

THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION

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THE MIDWEST'S SHORT TRACK AUTO RACING AUTHORITY

September 2016 Vol. 20, No. 5

Inside...



Dixieland 250



Photo Gallery



USA Nationals



Going In Circles



Racing Nuggets



Champions Crowned



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Publisher's Note

Racing According to Plan



Dan Plan

It seems more and more these days, all we see or hear is the bad stuff. One of my favorite lines a few years ago came from a promoter in our distribution area. The guy's actually pretty smart and even won the

The Good Stuff

promoter of the year award one year. He once told me; Democrats hate Republicans and dogs hate cats, but we're here to have fun. That's what Saturday night during the summer is for me, fun.

I'm not claiming that it's all sunshine and unicorns. Sure there are times when I get frustrated with some of the shows I go to. I could probably right a column about everything I think is wrong with short track racing, but what good would that do? If I have a valid concern, I'll go talk to the people that can make a difference and offer suggestions. I don't jump on social media and piss & moan to get everyone all riled up or feel sorry for me. As far as I'm concerned, the good stuff far outweighs the bad stuff in short track racing. Some people have a hard time seeing that. These same people probably piss & moan all week long about things other than short track racing. Heck, even when it rains, there might not be racing, but you can still have fun if you hang out with the right people.

For as long as I've been on this planet, most of my Saturday nights from April to October involve spending the evening with my race track friends and usually one or more of my family members. Sometimes it's just me and the old man, sometimes it's me and the kid and several times a year all three of us spend time together. I come from a somewhat dysfunctional background, but then again, so do most of the people I hang out with. We don't golf and we don't go fishing. We go to the races. That's the good stuff to me.

continued on page 7



Bruce Nuttleman photo

The Midwest

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Going in Circles



Charlie Spry

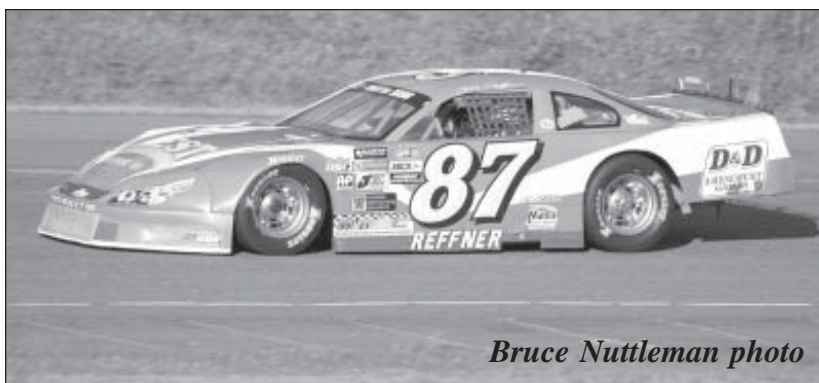
The regular season is slipping away fast, but not before a few surprises and first time winners get put in the books.

At the Madison International Speedway, Dan Jung won a Midwest truck series feature, which while may be kind of a surprise, maybe isn't so much. Dan has many years of racing experience in many different divisions, the trucks just being his newest venture.

At this track, the NASCAR late model division has seen three drivers rise to the top. Veteran Bobby Wilberg, relative newcomer John Beale, and Zack Riddle. No real surprises here as all have top notch operations and great crews, along with the drivers being on top of things. However, all have also had their share of bad luck. Beale and Riddle both sustained serious damage to their cars during weekly events, and Wilberg had mechanical difficulties the same night the others had their misfortunes.

The weather has not been kind to MIS on Friday nights, with extremely hot weather and many nights of threatening weather making it a tough go. No real drama in any of the points races, but some real good racing going on in all divisions. Now, if we could just have some nice weather on Friday nights.

The weather stopped the final round of the super late model triple crown challenge, so Casey Johnson was declared the winner in that over Jeremy Miller and Austin Nason. Johnson also won the Red, White and Blue series at WIR.



Bruce Nuttleman photo

Took in a racing show at the Marshfield Motor Speedway for round two of the "Yellow River Racing Series." Dalton Zehr raced to the win in the Redline



TJ Harron photo

Speedsports entry. Dalton is having a great year this season, and has to be considered one of the top drivers in the state, along with Ty Majeski. Colin Reffner had a good run to finish in second. He is going to break through with some feature wins real soon, I would say. Watch out then.

Nice to see Derk Hauser get the win in the Extreme-four division. Derk was only racing for the second time this season, as he and his wife recently welcomed their second child. He also teaches and coaches eight-man football in a small school district in west central Wisconsin. As you can see, he is busy. Derk's Dad, Steve, also races in the division, with both currently tied for the all-time feature win list in the class. A pretty cool family thing going on.

Charles Dixon is back racing again in this division after a severe crash late last season. Yes, it is even the same car. Even more remarkable when you realize that he is seventy-four years of age.

Always good to chat with Christine Schmude and her husband, Jerry. Very low dollar racing team that doesn't go into debt to race. Christine does a nice job of driving in the class where her car is vastly underpowered.

Rockford Speedway crowned their Wednesday night champions in August, with Heather Stark getting the title in the Bandit division, besting many male counterparts. The Bandit division usually had the highest car count every week.

Chad Lounsbury took the title in the Roadrunner division, while "Sassy Cassy" i.e Cassidy Frisch won the Winged Women On Wheels title over Stark. These two put on some pretty good battles during the season and were fun to watch. Young Zach

Tinkle won the Super Cups title, with all of the above champions not being decided for sure until the final night.



