

THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION

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THE MIDWEST'S SHORT TRACK AUTO RACING AUTHORITY

The Inside Dirt Returns!



May 2014 Vol. 18, No. 1

Inside...



Photo Gallery



1:1 With Jason Vandekamp



Going In Circles



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Publisher's Note

Racing According to Plan



Dan Plan

Following the NASCAR race in Richmond, anybody that is even vaguely with motorsports heard of the dust up between Marcos Ambrose and Casey Mears. For those of us that are real race fans (aka –short track racing fans), this is nothing new. While not condoned by anyone, it probably happens far more than anyone cares to admit. We just don't always hear about the short track fights because there aren't cameras everywhere at your local short track. Sure, you can see a clip every once in a while on YouTube, but it probably happens more often than we know about, but usually cooler heads prevail.

Now the irony of the deal at Richmond was all of the mainstream reporters calling out the Firm, and accusing NASCAR of double standards and hypocrisy for their fines of Ambrose and Mears. Far be it for me to stand up for something the Firm has done, but I almost had to laugh every time I read a post (or Tweet as the cool kids do these days) saying how NASCAR was setting a double standard by fining the drivers, and then predicting NASCAR will use the video of the fight to promote future races. Thanks for filling up my Twitter feed by stating the obvious.

I think these so called "reporters" forget that NASCAR at the upper levels is far more a show than racing itself. The fines and suspensions get people talking about the show

The Double Standard



more than the product on the track. Let's face it; a \$25,000 fine is a considerable amount to the average Joe. To somebody that's pulling in a salary that's near 7 figures (or maybe more than 7 figures); it really isn't that big of a deal. Now, the \$100,000 fine for Chad Knaus stretching rules was a big hit; Ambrose and Mears, not so much. It's like Vince McMahon levying a fine against Nature Boy Ric Flair for using a chair against Hulk Hogan or jumping off the top rope in a match. Woooo!

Wouldn't it be great if King Richard released a statement following the NASCAR announcement of the fines that he personally paid the fine for Marcos because he always thought Mears was a punk? How about if Mears showed up at the next race and smacked Marcos with a folding chain during driver intros? Man, we would have something to watch on TV if that happened.

Miscellaneous News & Notes:

We were able to take in the opening night show at Cedar Lake Speedway to kick off our local season in 2014. What was originally scheduled as a two-day show for the first weekend in April, ended up being a one-day show three weeks later due to our lovely weather. While the car count may not have met the expectations for some, this race fan was completely satisfied with the show. Each class had two full heats and a feature. With weather approaching, the show was hustled along, and we were back on the road (driving in rain of course) in less than 3 hours after the first green flag. Humpy Wheeler would have been proud.

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The Midwest

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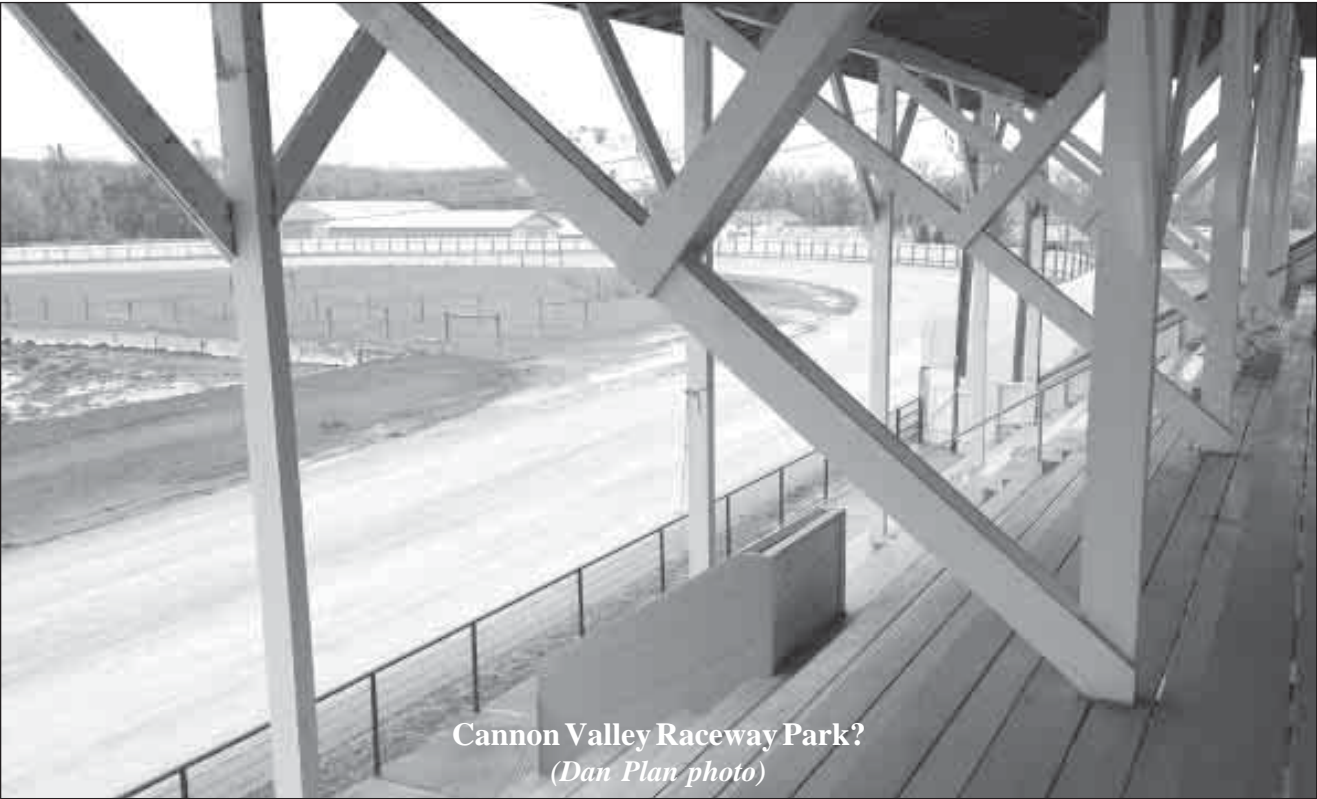
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The next day was supposed to be our visit to the second annual Frostbuster at LaCrosse Speedway. This year's version was scheduled for a Sunday afternoon in West Salem. While the weather didn't look the best, there was a chance the show could go on. Fortunately for me, I found out the show was cancelled before making the entire 2.5 hour drive. While turning around to head back home in

