

Rick Lee stars in Reno finale of American City Racing League

By Roger Diez

RENO, NV, Sept. 25—It was a Wild West shootout in the streets of Reno as the American City Racing League finished out its season at the Kinko's-sponsored finale in the Biggest Little City.

Local driver Rick Lee of Team Reno planned to stay with the lead group from his fourth-place starting spot, and avoid the inevitable problems that would occur on the tight, bumpy 1.27-mile Reno Hilton course. The scenario played out just as he figured, and he scored the track's inaugural win for the home crowd.

Lee moved to third on the first lap, second on lap three, and into the lead when polesitter Steve Knapp crashed in Turn 7 on lap 10. Leo Sismani hounded Lee for 29 of the 30-lap distance until Memo Gidley, subbing for Team Santa Barbara's Brad Krause, shouldered his way past Sismani on the final go-round.

Lee Lucas, charging through the field after a first lap spin, briefly held second spot on lap 28, but bobbled on the next to last circuit and fell to fourth. Peter Zarcades rounded out the top five with a great run from the back of the field that included the fastest lap of the race and helped Las Vegas win team honors over San Diego by 19 points. S2000 driver champion Joe Giroski added to his point total with the "B" category win, 10th overall. Team Fresno took the next two "B" spots, with newcomer Steve Romak beating boss John Ostlund to the flag.

Qualifying took place Friday afternoon, with the new track just beginning to sport a buildup of racing rubber in the turns. The Hoosier spec tires were getting a good grip, and the DAECO racing gas proved equal to Reno's 4500 ft. altitude.

The new Carbir chassis debuted with newly crowned FF2000 champ Steve Knapp in the cockpit. The Carbir was immediately recognized as the car to beat, and Knapp's considerable skills added to the package's potency. The Team Vancouver entry blazed to the pole position more than four-tenths ahead of second fast qualifier Jeff Glenn, Team San Jose. Mike Wright of Team Vancouver BC became the second series' newcomer in the Top Five with his third place qualifying run.

ACRL veterans Lee and Lucas rounded out

the DAECO Top Five. Team Las Vegas, the only one with a mathematical chance of taking the Blackaller Cup from Team San Diego, had a disastrous qualifying session. Engine and differential problems sidelined both Chris Ronson and Peter Zarcades, who would start the race from the back.

Some first-time ACRL competitors showed at Reno, a fact that bodes well for the 1997 season. Newcomers Knapp, Wright, and Romak were also joined by ACRL veterans Bob Dorricott Sr. and Jeff Clegg in their first 1996 starts.

Team San Diego drivers Margie Smith-Haas, Marc Zurlinden, and Ian Wood carried the team banner at Reno, and Zurlinden's sixth and Smith-Haas' seventh place took second in team points in the race, securing the 1996 team championship for San Diego.

San Diego driver Bob Schader was absent from the grid, having already clinched the driver's crown. At the awards banquet, Schader became the first recipient of the Vasser Cup, a newly-instituted perpetual trophy named for former ACRL competitor and current CART/PPG IndyCar champion Jimmy Vasser.

Race results: (30 laps, 38.1 miles) Driver/City, Team: 1. Rick Lee/Reno, 30 laps; 2. Memo Gidley/Santa Barbara, 30 laps; 3. Leo Sismani/Las Vegas, 30 laps; 4. Lee Lucas/San Jose, 30 laps; 5. Peter Zarcades/Las Vegas, 30 laps; 6. Marc Zurlinden/San Diego, 30 laps; 7. Margie Smith-Haas/San Diego, 30 laps; 8. Chris Ronson/Las Vegas, 30 laps; 9. Justin Ferguson/Anaheim, 30 laps; 10. (S2) Joe Giroski/Woodland, 30 laps; 11. Jeff Glenn/San Jose, 30 laps; 12. (S2) Steve Romak/Fresno, 30 laps; 13. Tom Kreger/Vancouver, 30 laps; 14. Bob Dorricott Sr./San Jose, 30 laps; 15. (S2) John Ostlund/Fresno, 30 laps; 16. (S2) Joe Casanova/San Jose, 30 laps; 17. Dennis Pavlina/Portland, 29 laps; 18. (S2) Brad Amtson/Woodland, 29 laps; 19. (S2) Ian Wood/San Diego, 30 laps; 20. (S2) Bill Bachofner/Wilsonville, 26 laps (NR); 21. (S2) Tom Bungay/Santa Barbara, 21 laps (NR); 22. (S2) John Bachofner/Wilsonville, 21 laps (NR); 23. Bill King/Vancouver, 18 laps (NR); 24. Steve Knapp/Vancouver, 10 laps (DNF); 25. Erik Lunn/Fresno, 5 laps (DNF); 26. Mike Wright/Vancouver BC, 1 laps (DNF)

Overall Driver Point Standings: (top 10, best 7 of 8 finishes): 1. Bob Schader/San Diego, 645 (champion); 2. Rick Lee/Reno, 622; 3. Leo Sismani/San Diego, 590; 4. Jeff Glenn/San Jose, 563; 5. Chris Ronson/Las Vegas, 526; 6. (Rookie of the Year) Marc Zurlinden/San Diego, 500; 7. Joe Giroski/Woodland, 487; 8. Leo Giroski/Woodland, 407; 9. Ian Wood/San Diego, 371; 10. Peter Zarcades/Las Vegas, 332

S2000 Driver Point Standings: (top 10, best 7 of 8 finishes): 1. Joe Giroski/Woodland, 693; 2. Leo Giroski/Woodland, 594; 3. Ian Wood/San Diego, 531; 4. John Ostlund/Fresno, 440; 5. Bill Bachofner/Wilsonville, 381; 6. John Bachofner/Wilsonville, 380; 7. Tom Bungay/Santa Barbara, 323; 8. Len Renick/Anaheim, 168; 9. R.C. Watt/Woodland, 156; 10. Brad Amtson/Woodland, 153

City Championship Points: (top 10): 1. San Diego, 1357; 2. Las Vegas, 1238; 3. Woodland, 1025; 4. San Jose, 995; 5. Santa Barbara, 947; 6. Reno, 672; 7. (tie) Portland, Wilsonville; 9. Vancouver, 502; 10. Fresno, 439