

# THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION

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THE MIDWEST'S SHORT TRACK AUTO RACING AUTHORITY



*Spring has finally Sprung*

April 25, 2013 Vol. 17, No. 1

## Inside...



Photo Gallery



Talkin' Racin'



Racing Observations





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## Publisher's Note

### *Racing According to Plan*



**Dan Plan**

Just as our April on-line issue went up on our website, the news came out regarding the pending sale of Raceway Park in Shakopee, Minn. For years, Raceway Park was known as "Minnesota's First and Finest", as the facility was the first paved track in the state of Minnesota. The announcement posted on the Raceway Park website early in April, stated

## *Times are a Changin'*

the 2013 racing season will run without interruption through September 1, 2013. While the press release did not specifically say it was the last season for Raceway Park, it does mention the potential new property owners, and zoning changes needed to build a new recycling plant. Does this leave open the question there may be a new Raceway Park facility built in the area at some future point? It's tough to say, and only a few people know the real answer to that question, and I'm not one of them.

News like this often conjures up all sorts of different rumors, so here's what I would like to see. The Minnesota Vikings were recently given a boatload of tax payer money to fund a new stadium. Since the Vikings typically play from September to December (maybe longer if they ever make the playoffs) the new Vikings facility will be available the remainder of the year. I can't think of any better use for the new facility than to put in a paved oval track and have Sunday night racing. If the management team at Raceway Park is interested in this option, feel free to give me a call and we'll get the ball rolling on this one.

*continued on page 6*



*Bruce Nuttleman photo*

*The Midwest*

**RACING**

*Connection*

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Auto Racing Facts,  
Observances and  
Opinions



Dale P. Danielski

Well, it's still April and amazingly with this cold, dreary, wet weather we've had for what seems like forever we were still able to witness our first racing action of 2013. Not surprisingly it occurred at the La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway, West Salem, WI, here Saturday night, April 20<sup>th</sup>.

J. Herbst has vowed that 2013 is going to be a much better year for his Electrified Motorsports race team and it'd be hard to argue that after the first night of racing as he won the 25 lap NASCAR Late Model Feature. Herbst who finished 4<sup>th</sup> in final track point standings last year feels he lost the title due to poor qualifying efforts that resulted in him missing the dash event too often which was leaving many points on the table. That changed here tonight as his time trial laps put him into the dash which he won.

It was definitely a night of fast laps as Shawn Pfaff set a new track record in Late Model qualifying turning the 5/8 mile paved oval in 19:570 seconds to set the new standard. Brad Powell was right behind at 19:597. Both those times beat the previous record by J. Herbst of 19:619. The highlights for those two drivers would end there however

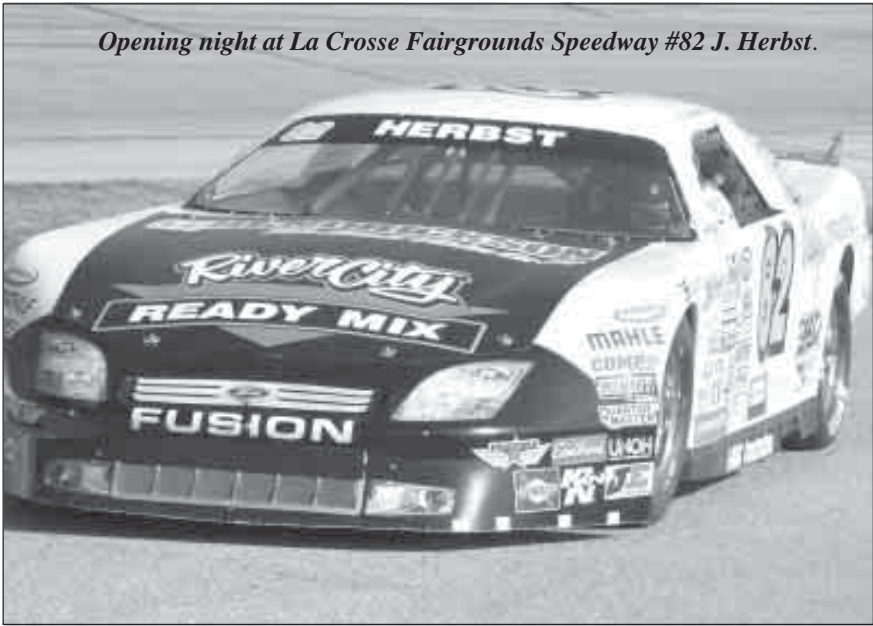
as they were involved in a skirmish in the Feature event which put them both on the sidelines. The final order of main event finish found Herbst 1<sup>st</sup> followed by Mike Carlson, Steve Carlson, Brent Kirchner, Todd Korish, Bill Niles, Cole Howland, Nick Clements and rookie contenders Brandon Berg and Jonathan Eckleberg rounding out the top 10. Steve Carlson's finish may have been better but a car ride height infraction forced him to start last in the Feature field and that along with a flat tire during the race kept him out of contention for the win. Mike Carlson actually appeared to have the main event wrapped up but slid high in turn 4 with just a couple laps to go which allowed Herbst to sneak by for the win.

Sportsman racing action was exciting as Steve Bachman made a late race pass to secure the win in that division's 15 lap Feature. Jimmy Gilster back running a Sportsman car full time placed 2<sup>nd</sup> with Bill Martin 3<sup>rd</sup>.

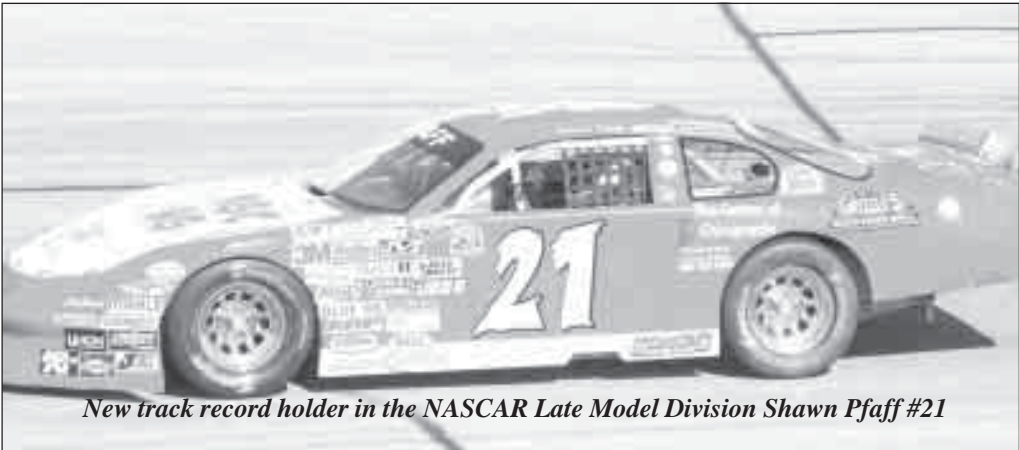
The Thunderstox main came down to a last lap shootout as well with Adam Moore taking the win just in front of Jason Bolster.