Cannon Falls, MN I decided to use this as an opportunity to take a quick look at the Cannon Valley Fairgrounds. I've always seen the grandstand from the highway, and what appears to be a race track. Upon closer inspection, it's not really a race track, but maybe it could be? A few jersey barriers and some catch fence, and we're set to go. Anybody else in?



Cannon Valley Raceway Park?
(Dan Plan photo)



Coming in the next issue of

THE MIDWEST
RACING CONNECTION

**Event previews, driver
profiles, columns & more**



A large crowd on hand for the ARCA Midwest Tour opener at Madison International Speedway
(Bruce Nuttleman photo)

2014 Event Schedule

May 24	Elko Speedway
May 26	Golden Sands Speedway
June 4-8	ARCA FEST Milwaukee Mile
June 8	Slinger Super Speedway
June 21	Jefferson Speedway (Tentative)
June 27	Madison International Speedway

www.IMCAoldtimers.com

Going in Circles



Charlie Spry

With another racing season upon us, my first race of the year was for the Stone & Double T enduro at the Rockford Speedway for four cylinder cars on April 5th. While some folks scoff at enduros as not being “real racing,” I beg to differ, as there are cars all trying to be first

and Kyle Stark swapped the lead back and forth. Shultis took over seemingly for good as Stark battled car troubles at about the midway point of the event. Shultis got spun out by traffic, but quickly got back on track, as Stark re-took the lead. Shultis chased him down and made the pass for good as Stark dropped out with about eight laps to go, with Jay Orr having a steady run and taking over the second spot, albeit a lap down. Shultis drove hard and drove well, taking the win.

The following Sunday brought me back to Rockford once again for the annual running or the “Spring Classic” at the venerable speedplant. The Big 8 cars headlined the show along with the Mid-American stock cars and the vintage cars.

Teams and track officials were scurrying around in an attempt to get things going quickly and hopefully beat the rain which was reportedly on the way. The Big 8 last chance races were quickly run, with Ryan Miles and Tim Sargent recording the victories in these races to transfer to the feature event. The vintage car feature went off and was run in short order as well, with veteran dirt racer Tim Hamburg getting the win in his ’71-’72 Chevelle over Vince Heywood and Tom Jones, making a return to racing for the first time in several years.

The Mid-Am cars saw much dicing and some drivers running with a real sense of urgency, with rain getting ever closer. The feature made it to past the half way mark before a light rain soon intensified into a steady, harder rain throughout the evening. Jeff Holtz took the Mid-Am win, with a car that appeared to be going away on him a bit,

leading one to wonder if he would have been able to hold on to the lead the rest of the 21 laps yet to be run. Doesn’t matter, as he was leading when he needed to be leading and got the win.

The Big 8 feature never got the start, which is a shame, as I think it would have been a dandy. You can try hard, but it will rain when it wants to rain, and we couldn’t quite beat the weather today. Nice job by all to try, however.

usually run pretty well, but when I am running well, either something breaks or I get caught up in a wreck. Never bad wrecks, just something to take me out of contention,” Said Steve. He qualified second fastest for the day.

Central Wisconsin racer Jeff Nowak was making his first ever start at the track. “I had never even seen the track before we got here,” Said Jeff. “I really like it, it is a fast, fun track.” having raced in the super stock and limited late model ranks at places such as Wausau and Golden Sands, Jeff now has a new car to travel a bit with the Big 8 series, but says he will also race weekly at Wausau.

The regular season at Rockford got underway the following Saturday night, with pleasant weather. Quite a few changes here, especially in the sportsman division. Former American Short Tracker division driver Nick Letsinger now is behind the wheel of the former Justin Sellers Camaro, while Mike Coleman is racing the former Q98.5 car driven by Bobby Frisch for most of last year. Another former AST division racer Jason Bragg is now racing the former Scott Lawver car, while Rob Goodman is now wheeling the former Doug Bennett car.

