

# NASCAR's carburetor ruling s

Shangri-La Motor Speedway promoter Dale Campfield isn't happy with the latest ruling out of NASCAR headquarters.

The 390 cfm carburetor, relegated to the back of the garages in the spring of 1986, has just been resurrected for the asphalt modified division.

"It's really a knee-jerk reaction by well-intended people, saying we've got to slow the cars down," Campfield said.

People are calling the announcement either a wise move or a horrendous decision.

The new rule applies mainly to the Winston Tour shows and will go into effect a week from today in a race at Stafford Springs, Conn. It may also be required at other shows as NASCAR deems necessary. Current plans call for the 390 to be mandatory for the entire Winston Racing Series next year.

In the press release accompanying the announcement Jim Hunter, NASCAR vice president for administration, said "the new rule is designed in an effort to increase competition and to reduce overall costs to car-owners on the tour. We have discussed this rule with car owners, drivers and track operators. Everyone agrees that this deci-



## MOTOR SPORTS

By Michael J. Marrer

sion is in the best interest of modified racing."

In reality, the overwhelming motivation for the change is fear.

Fear for the lives of the drivers.

Concerns have been raised because of the deaths of Charlie Jarzombek and Corky Cookman in high-speed crashes this season, but Campfield and others think NASCAR may have acted in haste.

"The 390 carburetor is not the answer to the problem of people getting fatally injured," Campfield said. "It's a chassis problem, because people (CART and Winston Cup drivers) hit a lot harder than these cars

are going and they not only live, they go back to race the next day.

"If they said they wanted to come out with a different engine or a different carb for next year, I'd say that's fine," But to do it in such a short notice and when we have these Tour races left, it's ludicrous."

Bob Gentile, owner of Doug's Speed Shop on Court Street in Binghamton, echoed those sentiments.

"I just think their timing is poor, and the decision is awful quick," Gentile said.

Reigning national modified champion Jimmy Spencer of Berwick, Pa., supports NASCAR's decision. "I think it's good," he said. "I think that first of all it's going to tighten the competition up.

"Second, it's going to give the drivers a better feeling at the end of the straightaway. Even though you're going to drive in harder, I still think we're going to be going slower overall."

Jan Leaty, another tour competitor, also thinks some of the danger may be reduced by the ruling.

"I think it's a step in the right direction," Leaty said. "The cars are getting too fast. It's tough to compete knowing that you're-

# stirs controversy

trying to pass someone around the outside and you know you're right on the very edge all the time anyhow."

Both drivers estimate that the rule will result in a reduction of 100 horsepower, dropping the top speed of the cars by 10 or 15 mph on the straights.

Despite what the NASCAR press release said, it does not appear that all of the major players were consulted. Spencer and Leaty said they were polled for their opinions, but Campfield wasn't.

Campfield is irked, and probably rightfully so, as his is one of the only three tracks running the affected class on a weekly basis. He also doesn't think the small local teams, the ones most affected, were consulted either.

One local team that definitely wasn't and stands to be affected was the combination of Gentile and driver Ron Shephard, who campaign No. 34.

"As a car owner, it put us in trouble and we'll miss some of the 390 (Tour) shows," Gentile said.

Spencer feels he can probably just bolt the carb directly onto his existing engines. At the most, he says, a cam change is all that's necessary. But others say the heads

will require major work.

"The teams with money can buy the camshafts and the heads to make a 390 carb just as fast as the other cars (with the big carbs)," Campfield said.

Said Leaty, "I could get mad at NASCAR for making the rule change, but that would be misplaced aggression. It really belongs back on the shoulders of the race track operators that bullied this whole move into the rule book last spring."

Leaty was referring to four tracks, including Spencer Speedway near Rochester, that banded together to drop the 390 rule last year. They basically blackmailed NASCAR, threatening to leave the organization if their demands weren't met. NASCAR gave in because one of those tracks, Stafford Springs, was considered the flagship of the NASCAR modified division.

Ironically, both Stafford and Spencer dropped modifieds from their weekly programs at the end of last season.

Gentile was definitely disgusted as he summed up the situation: "Rules don't cost people money, rule changes do."

**Marrer is a free lance writer whose motor sports column appears every Friday in the *Press & Sun-Bulletin*.**