

THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION

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THE MIDWEST'S SHORT TRACK AUTO RACING AUTHORITY

April 2017

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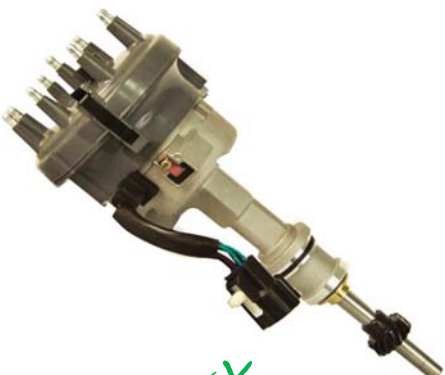


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Publisher's Note

Racing According to Plan



Dan Plan

As we approach the beginning of the 2017 short track season here in the upper-Midwest, I can't help but think of the Bob Marley song named Everything's Gonna Be Alright. During the off-season, Elko Speedway announced they were dropping the Super Late Model division. Many were upset with decision and weren't shy about voicing their concerns. I get it. It's a bitter pill to swallow and doesn't seem fair to those that own the cars or the fans that enjoyed this class. But, it's not the first time this has happened, and surely isn't the end of the world.

The same scenario took place in the mid-1970's when Rockford Speedway and several other tracks in the upper-Midwest switched to a more economical Late Model. This type of Late Model became widely known as a "Rockford Rules" Late Model. Some may not realize Elko went through the same change following their 1979 season; Super Late Models out, less expensive Lat Models in. Back then, the drivers really did not have the option to convert their cars to the new rules. I remember this well, as my favorite driver was no longer going to race at Elko. He

Everything's Gonna Be Alright

continued to race, but I had to wait a week to see how he did across the river in Wisconsin.

While other tracks like Rockford, Jefferson and Columbus 151 (when it was still around) have stuck with the "Rockford Rules" type Late Model, things gradually changed at Elko. Over the next 30+ years, the cars at Elko Speedway transformed back into Super Late Models. Now, I don't have a horse in the show, but as a fan I've always maintained adding the term "Super" in front of the words Late Model does not necessarily guarantee super great racing. It does guarantee super expensive racing; both for the competitors and the tracks that run them.

While Elko continued running Super Late Models, the Big 8 (or Rockford Rules) Late Models were added back into the mix several years ago. The weekly car count in the Big 8 class has grown significantly in the past few years, and the Super Late Model car count has been quite impressive when compared other tracks in the nation. While the numbers were good for both divisions, often times I found myself wondering what it would be like if there was only 1 Late Model division. Sure it's neat to see two 18-car fields, but a car count of 30+ at a weekly show, would be phenomenal.

Based on the people I've spoken with, there will be an abundance of Late Models at Elko this year. I would not be surprised at all to see 30+ Late Models on hand for a weekly show this year. That would be pretty impressive in this day and age. Heck, some of the tracks in the South struggle to draw 20 Late Models for a special event.

The bottom line is cars will still be going fast in circles on Saturday nights. Maybe not as fast as they were last year, but still plenty fast. As Bob Marley would say; Don't worry about a thing. 'Cause every little thing gonna be alright.

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Racing Nuggets



Jacklyn Daniels-Nuttleman

Allow me to be Captain Obvious for a moment: Racing is an expensive hobby.

My husband Toby and I just got back from South Alabama Speedway where his driver, Ty Majeski won The Rattler 250—backing up his win there last year. It was exciting, but expensive—and this team wasn't spending half of what many other teams were spending. Allow me to elaborate.

Open practice was on Thursday, official practice on Friday, more practice on Saturday for the super lates and racing for some local divisions, modifieds, and pro late models, who had their Baby Rattler 125 that night, and then Sunday was the big day for the super lates with The Rattler 250. Four days—which was not mandatory but helpful to get a car dialed in for racing—yet for many, it was four days of pit passes, hotel rooms, meals—oh and tires of course.