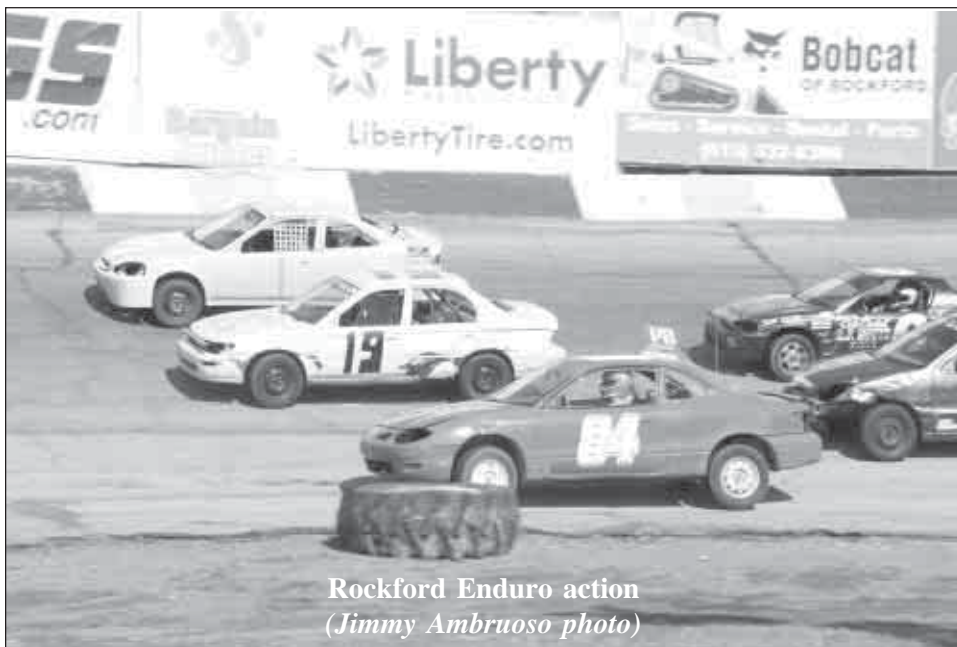
Returning to the AST ranks is Kelly Evink, who was off for a few years. he showed no rust at all, as he won the feature opening night. Corey Snow and Jason Halbrader were rookie drivers who were out on opening night.

In the Roadrunner division, the cars of choice are usually Monte Carlo’s, Chevelles, and various “metric” GM cars, but one unusual machine this year was put together by Daniel Opsahl. The car is a 1967 Buick Special (Skylark). In talking with the crew, they said “He got it and started thinking that it might be too good of a car to tear into and make a race car out of, until we got into the interior and found mountains of raccoon poop in it, and most of the floor rusted out. We had to fabricate and patch most of the floorpan.” Daniel noted that this is only his second year of racing, and that he finished third in figure-eight points last year and had an overall good season. “I’ve got quite a bit of money into the car,” Said Daniel, “But it is nice to have something different out there, and I’m happy with it.”

Two visitors from the Jefferson Speedway were present in the late model division on opening night, as Jefferson wasn’t running yet. Casey Johnson made it pay off, as he took the feature win in a close one over Jake Gille. Craig Phillips was also present and had a good run in his heat. The late model racing was very intense, even in the heat races.

Third generation racer Daryl Gerke was present with his sportsman car the second night out. Late last year, Daryl said that he probably wouldn’t be racing at Rockford this year, as the long trip from the Whitelaw, Wisconsin area was getting tiresome, and he wanted to race closer to home at WIR. He made it to the track in time for about five hot laps and qualifying. “We’ve got a bunch of work to do, brake problems,” Stated Daryl after qualifying. He also explained his change of plans, noting, “We will be here all year. The local Rockford area sponsors came through, and the Kaukauna area ones did not. I was hoping to race my late model there, but that probably won’t happen much.” In the past Daryl has run a variety of tracks, one time calling 141 Speedway his home. He also had a short stint on the

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Rockford Enduro action
(Jimmy Ambruoso photo)

to the checker... Which constitutes a RACE! Usually several cars drop out of these events early, either through mechanical problems or more likely, wrecks. This was not the case here, as the group set off at a fast pace, with few problems with wrecking, and not too many with mechanical difficulties, at least not at the beginning.

Caleb Shultis had raced in several of these enduros before, but he seemed to be the man to beat from the outset, as he



Rockford Enduro winner Caleb Shultis
(Jimmy Ambruoso photo)

Before the races started I had a nice chat with veteran late model racer Steve “Dobie” Dobbratz. Steve recalled his first race car, which was a ’73 Chevelle he ran in the Street Stock class at Columbus 151, and also recalled his first ever race, saying, “My first laps in the car were in time trials. I thought I was just going terribly fast, thought I had to be setting fast time. Well, I wasn’t even close.” He drove that car for quite some time, but like many others, met its demise in a grinding crash. His first race at Rockford was with the same car during the first ever Bahama Bracket nationals, where he led late in the race, until a late crash dropped him back a bit. Now, he is a top contender in the late model and Big 8 ranks, and has raced at many tracks. “Here at Rockford, it seems like I

The Inside Dirt



Stan Meissner

Sprint Car fans in the upper Midwest have many reasons to be excited. In addition to the excellent racing we see nearby with the UMSS, IRA and our annual WoO shows we are fortunate to have the Knoxville Raceway within a reasonable distance as well. For most of us Knoxville is about a 600 mile round trip almost all freeway making it a weekend destination. The argument could be made that it's the best weekly Sprint Car program in the world and this season is poised to be their best ever.

Regular competitors in the 410 division include Craig Dollansky, Brooke Tatnell, Terry McCarl, Mark Dobmeier, Davey Heskin, Brian Brown, Dusty Zomer, Ian Madsen and Justin Henderson. Few places in the country can boast fields with this much talent racing at their weekly events. MAVTV will be televising a show about Knoxville called "Dirt Dreams" starting Thursday June 5 so if you have MAVTV check your local listings. Knoxville/Pella radio station KNIA/KRLS offers a free weekly audio broadcast every Saturday night at kniakrls.com for those of us who cannot get MAVTV through our cable system.

Knoxville kicked off their season on Saturday April 19 and I listened to the audio broadcast. Even without the video the racing sounded very exciting and internet posts backed me

up on that assessment. Ian Madsen beat Brooke Tatnell over the line with Tatnell pressuring Madsen at several points during the course of the Feature. Brooke went into the evening having won the bracket challenge for most popular driver that was being promoted on social media in advance of the opener.