All in all it was a great night of racing and despite what Mother Nature has thrown at us we are once again racing here in April to start out a new season. It can only get better weather wise from here, right?

Here and there...Shawn Pfaff wasn't really surprised with his new track record in qualifying. "We had a car like this last year at Oktoberfest. We didn't touch it, just scaled it and it was just as fast as last year" It's a good thing we did scale it too as we found we were 25 lbs lighter

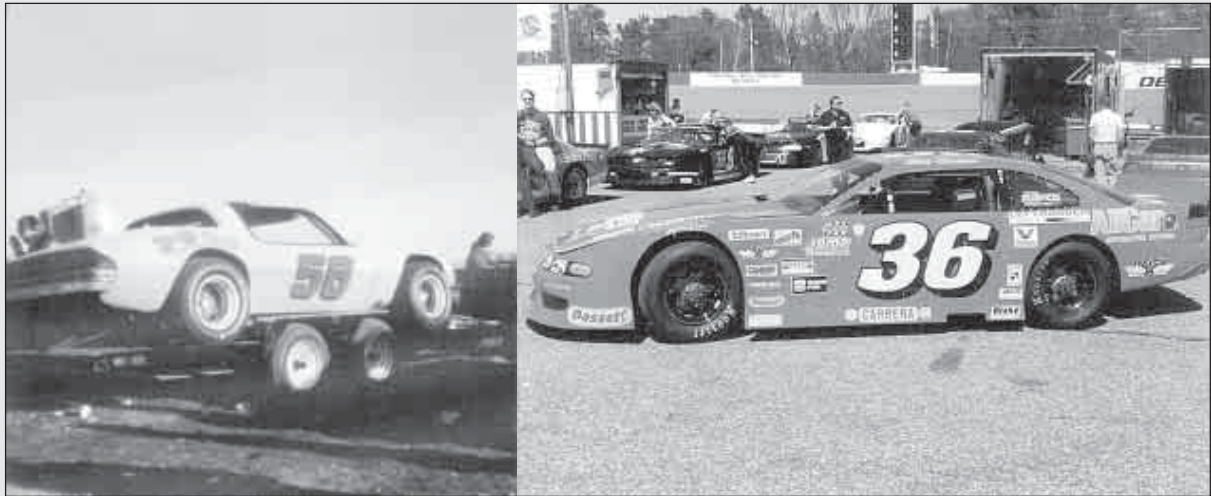


Opening night at La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway #82 J. Herbst.



New track record holder in the NASCAR Late Model Division Shawn Pfaff #21

his car's tire pressures incorrectly and according to Korish, "It didn't start to hook up until coming out of the last corner of the last qualifying lap". That miscue resulted in a 10<sup>th</sup> place qualifying effort for Korish well below where he is normally at... The Eckleberg racing team was out in force Saturday with Dad Curt racing a NASCAR Late Model, son Jonathan moving up from the Sportsman Division to Late Model and daughter Mandi taking over the driving duties in the Sportsman car. It's truly a family affair as Mom has been known to hop into a car now and then as well!... Bill Niles looked strong in the NASCAR Late Model Division opening night in a car his Dad Mike has been working on the last couple of years. After wrecking a car at Oktoberfest last year this car was finished and the result was a solid 6<sup>th</sup> place finish in the feature race... Ty Majeski who is a regular competitor at Fox Valley Wisconsin tracks will be racing at La Crosse Fairgrounds this year. "We'll be racing in 6-8 races here this year. I'm doing it to get better accustomed to racing without a spotter which isn't allowed here." This scribe remembers the days when drivers drove cars and everyone else watched as steering wheels weren't allowed in the hands of those viewing and trying to steer



1976 found Fred Bender #56 racing this car (left photo). Note the high dollar hauling apparatus. Joe Shear #36 from 1998 (right photo).

continued on page 17



## Going in Circles



### Charlie Spry

After a few years' absence, I took in the annual Spring Classic at the historic Rockford Speedway. Just a few hours earlier in the day, we had snow, sleet, and rain at various times, but Rockford does not cancel easily, and the day actually turned out very nice, with rare sunshine gracing all at the speedway.

A good field of late models were on hand for the Big 8 portion of the show, with a list of who's who in late model racing. Kyle Jarlsberg surprised a few by setting fast time, but really shouldn't surprise anyone with this, as he is fast and times in well wherever he races. The qualifying races were quite interesting, with "Insane" Wayne Freimund taking the first one, and Lacrosse area regular J. Herbst taking the other. Jimmy Ganski had troubles with his own car in practice the day before, so borrowed the Mike Beyer ride, only to experience difficulties with that car as well. Sometimes, you just feel like staying in bed all day! Rich Schumann Jr. also had troubles in hot laps, didn't get a qualifying lap in, and had to start in the back of the qualifier, which he finished third in. He then won the last chance race to advance.

Alex Papini took the emotional win, leading almost the entire distance. It was not an easy win, however, as at various times he had several cars hot on his heels, with



Vintage racing action during the Spring Classic at Rockford Speedway  
(Jimmy Ambruoso photo)

Dale Nottestad providing much pressure along with Steve Rubeck, Jon Reynolds Jr., Jerry Gille, Casey Johnson and others. Alex has the ability to keep up a flawless groove for lap upon lap, never seemingly flinching or succumbing to pressure. Alex said, "We had a good starting spot, on the pole, I was surprised to get the lead on Bobby (Wilberg) at the start, and then it was real important to keep hitting our marks and not getting rattled. I have to thank Dale (Nottestad) for racing me clean. He might have gotten into me once the whole time, and I'm sure that was not on purpose." Alex did a great job, especially on the restarts, as he seems to be a master at this. It was a race where there was almost too much to watch, as things were happening everywhere on the track. Never a dull moment.

