

# 2003 Montana 500

by Ed Detour

I had never observed an entire Montana 500 as a spectator, but here are my observations and assessment of the 2003 Montana 500 from start to finish.

## Pre-race:

It turns out that 21 cars have entered the trophy class. Some of the cars I am familiar with, some are unknown quantities. A few of the pre-race favorites would have to be previous winners. These are Ron Miller, Rick Carnegie and Tom Carnegie. Other interesting possibilities are Joey Coniff in the "Red Rocket" and Nan Robison in "Tweety-bird". These are cars that in the past had won with other drivers. Steve Coniff won with the "Red Rocket" in 1998 and Tom Carnegie won with "Tweety-bird" in 1977. I also have an eye on Doug Langel who has been runner-up but never won - he may be due. At the end of last year's race, Tony Cerovski was running really well - this may be his year. I have heard rumors that Mark Hutchinson, Rob Flesner and Chuck Nauditt's engines were worked on by Tom Carnegie. Will this be a help to them? Newcomers Mike Wendland and Dave Warhank are an unknown quantity to me, but they are from Rudyard and maybe Doug Langel has given them a few pointers. I won't count them out. Other possibles are B.J. Miller, son of Ron Miller. B.J. came in third last year. There is also Gary Ebbert. He finished fourth last year just a few seconds behind B.J. Art Hedman and Ted Ballard have been coming for several years now. They are getting stronger each year. I don't know Garrett Green. He is driving a touring car, so I don't hold out much hope for his chances. Maybe I'll be surprised? Jillian Caples is driving the same car that Anna Marx drove last year. It was o.k., but unless it is souped-up some from last year, I would consider it an also-ran. I don't know about Red Cress either. Dave Huson is an experienced driver and has finished in the top three before. Anyone who can finish in the top three is only a couple of breakdowns from taking home all the marbles.

## Leg one:

Most of the action seems to be up front Doug Langel is really flying. Two new guys, Garrett Green and Red Cress are also really cooking. I was definitely wrong about Garrett Green's touring car. That thing is a contender. Tony Cerovski, Tom Carnegie, Rick Carnegie, Mark Hutchinson, Ron Miller, Dave Huson and Ted Ballard round out the top ten cars at this point. Dave Warhank, Chuck Nauditt and Mike Wendland are having some problems.

## Leg two:

Everybody turns in a good leg this time except for Dave Warhank who seems to be having carburetor troubles and Jillian Caples, who is having radiator problems. At the coffee stop Jillian and some helpers install a new radiator on her car.

## Leg three:

Everyone turns in a good run except for Rob Flesner. Dave Warhank seems to be getting his troubles under control.

## Leg four:

Disaster strikes Mike Robison. He is out with a broken crank. Mike was in 14th place, 14 minutes off the pace of the first place car when he blew up. Mike was driving the oldest car in the run, a '14 of course. At the end of day one, the top five are Doug Langel, Tony Cerovski, Tom Carnegie, Red Cress and Garrett Green. Less than ten minutes separate the top five cars. Rick Carnegie loses a rod on this leg but nurses it in.

#### Leg five:

More troubles. Red Cress becomes the second car to break a crank. He is out. This is Red's first year and he was doing very well, running a strong 4th place when he broke down. He was just three minutes off the pace of the first place car at the time. Rick Carnegie has decided to change his rod today. Breaking his seal will cost him an hour's time penalty. Tony Cerovski has timer problems. Dave Huson takes a wrong turn. The top five cars this leg are Doug Langel, Tom Carnegie, Nan Robison, Ron Miller and Garrett Green, in that order.

#### Leg six:

Mike Wendland has some problems on this leg. It seems to me that the fastest car is Tony Cerovski. Doug Langel is still in first place and Tony has a lot of time to make up because of his timer trouble on the previous leg. I think he may have the speed to do it. Tom Carnegie appears to have the third fastest car at this point. All the cars are running 11/16" restrictor plates between the carburetor and the manifold, but the only car running cast iron pistons is Tom Carnegie.

#### Leg seven:

Rob Flesner, Mark Hutchinson, Dave Huson and Ted Ballard all have troubles on the road. Rob and Ted get going again, but Mark and Dave throw in the towel. Mark was in tenth place and twenty-five minutes off the pace. Dave was in 14th place and a little over an hour off the pace.

#### Leg eight:

Tony Cerovski is really moving. He picks up over three minutes on Doug Langel. There is a saying that model T's run really good right before they blow up. Can Tony hang together long enough and drive fast enough to catch Doug? We'll see tomorrow. Less than five minutes separate the top three cars. The top five are: Doug Langel, Tom Carnegie, Tony Cerovski, Ron Miller and Garrett Green. Gary Ebbert has a rod that's "talkin'" to him, so he decides to pack it in. Gary was in tenth place at the time, about 40 minutes out of first place.

#### Leg nine:

All the remaining cars do fine this leg. Joey Coniff does especially fine and turns in the best time for the leg. Rick Carnegie is back in the race and turns in the third best time for the leg. Although Rick broke his seal to replace his rod, he is still running with his restrictor plate. It looks like it is a race for second place. Doug Langel is in first place and will not be caught unless something bad happens to him. Tom Carnegie, in second place has 55 seconds on Tony Cerovski, who is in third. Tony gained over a minute on Tom on this leg. If he can do it again, Tom will get third and Tony will get second. I notice Tom draining oil out of his car. T drivers do this because excess oil causes drag in the motor. It is a dangerous operation as too little oil can allow the rods to go out. Will this little trick give Tom enough speed to hold Tony off? Will Tom lose a rod? We'll find out on the last leg.

#### Leg ten: (last leg)

Some strange things happen on this leg. Joey Coniff again turns in the fastest time. Ron Miller turns in the next best time and Rick Carnegie is again third, tied with Doug Langel. Tom Carnegie is next. Tony falls out of the top five for this leg, in fact, he is beaten by Mike Wendland for the first time. Tony was seventh, Nan Robison, B.J. Miller and Jillian Caples rounding out the top ten for this leg. All the remaining cars do o.k. After the tear down, the top three cars are declared legal. The final results are as follows:

## Trophy Class

Name	Car No.	Time	Avg. Speed	Notes
Doug Langel	6	9:45:54	50.18	
Tom Carnegie	19	9:49:15	49.89	
Tony Cerovski	1	9:50:41	49.77	
Ron Miller	13	10:05:45	48.53	
Nan Robison	21	10:08:27	48.32	Top lady
Garrett Green	17	10:10:39	48.15	
Joey Coniff	8	10:10:50	48.13	
Arthur Hedman	9	10:16:56	47.66	
B. J. Miller	2	10:23:18	47.17	
Ted Ballard	18	10:46:19	45.49	
Michael Wendland	11	11:00:29	44.51	
Jillian Caples	10	11:04:28	44.25	
Gary Ebbert	12	11:36:44	42.20	Lost Rod - DNF
Robert Flesner	15	11:44:05	41.76	
Rick Carnegie	16	11:47:29	41.56	
Dave Warhank	20	11:48:19	41.51	
Chuck Nauditt	14	11:52:56	41.24	
Brian Cress	5	10:16:56	38.41	Broke crank- DNF
David Huson	3	12:55:03	37.93	Lost Rod- DNF
Mark Hutchinson	4	12:57:35	37.81	Lost mag - DNF
Mike Robison	7	15:26:17	31.74	Broke crank- DNF