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Soap Box Derby racers take Akron by storm





SOUTH AKRON — Battling sporadic heavy rainfall, a wet track and each other, 514 racers of all shapes, sizes and ages faced off at the 69th All-American Soap Box Derby at the Derby Downs track, shown at right, July 22.

Though each racer earned the right to compete by either winning local championships or with strong performances in rally races, only six would end up rolling away with championship trophies. Shown at top right, from left, Scott Reed, 16, of Virginia; Olivia Murphy, 12, of Indiana; and Michael Bridges, 11, of Arizona, the 2006 champions in the Rally Masters, Super Stock and Stock divisions, respectively, celebrate their winning efforts during the trophy celebration.

Shown at top center, from left, Garrett Kysar, 14, of West Virginia; Sally Sue Thorton, 14, of California; and Michael Neely, 14, of North Canton, took home the gold in the All-American Masters, Super Stock and Stock divisions, respectively.

But even though most racers won't go home with a piece of hardware, they don't go away empty-handed. Racers such as 16-year-old Amber Starcher, a Super Stock racer from Virginia, shown above left as she coasts beyond the finish line in her No. 642 car, will always have memories of national competition to treasure and experiences to share.

Akron racers who competed in the All-American include: Felicia Burkhammer, Rally Super Stock; and Megan Thomas, Super Stock.

— *By Mike D'Agruma*

Photos: Fred Durr