is plenty of talent in the field, Steven Lines, James McFadden, Kerry Madsen, Ian Madsen, Brad Sweet, Jamie Veal, Robbie Farr, David Murcott, Jason Sides and the rest. Not to mention Queensland regulars Andrew Scheuerle, Bryan Mann, Luke Oldfield, Brent Kratzmann and Peter Lack to start with. It is a very tough field, with more than half the drivers most certainly capable of winning if they bring their a-game and have a little luck on their side. This is one race meeting you will not want to miss and is sure to be full of frantic, exciting, edge of your seat racing action. Come on out to AusDeck Archerfield Speedway tonight and see it all for yourself! And don't forget to pop down to the pits after the racing to see the cars, meet the drivers and grab an autograph, photo and some merchandise. It will be the last Sprintcar race in South East Queensland until late February so make sure you come out tonight and get one last Sprintcar fix before the mini break. See you there!