

By EARL WATT

• Daily Leader

In just three races so far this season, Cody Gearhart has already established himself as the driver to beat in the Modified class in Southwest Kansas.

Gearhart has won in Beaver, Hugoton, and after Sunday night's Mother's Day special at Seward County Fairgrounds Speedway, he has three checkered flags under his belt.

"When you do good, you're not as well-liked," Gearhart said after his Liberal victory.

Once Gearhart made his way to the front of the pack, only restarts allowed a challenge.

One local racer, Jim Armstrong, didn't get to push Gearhart after having a J-bar failure in the first two laps of the main event.

"I had confidence in the car," Armstrong said. "I think I could have won it or at least been in the top three."

Gearhart felt better after seeing Armstrong leave the track early.

"There's a lot of fast guys out here," he said. "It's hard to get around going so fast. When I saw Jim break, I thought I might have it under control."

Gearhart wins opening race of the season

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While Armstrong's breakdown happened at the worse-possible time, Gearhart had repairs to deal with of his own. His crew had to replace his motor prior to running in Liberal after the races in Hugoton and Beaver earlier in the week.

"I have to give it to my pit crew," he said. "They did a great job."

For the first race of the season, both drivers said the track was in good shape.

"The track;s good," Armstrong said. "It will take a little time and some races for us to work it back in, but it's a good track. There's going to be some good racing out here."