

THE VINTAGE EDGE

YOUR TOTAL MOTORSPORTS MAGAZINE

Remember When?

Arctic Cat Struck Back in 1983



© Steve Landon

TOM ST. JOHN TAKES A VICTORY LAP AFTER WINNING THE 1983 LINCOLN LIONS 250 WITH CO-DRIVERS ROGER BRITT AND DAVE YARHOUSE.



© Steve Landon

DAVE YARHOUSE RETURNED TO ACTION FOR TEAM HIGHLAND AT LINCOLN HELPING LEAD THE TEAM TO VICTORY.



© Steve Landon

TEAM HIGHLAND'S PIT CREW SWINGS INTO ACTION LIKE A WELL OILED MACHINE AS DRIVER ROGER BRITT LOOKS ON READY TO GO.

At the start of the 1983 enduro season, it was believed that the Sno Pro style Arctic Cats would be little competition because of their age and a lack of parts. Now, after three enduro races, thoughts are changing-fast. And little wonder because at the last two Enduro races at Lincoln and Traverse City the green and black bandits have run off with the checkered.

Team Highland's Tom St. John, 38, of Midland, Mich., captured the Lincoln Lion's 250 Jan. 23 and one Week later Jeff Kipfmiller, 24, of Bay City, Mich., ran away with the 13th annual Traverse City 250.

A crowd estimated at 4,000 circled the half-mile oval at Lincoln for the fifth annual running of the Lincoln Lion's 250. As expected, Dan Kirts, 41, of Bristol, Ind., captured the pole position and seemed eager to chalk up his second straight win. Kirts, coming off of a win at the enduro season opener at Alpena, Mich., a week earlier, jumped to an early lead for the first 10 laps before steadily falling out of the top 10 by the 100-lap mark with minor problems.

Tom St. John took over the lead at 25 laps and held on until Guy Useldinger, the 1983 winner, moved his Polaris Indy to the top. Useldinger, a native of Grand Forks, N.D., finally seemed to be on the right track after engine problems forced him out in the early going at Alpena.

By 100 laps, Useldinger and co-driver Dan Enns were on top, but they had competition. St. John and Paul

BILL STEVENS STREAKS DOWN TRACK ON BOARD HIS SNO-PRO ARCTIC CAT. STVENS AND KIPFMILLER WON TRAVERSE CITY AFTER FINISHING SIXTH IN LINCOLN.



© Steve Landon



© Steve Landon

TOM ST. JOHN #6, ROB DIAMOND #65 AND DAN KIRTS #45 LEAD THE PACK ON A PARADE LAP PRIOR TO THE START OF THE 1983 LINCOLN LIONS 250.

Swartzendruber of Bay Port, Mich., were sharing the same lap. Terry Spencer and Kirts were not far behind, following in fourth and fifth position.

Warm weather proved to be the only major problem drivers faced. Temperatures hovered in the mid 30S and a light, wet snow fell steadily. The track started out with 11 inches of ice, which rapidly turned to mush.

At one point Bill Britt, 23, of Turner, Mich., running with the Spencer team, found himself sliding down the track after Brad Hempton bumped into Britt's tunnel sending his sled into the bank on the front stretch. Following the accident, Britt headed for the pits and his crew made some changes.

"We geared too low,,," said team,

owner Terry Spencer of Burton, Mich. "We were expecting a bad slush track but it turned out better than we expected. We fell off the board (of leaders) after the wreck and had to make a big push to get back into it."

As a result of Spencer's push, he was

able to place his Arctic Cat in fifth at the finish.

Useldinger's run at the top was short lived and by 125 laps the Highland crew with drivers St. John, Roger Britt of Turner, Mich., and Dave Yarhouse of Evart, Mich., were back on top. Useldinger slowly fell from the pace and later went out with a blown crank.

Almost unnoticed, Kirts and co-driver Cliff Besaw of New Lothrop, Mich., moved near the top. By 125 laps, Kirts was in third and was on the same lap as St. John and Useldinger. When 325 laps rolled around, Kirts was on top. Yarhouse, who had not driven in a pro race since 1977 when he retired after an accident in Alpena, took the helm for Highland.

Yarhouse drove strong, but soon was lapped by Kirts. At that point, it looked like it was going to be Kirts and Company taking the checkered again.