Early in the feature, Dan Lensing got into Bobby Wilberg, who appeared to be struggling mightily with his car. Since both are employees at the same place, I'd bet there were some interesting conversations around the water cooler at work on Monday!

The Mid-American series was down a little on car count, so twin 25 lap features were run in lieu of one 50 lap affair. This was a good move, and provided for some great action. Adam Bendzick won the first feature, with Jack Stern taking the other feature. Overall, Mark Pluer was declared the winner, with his second and third place feature finishes.

The Illinois vintage racers group was also on hand, and I'll tell you what, these people really race these fine automobiles like the old days. Some rearranged sheetmetal later, and Dick Kath took the feature win. These cars were raced hard, and provided several anxious moments for all. Very good racing, but I'd hate to have to find some of the body parts for these cars. I'm sure they are not cheap! These racers had fans shaking their heads in awe!

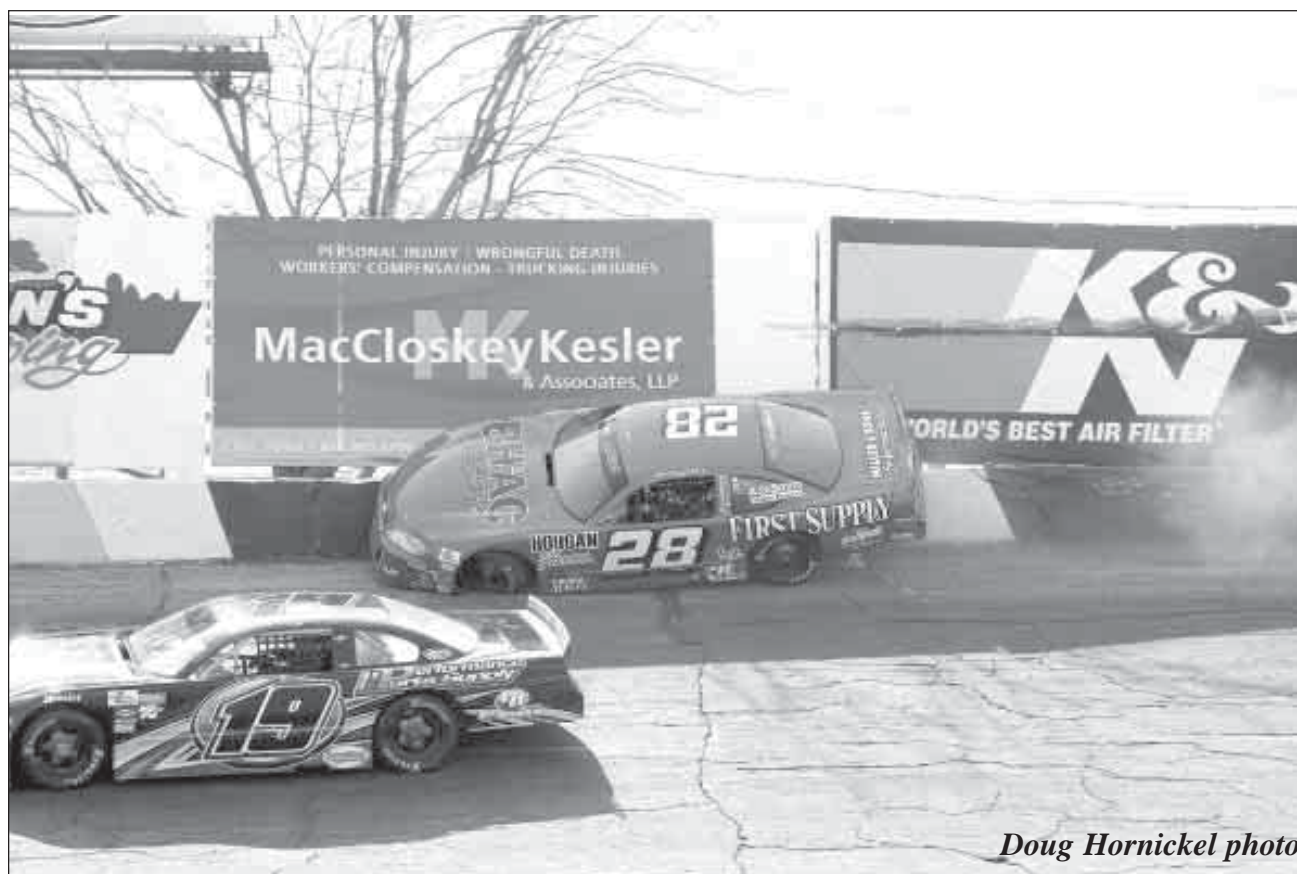
The following Saturday night I once again took the short drive to the Rockford Speedway for their 66th season opener. Once again, Alex Papini took the late model feature win, leaving him 2-0 this season in feature starts. It is a pretty impressive start to the season for the young driver, who is showing that he can handle pressure without flinching, and will be one to reckon with. Jon Reynolds Jr. got up to second, but never really mounted a serious challenge to Papini. Could this be a dominating and breakthrough year for Papini? Sure looks that way.

Joel Clossey was present tonight in the late models, and won a heat race. He is a veteran driver, but hasn't done much driving for the past three years or so. He began his career back in the 1990's, racing an asphalt modified at Madison.

Enjoyed talking with sportsman driver Justin Sellers. Justin has been improving every year he has been racing, as has his car been improved. What some might not know, is this car is the same car he formerly raced on the dirt at Sycamore. "It's the same basic chassis," Said Justin, "We have slowly been improving it a little each year. This kind of racing is actually less expensive than when I was racing on the dirt, as we utilize a crate motor. It's about \$3,000 vs. \$8,000 for a dirt motor." Justin began racing in 1998 at Sycamore, racing there in the late model class until 2006 when he won the championship. He then ran on the dirt at LaSalle for a year before giving the asphalt at Rockford a try, where he has been since 2008. "We finished second in points last year, and while I like to win races, the goal is also to win championships, so that is the target. I like to master a division before moving up, and I'd like to race late models sometime in the future if we get the backing for it."

Another top sportsman driver is Johnny Robinson, who also races a #99 car like Mr. Sellers. "I am not going to worry about points this year," Noted Johnny. "If I do the best I can in the races, the points will take care of themselves. I just want to relax and let things go as they may as far as that."