Teams and their checkbooks were able to decide how much to spend on practice tires. I'd venture a guess that my husband's team owners had one of the smallest tire bills for the Rattler. They purchased three sets of practice tires and the allotted 10 race tires—a total of 22 tires for \$3700. I saw several teams who had many racks and stacks of tires—three to five times as many practice tires for the race weekend—yes, some teams spent over \$10,000 on tires alone for The Rattler weekend. It's jaw-dropping how much some teams spend.

Allow me to state the obvious again: It makes a win tastier when you're able to get it done on less money than others.

The topic of money being spent on racing invariably bubbles to the surface time and time again, and it did recently in light of the upcoming CRA, CARS, and Southern Super Series event in May at Bristol Motor

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Speedway. Much discussion surrounded those who are selecting to not enter the event and the reasons why.

I'll have to back the bus up momentarily here. Oklahoma's Donnie Wilson was doing a tire test at Bristol recently for that event, when low pressure in his right rear killed the sidewall on it, causing it to pop as he was going into turn three. The car suffered significant damage, but Wilson was OK.

Southeastern hot shoe, Bubba Pollard was quite vocal after seeing this news, stating that he had reservations about running super late models at Bristol—not just for the safety reasons, but for the cost that will be involved for teams to do it. He even quipped about Wilson's accident during that tire test saying, "who is going to pay to put that car back together?"

Ty Majeski tweeted his concerns about the incident, stating that while he didn't know the full circumstances surrounding the accident, he doesn't feel that super late models belong at Bristol because they are built too light these days and won't be able to sustain the load from the G-forces. A super late model will need some significant changes made to it as it sits for normal competition, in order to withstand the strains it will endure at the high banks of Bristol. That's another set of costs for some teams.

It's also another set of safety concerns as well—that is if teams take safety seriously. Some, I suppose, believe that taking risks proves how engorged their nether regions are, so they snort at the safety concerns. Racing is inherently risky. However, foregoing safety checks and balances is just plain stupid.

Toby says he's had the same wheels and hubs on the cars he's built for two years. The same upper and lower control arms have also been on his cars for two years. If he were to take the car to Bristol for Majeski to run, he says he would want to replace all of that to ensure that the additional G-forces at that track wouldn't take a toll on all of his stuff which may have already started to fatigue from so many races. Of course, playing devil's advocate, Toby also says you could put new stuff on and it may fail too.

He goes on to say, "It isn't just your stuff you worry about—it's the other guys. What if they have a failure and you're passing them?" Racing is full

of risks no matter where you race, but when you combine the blazing fast speeds and the tremendous G-forces at Bristol, it ratchets the concern up a bit if safety is something on the forefront of your mind.

In talking with Toby, he says there are some teams who run hollow bolts or titanium bolts—mind you, he doesn't put that stuff on the cars he builds, because it's too much money—and quite frankly, hollow bolts, while they are lighter—they're not as strong, so you're putting your driver and equipment at risk. The transmission Toby has put in Majeski's car cost \$4500. Some teams run \$7000 to \$8000 transmissions that are lighter and offer a lower ground clearance. This is just one example, but suffice it to say that teams make conscious decisions to spend money on things to gain a (perceived) competitive advantage.

In the end, the spending is ultimately what is biting short track racing in the backend. When you add in the cost of travel, fuel for both the car and the hauler, pit passes, tires, hotel rooms, meals, etc. and then compare that to what the races pay out for winning—significantly less for anything other than P1—you are in a losing proposition.

Then there's maintenance to be done when you get back home; changing all of the fluids, packing all of the wheel bearings, replacing spark plugs, brake pads, rotors if needed. You don't always have to replace all of that stuff after every race, but after so many laps, you'll need to look at that. And I'm speaking about a car that didn't get wrecked. It's obviously more costly when you have to repair a car.

