

Doing Something About Traction Control

Story and photographs by Karl Fredrickson

Mark Twain once said, "Everybody talks about the weather, but nobody does anything about it."

There's a similar problem at most tracks. Lots of people talk about who is running traction control, but nobody does anything about it. At the three-day DirtWorks Justin Stanfill Memorial in Missouri in March, West Plains Speedway did something about it.

It started with a suggestion at the drivers' meeting on Thursday. Joplin, Missouri's Jerry Hoffman was as frustrated as everyone else with the amount of electronic racing, so he asked: "Why don't you smash the MSD boxes of all the cars in the top 10?"

Track officials announced their plan at Saturday's meeting. The top 10 finishers would be required to pull their MSD box and its wiring harness on the frontstretch immediately after getting weighed. Then they'd be auctioned off in the pits with a minimum bid of \$230 (replacement price) that

would go to the driver. Anything over that would be placed in the purse for next year's race.

Each car's ignition was removed under the supervision of a track official, identified as to the car it came from, and brought to the pits.

Late model star Wendell Wallace sounded like he'd not heard about the plan when told he had to remove his spark box. "Who gets the money?" asked Wallace. "Driver gets the cost to replace the box," someone replied. "Shoot, I'm not selling mine for that,"



PULL BOX: Track owner Don Gibson and driver Wendell Wallace watch as the box is removed.

SPARK ARREST: West Plains' Dennis Burton auctions off an MSD Ignition box after the Justin Stanfill Memorial race in March.

an alarmed Wallace said, "I have a lot more money in my box."

Much Ado About Nothing

Despite all the pit-side whispers of who had traction control, bidding was scarce. Many racers maintained the traction control was no longer in the MSD box, so buying the box would not change anything.

Because Hoffman had piped up at the drivers' meeting, he thought he should purchase a box. "I figured I had to buy one and Jeff Taylor's box was being auctioned," said Hoffman. "I didn't want to single Jeff out — I didn't want to single anyone out — but I spoke up, so I *had* to buy one. I've looked all through it and haven't seen anything."

Regardless of the result, West Plains' management was glad to see Hoffman step up to the plate. "We're proud of Jerry Hoffman," said competition director Dennis Burton. "Everybody is griping about traction control, but he's the only one that backed up the talk and bought one of those boxes." 🍷