Tonight, Brett McCoy took the feature win, holding off



Doug Hornickel photo

*continued on page 6*



*continued from page 3*

The older one gets, the more things change. It always seems that people make the most noise after it's too late. Some of these people probably would have been upset they weren't on the Titanic or the Hindenburg when they went down, but they probably would have still bitched after it happened. Things change, and sometimes we just have to deal with it. I grew up in Cottage Grove, MN and spent many a summer night at the Cottage View Drive In. The Cottage View closed down at the end of 2012, and I missed my chance to see one more drive in movie in my home town. There's not much I can do after the fact. If I

was as big of a drive in movie fan, as I am a race fan, I would have went more often, and probably encouraged people I know to check it out. Complaining on the Internet after the fact wasn't going to help bring back the Cottage View.

If the sale of Raceway Park does go through to completion, it will be a sad day when they turn out the lights for the final time at the facility on Labor Day weekend.

**Miscellaneous News and Notes:**

Along with our topic above regarding Raceway Park, we received a letter to the editor from one of the competitors at Raceway Park (Mark Bronstad). Check out Mark's letter further into this issue and see if you agree regarding the impact of social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.).

While not the typical motorsports coverage you'll see here in MRC, we sent our unpaid intern to the SuperCross event at the Metrodome. Minnesota resident, Ryan Dungey, picked up the big win in front of the home town crowd. From the video we've seen from our intern, the place was packed, and the fans made an enormous amount of noise for the hometown hero. This was the first SuperCross race at the dome in five years, and the last one ever, as the dome is being replaced by a new facility for the Minnesota Vikings (and the future home of Raceway Park?).

With the announcement regarding Raceway Park, Kevin Busse (Raceway announcer), is looking for copies of any photos, videos, or audio of him announcing the event action at the track. Please contact Kevin at [BPLmusic@juno.com](mailto:BPLmusic@juno.com) if you have any information you could pass along to him.

We made our first trip to Lacrosse Speedway of the year for the season opening "Frostbuster" event. The title of the event was appropriate; as the temperature was quite cool once the sun went down. On this particular evening, we witnessed one of the things that often goes unnoticed in racing, as the a majority of interest is usually focused on the battle for the lead. It always seems that race car drivers can seem to find a little something extra, when things don't go right on race night. On this particular night in West Salem, Steve Carlson had a left front tire go flat early in feature race. Carlson would have to pit and go the back of the pack. Without the aid of a caution, Carlson drove to the field and made it back up to third at the end of the night.

And finally, we recently spent some time with Mike Kelley Sr. (Kelley Racing Engines) during the indoor races at the Cedar Lake Arena. We were pleased to see Mike Sr. brought Mrs. Kelley out for the evening to see their grand kids turn their first laps in Quarter Midgets. It seems that it was the Kelley's wedding anniversary, and Mike promised his wife a sit down dinner for their anniversary. Turns out the sit down dinner consisted of sitting in the front row of the bleachers in the Cedar Lake Arena with some race track food. Not sure if that's what she had on the agenda for the evening.

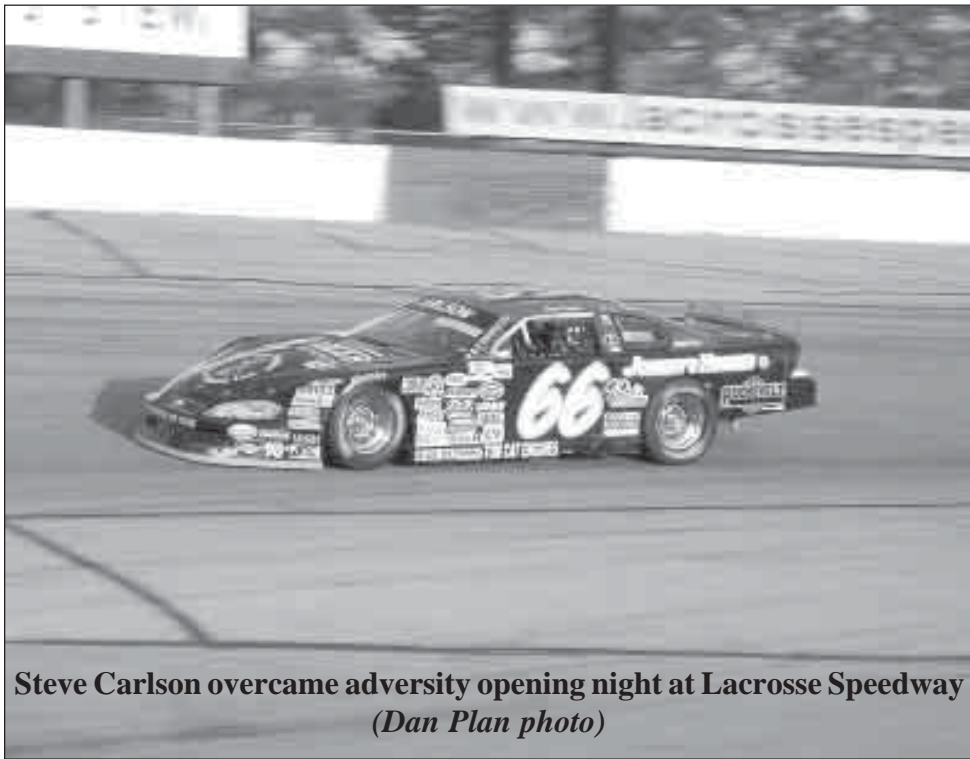
**Going In Circles from page 5**

Doug Bennett, who had a near clean sweep. Sellers took third in a strong run.