Again, racing is an expensive hobby. People have been pointing to dirt racing as the example of success, and yes—there has been a bigger surge in dirt racing

Racing Nuggets continued on page 6



Racing Nuggets from page 5

as of late. Dirt racing also pays out significantly more to their teams than asphalt does.

Why? I do not know.

Perhaps they're doing a better job at securing sponsorship to offset the costs. Maybe because they're consolidating their events to not become three or four day ventures that can bleed a team dry? There's something to be said for qualifying the same day as the race and getting an event done in one or two days, as opposed to three or four. Perhaps some of these signature race events need to consider that

during the planning stages, if they want to be part of the solution to fight the rising cost of auto racing.

The only thing I know for sure is that your local weekly race track—dirt or asphalt—will be filled with a tremendous amount of talent, ready to put on a great show for you each week this summer. Taking a page from storefronts and other retailers imploring you to “buy local”—we all need to “watch local.” It's ultimately the heartbeat for the future of racing, and they're truly doing it on a shoestring budget.



2017 World of Wheels at US Bank Stadium

For the first time in several years, the traveling World of Wheels show made an appearance in Minneapolis at US Bank Stadium.



Craig Genzler's sharp looking Nova (left) and Tristan Swansan's Legend car (right)



The two biggest draws for the show were Jamie Hurd (left) of J&L Collectibles and NASCAR Legend Mark Martin (right)

Dean & Jason Talkin' Racin'



Dean Reller

Some new additions combined with several already exciting divisions of racing are what's on tap for the Granite City Speedway in Sauk Rapids as its set to open for the sixth season. Previously known for decades as the Golden Spike Speedway, the once shuttered track is back up to full power with a big lineup of racing each night just as it has for the last five years. Racing will have a new start time of 7:30 this year to allow for Friday travelers to make it to the track without missing any of the action.

Each Friday night show will offer a program highlighted by WISSOTA Poly Dome Dirt Track Series classes including: Modifieds, Super Stocks, Midwest Modifieds, Street Stocks, Mod Fours and Hornets. Plus, new for 2017 will be the small, but extremely fast Outlaw Mini Mods. The Outlaw Mini Mods will race about twice each month and will also crown a Track Champion.

The season kicks off on Friday May 5th with all six WISSOTA classes in action. The Outlaw Mini Mods

will make their season debut on May 19th. On Memorial Day weekend, Granite City Speedway will hold Mystery Payout Night, where one random class will come out with a bigger than usual payday. June brings lots of high powered action as the RV Modified Tour joins many of the regular classes on June 2nd. On Tuesday June 20th the World of Outlaws Craftsman Sprint Car Series returns for their annual visit. Many of the top names in Sprint Car racing are expected to compete in this mid-week event along with the Midwest Modifieds.

July 7th is the popular Meet the Drivers Night, where fans can go on the track to talk to the drivers and check out the cars up close. On July 14th racing takes a step back in time as the Northern Vintage Stockcar Racers join the regular classes featuring the best of racing past and present.

The hot summer nights of August will feature the UMSS Winged and Traditional Sprints on August 18th. Points for the season wraps up on September 1st as Track Champions will be crowned in all seven divisions.

Many special events are geared for kids throughout the season including the opportunity to win bikes not just once, but twice as Bike Giveaway nights are scheduled for June 9th and July 28th. To get ready to go back to school, there will be a Backpack Giveaway Night on Friday August 25th.

Granite City Speedway Gears Up For Season Six



Dan Plan photo

Two big Specials will close out the year. The first is the Granite City Cup that will be held on September 29th and 30th. Both nights will be complete shows with all six WISSOTA Poly Dome Dirt Track Series cars in action. Then on October 13th, 14th and 15th the National Championship weekend will be run. This is the final chance for drivers to earn WISSOTA National Points and as in years past, many drivers will travel to Granite City Speedway from all directions as they seek out National Points Titles. Friday October 13th will feature the Hornets finale along with an open practice for all other divisions. Complete programs will be held Saturday and Sunday featuring Modifieds, Super Stocks, Midwest Modifieds, Street Stocks, Mod Fours and Late Models who will make their only appearance of season in these big events.