Jimmy Ambruoso photo

Perhaps the most popular titlist was Curt Nighswonger, who took the crown in the figure-eight division. Curt didn't win an event all year, but was present every night, and that is very important if you are looking to win a title. Curt races on a very, very low budget, and I know he will remember this for the rest of his life.... It meant that much to him. Rockford has seen a nice increase in late model entries this season, with more coming out as the season progressed. Former Roadrunner champ Dennis Smith Jr. came out late in the season with a sharp red late model, carrying his traditional number 08. Another driver coming out late in the year is veteran Paul

Going In Circles continued on page 8

Jimmy Ambruoso photo



Dean & Jason Talkin' Racin'



Dean Reller

The recent death of driver Brian Clauson is a reminder that no matter how safe we think that racing is, there is still that element of danger and despite all that we try to do to prevent it, that element will still be there.

Safety has greatly improved over the years, but there have been a number of significant drivers such as Dale Earnhardt, Aytron Senna, Mark Donohue and Dan Wheldon that have lost their lives while competing. However, short track drivers have had their share of fatalities as well. We know of Kevin Wards incident with Tony Stewart, but Clauson's recent crash during a Midget event is eerily similar to another driver, Rich Vogler.

In 1990, Vogler was a prominent driver who raced nearly every night of the week, mostly in USAC Midgets, Sprint Cars and Silver Crown cars. ESPN provided extensive coverage of these races with their Thursday Night and Saturday Night Thunder events, making Vogler one of the short track stars of racing. On a late July night, Vogler was leading the Sprint Car Feature at Salem Speedway by a large margin when

he tangled with a lapped car and hit the wall, killing him instantly. Fast forward 26 years and about 2 weeks, 27 year old Clauson was leading a Midget race at Belleville Speedway when he tangled with a lapped car and then flipped several times. Clauson died one day following the crash. Vogler was awarded the win posthumously as his incident happened on the final lap, while Chad Boat won the Belleville event as the crash happened on lap 14 of the 40 lap race.

Both Vogler and Clauson were drivers taking the "Traditional Route" through racing. That is working up through midgets and sprints to Indy Cars. Vogler had 5 starts in the Indianapolis 500, while Clauson (who was 12 years younger than Vogler at the time of his death) had 3 starts in the 500. Vogler had over 200 total career wins with 170 of those in USAC races. Clauson had 170 career wins with 70 of those in USAC races.

National Championships were both in these driver's wheelhouses as well. Vogler was a five time USAC National Midget Series Champion and a two time USAC National Sprint Car Champion. Clauson's numbers again are very similar, with three USAC National Midget Series Championships and two USAC National Sprint Car Championships.

Both drivers won a single Chili Bowl title, with Vogler winning the inaugural race in 1987, Clauson won it in 2014.

Drivers Shared Similar Careers and Fates



The late Brian Clauson (shown here in World of Outlaws action at Cedar Lake Speedway in 2015) had a career similar to the late Rich Vogler 26 years ago
(Stan Meissner photo)

It's not often that we see two drivers with such similar careers meet such similar tragic endings. It proves the point that even though the sport of racing has seen several innovations to make things safer. The sport still has the elements of danger and the possibility of injury or death still exist. The numbers haven't been as frequent as in the decades of long ago where deaths were much more common, but in this world of instant news and social media, the element of danger and the tragic results tend to get greater attention. Some people are prompted to try to abolish the sport due to the inherent risks. True followers of the sport realize the risks that drivers take each time they sit in a race car. Clauson and Vogler never raced each other, but the passion and the desire to race and win was strong in both of them and though it's sad they are no longer with us, we can find comfort that they made the ultimate sacrifice doing something they truly had the love and passion for. Not many of us will be able to say that.



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By Kari Shear-Carlson

Dennis Prunty collected a \$10,000 check and his first ARCA Midwest Tour victory on Tuesday night in Dixieland 250 at Wisconsin International Raceway.

With ten laps to go, Johnny Sauter appeared to have the field covered but suddenly fell off the pace. On lap 244 of 250, Sauter blew a tire handing the lead over to Prunty who had pulled away from current point leader, Ty Majeski.

A unique pit strategy made for an exciting night of lead changes and battles throughout the entire field. As the sun set behind turn three, the field rolled off the grid. Local veteran, Lowell Bennett set the pace as starter Tom White waved the green flag. Bennett led the first few laps until Andrew Morrissey made his way around for the lead. Local hero, Jeff Van Oudenhoven glued himself to Morrissey's bumper also passing Bennett for second. Meanwhile, Paul Shafer, Sauter, and Majeski were racing for 4th-6th and appeared to be the fastest trio on the track. Van Oudenhoven passed Morrissey for the lead but Majeski's charge to the front came as no surprise. On lap 45, Majeski took away the top spot.



Doug Hornickel photo

The first competition caution of the night came on lap 56. Sauter, Bennett, Van Oudenhoven, and Chris Weinkauff were among the cars to pit. When the race returned to green, Ty maintained his lead, but the caution quickly came out again when Dan Fredrickson hit the wall coming out of the dogleg. Majeski led once again and Prunty was up to sixth at the restart. Johnny Sauter was held up in the middle of the pack but worked his way through the field. Just as Prunty was passing Bennett for second another caution came out

for Casey Johnson who was stopped against the backstretch wall.

Majeski and Prunty led the field back to green followed by Paul Shafer and Dalton Zehr. Again the caution came out on lap 108. Several drivers pitted including Majeski and Prunty. Sauter quickly took the lead at the restart. As the laps wound down, Sauter was able to hold onto his lead with great racing taking place in his rearview mirror. Kyle Calmes and Derek Kraus were now in the top five and battled side-by-side, but Johnson's bad luck continued when he brought out another yellow.