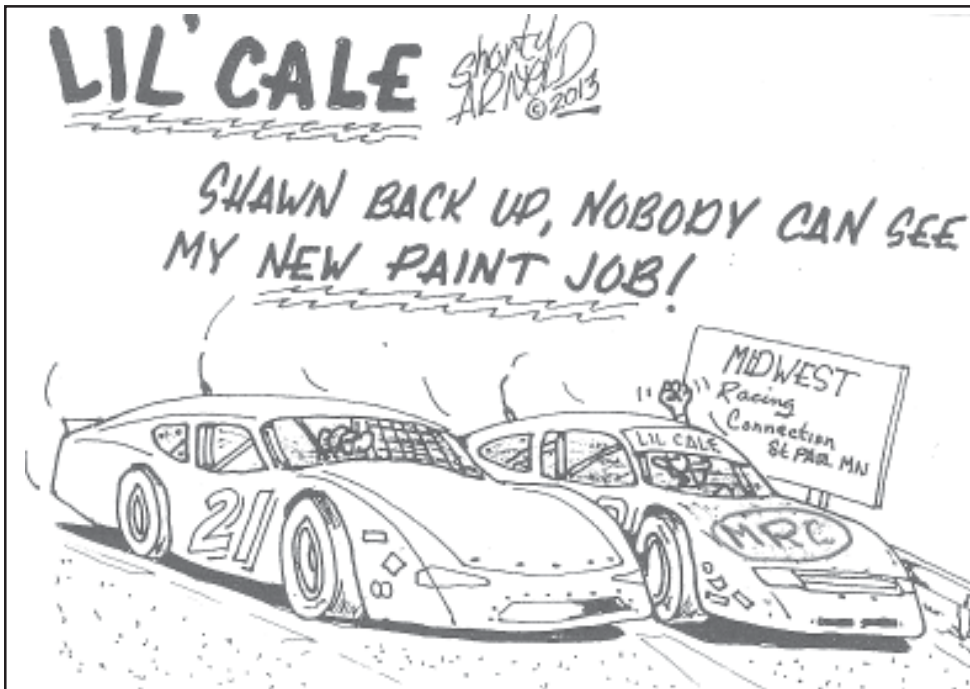
Kyle Lapier took the win in the American Short Tracker feature, as Nick Cina appeared to be on his way to victory, but bobbled or had car difficulty late in the race while leading, giving LaPier the chance to overtake him, with Zach Rodriguez following.

The Roadrunners had a strong field, with many surprises in their racing as per usual. Arlyn Roush took the win, as he and second place finisher Terrance Robinson seemingly came from nowhere to suddenly be there at the end.

Talked with Roadrunner racer Josh Digiovanni tonight. Josh has a beautifully prepared racer, and noted, "I had to put a new frame under it, I got it wrecked real bad last year, so it was alot of work." Josh is in his third year of racing.



**Steve Carlson overcame adversity opening night at Lacrosse Speedway**  
(Dan Plan photo)



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## Dirty Talkin'



**Kris McMartin**

Dirt track racing is the single most common form of auto racing in the United States. It is also an exciting form of family friendly entertainment that is relatively inexpensive in today's economy. Dirt track racing is a fast and unpredictably thrilling form of entertainment that is fun for all ages. Area tracks rely on both race fans and drivers to stay in business year after year. Dirt tracks who look to expand on family friendly programs and costs in an effort to capture the interest of the next generation of both race fans and race car drivers will have more success in future years.

I recently had a personal experience giving me a front row seat as an area track made changes that have created an even more family friendly environment involving a younger generation in both the stands and the infield. It is possible, through this experience in my own family, we have created a next generation driver which will add fans in the stands with many relatives/friends not normally in attendance. Our favorite dirt tracks need to find this success so that our grandchildren are not just hearing stories but are able to experience the excitement for themselves.

As I have reported in earlier articles Cedar Lake Speedway (CLS) purchased the Sandbox Arena over the winter months. It has been transformed into the state of the art indoor dirt racing facility. A couple of weeks ago I brought my daughter and one of her friends out to the CLS Arena for the indoor show featuring Hornets, Quarter Midgets, Outlaw Mini Mods and Micro Sprint Cars. While I have been bringing her to the track for years and she is a big fan, loves coming to this track and loves racing, this weekend would turn into a little more for her.

My daughter has been forever asking me when she would be old enough to buy and race a Hornet (the only beginner class of cars she has seen race). After the Quarter Midget heat races she came barreling over to me plopped down and did the "mother" thing in her own special excited yet aggravated way "those are like small non-wing sprint cars and there are kids both bigger and smaller than me driving them. I have been watching their families on the infield working on cars and getting kids strapped in and without a doubt, I want to do that, I want to race those Quarter Midgets too."

*Vince Peterson photo*



## Attracting the Next Generation

My brain is screaming OMG, I have created a monster all the while trying to think about what I was seeing and wondering if it was even possible to make this happen for her. As it happens I knew one of the fathers who had two kids racing this class for the first time and was able to talk to him and ask endless questions after the races. Then last weekend I got a phone call from one of the other dads letting us know that they were going to have a practice session out at Cedar Lake and that Katrina was welcome to come and test one of the cars that would be out there. The families involved in this class are amazing, friendly and willing to provide an opportunity for more than just my kid to actually be strapped in and drive their cars on the track in a non-competitive setting. Like all of my experiences with racing families it was a great way to spend my Sunday afternoon.

I believe that racing venues that look to expand on family friendly

programs and capture the interest and enthusiasm of the next generation race fans as well as bring in new young drivers with these types of kid friendly entertainment options will most certainly have a much brighter future.



*Vince Peterson photo*





## Dean & Jason Talkin' Racin'

### Jason Searcy

In June of 2010 after a bad wreck at Hawkeye Downs it was suggested to Jonathan Eilen that he might want to consider giving up racing cars and do something different, like basketball. A perfectly reasonable thought considering he

was lying in a hospital bed with a broken L3 vertebra in his lower back and four broken ribs.

Eilen did not give up on his chosen sport, as a matter of fact, that suggestion made him more determined than ever to push forward, do the physical therapy and come back better than ever.

Jonathan Eilen from Hampton (MN) has been named the

Speed Talk on 13602012

Minnesota

Asphalt driver

of the year. He

is the first MN

driver to win the ASA Midwest tour

Championship since Dan Fredrickson won in

2008. Eilen scored a win and seven "top 5"

finishes during the 12 race Super Late Model

touring schedule.

In June of 2012, two years after his big wreck, Eilen felt like things were falling in place for him, "After having a good run and finishing fourth at the Milwaukee Mile, it kind of opened my eyes that this might be our year" said Eilen. The roll continued at Marshfield,

Doug Hornickel photo



Jonathan swapped the lead with Travis Sauter and Skyler Holzhausen the entire race until Skyler had problems just 18 laps before the checkered flag fell, giving the lead back to Eilen who then scored the win. "In past years it seemed like things would go bad or we would have a parts failure," said Eilen "but this year it didn't happen, it was like we had someone watching over us," Jonathan's brother and crew member Jake passed away in an automobile accident in 2008.