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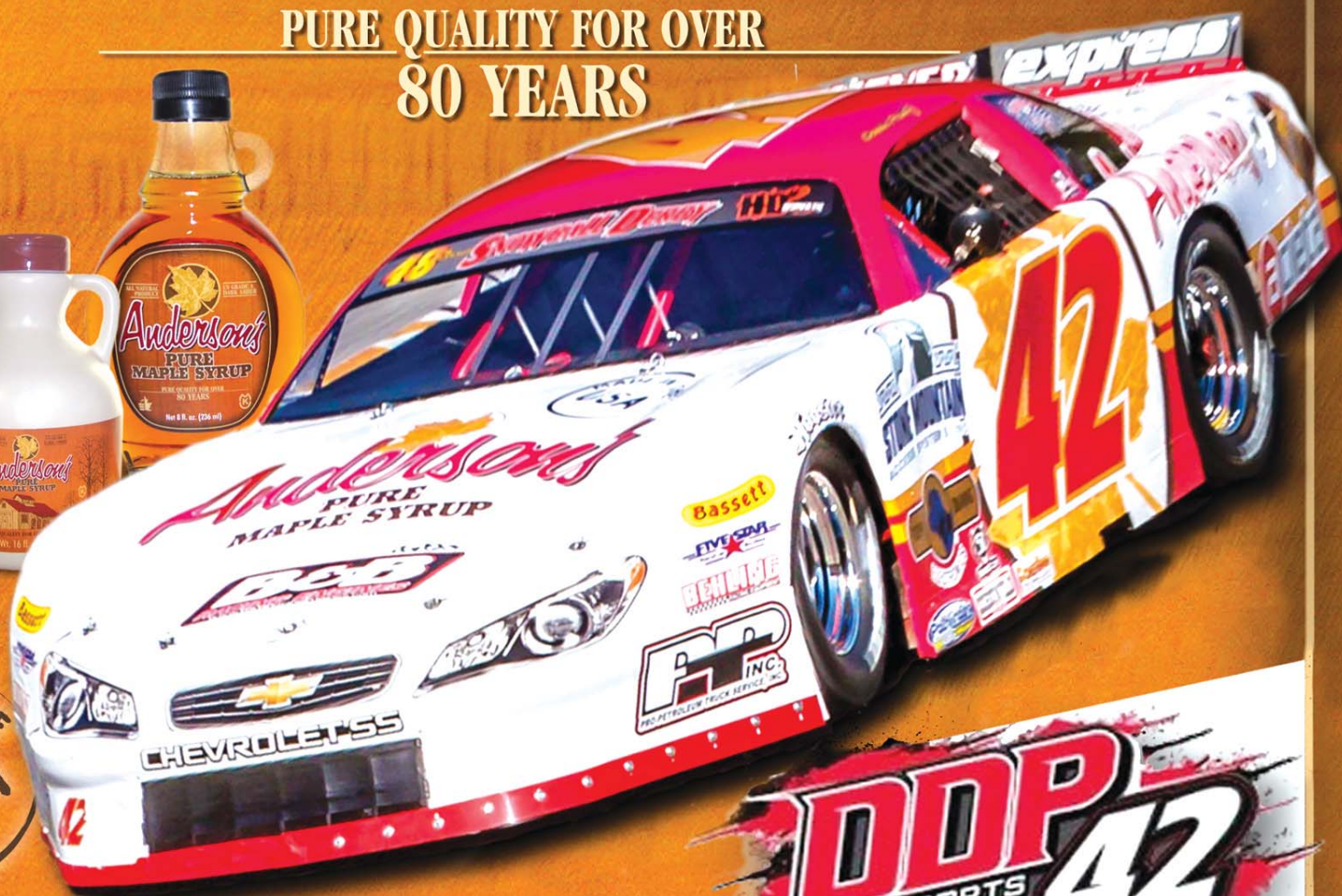
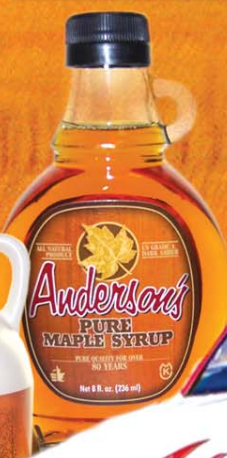
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Dale P. Danielski