Craig Dollansky is finding himself in the unfamiliar position of racing a regional schedule and mentoring his son Garrett. Craig blew a tire and dropped out of the A Main on opening night but he came back strong and took an exciting win on April 26. In addition to Knoxville Craig's schedule includes most of the big races in the Midwest with the benefit of being home during the summer.

Knoxville's winningest driver Danny Lasoski was planning on running at Knoxville until he was tapped to fill in as driver of the Roth Motorsports 83. Regular driver Tim Kaeding made an unceremonious exit from the car in Texas. Tim's exit was said to be for personal reasons and there was a lot of buzz on the internet surrounding the circumstances of his departure. After a couple of weeks weeks of rumors and uncertainty it was announced that Tim Kaeding will be the new driver of the Phoenix Racing 59. David Gravel was named as the driver of the Roth 83 and answered the call

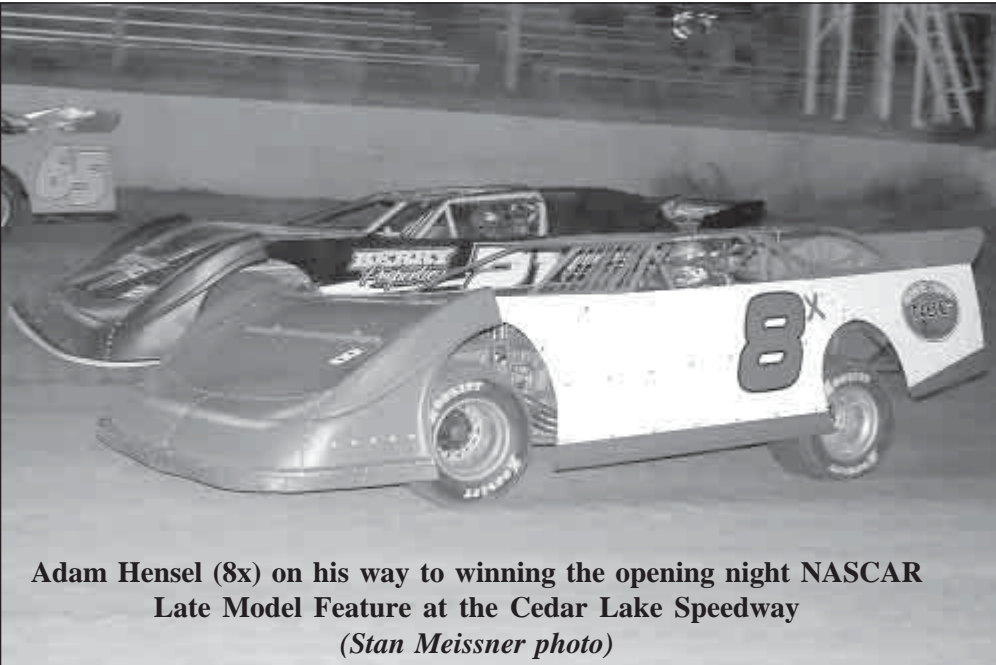


Tim Kaeding was released from the Roth Motorsports 83 without detailed explanation and landed in the Phoenix Racing 59 a couple weeks later. This shot of Kaeding in the 83 was taken at a Rice Lake IRA race on May 30, 2009. Kaeding showed up at RLS with Guy Forbrook turning the wrenches and won the feature on this night.
(Stan Meissner photo)

with an Eldora Outlaw win in only his second night behind the wheel.

We thought that Cedar Lake would start their season on April 11-12 but the weather did not cooperate so I was able to attend the Texas Hippie Coalition performance at POVS 65 guilt free. The plan was to go racing the following weekend April 18-19 but my yard was buried by 14" of snow in the week leading up to the rescheduled opener so I wasn't surprised that it was postponed for another week.

The Inside Dirt continued on page 16



Adam Hensel (8x) on his way to winning the opening night NASCAR Late Model Feature at the Cedar Lake Speedway
(Stan Meissner photo)



The UMSS kicked off their sixth season at Cedar Lake Speedway. Fargo's Lee Grosz would go on to win
(Stan Meissner photo)

Racing Nuggets



Jacklyn Daniels-Nuttleman

Oh the drama of racing! Especially the stuff that happens before the race season even begins! Radio station wars can be brutal. A local classic rock station was informed less than a week before opening night that the up-and-coming driver in the NASCAR Late Model division that they had supported for the past several years would be parting ways with them. It was a bit of a blow, given the station had continued to support that driver last season, when his work schedule prevented him from running more than a handful of events. It was an even bigger blow to learn that he was leaving to carry the banner for a rival radio group. Competition infiltrates every aspect, apparently.

Fortunately for that classic rock station, they were able to secure a former multi-year track champion and national title holder to partner with for the 2014 season. I guess they can “settle” for that instead.

While it seems that all parties have landed on their feet and will be just fine, it gives a few twinges to the heart when you realize that it’s all-too-possible for racing on the local level to have the same lack of loyalty that the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series exhibits.

I know my husband was devastated when Matt Kenseth switched teams, not so much because his t-shirts emblazoned with DeWalt were now collector items and obsolete, but because my husband is a Ford man. His favorite driver now pilots a Toyota. It took him three full months to kick the sadness from that turn of events. He was just recently able to finally say “Toyota” without the disdain in his voice. We all eventually have to learn how to deal with change.

God bless Dale Earnhardt, Jr. for making change easier for some of his fans, back when he made the move to Hendrick Motorsports and his number became 88. That change was nearly seamless for all of those who had tattooed a number 8 on their bodies. They simply added another 8 to their



photo from allelefturns.com

Change & Adversity

flesh. I’ve long wondered how much money that modification generated for the tattoo industry.