2012 was the first year working with crew chief Chad

*continued on page 9*



Doug Hornickel photo

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Jonathan Eilen #77  
Super Late Model Ford Fusion

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*continued from page 8*

Wood, "It seemed to click this year with Chad, right away from Madison all the way through Oktoberfest," said Eilen who won the ASA Midwest tour championship by 17 pts over Nathan Haseleu.

Eilen then had the opportunity to test drive an ARCA car

down in Daytona in December, "It was really cool, something to check off the bucket list," says Eilen "the first couple laps were nerve-wracking, holding it wide open and not knowing if it was going to stick, but after a while it felt like driving down the interstate."

The Midwest tour is now sanctioned by ARCA and Eilen plans on attempting to defend his title with a little different

focus, "in 2012 we played it conservative at quite a few races," said Eilen "this year I'd like to come to the track and go for wins."

2012 was a dream season for Jonathan Eilen and his race team, a season that would've never happened if he had taken the perfectly reasonable suggestion two years prior, "I'm glad I didn't walk away from it," said a race car driver who has little time for basketball.



*Bruce Nuttleman photo*

Previous winners of the MN Asphalt driver of the year:

2004 Dan Fredrickson  
2009 Adam Royle  
2010 Brent Kane  
2011 Chad Walen

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# THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION

## Photo Gallery



Adam Bendzick (outside) and Brad Keith (inside) battle for position at Rockford  
*Doug Hornickel photo*



Minnesota racer Ryan Dungey picked up the SuperCross win at the Metrodome  
*Bruce Nuttleman photo*



Quarter Midget drivers at the Cedar Lake Aren  
*Vince Peterson photo*



Steve Arpin (shown here in 2012) announced he'll be racing in the X-Games  
*Scott Swenson photo*



Rockford Sportsman winner Brett McCoy  
*Jimmy Ambruoso photo*



Jeff Matjek in victory lane with his XL600 Mod  
*Vince Peterson photo*



# THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION

## Photo Gallery



Adam Royle gets a little sideways at New Smyrna during Speedweeks  
*Bruce Nuttleman photo*



Todd Tachney picked up a Hornet feature win at the Cedar Lake Arena  
*Vince Peterson photo*



Lacrosse Sportsmen winner Steve Bachman  
*Dale Danielski photo*



Chad Walen captured the Late Model title in 2012 at Raceway Park  
*Martin DeFries photo*



Jeff Stumlin picked up one of the Hornet feature events at Lacrosse  
*Bruce Nuttleman photo*



Gregg McKarns joins Alex Papini in victory lane at Spring Classic  
*Jimmy Ambruoso photo*



PLUER PUSHES PAST SPOONMORE TO SECURE OVERALL SPRING CLASSIC WIN

Mark Pluer grabbed his second Spring Classic win since 2010 at Rockford Speedway Sunday afternoon by nipping defending Mid-American Stock Car Series Champion Jeremy Spoonmore at the line in the second of two 25-lap

segments. With a second-place finish in the first segment, Pluer needed every inch to take third from Spoonmore to secure the overall win by one point. “I knew I had to get the spot to take the overall,” a content Pluer said in Victory Lane afterward. “I’m thankful he raced me clean and we had a heck of a battle right to the line.” Fast qualifier Brad Keith finished second overall with a second-place finish to Jack Stern in segment two and a fourth-place finish in segment one. Keith and Stern tied with six points for second, but Keith was awarded the tiebreaker as he set fast time earlier in the day. Adam Bendzick cruised to a win in segment one and seemed to have the overall win locked up running third in the second segment. However, with just six laps to go Bendzick was forced to retire due to heavy smoke and fluid leaking from the rear of his machine. He still went on to pick up fifth overall.

outside retaining wall on the backstretch. Nowak’s momentum nearly took him into the pit road point, but Nowak was able to control his racer in time to veer left and avoid further damage. However, the incident ended his day. Bendzick swung to the inside line when the decision cone was placed and fought off the early-race leader Stern. A debris caution brought Pluer to the front row on the following restart, however, Bendzick was able to break away and secure his lead in the first 25. While Bendzick cruised up front, the defending MASCS champ Spoonmore and Keith marched through the field. Spoonmore moved to third on lap ten with Keith following into fourth on the next lap. The field would stay put over the next 15 laps even though positions were being hotly contested.

After inverting the top eight finishers of the first 25 lapper, Ryan Gutknecht and Scott Null led the field to green in the second stanza. Gutknecht took the lead from Null as the top four from the first segment began to mix in the top ten. On lap eight Stern took the lead away from Gutknecht, who was experiencing mechanical difficulties. Keith followed to the runner-up spot just two laps later. As Gutknecht started to fade on the outside line, the inside lane was opened for Bendzick, who slashed to third on lap 11. As Stern and Keith broke away out front and Spoonmore and Pluer duelled behind, Bendzick seemed assured of his first MASCS win.

Unfortunately for Bendzick his machine began showing signs of strain just after his pass of Gutknecht. The smoke began to increase, as did the fluid leaking from the rear of his machine, just past the midway point. On lap 19 Bendzick was shown a mechanical black flag. Attention then turned to Pluer and Spoonmore who were settling a battle for third. Spoonmore held the spot with just two laps to go, but Pluer was able to edge him at the white flag, then again by a bumper at the line after Stern and Keith had taken the checkered flag. Had Spoonmore held off Pluer, a four-way tie between Keith, Stern, Spoonmore and Pluer would have taken place for the top spot. Keith would have been declared the overall winner.

To spice up the program, Mid-American and Rockford officials decided to run twin 25-lap features in the morning hours. The changed up format proved to provide some extra drama. The earliest drama came just two laps into the first 25-lap feature. Former Spring Classic winner and 2010 MASCS champion Lyle Nowak was tangled in traffic and was sent into the



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## Larson Ready for 2013 at CLS

Brent Larson captured two titles at Cedar Lake Speedway in 2012. Larson was the Late Model and Modified champion at the historic facility in New Richmond, Wisc. *The Midwest Racing Connection* recently caught up with Larson to discuss his championship season and his 2013 racing plans.

### *Did you intend to run for points in both the Modified and Late Model divisions?*

We planned on running for points in the Late Model, we didn't really plan on it in the Mods. We figured we would just see how it goes. We didn't really plan on it, but we ended up running it all of the way through, to kind of see what was going to happen.