St. John came back and recaptured the lead but again they were sharing the

RESULTS

Lincoln Lion's 250

Team Highland	Tom St. John	Midland, Mich.	Arctic Cat
Williams Race Team	Ron Williams	Burton, Mich.	Ski-Doo
ATM Race Team	Ken Manning	Harrisville, Mich.	Scorpion
Benner Racing	Dan Kirts	Bristol, Ind.	Ski-Doo
Team Spencer	Terry Spencer	Burton, Mich.	Arctic Cat
Team Kipfmiller	Jeff Kipfmiller	Bay City, Mich.	Arctic Cat
Team Havercroft	Tim Havercroft	Lincoln Mich.	Scorpion
Team Viking #2	Tim Seibert	Harrisville, Mich.	Ski-Doo
Team Dobson	Scott Neveau	Bay City, Mich.	Ski-Doo
Team Blu	Duane Bauer	Bay Port, Mich.	Yamaha

Traverse City 250

Team Kipfmiller	Jeff Kipfmiller	Bay City, Mich.	Arctic Cat
Felske Farm #1	Bob McCausey	Dewitt, Mich.	Polaris
Agnew Racing Ltd.	Ed Badour	Munger, Mich.	Arctic Cat
Team Spencer	Terry Spencer	Burton, Mich.	Arctic Cat
ATM Race Team	Ken Manning	Harrisville, Mich.	Scorpion
Williams Race Team	Ron Williams	Burton, Mich.	Ski-Doo
Bridgeport Pools	Mike Staszak	Kawkawlin, Mich.	Arctic Cat
Team 14	Paul Swartzendruber	Bayport, Mich.	Yamaha
Felske Farm #2	Brand Hempton	Goodrich, Mich.	Polaris
Team Highland	Tom St. John	Midland, Mich.	Arctic Cat