When the green waved, Sauter had a great restart. Calmes and Shafer juggled back and forth for the second spot. One more caution flag waved and only four cars stayed out, Nick Panitzke, Chris Weinkauff, Noah Gragson, and Brandon Reichenberger. The field settled in for the final few laps and it appeared Sauter had them covered until his luck ran out with six to go and Prunty was able to take advantage of it. Bobby Kendall snuck his way into third behind Majeski, who finished second. Chris Weinkauff and Cardell Potter rounded out the top five.

WoO Late Model Report

Josh Richards won his second career USA Nationals finale Saturday night at Cedar Lake Speedway. "I don't know what to say...I'm speechless," said Richards, winning the \$50,000 purse. "I can't thank everyone enough for coming out. This car has been so fun to drive. This is awesome."

Jonathan Davenport, who started runner-up to Shane Clanton, suffered a flat right rear tire. It seemed "Superman" had found his Kryptonite, as he veered-off into the pits. The other 30 cars moved-up for the restart; Richards and Mason Zeigler shared the podium with Clanton.

On the restart Clanton and Richards separated from the rest of the field. Zeigler and Eric Wells paired-up and dueled for the third spot. Wells was the weekend's fast time winner, a first for him since his rookie year in 2013. He continued his hot streak; however, Zeigler briefly extinguished his chances of passing him. Zeigler moved to Richards, sweeping the nose of his

bumper through the backside of his No. 1 Valvoline/Seubert Calf Ranches Rocket racecar. A three-wide battle between Clanton, Richards and Zeigler had the packed crowd on their feet for half of lap 12. Zeigler managed to get by Richards in turn four before another caution flag waved.

On the race's third restart – one lap later – Richards reclaimed the second spot from the top of the cushion. Richards closed the gap between him and Clanton to



Bruce Nuttleman photo

USA Nationals

as little as 0.455 seconds, but could not capitalize.

Within two more cautions both Richards and Wells challenged Clanton for the top spot, staying within a second of him. Though Clanton blocked Richards' inside attempt entering turn one, it only took two more turns for him swoop into the lead on lap 31.

At first, Davenport seemed to be taken out of contention in the feature with his early troubles. But, throughout the race, he gained ground. By the halfway point, Davenport was back into the top 10. By the time Wells made the pass into second place, Davenport's No. 6 Baird Transport/ Elite Concrete Longhorn car had him in his sights.

By this time, Davenport maintained a 0.45-second margin between him and Wells, biding his time. Davenport sailed on the top cushion, wildly flirting with the outside walls of each of the turns – at times kissing them with his right rear fender.

"We were reeling them in," said Davenport, who charged hard from the back of the pack. "I thought,

continued on page 9

Publishers note from page 3

Now, as we approach the invitational season, the RV starts to get some miles put on it, and the good stuff kicks into high gear. As I've become older (much older some might say), I've begun to realize the fun I have at the races isn't always limited to watching the actual action on the track. The time spent in hanging out in the pits, or with friends at the RV before races, and then later in the evening solving the world's problems can be just as entertaining.



Bruce Nuttleman photo

Miscellaneous News & Notes:

During the 2016 version of the USA Nationals at Cedar Lake Speedway, local racer Lance Matthees picked up a heat race win against World of Outlaws Late Model travelers. The fans on hand went absolutely bananas. Cheering, screaming and fist's pumping in the air throughout the crowd. It was great to see fans still have the passion to cheer a local guy against the WoO regulars. And I'm not ashamed to admit I was one of them.

And finally, Elko Speedway recently had two drivers pick up the first-career Super Late Model main event wins. Joey Garofalo picked up his first career Super Late Model feature win during the annual Behrens Memorial race night. Chris "Cruiser" Marek also picked up his first win to close out the month of August at Elko. Both wins were well received by the crowd on hand each night.



Martin DeFries photos



Midwest Area Track Champions Crowned



Jeff Blaser photo



Jimmy Ambruoso photo



Tom Loos photo



Vance Birno photo

Several tracks in the Midwest have wrapped up the season championships as we head in the special event season. Pictured are; Dalton Zehr - Golden Sands Speedway Super Late Model (top left), Chad Lounsbury - Rockford Wednesday night Roadrunner Summer Series (top right), Ryan Aho - Spring Lake Speedway Modified (bottom left), Rick Hanestad - Red Cedar Speedway Late Model champion (bottom right)



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Classic Corner

Prior to rasing his own two children and then many years later becoming a grandpa, a young Kevin Marek is shown here in the early 1980's. It's interesting to note it is the same car in both pictures. Some off-season fabrication took the old Chevelle from a show-quality ride (left) into one that was capable of a clean sweep (right) at Elko Speedway.
(Photos courtesy of the Marek family collection)



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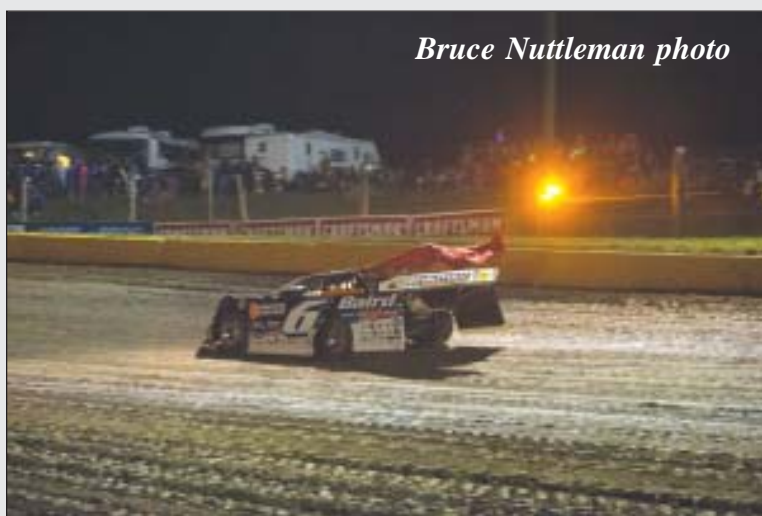


