

Jets in June set to roar

By Jarrett Smith, The StarPhoenix June 5, 2010

For many residents of Saskatoon, June is among their favourite months of the year.

Winter is just a memory, the trees are green and the weather starts to warm up.

If the weather isn't quite warm enough for you yet, Saskatchewan International Raceway (SIR) is going to provide the cure in a big way tonight.

SIR track record holder Chuck Haynes of Billings, Mont., is back this year with his jet dragster Gravity Storm. This dragster has been a fixture at this event for the last several years and always guarantees an amazing fire show and high-speed runs down the track.

Adding some local flavour to the event, Andy Beauchemin who originally hails from Saskatoon will be making his debut behind the wheel of Gravity Storm. Beauchemin is heavily involved in many forms of drag racing, including nostalgia nitro funny cars and nitro Harley Davidsons.

Adding more local flavour will be the always entertaining Kevin Therres of Humboldt with his jet powered Chevrolet Corvette. For those of you who were expecting to see his truck that was featured at SIR last June, Therres has switched to the more aerodynamic Corvette body after experiencing some handling difficulties at high speeds with the truck.

Therres's car is even more unique when you look at it and realize that it's powered by canola based bio-diesel, grown right here in Saskatchewan. Who says you can't go fast on a renewable fuel? Therres proves it's possible and will have a shot at breaking the current SIR jet funny car record of 5.86 seconds at 419 km/h, currently held by Bill Hosford.

Lining up with Therres will be Derek Snelson of Alaska, who is making his SIR debut behind the wheel of the Warhawk jet funny car. The two racers will provide some side-by-side fire shows as well as passes down the track with the afterburners turned up. Staying later into the evening to watch these vehicles make their final passes in the dark is one of the coolest things you'll ever see at a race track.

While the theme of this annual event is vehicles powered by thousands of pounds of thrust, some more conventionally powered and wheel driven vehicles capable of some very high speeds will be in attendance as well.

Dwayne Treleaven of Saskatoon and Sherri Bodnarchuk of Grandora will be featured tonight with their supercharged, alcohol burning vehicles.

Both Treleaven and Bodnarchuk's cars are capable of running the quarter mile in the low seven-second range at more than 270 km/h. Add in a full slate of racers in Super Pro, Pro, Sportsman, Sport Compact, Street Legal and Jr. Dragster and you have the makings for a very good night at the track. Expect to see a big car count of local racers, especially after last weekend's Erin Beck Memorial Season Opener was rained out for the second consecutive year.

On Friday, Centennial Plumbing and Heating hosted a BBQ and show & shine to promote tonight's feature event as well as the Big Buck Jackpot Race on Aug. 7. This event will feature a guaranteed first place payout of \$5,000 to the winner and a total purse of \$7,700. The event will feature the biggest sportsman racer payout in SIR history.

So far, 73 cars are pre-registered and more than 100 are expected on race day.

SIR would like to thank Centennial Plumbing and Heating for their continued sponsorship of drag racing in Saskatchewan as they have gone above and beyond by offering a purse never seen before in Saskatoon.

For today's racing action, the racer gates open at 9 a.m. with time trials starting shortly after. Spectator gates open at 2 p.m. and first round eliminations will start at 4:30 p.m. The first round of the feature cars is expected to begin at 6:30 p.m. Something new for fans this year is the inclusion of a pit pass with every entry fee.

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