### *How difficult is it racing two classes in one night?*

If everything is going smooth, it's not too bad. If you've got problems with one car, or it's hot out, or the track is rough, it can be quite the challenge. If one of the cars isn't handling the way you want it to, it's tough. It can be a lot of work, there are nights when it's not too bad. It really varies from night to night.

### *Do you have separate crews for each car, Late Model and Modified?*

No, I just have to bring a fair amount of guys with. When I have one car, I can just bring one guy with. With two cars, most times I need four guys with. I pretty much need two guys per car, and I can't be one of them. It's just three or four guys, and sometimes those guys don't get to watch any of the races, just so they can get one of the cars ready and out on the track. It's not really separate, everybody kind of pitches in together.

### *What was the most rewarding night of the season for you?*

I would have to say winning the Triple Crown at Cedar Lake was one of my best nights in my Modified. In the Late Model, in the USA Nationals, we didn't really finish all that well each night, but we overcame a lot of adversity all weekend long. The top point guys in the Late Models all had tough times, and I felt we rose to the occasion better than the three or four teams did, and the that's definitely why we ended up winning the Late Model points.

### *We understand you made a trip to Arkansas this winter to pick up a new Shaw car?*

I went down in early December and built a Late Model down there and picked up a new frame at the end of last summer for the Mod. We've kind of been picking away and putting that one together.

### *Do you plan on running for points in both divisions again this year?*

I'm going to give it a shot in the Late Model, but I'm not going to try to attempt to in the Mods. In the Mod, we are going to try and run a little bit with the USMTS, and kind of run it when we feel like it.



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Tachney Triumphs In Cedar Lake Arena’s NASCAR Opener

By Chris Stepan

The Cedar Lake Arena kicked off its 2013 regular season with a 9 division program on Saturday, April 6<sup>th</sup> which saw Mankato, Minnesota’s Todd Tachney take a thrilling win in the NASCAR-sanctioned Hornet division to highlight a wild night in the arena. Cedar Lake Speedway’s 55<sup>th</sup> season opener was delayed by weather, but the Arena was rocking tonight as a large crowd spent some time checking out the indoor racing action for the Hornets, Micro Sprints, Slingshots, Outlaw 600 Modifieds, XL600 Modifieds and 4 divisions of Quarter Midgets.

After the 4 divisions of Quarter Midgets raced on the mini track and saw Jack Larson win the World Formula division; Jack Berger win the 160 division, Tyler Janecek win the 120 class and Trinity Kelley outrun her brother to win the 120

Blue class, the five remaining division took to the big track for their respective feature events.

The XL600 Modifieds put on one of the best races of the night with Winona, Minnesota’s Jeff Matjeka leading all twenty laps, but Joe Provinzino and Bob Cisewski swapped the runner up spot countless times while trying to chase down



Vince Peterson photo

Matjeka out front. The race was slowed by three caution flags, which kept Provinzino challenging out the high line, but Matjeka was too strong and raced to his first victory at the Cedar Lake Arena in impressive fashion.

The Outlaw 600 Modifieds were up next with Dave Finstad leading the way over first time racer Chase Viebrock at the start. The duo ran door to door at the front of the field over the first three laps before Finstad took control out front. Once Finstad got to the front all eyes were on Dave Brandt, who won at the Arena two weeks prior as he marched his #11 into second early on. A caution on lap 6 set up a double file restart with Finstad again taking control until the second and final caution flew on lap 13, setting up a seven lap shootout. On the restart Jeremy Schubert, who started 7<sup>th</sup> got into Finstad and turned him sideways just enough for Schubert and Brandt to race by momentarily, but Finstad faught back to second on the next circuit. Schubert now lead as the laps wound down and on the final lap Finstad threw his #7d to the cushion and made a thrilling move to steal the lead back and the snatch the win as the field raced out of turn four in a near photo finish. Schubert came home second with Brandt in third.

The final race of the night was the NASCAR Hornet division which was the first event sanctioned by NASCAR of the 2013 season for the Hornets and saw Dan Knish and Ashley Bell pace the field to the start of the 20-lap finale. Knish and Bell raced side by side out front for the first several laps until Knish cleared Bell and tried to take off to stretch his advantage, but the race, which went non-stop, saw several tense moments on the 1/5 mile oval as lapped traffic played havoc for the leaders which allowed third starting Todd Tachney to creep up on the leaders and steal the lead as the field raced to the white flag. Tachney lead the final two laps in a wild shootout with the leaders splitting lapped cars left and right to become the first NASCAR winner of 2013 for the Hornet division. Knish finished in second with Justin Schelitzche in third.

Ty Sampair took the lead from the outside of the front row in the Micro Sprint division and withstood two caution flags to hold off Iowa veteran Merlin Schnurr for his first career victory.

AJ Hoff lead all ten laps of the Slingshot main event to hold off the brother tandem of Jim and Joe Chisholm in an exciting feature, which came down to the last lap.

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## Papini Springs to Rockford Spring Classic Checkers

By Eric Huenefeld

It was the perfect place for the perfect win.

On the high banks of Rockford Speedway, just minutes from his shop. At a place that where he grew up watching racing.

At this place on this day, and while being tested by the "best weekly warriors in the country," Machesney Park's Alex Papini had his finest day in a Late Model, winning the 36th Annual Spring Classic at the Rockford Speedway. Papini, who started on the pole position for the 108 lap main event, would lead from start to finish, despite numerous challenges from numerous challengers en route to the benchmark victory.

Sharing the front row with seven-time Rockford Speedway champion Bobby Wilberg, Papini was able to move ahead of Wilberg after a couple laps of side-by-side with the veteran racer and former track champion. As Papini slipped ahead of the pack, the storm raged behind him.

Throughout the race, the action was fast and furious within the pack. Paint was traded, and at times, lines were crossed. Outside pole sitter Wilberg was one of the first casualties of the day. On lap six, as Wilberg fell back while working the high side of the speedway, he was contacted by 2012 Dells Raceway champion Dan Lensing. The contact sent Wilberg quickly to the wall and climbing up the billboards before his car would come to rest. His day was done, and Lensing was sent to the tail end of the field. Despite the setback, Lensing was still able to fight through the field and ended the day in eighth position.