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Dale's Pictures from the past



In the Dale's pics from the past category: (left photo) May 5th 1981 at Dells Motor Speedway, Wis. Dells, WI. it's Mike Miller driving his Camaro in ARTGO action at the track. (Gary Hall photo), (middle photo) Racing at Capital Speedway, Oregon, WI. in 1977, is #75 Larry Phillips. (Gary Hall photo), and the right photo is Jim Back racing his Wehrs Chevrolet Camaro in the Blue race in 1979 at Wisconsin International Raceway, Kaukauna, WI. (Gary Hall photo)



Bruce Nuttleman photo

'Here we go, we have a shot.' All I had to rely on was the cushion, and I was rolling on it decently."

With 20 laps remaining, Davenport took his shot at Wells. In turn four, he was able to pass Wells for second place. Richards increased his lead to a tick shy of two and a half seconds. Davenport began to close the gap slightly, but it was not until the race's final caution when he saw his chance. With 9 laps remaining, Richards and Davenport had a shootout for the lead.

Richards stayed low on the track while Davenport stuck with his bread-and-butter up-top. A strong restart from Richards reopened more than a two-second gap, and the final dagger was when Davenport clipped the turn two wall. Davenport held his ground for second place even so, with Wells rounding out the podium.

"We had a shot at it with 10 [laps] to go," Davenport said. "I made a run on him, jumped the cushion one time and that's all we had for him."

Richards picked up his 13th win of the season, the same number of wins World of Outlaws Craftsman® Sprint Car Series points leader Donny Schatz had after the series made its stop at Cedar Lake Speedway in July.

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THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION

Photo Gallery



Lance Mathees picked up a heat win against the WoO travelers at Cedar Lake
Bruce Nuttleman photo



Mike Wilson on his way to winning a heat race at Red Cedar Speedway
Vance Birno photo



Father knows best episode with Don & Tina at Elko Speedway
Martin DeFries photo



Ryan Goldade and Jason Thoma in Sportsman action at MIS
TJ Harron photo



Bike race winners at Rockford Speedway
Jimmy Ambruoso photo



Johnny and Jimmy at LaCrosse
Bruce Nuttleman photo

THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION

Photo Gallery



2015 Dixieland winner Nick Murgic and Cardell Potter in action at WIR
Doug Hornickel photo



Alex Prunty picked up his first win of the year at Dells Raceway Park
Jeff Blaser photo



Midwest Modified action at Spring Lake Speedway
Tom Loos photo



Dennis Smith and Justin Sellers race for position at Rockford
Jimmy Ambruoso photo



Intense Late Model action at Elko Speedway
Martin DeFries photo



Sportsment action at LaCrosse Speedway
Bruce Nuttleman photo

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Going In Circles continued from page 4

Dygon. Paul has raced for many years at various tracks, probably most often at Lake Geneva Raceway, which is now gone. Paul talked about returning to Rockford, saying, "We were talking about it while signing in. We figured it had been about eighteen years since I last raced here." He is not afraid to try different venues, as he said, "One year we raced at a different track every week." Paul races on a strictly part-time basis, usually coming out in August.

Adam Peschek has come on strong late in the season in the late model division. He is running up near the front in the feature events, and is a definite threat.

There may be a new sheriff in town in the American Short Tracker division, as Aaron Rude has his new Pinto flying, winning the last two features in a row here. The points battle will come down to the wire, with Nick Cina Jr. leading Zach Rodriguez, Rude, Bobby Frisch, and Leo Bujak.

I had a chance to race a six cylinder, front drive car this year for Art Blakely. I only raced three times, twice at MIS and once at Rockford. Two other attempts were rained out. It was a ton of fun. The "Six Shooters" as they are called at Madison, and the "Original Sixers" as they are named at Rockford are identical in rules. This has to be the absolute cheapest way to go racing on a budget. I just wanted a little fun on a few nights and that is exactly what it was. Glad that these two tracks have started this division in our area.

Now, it will be on to the specials season shortly.

Tribute Night at Elko

For the 2016 season at Elko Speedway, the annual Behrens Memorial Late Model race and Scott Kingery Memorial Thunder Car race were held on the same evening titled Tribute Night. With the double-feature format in place, combined finishes from both feature race events were tallied to name the overall memorial race champions. The first Super Late main went to Nick Murgic and the second going to Joey Garofalo. Jacob Goede picked up the overall Behrens Memorial title based on his seventh place finish in the first race, and then runner up to Garofalo in the night cap. The Kingery Memorial Thunder Car portion of the evening had main event wins going to Ted Reuvers and Adam Wiebusch, with Brent "the Freight Train" Kane and Dillon Sellner in a tie for overall points for the night. The tie breaker went to Kane, giving him his second Kingery Memorial title.



Martin DeFries photos





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Auto Racing Facts, Observances and Opinions



Dale P. Danielski

When you see that word Championship in a sentence it usually means the racing season is winding down. I wish I could say Mid-Season Championship but we indeed are getting to the end of the 2016 racing campaign in these parts.

Perhaps the earliest season ending race (Unless your track is closing) we've experienced happened here August 5th at the Golden Sands Speedway, Plover, WI. Usually track season championships are just starting to heat up around that time of year but not in this case as GS ended their racing season of six races on this day. A great crowd was on hand for the event

and 23 Super Late Models, one of the better turnouts for a weekly race we've seen on pavement this year, and more than enough cars in four other divisions made for some very entertaining racing. And, we can even say we witnessed a feature race that Ty Majeski didn't win! Of course he wasn't racing here tonight but nonetheless that says something for how dominant Majeski has been as we've seen almost nobody else win a main event in a top division at any tracks and we generally get to more shows than most! Actually it was Dalton Zehr taking the main event on the night. Zehr has had a very good season of racing but has unfortunately been doing it in the shadow of Majeski who has had another stellar season of racing.

