

One of the hometown heroes of the Rumble in Fort Wayne finally cracked the code to victory lane on Friday night during the 21st edition of the indoor midget-car classic.

Fort Wayne native Geoff Kaiser, making his 19th A-main start inside the Allen County War Memorial Coliseum, led all 50 laps of the headlining National Midget feature to score his first-ever Rumble victory.

However, Kaiser's path to victory was anything but as easy as the box score made it look.

Kaiser had to hold off a hard-charging Jim Anderson during the first half of the race, then survived a late tussle with two-time Rumble winner Justin Peck in the closing stages before parking his No. 10 Don Moore-owned Beast/AutoCraft on the frontstretch and climbing on top of the roll cage in jubilation.

"That was a hell of a race, right there," said Kaiser. "The track was totally different from what we expected; our car totally lost it and I was just hanging on. I knew there were a lot of fast guys back there and just did everything I could to keep it going out front.

"Justin got my shoulder a little bit when we came together, but other than that, we held off all the shots they threw at us tonight."

Kaiser started from the pole and never trailed, but it was 2010 race winner Jim Anderson who gave him the most hassles early on. Anderson found his way to second on lap six and hounded the back nerf bar of Kaiser's machine for 30 laps as the two Midwest veterans pulled away from the rest of the field.

After several failed attempts to bump Kaiser out of the way, Anderson's shot at winning finally evaporated with 13 laps left, when he looped his car around exiting turn two and skidded to a halt.

That lined Peck, who was eighth just before halfway, up directly behind Kaiser for the ensuing restart.

Following a second spin by Anderson that negated a pass by Peck for the lead, the 20-year-old transitioned from the top lane to the bottom to try and make his move around Kaiser for the victory.

The change in lanes ultimately bit Peck, who ended up backward in turn one after contact with Kaiser when he dove to the bottom of the sixth-mile concrete oval.

Fortuitously, Kaiser was able to keep going despite the shunt with Peck, and as a result he was able to keep the lead and drive off when the green flag waved over the field for the final time.

Joe Liguori, who like Kaiser was seeking his first Rumble win, got to second after Peck's issues and had a shot on the final lap, but spun out of the runner-up position in the final corner.

That allowed Liguori's teammate, Cap Henry, to sneak through the smoke for a career-best second-place finish in national midget competition at the Rumble.

Travis Welpott completed the podium ahead of five-time Rumble winner Billy Wease, while Peck rallied back through the field to finish fifth and chalked his incident with Kaiser up to "a racing deal" afterward.

"Geoff and I just got to racing there; I had already passed him once before the yellow came out, but that bit us and it's just part of this indoor deal," noted Peck. "He just turned left, plain and simple, and I ran up into him. We were fighting hard, going for the win, and that kind of stuff happens sometimes.

"You win some and you lose some. I feel like we had the fastest car here and just didn't get the job done tonight."

Retired three-time NASCAR Cup Series champion Tony Stewart set fast time in qualifying and won his heat race, but was involved in a multi-car accident on lap two and could not continue.

Stewart was credited with 13th in the final rundown.

John Ivy swept both the winged and non-winged 600cc micro features during Friday night's racing program.

**RESULTS: 21st annual Rumble in Fort Wayne; Allen County War Memorial Coliseum; Dec. 28, 2018**

**National Midget A-Feature (50 laps):** 1. Geoff Kaiser (#10-Moore), 2. Cap Henry, 3. Travis Welpott, 4. Billy Wease, 5. Justin Peck, 6. Russ Gamester, 7. Jim Anderson, 8. Joe Liguori, 9. Billy Hulbert, 10. Cooper Clouse, 11. Bryan Nuckles, 12. Nick Hamilton, 13. Tony Stewart, 14. Kyle Hamilton. Fast qualifier: Tony Stewart, 7.622 seconds. *Lap Leader:* Kaiser 1-50.

**National Midget Qualifications (best of two laps):** 1. #2 – Tony Stewart, 7.622; 2. #8up – Joe Liguori, 7.721; 3. #36 – Jim Anderson, 7.807; 4. #18 – Travis Welpott, 7.809; 5. #59 – Bryan Nuckles, 7.824; 6. #7cc – Cooper Clouse, 7.885; 7. #10 – Geoff Kaiser, 7.908; 8. #5x – Justin Peck, 7.953; 9. #63 – Rex Norris III, 7.982; 10. #67k – Kyle O’Gara, 8.022; 11. #33 – Kyle Hamilton, 8.023; 12. #59x – John Inman, 8.024; 13. #46 – Russ Gamester, 8.026; 14. #88 – Billy Hulbert, 8.041; 15. #6 – Nick Hamilton, 8.064; 16. #9 – Matt Westfall, 8.070; 17. #99 – Billy Wease, 8.083; 18. #31 – Derek Bischak, 8.138 (8.253); 19. #24 – Cory Setser, 8.138 (8.265); 20. #67 – Cap Henry, 8.245; 21. #98 – Scott Hampton, 8.283; 22. #49 – Billy Lewis, 8.324; 23. #92 – Chris Guingrich, 8.344; 24. #19 – Austin Nemire, 8.362; 25. #63B – Matt Browning, 8.474; 26. #4B – Sean Murphy, 8.635; 27. #15 – RJ Corson, 8.699; 28. #49c – Ron Combs, 8.751; 29. #22 – Cory Guingrich, 8.856; 30. #65 – Junior Gould, 8.893; 31. #24R – Rico Abreu, NT; 32. #8 – Kody Swanson, NT; 33. #97 – Mike Fedorcak, NT.

**National Midget Heat Race #1 (10 laps, top two transfer):** 1. Tony Stewart, 2. Kyle Hamilton / 3. Matt Westfall, 4. Scott Hampton, 5. Cooper Clouse, 6. Sean Murphy, 7. Rico Abreu (DNS).

**National Midget Heat Race #2 (10 laps, top two transfer):** 1. Geoff Kaiser, 2. Joe Liguori / 3. Billy Wease, 4. Billy Lewis, 5. Kody Swanson, 6. John Inman, 7. R.J. Corson (DNS).

**National Midget Heat Race #3 (10 laps, top two transfer):** 1. Russ Gamester, 2. Jim Anderson / 3. Justin Peck, 4. Cory Setser, 5. Chris Guingrich, 6. Ron Combs, 7. Mike Fedorcak (DNS).

**National Midget Heat Race #4 (10 laps, top two transfer):** 1. Travis Welpott, 2. Billy Hulbert / 3. Rex Norris III, 4. Derek Bischak, 5. Cory Guingrich, 6. Austin Nemire, 7. Dave Darland (DNS).

**National Midget Heat Race #5 (10 laps, top two transfer):** 1. Nick Hamilton, 2. Cap Henry / 3. Kyle O’Gara, 4. Matt Browning, 5. Junior Gould, 6. Bryan Nuckles.

**National Midget B-Main #1 (8 laps, winner transfers):** 1. Bryan Nuckles / 2. Cory Setser, 3. Chris Guingrich, 4. Kyle O’Gara, 5. RJ Corson (DNS), 6. Rico Abreu (DNS).

**National Midget B-Main #2 (8 laps, winner transfers):** 1. Cooper Clouse / 2. Kody Swanson, 3. John Inman, 4. Derek Bischak, 5. Ron Combs, 6. Austin Nemire.

**National Midget B-Main #3 (8 laps, winner transfers):** 1. Justin Peck / 2. Matt Westfall, 3. Scott Hampton, 4. Cory Guingrich, 5. Matt Browning, 6. Mike Fedorcak.