The funny thing about change is that many times, it comes full circle. A few years ago, race car set ups from decades ago experienced resurgence. Big bar – soft spring, anybody? And people who were unfamiliar with the history of that setup were amazed at the “new” innovation and how effective it could be. What was old—often becomes new again—so save your current set-up notes; your grandchildren might need them some day.

There’s a book called, “Switch,” written by brothers Chip and Dan Heath about how to go about making difficult changes. There are a few nuggets of noteworthiness inside of it; particularly the realization that our minds are ruled by two different systems: rational and emotional. Once you understand those two systems, and how they work together, it becomes easier to affect change.

Take weight loss. For many of us trying to shed extra pounds, our rational selves know we need to quit eating burgers and fries, but our emotional selves just can’t stop it. Those salty fries are like a big ol’ hug from mom! I haven’t finished the book yet, so don’t look for me to have that burger and fries deal conquered before the race season begins. The scent of hamburgers on an open flame, wafting through the air is like crack to us chubby types at race tracks.

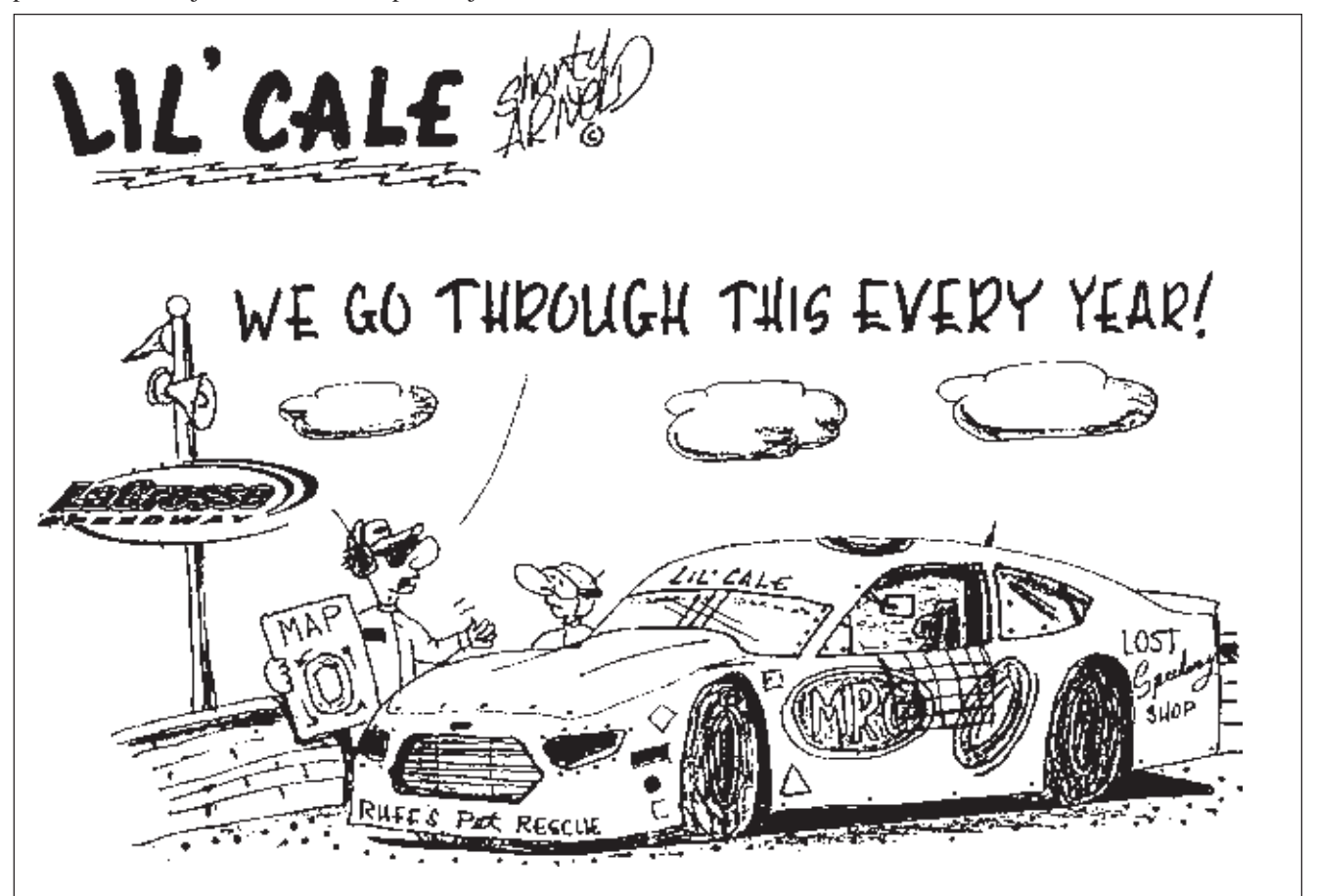
There are some changes that take time to implement, particularly due to the behavior associated with it. Under this banner, I would file the smack-talk that some in the racing community direct at their local track; armchair quarterbacking how the joint is run and decisions made. If the grass looks greener on the other side, chances are that there’s more manure being spread over there. There is no perfect situation, just like there is no perfect job. There will

always be some aspect that is not exactly how you would want it.

Our emotional minds want to lash out and bad-mouth track management for the “wrong” we perceive, but the fact of the matter is that we are clueless as to the full scope of factors that need come into play in order to successfully operate a race track. We tend to view things through our own little portal and neglect to see the big picture. It’s so easy to point out what is wrong, but how about coming up with viable solutions?