Speaking of Majeski we did again see him win at La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway, West Salem, WI. on August 6th. Our next event attended was at Lax. on August 13th and we saw, yes you are reading this right Brad Powell take the 20 lap NASCAR Late Model Feature win! Of course it was back to normal routine on August 20th at the Speedway as Majeski won not just one, but two 20 lap NASCAR Late Model main events. Lost in the shuffle is the fact Steve Carlson has actually won four features at the track this year. Even more phenomenal is the fact until August 20th he had won or placed no worse than 2nd in all feature races at the track this year. Adam Degenhardt finally broke Carlson's 2nd place streak this past Saturday by taking that spot in one of the mains. Carlson's consistency has however resulted in another track championship, his 4th in a row, as only Oktoberfest remains for NASCAR Late Model racing at the track this year with nobody close enough to catch him.

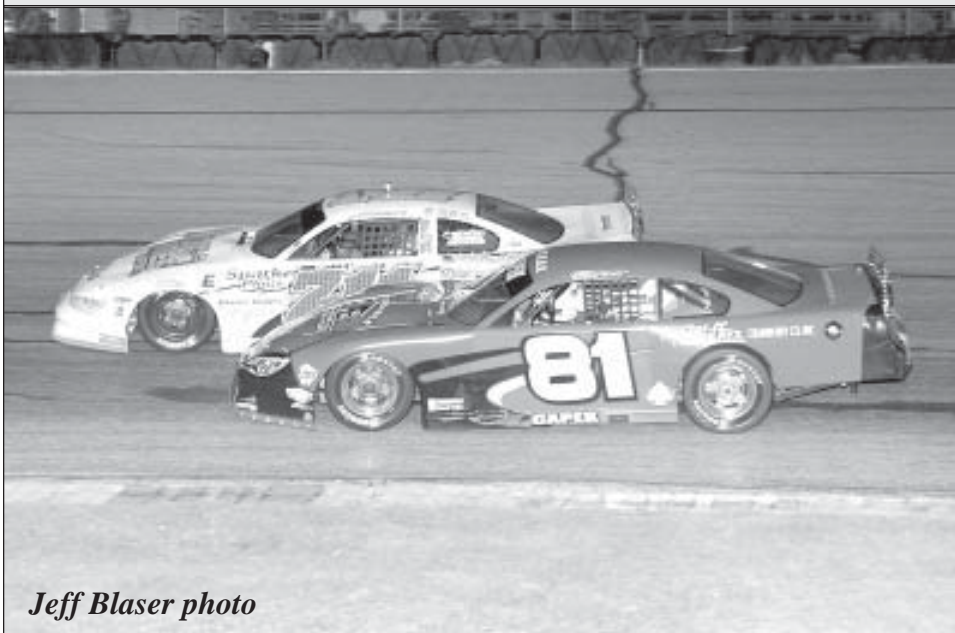
Here and there...It appears Ty Majeski with his two feature wins at La Crosse Fairgrounds August 20th has a legitimate shot at winning the Whelen All American Series National Championship. Ever since Larry Phillips circumvented everything NASCAR tried

to do with its point system to win numerous National Championships, I have no idea what is required these days, but it would be pretty cool to see someone here racing local win it. With Majeski moving on to bigger things this may be the last chance fans get to see something like this... Well, Jeff Thompson finally did it. After coming Oh, so close in the past, he finally won his first ever Feature, taking the 15 lap Sportsman feature at La Crosse Fairgrounds August 20th over a fast closing Nick Clements. Justin Berg, Brian Hesselberg and Devin Schmidt were next across the line... The

Central Wisconsin Racing Association was the sanctioning group for the Dan Weinfurter Memorial race held August 21st at Marshfield Motor Speedway of Marshfield, WI. The race is held in honor of Dan, a racer himself, who lost his life in a highway accident awhile back. Dan had to be smiling on the day as Uncle Jeff Weinfurter took the win in Late Model feature one and placed 2nd in the night cap feature event. CWRA is now holding their events with the Towel City Racing tire a requirement for Late Model competitors. The Marshfield event also saw a draw take place for starting positions in the feature instead of time trial qualifying. The draw provided just as much if not more drama for fans as kids in the stands drew pills for the 16 drivers starting the event. A complete invert of the finishing order of feature one was how main event two started and with Jeff Weinfurter and Dalton Zehr finishing one, two in that event there was plenty of passing in the 2nd race as again the two placed one and two, this time with Zehr winning. With two laps of boring time trials these days having way too much bearing on feature starts and finishes this is definitely something tracks should take a look at for lining up cars. Sure the fastest car may at some point get lucky and start up front but at least it's more interesting determining how they got there.