Only four laps later, Minnesota's Darren Wolke would almost mimic Wilberg, breaking loose in turn one and climbing the wall. Wolke's day would be done as well. The ensuing restarts off of cautions provided wild, "elbows up" racing, with positions being traded back and fourth. The third caution of the race would be a result of such behavior, as a jumble near the front would end up snaring 2011 Rockford Speedway champ Ryan Carlson. Carlson would lose control in turn three and almost avoided the field. However, 2012 Big 8 Series Rookie of the Year Jesse Bernhagen would find Carlson's front end. Both drivers days came to an end as a result of the contact.

The race would then find it's longest stretch of green flag. A 45-lap segment of caution-free racing, would let the field stretch out, and allow 2012 Madison International Speedway champion Dale Nottestad to escape the pack and begin to reel in Papini. Nottestad and Papini played a game of high-speed chess on the green flag run, with Nottestad sizing up Papini for the lead just past the halfway

mark. But as Nottestad caught Papini, the duo would catch lapped traffic. A frantic moment in turn three almost ruined the day for both drivers, as three wide lapped traffic blocked the lead battle. Both cars moved past hurdle aggressively and continued their sprint through the field.

One more late yellow would bunch up the field yet again and with numerous battles from third on back being contested, Papini and Nottestad would wonder off and settle it amongst themselves. Nottestad would get even with Papini twice in the final 15 laps, but was never able to get ahead of the local favorite.

Papini would take the checkered flag and with it, collect his first ever Big 8 Series win. Nottestad, the 2011 Spring Classic champion, would finish in the runner up spot, ahead of two time event winner Steve Rubeck. Casey Johnson, the 2012 Jefferson Speedway champion would take home a fourth place finish, while defending Rockford Speedway champion Jerry Gille rounded out the top five. The top five was Gille's best ever Big 8 finish.

Wisconsin driver Steve Apel would be the race's "Powersource Power Mover of the Race," advancing from a 22nd starting spot to a 7th place finish.

Earlier in the day, Whitewater, WI driver Kyle Jarlsberg would top a field of 36 Big 8 Late Models in Quartermaster Time Trials, turning a lap of 13.901 in the timed runs.

The series' next event will be Memorial Day Monday at Columbus 151 Speedway. Also on the card will be the inaugural race for the Great Northern Sportsman Series as well as the the 3rd running of the Bandit Blast. First race on Memorial Day will take the green flag at 2pm.

The Tibor Machine Vintage racers were

on the card as well Sunday, with Janesville's Dick Kath stealing the win late from Dixon's Tim Hamburg.



Mark Melchiori photo

Coming in the next issue of

# THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION

## ARCA Midwest Tour Joe Shear Classic Highlights

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### *Racing Observations from page 5*

the machines...Bad Brad Warthan is back at La Crosse Fairgrounds in an attempt to win the Thunderstox Division Championship. "I'm going for the Championship here and probably not racing much if at all anywhere else."

Warthan's first effort resulted in a 5<sup>th</sup> place showing in the Feature...John Radtke who does the bulk of his racing on dirt was at La Crosse Fairgrounds competing in the Hornet Division. Radtke proved tough on asphalt taking the first Hornet Feature event...Was really sad to hear of the announcement Raceway Park of Shakopee, MN., will be seeing their last racing ever this season. I didn't get there a lot but sure enjoyed the tight racing action when I did. It's a track like so many I was brought up on, back to basics, not all the modern era bells and whistles but a bunch of fun none the less. Too often these tracks close and whatever development is supposed to occur never does leaving the facility to deteriorate over time when it could have been holding action packed racing. We'll see just what does happen here once 2013 comes to a close.

With announcements of tracks closing it's good to hear of news that a facility is planning to open. Amherst Speedway of Amherst, WI., is planning a full schedule of racing for 2013. Located at the Fairgrounds site in Amherst the track already held an exhibition of sorts in 2012 which hopefully leads to a full fledged campaign this year. Although a fair amount of work needs to be done internally as well as facility wise, Rick Schlabowske who is heading up the promotional efforts at the track expects racing to commence in late May. I hope all goes well and the track indeed does get up and running as that is very near my home stomping grounds of Stevens Point, WI., which will offer great opportunity to head back to that area for some dirt track racing action...We mentioned last year that Mark Kraus was not going to be in the driving seat in 2013 instead devoting time to his son's racing and other endeavors. However Kraus did compete in the combined CRA/ARCA Midwest Tour event this past Saturday at Toledo Speedway of Toledo, OH. With assistance from Toby Nuttleman, he was competitive all weekend and ended up 21<sup>st</sup> in the 150 lap main event. It's not so easy come Spring and the beginning of racing season to step away from the sport!

In the quote of the column department Brad Warthan cut our discussion short at the track here Saturday night, but

he had a very good reason for it. "Sorry, but hey, I gotta go pee before this Feature event" and he ran off...

Looking back in time we attended the ARTGO/REMAX event held at La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway on April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1998. Eddie Hoffman won the 125 lap event and was followed by Ron Breeze Jr., Brian Hoppe, Al Schill, Jr., and JR Roahrig. March 28<sup>th</sup>, 1999 found us at Raceway Park for the season opening Enduro event. Jim Schoepke won that 200 lap race held in cold, blustery weather conditions.

Turning back the hands of time even further it was Augie Winkleman taking the 30 lap Feature at State Park Speedway, Wausau, WI. The date was May 28<sup>th</sup>, 1961 and Winkleman took the checkered flag first ahead of Jerry Volm, Ben Landwehr and Jerry Wagner. Herbie Kurth took the Semi-Feature win over Don Winkleman, Woody Schmutzler and Bob Dalsky. Heat race wins went to Kurth and both Don and Augie Winkleman. Wagner captured the Trophy Dash. The Adams County Fairgrounds Speedway held their 2<sup>nd</sup> ever paved track event June 9<sup>th</sup> with Augie Winkleman also taking the win there in the Feature race. Winkleman was followed to the stripe by John Mayer, Vern Piotrowski, Dean Spohn and Cal Breezer. Heat race winners were Piotrowski and Winkleman with Spohn taking the non-money winners event. Interesting to note that Tom Reffner, #88 in a 1956

Olsmobile finished 2<sup>nd</sup> in that race. Winkleman had a big night also taking the Trophy Dash and fast time honors at 20:32 seconds.

News, notes and comments welcome to Dale P. Danielski at Starmaker Multimedia 967 10<sup>th</sup> Ave N Ste A, Onalaska, WI 54650, at 608-783-5827 or at dale@starmakermultimedia.com, www.starmakermultimedia.com



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