So how dumb is it to sit in 100 degree temperatures for over three hours with absolutely no shade to be found? Has to have something to do with racing for this scribe to do it and that is exactly what happened here March 19th as for the first time in probably 10 years we attended a NASCAR Cup race.

Phoenix, AZ in March has average high temperatures of 72 degrees or so. With a trip out west planned that sounded reasonable for an appearance at a Cup race at Phoenix International Raceway. Well, can you say

record temps for the time chosen to catch a race here in cactus country? That's what happened for several days here but still, all in all a memorable experience.

I've always been partial to the shorter tracks at any level of the sport and the Phoenix track being a mile in length definitely fits in that category. Viewing at a venue like this is at a premium as there is very little

you miss. As far as the racing itself you can sure tell when these drivers decide to race and when they are coasting. With the segment format NASCAR is using now there was a bit more competition at the end of each, but overall the real racing doesn't take place

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Sean Gardner/Getty Images photo

Dale's Pictures from the Past

1975 #61 John Boegeman the Super America Black Knight (left) and the #36 Joe Shear race car from the 1995 racing season (right)



Racing Observances from page 9

until near the end of the event. And of course with that mindset it's no wonder why there are wrecks at the very end of these races. Actually with the Phoenix event that wasn't going to happen and it appeared race leader Kyle Busch would coast to the win. A Joey Logano wall smacker changed that scenario however and it was into the pits for most teams with just a few laps left. It is too often at this point in this scribes observance that crew chiefs over think things as far as giving up track position with so little of the race left. I firmly believe had Busch stayed out for the restart he would have kept his advantage and won. That strategy obviously worked for Ryan Newman as he did stay out and won the race! Starting in front on these restarts is a huge advantage as well as the slowpoke starts NASCAR mandates puts anyone further back at a severe risk.

Oh well, the finish did create some additional excitement and I guess that is what NASCAR wants its fans to see. That was certainly the case in this instance.

Here and there...We are getting to that part of the spring when opening season events are set to take place. Not sure when we'll be catching our first short track race but still being quite early as time goes by there will be more and more opportunities.

We're seeing where the Marshalltown, Iowa Speedway is holding a \$10,000 to win Modified race

March 30th - April 1st, which of course barring bad weather will already have a winner before you read this. The Dells Raceway Park track of Wis. Dells, WI., will be holding their first event of the year April 9th with the Annual Icebreaker 100. Deer Creek Speedway of Racine, MN., will get things rolling there on April 15th. Golden Sands Speedway of Plover, WI., will get it's season kicked off under new ownership on April 22nd. We can remember attending many a Spring Classic at Rockford Speedway and the 40th running of that event will take place April 23rd. Mississippi Thunder Speedway, Fountain City, WI., will kick off their 2017 season with racing on April 28th. And close to home for us is the season opening Frostbuster event at La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway, West Salem, WI., April 30th. There are of course other tracks with openers coming up but with very few newspapers left to advertise said events you'll just have to hunt and peck around the internet as to where they are and when.