Of course the Oktoberfest Racing weekend at Lax. Fairgrounds will be here before you know it as the dates this year are October 5-9. With 'Fest comes the Annual Champions Reunion. This year's event, Sunday October 9th will be the 8th held and each year the turnout of former champions gets larger and larger. There are always many surprises as to who will show up and this year promises to be the same. The event is held from 11am-2pm Sunday the 9th and is open to all Champions of any division of racing in any series at any track that haven't raced in the last three years. This scribe qualifies for entry to the event as the Bicycle Champion at Golden Sands Speedway in 1902 and with that in mind you may qualify too! All kidding aside it's always fun to get with the heroes of past racing. A number of race cars will be on display as well during the event including the #5 Schneider Trucking Dick Trickle NASCAR Grand National Division show car. Dick raced for Schneider for three years, 1998, '99 and '00 and the car will provide a great remembrance of those days of racing. The 1934 Ford 5 window coupe driven by Cecil Henderson at the old North La Crosse Speedway back when it was a dirt track will also be on display. The Camaro Mike Miller drove to the win with in 1981 at the Minnesota State Fair will also be on hand. Dan Navrestad has restored the car to original and in addition to displaying it will race it later that day! In discussing the car with Miller he stated, "I hope he wins that race, he has the car capable of doing it. When I drove it, it was the fastest car in the Country, then like a dummy I sold it." If you are a fan and have a Sunday ticket for 'Fest

Dalton Zehr takes the high-side around Jake Capek on his way to winning the Golden Sands Speedway point championship.



Jeff Blaser photo

continued on page 16

Racing Nuggets



Jacklyn Daniels-Nuttelman

I normally don't get to Elko Speedway until the ARCA Midwest Tour makes their annual stop there for the Thunderstruck 93 event. However, given the way this race season has gone, it prompted my husband and the team that work with Ty Majeski to make the decision to run some NASCAR Whelen All-American Series events at other tracks, just to see where they end up in the national point standings before the September 18th deadline.

But I'm not writing about Majeski's pursuit of a potential national title; there's already plenty of musings out there about that. I'm writing about the experience of Elko Speedway, which left me feeling like an eight-year-old kid again; slightly over stimulated by the insane variety of activities that encompassed the night, which was billed as an "Eve of Destruction."

Mind you, I had to verify with three separate sources that there was indeed going to be racing that night at Elko, because everything I read online pointed only to "Eve of Destruction," which obviously doesn't bode well for a racer who's seeking to gain points in a national title hunt. But it was indeed a night for both—and a memorable one at that.

It all started with goats, which were just adjacent to the ticket gates, upon entering the facility. Goats, you

say? Yes, miniature goats in a pen that were happily bounding and leaping about, as chubby, little hands reached through the fencing to pet them. There was even a cougar and some wolves to see, as well as a woman walking around with a big, adorable raccoon that everyone wanted to hug. I checked the sign near the goat pen to make sure I was at Elko Speedway. Yep, I was at the right place.

Directly out from the goat pen was an odd contraption that had metal tracks, like a tank, and a curious "box" for a body, with a sticker reminiscent of the Jurassic Park movie, which read, "Transaurus." I'll openly admit it, my curiosity was peaked, but more on that later.

As I rounded the corner of the incredibly huge grandstands, there was a mechanical bull. Are you kidding me?! These folks at Elko Speedway are crazy... like a fox.

The grandstands were filled with people; many families with several kids, all ready for the insane entertainment. I felt a little clueless as to what to expect, particularly after seeing goats, a Transaurus tank and a mechanical bull within the first five minutes into the track. I found a spot high on the top row to videotape the races, as I usually do. Sure enough, racing action started up out of the gate, featuring the Thunder Cars, reassuring me that I was not misinformed about the night's events.

It was about this time that I had a mosquito land on my arm, which I quickly smacked and killed. I replayed a comment I had heard Danny Fredrickson say in the pits to my husband about how there hadn't been any mosquitoes around until about three days earlier. Thanks Obama; I mean Mother Nature for all of the rain. I hate mosquitoes.

But then, right on cue, Elko Speedway addressed my disdain for the little blood-suckers, by bringing out Drifter cars, which promptly began to turn sideways circuits on the 3/8-mile track, emitting copious amounts of tire smoke through the turns. IT WAS AWESOME! And the tire smoke effectively cleared the pesky mosquitoes. Well played, Elko Speedway. Well played.

The first of two 30-lap NASCAR Late Model features came out after the smoke cleared, followed by a Hornet feature. Another mosquito had the audacity to return, attempting to draw blood from a vein on my arm, and I took a half-hearted swat at it, because my attention was suddenly pulled back to the track.

A jet-powered golf cart came roaring out onto the asphalt. I couldn't stop

Circus on Steroids



Jacklyn Daniels-Nuttelman photo

myself from laughing like a maniac, because I'm fairly certain the concept of putting a jet engine onto a glorified golf cart was born from several guys sitting around drinking and talking into the early morning hours somewhere.

"Tee'd Off," the jet-powered golf cart did a couple of laps around the track in impressive fashion, rattling my lungs in my chest with every squeeze of the throttle, which blasted the full force of the jet. Then it backed up to a very unlucky minivan situated in the infield of the track and proceeded to melt down the vehicle, while cheers filled the air. I'm pretty sure it was a minivan, based upon the charred carcass that remained. I was far too mesmerized by the thrust of the jet on the golf cart to notice exactly what it was prior to meeting its demise.

And as you may have guessed, the smoke from the meltdown also helped to clear the mosquitoes. I was beginning to really embrace my redneck roots again, getting caught up in the cheers and laughs with the crowd around me.

More racing peppered the night, with two more features; the Great North Legends and the Power Stocks; both of which were filled with great battles throughout the field.

Spectator Drags followed, which were highly entertaining, and I found myself cheering for the



Jacklyn Daniels-Nuttelman photo

Racing Nuggets continued on page 17

*Racing Facts, Observances and Opinions
from page 14*

you will be allowed to attend the Reunion FREE! You also may want to go to FACEBOOK under Champions Reunion VIII for more updates on who will be at the show this year. Former racers can also indicate if they will be coming to the Reunion there as well.

In the Quote of the column department its Les Back son of legendary driver Jim Back. "My Dad knew he could make more money racing than working in the shop (The successful Jim's Custom of Vesper, WI.) so that's what he did 5-7 days a week."

