



## **The Lakeland 125 Trips the Gorilla** **Kirila Race Update 5-5-08**

The ASA Southeast racing series launched at Lakeland, FL on May 3, 2008. The high speed ¾ mile high banking oval was the fastest and largest track to date for Kirila's developmental late model program. The big track produced big speed with 145 mph top end and 124 mph average lap speed.

The ASA Southeast tour group drew a field of 39 cars but from different motor classes and then ran several races within one. The ASA Southeast series permitted super late models, modified crate late models and certified crate late models to all run in the same race. The various motor classes on the big track made for competitive practice sessions but the qualifying highlighted the big motor cars as they blistered the smaller certified crate motors by 1.5 seconds or better. This set the stage for a race within a race. The Kirila team's crate late model program and driver were dialed in, but we were no match for the super late motors.



*Gene and Crew Chief Tony Blanchard discuss the race strategy prior to qualifying at USA International Speedway, Lakeland, FL*

The Kirila #05 turned its best lap of the weekend during qualifying earning the 29<sup>th</sup> position on the starting grid. Based on the mixed motor classes we were running with the top 5 qualifiers with equal motor programs. The team has rapidly learned the qualifying game and we were happy with our qualifying progress, but it did not help the challenge of running in the rear of the field.

Overall the team loved the ASA SE quality of racing. The driver field is very experienced and they run a smart race.

When the green flag dropped, Kirila ran a clean race as he was challenged by brake issues early on. As the field sorted out over the first 50 laps, Gene held his rhythm. It was clear the car rolled the corners fast and smoothly,

but the drag races down the straight-aways proved we did not have the horsepower to advance up through the field.

It was on lap 68 of the scheduled 125 lap race that completed our weekend. Exiting turn four, there was a 4 car incident in front of Gene. The scramble left no hole for Gene and he was caught in the web of devastation. As the smoke cleared, our team spotted Gene limping around the wrecked pile. Said Kirila, "I saw the pile up in front of me, but the cars left me little room to dodge the roadblock." Gene's evasive moves squeezed him up the high bank and into the outside wall. The contact created enough damage that it parked the 05 for the night.

This was Gene's 3<sup>rd</sup> 100 or more lap race in his late model development run. Having completed the first two 100 lap races we were disappointed to crash and have to park the car on lap 68 of this race at Lakeland. This early in Gene's career he has proven he has the patience to run the long runs and avoid trouble but this race we tripped into the mess. The damage was light and the Kirila Gorilla crew will be in Cordele, Georgia next weekend for another 100 lapper. It will be the first repeat track for our driver and a place where Gene finished 15<sup>th</sup> during his first 100 lap race. The Kirila Gorilla team is now swinging into compete mode verses survival mode as our teams' confidence builds. The race officials are endorsing Gene's skills as a driver and the field is gaining his respect as we continue to gain momentum and race hard but smart.

Separately, this week Gene Kirila was ranked one of the top 40 drivers in America under the age of 18 by Speed 51. Speed 51 is a leading authority on short track racing in America. To learn more about Gene's recognition, see [http://www.speed51.com/2008\\_Stories/Draft/2008\\_Draft\\_Underclassmen\\_11-40.html](http://www.speed51.com/2008_Stories/Draft/2008_Draft_Underclassmen_11-40.html) (or go to [www.speed51.com](http://www.speed51.com) and click on "51's underclassmen short track draft picks #11-#40.")

We would like to thank the following Kirila Racing crew members for this weekend: Crew Chief Tony Blanchard, Chris Birdsall, Tony Stevens, Gene II, and Ginger. Thanks also to Fred for all the help!