And looking back in time at some area tracks and when they held opening season events, on Sunday afternoon, April 29th, 1962 it was Augie Winkleman winning the Feature event at the AF Speedway of Friendship, WI. Following Winkleman was Les Katzner, Dick Trickle, Don Bandt and Merlin "Cappy" Zahr. Heat race winners were Winkleman and Bandt with the non money winners race going to Katzner. The dash victor was Winkleman while fast time honors also went to Winkleman at 20:05 seconds which was a track record. On Monday afternoon, May 25th, 1964 it was Marv Marzofka in his 1957 Chevy taking the season opening race at the Black

River Falls Speedway in Black River Falls, WI. Heat race winners were Howie Kittleson, Jerry Wagner and Augie Winkleman. Fast time honors went to Marlin Walbeck over 50 other competitors. On Saturday night April 30th, 1966 it was Dick Trickle outdistancing a 9 car field to win the season opening feature race at the Dells Motor Speedway, Wis. Dells, WI. Following Trickle were Dave Marcis, Tom Reffner, Rich Somers and Marv Marzofka. The semi-feature was won by Howie Kittleson with the consolation race going to Bill Bembinster. Heat race winners were Bud Gawronski, LaVerne Weiland, Bud Schroeder and Reffner. Fast timer of the 42 cars on hand was Marzofka in a 1958 Ford at 14:03 seconds. On Sunday afternoon, April 21st, 1968 it was Marlin Walbeck winning the season opener at Golden Sands Speedway, Plover, WI. The semi-feature went to Sonny Immerfall. Heat race winners were Wayne Kraft, Ed Walkush, Nelson Drinkwine and Walbeck. Consolation race winner was Larry Sparks in a 1961 Ford with Reffner setting fast time at 14:06 seconds. Estimated attendance for the race was 3,000. On Sunday afternoon April 5th, 1970 it was Tom Reffner in a 1967 Mercury Comet winning the season opening feature at Capital Speedway of Oregon, WI. Following Reffner were Eddy Hume, Jim Back, Rich Somers and Mike Dolphin. Semi-feature honors went to Bill Retallick with the Non-money winners event going to Back. Heat race winners were Norm Bartnick, Ron

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Dale's Pictures from the Past

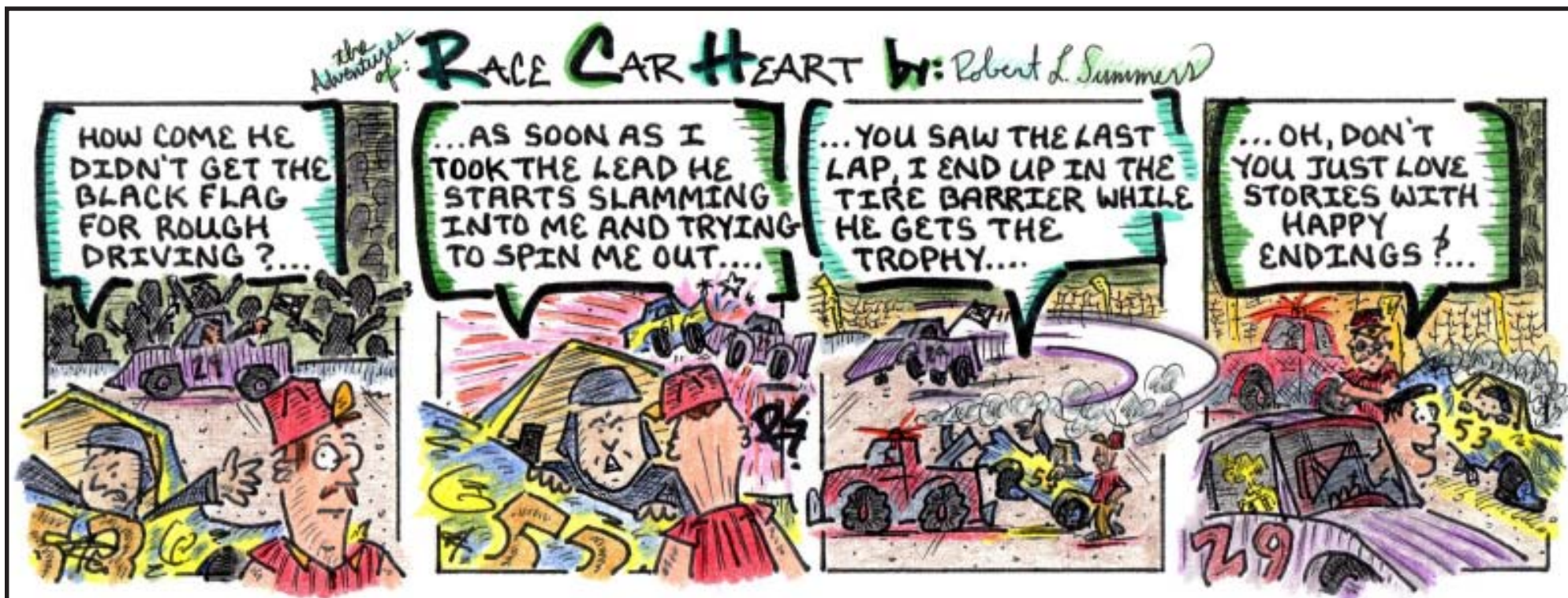
Hotshoe Modified racers Ron Jones, Eddie Martin and Tim Donlinger talk strategy in 1996 (left)
#96 Johnny "The Jet Saathof racing his modified in 1997 (right)



