

Memo Gidley pops to top at ACRL's visit to Mesa Marin

By Roger Diez

BAKERSFIELD, CA, April 27—FF2000 1995 Rookie of the Year Memo Gidley of Team Santa Barbara won the second stop on the 1996 American City Racing League tour at the half-mile Mesa Marin oval.

Team San Diego's Bob Schader and Rick Lee of Team Reno ran second and third in the first

oval track event since 1989 for the Ford Cosworth-powered ACRL sports racing cars. This was also the ACRL's first televised event, carried on Speedvision, and was run in conjunction with a Winston West race the same night.

Many of the teams had been to Mesa Marin the previous two weeks to test, and the cars and drivers were pretty well dialed in. Most teams used Saturday afternoon's practice sessions to make final suspension adjustments, check fuel mileage, and scuff in new sets of Hoosier ACRL-spec tires.

The usual exciting Daeco Top Five qualifying session was not run; instead each car got two solo qualifying laps, standard circle-track procedure. Peter Zarcades took his second pole of the season in his Team Las Vegas Swift DB5, with a 19.232 second lap (93.594mph) that would have put him inside row four of the Winston West grid. Schader's Lola was second fastest at 19.235, only .003 of a second back, and Gidley was third at 19.418, also driving a Lola. Team Reno's Rick Lee put his Lola outside row two at 19.478, and Marc Zurlinden rounded out the top five with a 19.518 aboard his Team San Diego Swift DB2.

The field took the green for the 74-lap feature at 7:30 p.m., and Schader got the jump on pole sitter Zarcades, who filled his mirrors for the next several laps. Gidley, sitting in for Brad Krause in the Team Santa Barbara Kinko's Lola, stayed right with the leaders. There was some shuffling back in the pack, as Zurlinden, a rookie, moved into fourth. He held that position until he drew a stop and go penalty for jumping the restart after a yellow flag for Team Los Angeles' Jeff Littrell's crash on lap 10. Lee Lucas, Team San Jose, showed up just before the race, having been at a Pinewood Derby in San Jose with Cub Scout son Luke. Lucas quickly began to work his way through the field and was soon up to eighth place.

Rookie Buddy Dold brought out the second caution on lap 35 as he had a close encounter with the Mesa Marin wall, sliding in debris thrown up by Zarcades' trip through the infield at Turn 3. Then on lap 48, Zarcades went low to pass a slower car coming off Turn 4 and spun, sliding into the inside wall at start/finish. Zarcades escaped uninjured, but the car sustained substantial body and suspension damage. After the wreckage was cleared away, the field got a restart on lap 56 and ran green to the end.

Gidley, last year's second place points finisher in the USAC Formula 200 series, made a brave move to take the lead in lapped traffic, and held it to the finish with Schader breathing down his neck for the last 10 laps. Team Reno's Rick Lee's Lola was third, a straightaway behind the leaders. Lucas, taking advantage of the bunching effect of the yellow flags and getting good restarts, worked his way to fourth place at the checker. Lucas made his last pass going three wide with San Jose teammate Jeff Glenn and San Diego's Margie Smith-Haas. Glenn finished fifth after a tight duel with Smith-Haas, whose sixth place clinched the team points for Team San Diego.

Leo Giroski came home first in the Sports 2000 "B" category for Team Woodland, 10th overall, after points leader Joe Giroski retired with drivetrain woes. Santa Barbara's Tom Bungay was second in the "B" class while Anaheim's Len Renick took third.

ACRL team point standings: San Jose, 345; San Diego, 336; Santa Barbara, 309; Las Vegas, 276; Woodland, 259; Reno, 168; Long Beach, 73; Anaheim, 61; Fresno, 58; Los Angeles, 55; Portland, 0.

ACRL Driver point standings: 1. Bob Schader, 193; 2. Lee Lucas, 177; 3. Jeff Glenn, 168; 4. Rick Lee, 168; 5. Leo Sismani, 149; 6. Leo Giroski, 128; 7. Joe Giroski, 120; 8. Peter Zarcades, 114; 9. Buddy Gold, 113; 10. Memo Gidley, 100; 11. Brad Krause, 84; 12. Margie Smith-Haas, 76; 13. Jim Paul, 73; 14. Marc Zurlinden, 70; 15. Ian Wood, 67; 16. Chris Ronson, 67; 17. Roger Werner, 61; 18. Tom Bungay, 61; 19. John Ostlund, 55; 20. Len Renick, 53; 21. Littrell, 48.

S2000 points: 1. Leo Giroski, 188; 2. Joe Giroski, 184; 3. Ian Wood, 93; 4. Tom Bungay, 93; 5. Len Renick, 88; 6. John Ostlund, 84.