And looking back in time to May 12th, 1972 it was Mert Williams winning the 25 lap Late Model feature event at the then La Crosse Interstate Speedway, West Salem, WI. Williams was followed by Larry Detjens, Jim Back, Allan Ward, Don Grant and Roy Schmidtke. La Vern Grandal won the Hobby Stock main. On July 22nd, 1981 it was Dick Trickle winning the 20 lap feature at La Crosse Interstate Speedway. Jim Sauter, Mike Miller, Jim Johnson and Marv Marzofka followed. On August 17th, 1991 it was Kevin Nuttleman winning the NASCAR Winston Racing Series Late Model feature at La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway after first to the checkered, Mark Manke was DQ'd for a rules infraction. Following Nuttleman at the line were Shawn Pfaff, Brad Loney, Dudley Fleck, Jerry Bottcher and Bart Horstman. Looking back at August 28th, 2004 it was Charlie Menard winning the 25 lap feature at La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway. Following Menard in a race that started 25 cars were Andy Burgess, Steve Holzhausen, Paul Proksch, Sam Anderson and J. Herbst. Looking back on August 2nd, 2014 it was Adam Degenhardt winning the 25 Lap NASCAR Late Model Feature at La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway. Following Degenhardt were Steve Carlson, Mike Carlson, Cole Howland, Matt Henderson and Brad Powell.

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

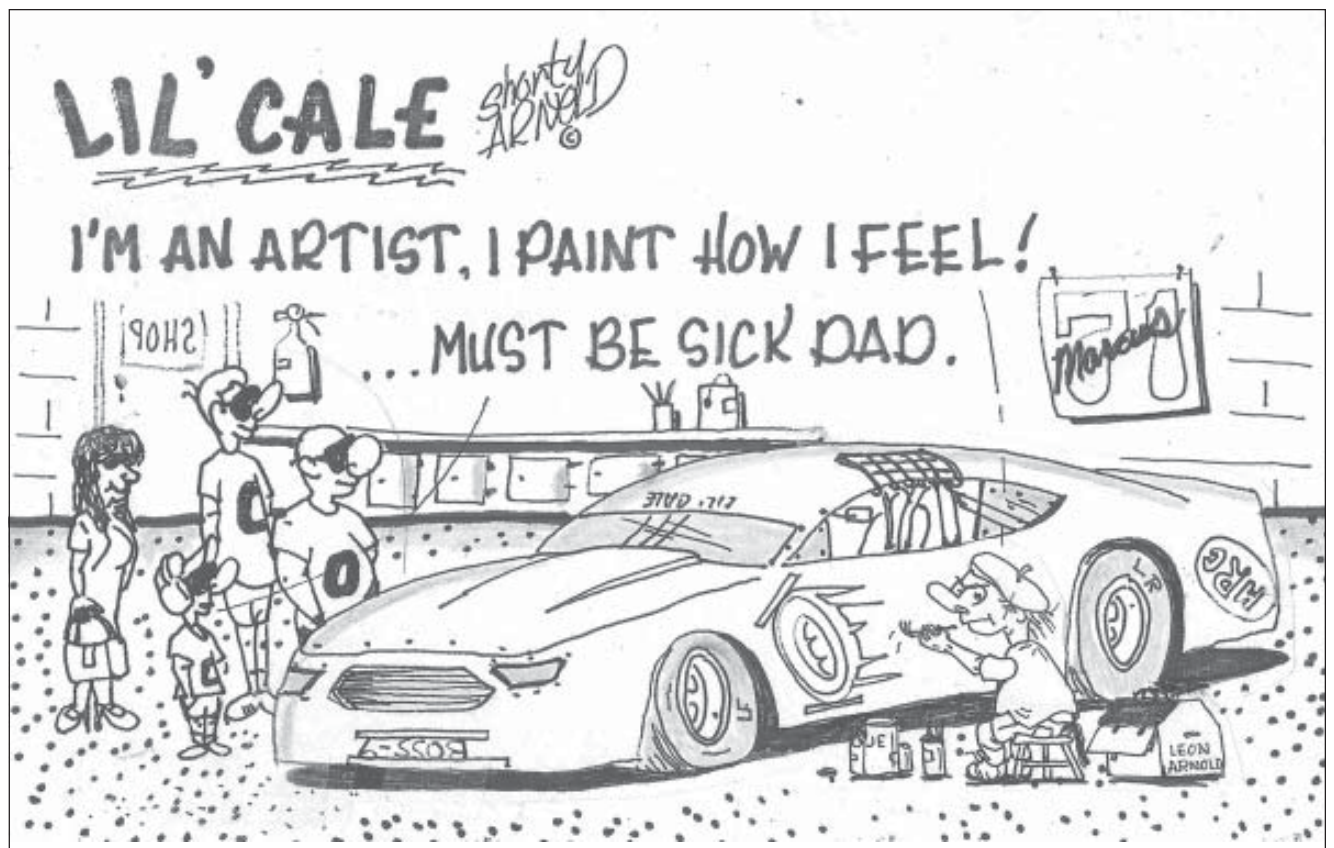


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Racing Nuggets from page 15

Cummins-powered, pristine pick-up truck that belched black diesel smoke as it turned a donut on the track, like a fat man in an office chair.

The most exciting Spectator Drag battle was between one of the Drifter cars and a Trans Am, which made contact coming off of turn four, heading for the checkered flag. Screams, squeals, and gasps were deafening, as the Trans Am spun out, in a failed attempt to regain control. I got the incident on tape, because like track announcer, Jason Searcy said, many of us were likely hoping to see some carnage with these street vehicles. I guess some of us are truly unashamed rednecks.

More feature races with the Thunder Cars and NASCAR Late Models, as well as another demo with the Drifter Cars (to help clear any remaining mosquitoes) all happened before the “Steel Wall Bus Crash.”

