

Springnational results posted

Pistons and turbines display power

By DIETER KRIEG
BUCK - There are moments in any sport when spectators are silenced by anticipation and wonder. It's a hypnotic minute just before the big play. Or the display of awesome power which leaves everybody gasping.

Tractors to the Buck Pulling Stadium are invited to such occasions at a weekly pull, but for the seeking the more thrills, last weekend was a special one.

Several jet-powered tractors were entered into hour-long contests and the noises from them sounded more like a Boeing screaming down the runway, rather than a tractor laboring in the field. The jet-powered tractors sounded like the whirring jets stationed at the terminal awaiting clearance for take-off.

With their turbines turning at 25,000 rounds per minute, these strange-looking machines tackle the job of sled and drag it on a hard clay track with a surprisingly little effort.

These screaming tractors aren't the only ones which display some power. One competitor driving a tractor pulled by two V-8 engines,

for example, roared down the track with power to spare. When the heavy load got to be too much, the rear wheels just spun and the tractor for pay dirt came to a grinding halt. Then, before officials had unhitched his mechanical monster, and his pull was officially over, the driver hit the accelerator for just a split second. Power was instantly transferred from engines to rear wheels and in that brief moment, both wheels dug a small trench.

Some of the tractors pulling here develop several thousand horsepower. The engines are extremely well tuned and drivers have to be highly skilled to control all those "horses." At times, the machines take off like a wild mustang, with the front end coming off the ground and jumping from side to side. The crowds love it.

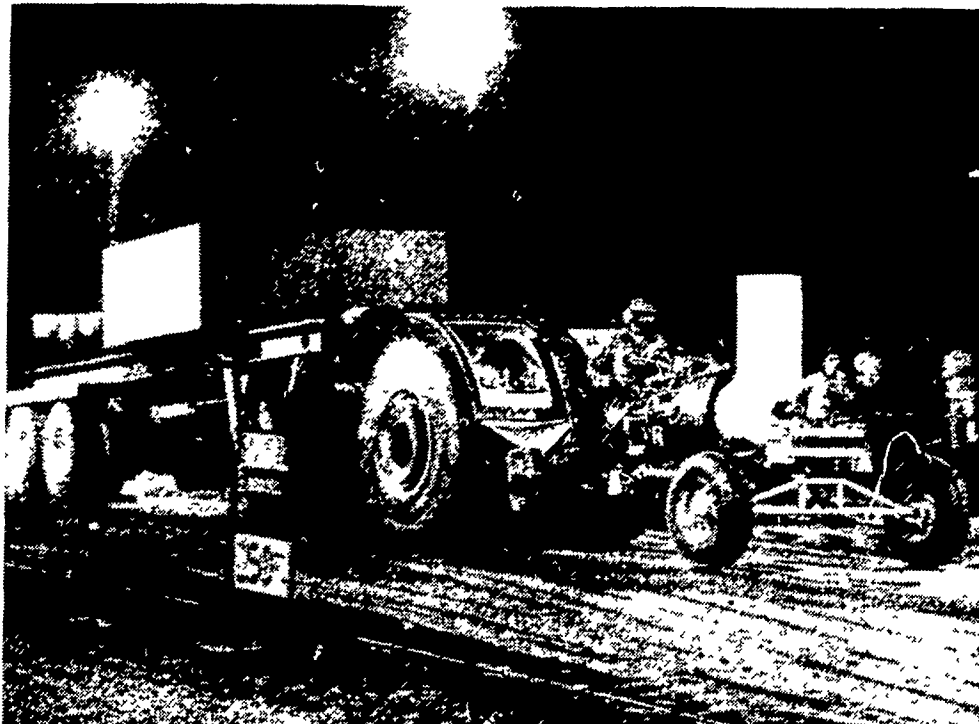
Visitors to the Buck track last week were fascinated by the method used to start the jet-powered tractors. An auxiliary tractor is used to provide electrical current to spin the rotors at high speed. Meanwhile, the jet hums and whines. Then there's a scream and possibly a burst of flames as the rich fuel is ignited and harnessed for work. In comparison to the modified tractor models

which are run by as many as four V-8's, Allison aircraft, or tank engines, these versions are relatively quiet. They scream and hum. The sound of suction is also predominant.

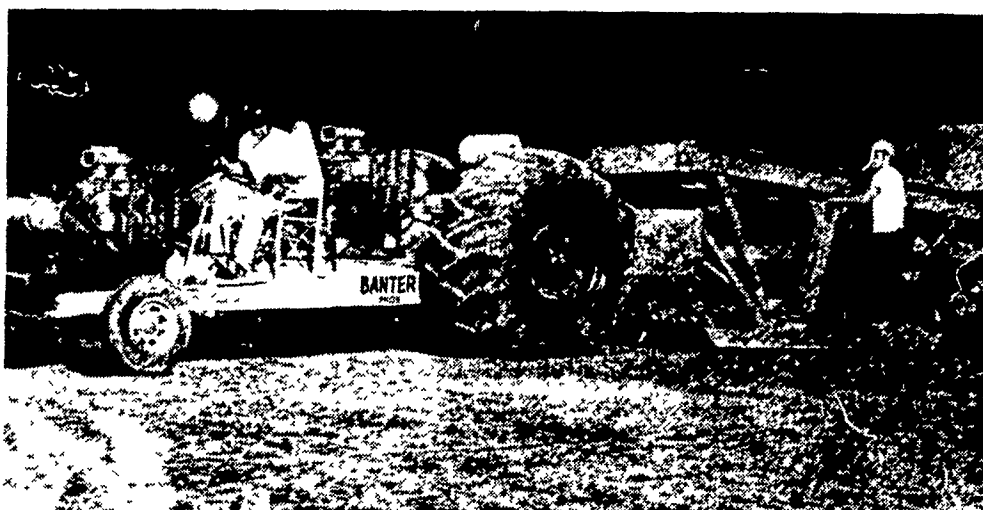
Providing the traction are huge rear tires which measure nearly a yard wide and six feet in height. They themselves cause astonishment for first-time visitors to the pulls.

At the Buck last week - as in most major tractor pulling contests - competition was divided into two categories: super stock and modified. The super stock tractors are factory models with variations as allowed by the National Tractor Pullers Association. Such variations include bigger tires and larger bores in the original block. Some pullers have applied some of their own engineering ideas to commercial farm tractors and increased horsepower tenfold. In the other category - modified - the competitor is allowed to go all out with his engineering ideas. Consequently, jet-powered and other bizarre machines were born. Exotic fuels are used by most pullers, with alcohol being a favorite. The end result is a performance of power which thrills crowds.

(Continued on Page 31)



This jet-powered machine had power to spare, but a moist track gave him traction problems.



Sitting between two blown Chevy engines, one of the Banter Brothers prepares for take-off at the Buck track.

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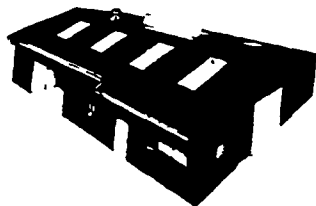
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