

Three for Three

BLACKFORST MOTORSPORTS MUSTANG WINS IN IOWA

Text by Greg Aleck Photos courtesy of Grand America

The Blackforest Motorsports team is now three-for-three in the 2007 Grand Sports KONI Challenge Series. With the team's victories in the Miami GS 400k at Homestead-Miami Speedway and the first-ever Grand-Am KONI 400k Challenge Series race at Iowa Speedway, this adds to their season-opening victory in the Fresh-From-Florida 200 at Daytona. The No. 5 USG Sheetrock/Ramset Tools Mustang with Co-drivers Tom Nastasi and Ian James took the lead from Charles Espenlaub in the No. 55 Supercuts/Hyper Sport Ford Mustang GT, on the oval portion of the 1.3-mile road course of Iowa Speedway with 13 laps remaining and held off late challenges from both Espenlaub and Jeff Segal to win by 2.551 seconds over Espenlaub. It was James' second consecutive KONI Challenge victory and the third straight for Nastasi and the Blackforest team.

By virtue of his third victory in as many races (Nastasi also won with James last weekend at Homestead and with David Empringham in January's season-opener at Daytona). Nastasi took the GS points lead with a total of 90 points. He is five points ahead of Joe Foster, with whom Espenlaub co-drove (in the No 55 Mustang) to the second-place result at Iowa.

"It hasn't been easy," Nastasi said. "Last week, having to start 30th and work my way up to the front and then today spinning on the second lap, and I had to do it all over again. I told everybody, 'I'm giving up qualifying. I'm just starting dead last.' That seems to be the only way I can do it. I drove the car hard, and I really put my head down and drove the wheels off it. We did not change tires, and the car just kept getting better and better and better. We won our first race together without changing tires. We learned fast this weekend and we figured, 'Let's keep the same tires on it, and see what happens.' It worked. Thumbs up to Hoosier Tires for lasting as long as they did, and to be able to go to the front. My partner here did the rest. He did the hard part. I just saved myself."





"Obviously, when we first came here in the first session, we didn't think it would potentially be a Mustang track," said James. "But a lot of times, the actual time sheets are misleading. Although we may not be the fastest car at the start, it's a very good race car. It's very good in traffic. You don't have to be quite as precise in some of the other cars like the BMWs and the Porsches. They can get really fast laps, but as soon as they have a little hiccup or the tires start to go away, they can't really

use that great potential so much. We just worked on our setup. That was our strategy.

"We decided to go and practice on old tires, and we did the whole race on one set of tires. The car was good at the end. We had a few minor problems, but no more than anybody else. The battle at the end with Jeff and Charles was fun. It was a lot of fun. These guys were clean and we managed to get by. I'm just really happy for Tom and his three-in-a-row, and two-in-a-row for me."

"Obviously, anytime you win one of these races it's an amazing feeling," James said. "I've done this before with Tom, and there's no better way to do it than with a great friend. I'm really happy I could come in and help him out. Anytime you win it's a privilege in this Grand-Am series."

The Blackforest Motorsports team returns to the track in mid-May at the challenging Laguna Seca Raceway at Monterey, California, to defend their GS championship lead. **MT**