The rational mind is able to consider all angles. Ideas and suggestions are great, but if you don’t have a practical plan that can effectively implement those changes, you’re pretty much just blowing smoke. If you actually do have a practical plan, keep in mind presentation is the key to winning people over to your way of thinking. Shouting at the top of your lungs, with spittle flying into the face of the other person is not effective. It’s also disgusting. People who can remain calm, cool and collected tend to actually have a greater chance of affecting change. Side note: This is also solid advice for dealing with other drivers after an on-track incident.

Change and adversity are inevitable; whether it’s in racing, work or life. How we respond to it is what defines us. In the wise words of Bambi’s little friend, Thumper, I recommend that if you can’t say something nice—say nothing. I’m paraphrasing, as Thumper had horrible grammar, but I don’t want to criticize that little fur-ball. I’m trying to heed my own advice. Change is hard.



Auto Racing Facts,
Observances and
Opinions



Dale P. Danielski

Ba, ba, ba baby, you ain't seen nothing yet. Of course that's a familiar song title by Bachman Turner Overdrive and unfortunately it describes our race attendance so far in 2014. We ain't seen nothing yet as far as events go!

We did however catch the practice session at La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway, West Salem, WI., April 26th and did learn a few things. With the usual rumors flying about Steve Carlson racing or not here at the track it would appear on this day at least he is as he was shaking down his Late Model. According to John Gilbertson who has ownership stake in the car, Carlson will be racing on Saturday nights and going after another Championship. It appears son Mike will also be at the track Saturday nights as the Father son duo once again does battle at the 5/8 mile paved oval track.

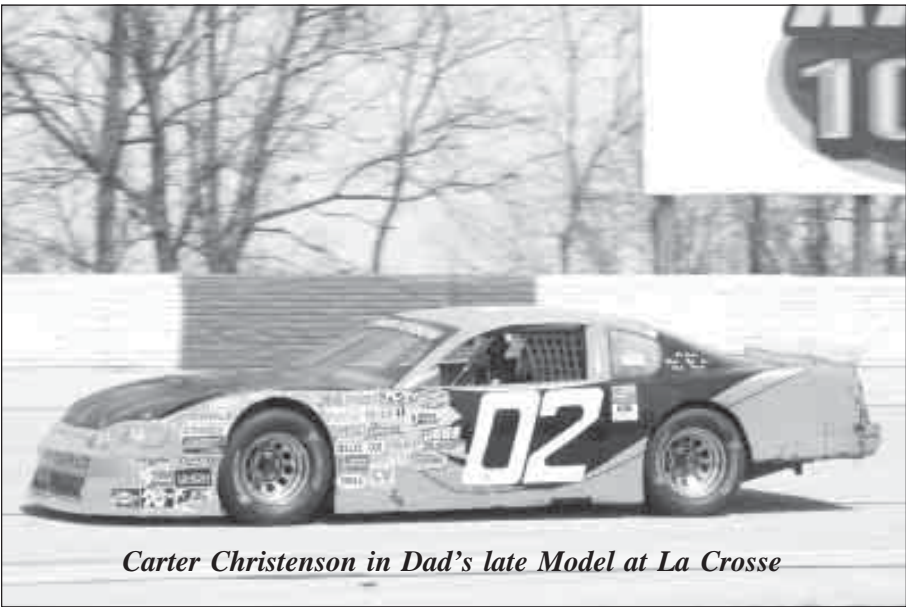
The Christenson name will again be a part of racing action at

La Crosse Fairgrounds this year as Travis plans to race frequently at the track. Shaking down his car on Saturday found a number of bugs to work out including transmission and engine troubles. Hopefully those issues are minor and Travis will make his way out to compete in the NASCAR Late Model Division season opener on May 17th.

Carter Christenson the son of Ken Christenson, Jr., also plans to race in the NASCAR Late Model Division as a rookie competitor this year. Carter is the latest in a long line of Christenson's racing and although the team won't be able to race every week they do hope to make their presence known throughout the year.

Ty Majeski claims to have a full plate of racing this year which will include racing periodically at La Crosse, competing for Rookie of the Year on the ARCA Midwest Tour and also racing in a number of other Super Late Model events. Majeski figures he'll run in 32 or so events which by today's standards is a lot! Of course back in the day Dick Trickle probably would have had that many events run by the end of May! Even in my short racing career in 1977 I raced in nearly 40 events. My, how times have changed.

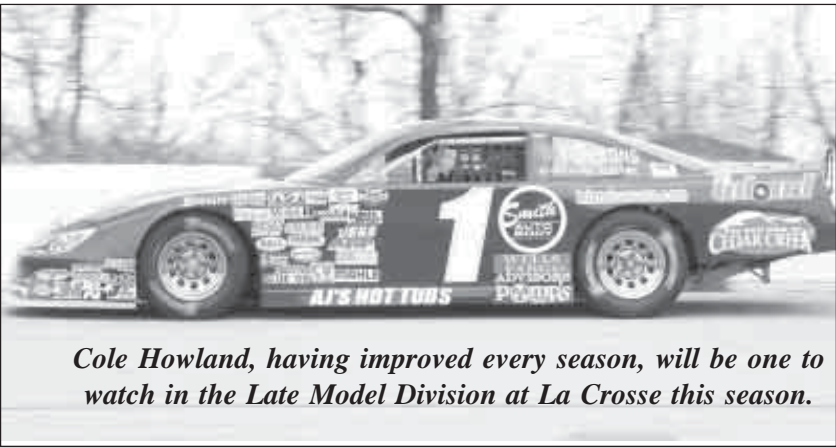
Folks will be seeing John Radtke's #7 4 cylinder race car at a number of different venues this year. Radtke, who was practicing at La Crosse on the "Little" track plans to race in the 10 events held at Lax Fairgrounds for the division along with 5 or so on the dirt at Mississippi Thunder Speedway of Fountain City, WI., and other tracks both paved and dirt in



Carter Christenson in Dad's late Model at La Crosse

the region. Radtke always has spiffy looking equipment so it's no wonder he's able to attract and keep sponsorship for his efforts. John is also one of those that will do what he can for the betterment of the sport and we can never have too many of those people!