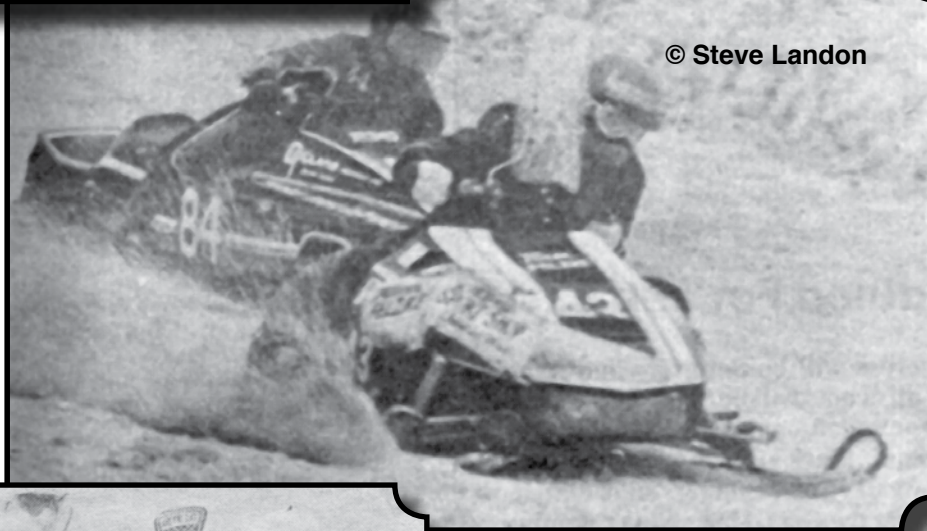


© Steve Landon

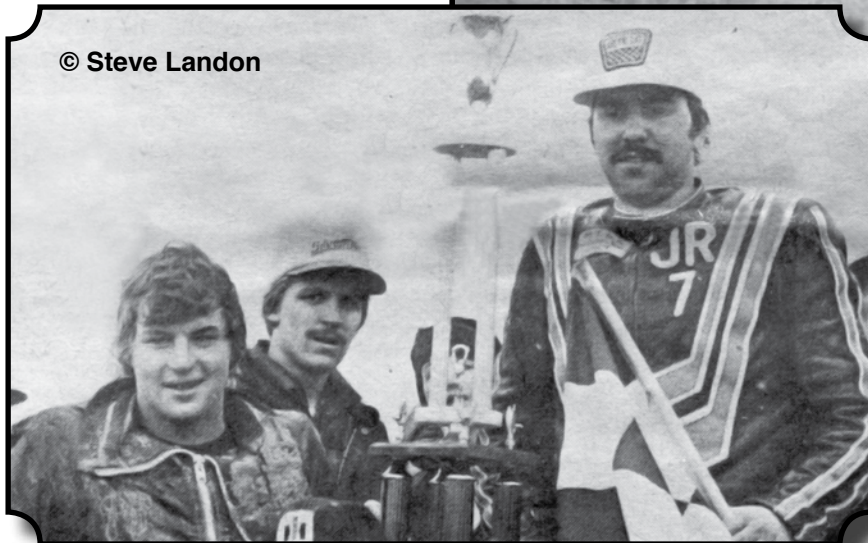
DAVE YARHOUSE, TOM ST. JOHN AND ROGER BRITT LED TEAM HIGHLAND TO VICTORY AT LINCOLN.

MIKE STASZAK #84 SLIPS INSIDE OF BRAD HEMPTON #42 AT THE TRAVERSE CITY T.C. 250.

JEFF KIPMILLER (FAR LEFT) AND BILL STEVENS CELEBRATE AFTER WINNING THE T.C. 250.



© Steve Landon



© Steve Landon



© Steve Landon

SO CLOSE AND YET SO FAR – JEFF KIPMILLER IS ASSISTED BY A TOW SLED JUST FOUR LAPS SHY OF VICTORY LANE AT TRAVERSE CITY. KIPMILLER RETURNED TO TAKE THE CHECKERED FLAG.

same lap. Kirts, noted for his hard driving in the clutch, continued to move closer to St. John, it seemed Only a matter of time before Kirts would be back on top. Tension was running high. Kirts made a pit stop but was back before St. John had a chance to lap him. Then, another pit for Kirts to replace a bad plug

the Northwestern Michigan Fairgrounds just south of Traverse City. A crowd of more than 4,000 was on hand to see 29 teams take the green on the five-eighths mile oval.

Jeff Kipfmiller piloted his Arctic Cat to a near flawless 250 mile victory over his nearest competitor Bob McCausey of Dewitt, Mich., on a Polaris who finished 10 laps back in second.

Weather again showed little mercy as temperatures reached the high 30s with a light mixture of rain and snow falling most of the day. Midway through the 400-lap race, the turns already had reached the clay under the ice and the plows had to come out.

Kirts took the lead from the green and held on until a blown bearing forced him out at 173 laps. Kipfmiller, driving with Bill Stevens of Bay City, Mich., took the lead at 175 laps until Tom St. John took over briefly at 190, 220 and 230 laps. From then on, it was all Kipfmiller.

Team Highland, winners of the Lincoln race the week earlier, blew a piston and spent most of the day rebuilding an engine just to get back in the race.

As the race was drawing to a close, Kipfmiller expanding his lead when, with just four laps to go, he came to a sudden stop in front of the grandstand. When his sled wouldn't start, it looked like victory was at hand for McCausey. Kipfmiller was towed in with a blown chain-case. Eight laps later, however, his crew had him back and he was on his way to the checkered.

"I can't help but praise my pit crew," said Kipfmiller. "They really worked fast and made it happen. If I would've had to, I think I could have picked it up and pushed it those final four laps. I really wanted to win!

wire, gave St. John a two lap edge.

Again Kirts came back, pushing harder than ever, but bad luck struck him coming out of turn four. Kirts blew his track, which locked up, forcing him into the loose ice and flipping the machine. Suffering only bumps and bruises, Kirts returned to the pits while his Benner Racing crew worked to get back into the race. Besaw took over and pressed to make up lost laps, but his efforts only

could earn him a fourth place finish.

Karl Schwartz of Saginaw, Mich., and co-driver Ron Williams of Burton, Mich., 1982 Triple Crown winners, moved into second place but could not muster the six laps needed to catch St. John. They finished third

The win earned Team Highland \$3,500 in prize money and makes the team only the second in enduro history to win four of the five Michigan enduro races. Kirts also has that distinction.

"We ran a real good race," said St. John. "We had no problems with the sled and only changed skis once. It was much better than running in the cold weather that causes a lot of ice dust.

TRAVERSE CITY T.C. 250

The Traverse City 250 finally found a home at