Racing Observations from page 10

Beyer and Reffner. Back set fast time at 20:12 seconds. And winning the opening day Feature at La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway, West Salem, WI., April 24th, 2016 was Ty Majeski. Majeski was followed by Steve Carlson, Mike Carlson, Adam Degenhardt and Brad Powell...And in the Quote of the Column department it's "Never care about something more than those that should". That's from this scribe and it's been said in a number of instances both in racing and outside of it!

Questions, comments, opinions and other information welcome at Starmaker Multimedia 967 10th Ave N Ste A, Onalaska, WI 54650 608-783-5827 or at dale@starmakermultimedia.com



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Short Track Memories with Mark Martin

by Dan Plan



Dan Plan photo



Bruce McClain photo

As a kid growing up in the 1970's, one of the names I read about often was Mark Martin. He was the kid (and they actually called him "the kid" at the time) tearing up tracks around Arkansas. Mark eventually started racing (and winning) in the upper-Midwest. I was lucky enough to see him race numerous times at the short tracks in the area before he moved down South to go Cup racing. The move to the South didn't pan out the first time around, but Mark eventually found his way back and had a phenomenal career. I recently had a chance to sit down with Mark while he was in Minneapolis making an appearance at the World of Wheels. Personally, I was more interested in spending the time talking about his short track days, prior to his making the move to the big leagues. By the smile on Mark's face, and the enthusiasm in his answers, I could tell Mark is definitely fond of his early days on the short tracks.

Did you ever imagine as a teenager racing on the dirt tracks of Arkansas, you would end up in the NASCAR Hall of Fame?

No, I didn't. Each step that we took along the way up the ladder was exciting and was a thrill. For the most part, the success we had was unexpected and was a surprise.

Can you tell us about the original trailer and car at your museum in Batesville?

In 2015 we found my very first trailer and I've got my very second race car already in the museum. We drug the trailer out, restored it and then put the car on it. We also have a picture of that second car sitting on

that same trailer in 1975 with me and all of my trophies.

You picked up one of your many ASA wins at the Minnesota State Fair on Labor Day weekend of 1979. Do you have any special memories of the fair?

I do. I came up the first time in 1977. I was just an 18-year-old kid and what a beautiful facility the race track was, and the fair was a blast. It was just an incredible experience. There was a lot of pride that went with this race and we came to the fair every year for the 300. If I only it won it one time, that's a shame. I know I must have run second. I know I had Senneker pry it out of my fingers at the end one year. I think Butch Lindley did the same right at the end. But we had many good times up here.

Did you have a favorite short track car through the years?