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Cole Howland, having improved every season, will be one to watch in the Late Model Division at La Crosse this season.

Dale's Pictures from the past



Some cool pics 1984 vintage featuring dirt racers #1 Tom Nesbit and #71 Leon Plank. How many main event wins did these two combine for do you think?

"Hammer Down"



Eric Huenefeld

I'll start off by saying I've never raced a race car regularly or owned a race car. I've never bought parts for cars or spent the long hours in a shop prepping a finely tuned race vehicle.

I have, however, been all over our great land watching short track auto racing. I've been lucky enough to work for and work with top notch dirt and asphalt racing series while also being lucky enough to announce racing events for fans at 31 speedways in 8 states.

I present the following to you because I am looking at an industry, a sport, an activity, a niche that is very near and dear to my heart. And it seems to be losing its way.

Several things have led us to this point (that's another narrative for another time), but the bottom line is, I worry for short track auto racing. Sparse crowds, car counts, negativity at every turn. None of it is good. And it needs to change. Or our little funhouses will go by way of the Edsel.

Let's start with sparse crowds. Granted, early in 2014, the weather has flat out sucked. That helps no one. However, it's no secret that crowds at short tracks nationwide have dwindled in recent years. Is it because racetracks run six or seven classes of cars each night? Is it because customer service is not number one? Is it because the racing is too strongly governed and resembles a parade? Is it all of these?

Hammers thoughts: First off, four divisions is a terrific number to run each night, and in my opinion, it's the maximum amount of divisions you should run on any given night. Four divisions should give you enough cars for a solid show, while still giving you a little extra time in case the unexpected were to happen. Fewer divisions also allows time for fun things, like Challenge Races, Candy Scrambles, Bike Races, Smokey Burnout Contests, etc. This gives the fans a chance to participate, gives the kids something to get excited about and maybe gives the family a reason to come back. Racing zillions of classes with no let-up for 4-5 hours is no good for no one on a Saturday night in 2014.

Remember, It's Entertainment



Which gets me to a side point...run a timely show! Monster Jam has it right in one respect, they run a timely show. Two hours and fifteen minutes and you're in and out. You've seen Grave Digger flip over, you've bought a shirt and you've gotten autographs. And...you're home by bedtime! A Saturday night short track show should go NO LONGER than three hours. People just don't have that kind of attention span.

We must always try our best to TREAT THE CUSTOMER RIGHT. Welcome them, make them welcome to your home for the night. Take care of them as best you can. I know it's hard sometimes, but it's a must. None of this 'if you don't like it here, go somewhere else' kind of stuff...because believe me...they will go somewhere else. We want them at our racetracks, enjoying our shows and buying our food and drinks and concessions so we all don't have to dine on nuts and bologna for the week.

LET THE RACERS RACE. The fans came to see a show, give it to them. Your racers should understand that they are there not only to participate, but to entertain. I know this isn't pro wrestling or roller derby, however, we have high speed loud and flashy machines and they can put on a one-of-a-kind performance. A little rubbing? Sure. May someone

spins someone else out? Sucks to be you buddy...but that's drama! Now, Mr Racecardriver, I know you spent lots of money on your car and you'll probably never make all that cash back this season. I don't want you walling your car or others. But just remember, sparks and smoke look cool at night and a little side-by-side racing is and paint trading is good for the soul.

And finally MEET YOUR FANS. Too many times in this day and age, it seems drivers want to leave the track as soon as they can or simply put their head in the sand after the races. Now, at my home track, we use a '30 Minute No Move' rule. This keeps the competitors in the pit area for half an hour after the show and allows interaction between fans and drivers. Socializing never hurts. Neither does an autograph, some candy, a t-shirt, or a beer with your favorite driver. Auto racers are the world's most accessible entertainers. That fact has been forgotten by some.

In conclusion, I do not know everything. I'm just a fan who wants to see the activity he loves carry on for years to come. Thank you for your time. Let's go racing!