I had been eyeballing the vertically mounted full-sized school bus just off turn four in the infield. I wasn’t sure exactly how it would be incorporated into the night, but was fairly confident it would come with a message to “not try this at home.”

It was amazing. Another school bus took what was essentially a Kulwicki Victory Lap, building up speed before veering hard to the right, making thunderous impact with the vertical bus. It knocked it down like a Giant Redwood tree, creating a twisted double-decker bus stacked roof-to-roof, as they continued to careen toward the outside retaining wall. The grandstand erupted in cheers. My eyes were wide, and I laughed insanely at the destruction.

This was the kind of stuff we did with our Hot Wheels cars as kids—but here it was being done in real life, with real cars! It was motorhead communion for everyone in the stands, as we all felt bonded—part of one big family, taking in this circus on steroids.

The adrenaline coursing through the veins of the crazies in the stands was ratcheted up even higher when several buses lumbered out onto the track for a Figure-8 Race. I can pretty much guarantee you that there was not one person in the stands who wasn’t fantasizing about driving one of those buses in that event.

The night ended with that contraption with the tank tracks, moving eerily out into the center of the track, where it transformed into a mechanical-metal-eating Tyrannosaurus Rex. Only this one actually had useful arms, as he was able to pick up a car with them, and lift it to his “mouth” to take big bites out of it before fully finishing it off with high-powered flames from its nostrils, while the crowd showed their appreciation with deafening applause.

Elko Speedway is certainly not a traditional speedway. There is nothing “normal” about events there. From the night club with live music under the grandstands, to the outdoor theater in the parking lot (they showed “Suicide Squad” after the races that night), you get more than just a standard night of auto racing.

That’s not a bad thing. In this day and age, when it’s a real challenge to attract attention and garner a crowd, because of all of the other “noise” out there, this is a pretty innovative way to capture that elusive crowd. I’ll tell you, it was an amazing night, mixed with incredible racing—and destruction—the kind of carnage that doesn’t cost racers money to fix!

My take away from the evening was that this was a genius way to expose new people to racing. Many families came for the Eve of Destruction, but also got a great taste of auto racing, which was interspersed among the carnage-filled craziness. It felt like everyone got a corner piece of a birthday cake. Add in the fact that Elko Speedway has their Victory Lane right alongside the grandstands; it’s a perfect recipe for making a very accessible experience to everyone in attendance, especially budding race fans.

The night made me even MORE excited for the Thunderstruck 93 ARCA Midwest Tour event coming up September 24th. Elko Speedway never fails to deliver entertainment. And the Thunderstruck 93 event brings a heartfelt tribute into the fold, acknowledging the memory of a great racer and friend—Dan Ryan, who lost his battle with ALS (Lou Gehrig’s disease).

Thunderstruck 93, is without a doubt “A Race Worth Winning,” because it raises awareness and funds for a much overlooked affliction, making your attendance and participation so important. When you buy one of the super-cool commemorative T-shirts that night, designed by Travis Dassow—which 100% of the proceeds go to the ALS cause, thanks to Country Joe Homes, and/or buy some raffle tickets at Thunderstruck, which could garner you cash, a sweet television, or other cool prizes, you’re going to be paying tribute to a great guy, and helping a tremendous cause.

Even the trophy for Thunderstruck 93 is much sought after by the competitors, as it’s an awesome commemorative guitar. Just ask any of the previous winners of it—Jacob Goede, Andrew Morrissey, or last year, Ty Majeski who couldn’t stop grinning ear-to-ear after winning. But probably the most emotional



Doug Hornickel photo

winner of the signature event has been Danny Fredrickson, who nabbed the checkers four times. Fredrickson was close friends with Dan Ryan, and for him and his family, this night holds huge significance.

Last year’s race was a real gem of entertainment, as Goede, Fredrickson, and Majeski created a battle royal for the win in the waning laps. My sources tell me that there might be a potential new face vying for a visit to Victory Lane this year, which will likely create tremendous buzz and raise the already stout level of competition significantly. You won’t want to miss this one!

And as is the case with any Midwest racing extravaganza, it wouldn’t be complete without a legendary post-race party. The fun will spill over to a Pink Flamingo Party (Karaoke Dave) at Captain Black’s, which is located just down the road from the speedway. I tell you this, so you can get your hotel room lined up now, because I’m not sure how much room the Fredrickson family will have left at their homes for everyone. They’ve been known to become a campground/makeshift hotel for many.

The bottom line is, you always get more than just a standard race night at Elko Speedway, but the Thunderstruck 93 really brings a human aspect to it. Anyone who has known someone afflicted with ALS knows how devastating it is—emotionally, physically, and financially, which is why the family and friends of Dan Ryan are so passionate about making this event a success.

Get caught up in that passion—both for the cause, ALS—and for the love of racing. Better yet, make plans to bring a friend or family, who has never been to Elko Speedway, as they will be astounded by the raucous fun that unfolds.



Doug Hornickel photo

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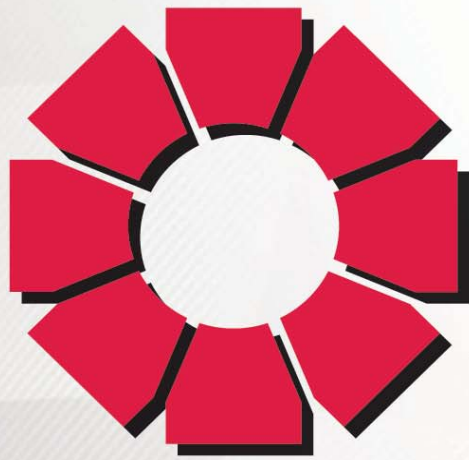
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