Really, my favorite was the car from 1981. It was the most sophisticated short track car and the last year I raced those cars full time. Of course, my handprints were all over those cars through the years. 1980 was the year we turned asphalt racing upside down with the Dillon Mark II Chassis. But the '81 car was sexier than the '80.

While not running entire seasons with ARTGO, you did make several appearances at tracks such as Dells Raceway Park, Elko, Kaukauna, Lacrosse, Madison, and Rockford. How much fun was racing with the ARTGO Stars and Cars during this era?

It was just fantastic. There were great drivers and tremendous fans. The fan support up this way was overwhelming. We did some good, serious racing. We raced hard and had fun and didn't tear much up. We

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Tom Johnson photo



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had a code of driving etiquette that worked well for everyone. Putting on a great show and not tearing up our equipment so we could race the next night.

I can only imagine how many people you've inspired with your "never give up" attitude. Most guys only get one shot at racing at the Cup level. How hard was it to make it to the Cup level, return to the short tracks and then return to Cup with success?

Honestly, most great drivers don't get a shot at NASCAR. I was fortunate enough to take my first shot at it. But, it was very, very humbling, and discouraging, to leave NASCAR broke and without a

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Bruce McClain photo

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single hand tool or piece of equipment that I had always had. I owned my own stuff and I always had. It was an incredibly difficult time.

When you returned to the short tracks, were you working with Jimmy Fenning?

No, not at that time. When I came back full time short track racing in 1984, I actually got with a group out of Beaver Dam, WI. We ran ARTGO and ASA full time. Then in 1985 I started working with Jerry Gunderman out of Franklin, WI and then I worked with Jimmy in 1985 and 1986. I worked with him again in the 1990's at the 6 car.

Was Jimmy instrumental in getting you back to Cup racing?

I would say that we both took ourselves Cup racing in an indirect way. When I got with Jimmy and Jerry Gunderman, it was an extremely first-class program.

We went after it hard and had great success in '85. In '86 we won the ASA championship and were really strong that year. Jimmy started getting pressure from Bobby Allison for him (Jimmy) to come crew chief him (Bobby) in Cup. I got an opportunity to go race in the Busch series. It was a good time for us to follow our career opportunities. Working with Jimmy was fantastic. When I did my Hall of Fame induction speech, I realized that Jimmy was responsible for about 40% of my ASA wins and we only raced together for 2 years. He was responsible about for 30% of my Cup wins and we only worked together for a few years. I knew he and I were pretty potent, but didn't really realize he had been a part of my success in both divisions.

You've been giving back to the sport since you've been away from driving. Things like donating a car for the Dick Trickle Memorial Project, sponsoring dirt late models, and now you're going spend some time short track racing later this year.

When was the last time you drove a Late Model and are you looking forward to getting into one again?

It may have been 10 years since I've been in a Late Model. It's been 3 ½ years since I've been in a race car. It's not something that's been on my radar screen, except that I am excited to make the trip to Nova Scotia and going to the IWK Children's Hospital. Helping the kids and being a part of something that's really good for young people. My passion is much greater for Late Models than it is for NASCAR racing. I wouldn't have ever been in NASCAR racing if it wasn't for Late Model racing. And, I didn't build those NASCAR cars. A majority of the Late Models I raced, I had a large hand in.

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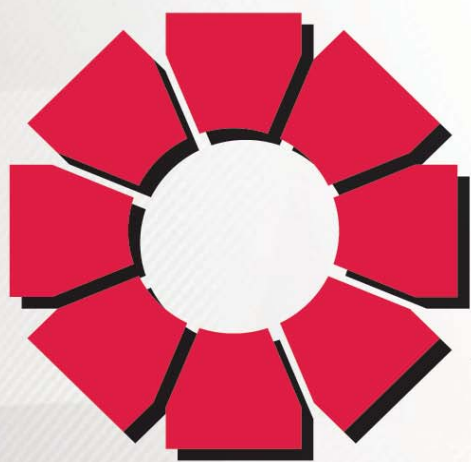
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