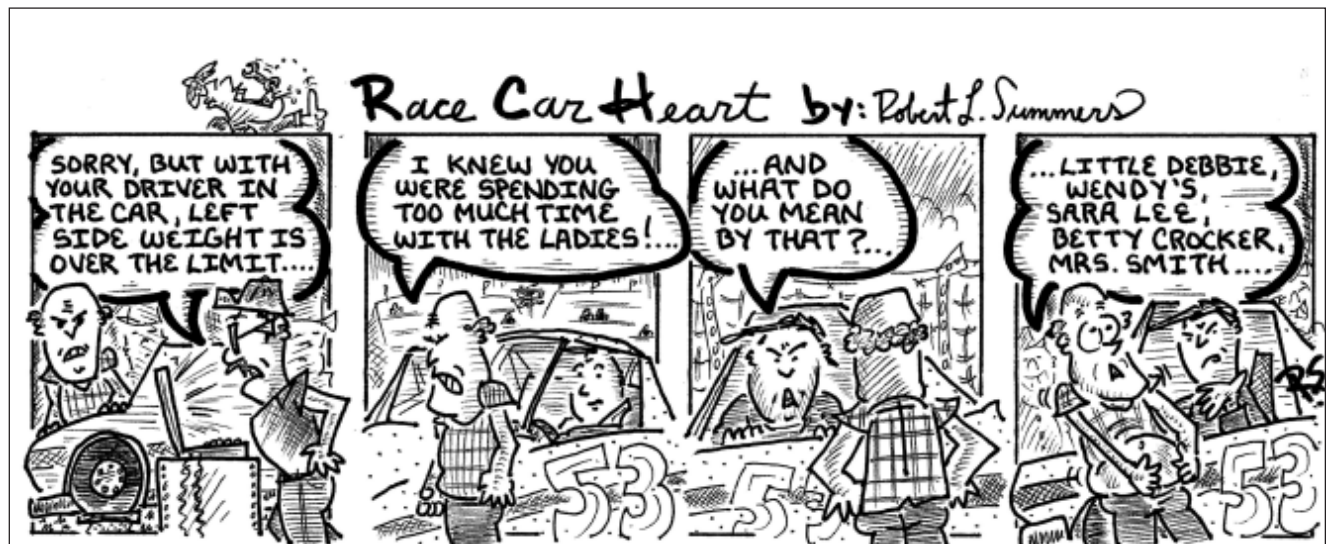




Photo Gallery



Benny VanCleve won the last race ever held at Raceway Park
Martin DeFries photo



Rockford Speedway's 67th Season Opener
Jimmy Ambruoso photo



A scary moment for Greg Hill at the Cedar Lake Speedway opener
Jerry Zimmer photo



LaCrosse Sportsmen driver Steve Bachman
Bruce Nuttleman photo



NASCAR Division 3 asphalt champ, Blake Dorweiller on the dirt at Cedar Lake
Vince Peterson photo



Tina White in her Camaro Thunder car at Elko's Test-n-Tune
Martin Defries photo

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NASCAR Insight



Shane Carlson

The old adage of ‘all good things must come to an end’ is an often-overused cliché, yet it holds true for so many things. There just comes a time when something, or in this case someone, that used to be at the pinnacle of their profession, fades into the black, eventually cast out of what they had done for so long.

Jeff Gordon, Tony Stewart, Dale Earnhardt Jr., and the like are not exactly NASCAR’s young guns anymore. By no means am I dismissing them as drivers who are just out there riding into the sunset and don’t have a lot of tread left on the tire, but team owners are beginning to search for and develop drivers who will handle the pressure of taking over those rides once one of those veteran drivers decides to hang up the helmet for the final time.

Not to worry. The future of NASCAR is unfolding before our eyes every weekend. Take a look at the truck and the Nationwide Series races. These lesser divisions of NASCAR provide some of the most hotly contested weekly action on the track, and it’s the kind of racing that is leaving fans clamoring for more.



Welcome to the Future

Whether you agree with Cup drivers dipping into the Nationwide races, it brings out the best in the teams that are actually racing for points in the truck and Nationwide races. Whenever one of the drivers who are racing for points in those two series wins, it is also a win for the sport.

It puts the league’s young talent on the big stage, and over the years, the trucks and Nationwide Series have provided a proving ground for drivers trying to make it to the Cup level.

This year, the Cup Series features eight rookies, the most since 1994. Until recently, the Rookie of the Year Award was a joke, merely because former ROTY winners Kevin Conway, Andy Lally, and Stephen Leicht had no competition, and someone had to win the award. None of them have sustained any sort of success at the Cup level. Well, that trend’s about to change.

When drivers like Chase Elliott are winning in places like Darlington, which will turn some heads. Bubba Wallace Jr. has shown he can wheel, after he won in Martinsville last season in the truck series. Fans who say the sport is in a bad state just aren’t looking hard enough. Personally, I think NASCAR might be the strongest it has ever been, at least since the ‘90s. The new generation of racers is here, and they’re going to be here for the foreseeable future, so instead of complaining about how it used to be, I’d suggest you take this time to watch these drivers cut their teeth while you still can. Guys like Ryan Blaney, Ben Kennedy, Jeb Burton, Chase Elliott, the Dillon brothers, and so many others that I would love to mention here are the sport’s future champions. Might as well embrace it.



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Dirty Talkin'



Kris Peterson

Ryan Bowers #199

I had an opportunity to catch up with Ryan Bowers at Cedar Lake Speedway this weekend for the first race of 2014 for the Upper Midwest Sprint Car Series (UMSS). He was racing a 360 winged sprint car sponsored by Mastell Brothers Trailer Service, Hilltop Trailer Sales, HWY 10 Towing, Dylan Enterprises and Supra Companies, as a rookie. Ryan has just started his sprint car racing career with tonight being his first time ever racing one of these winged warriors.

Ryan began his racing career later then most at age 22 in the Auto Cross arena. Auto cross is a form of timed competition where cars are driven around an obstacle course, on asphalt, typically marked by cones. With all of

his success in auto cross a race car driver was born. He then raced Karts for a while before really getting into dirt track racing, driving a Midwest Modified. He had been racing at many area dirt tracks racking up 6 wins in his five years in a Modified.

I asked Ryan why the big change from a modified to a sprint car? His response was he always wanted to try driving one, more horse power, faster and what he thought would be much more fun. He felt it would be like the formula one of dirt track racing. He said that he had a lot of fun his first night out and loved it. He will continue to race with the series so long as he is able. His goals for this 2014 rookie year, to finish all laps on all four tires, shoot for a win and to obtain the Rookie of the Year title in the UMSS series.

I would say from the performance that Ryan turned in at last nights opener and his first ever race in a Sprint Car those

goals are wholly obtainable. Ryan ran great finishing 5th in his heat race, 4th in the challenge race and grabbing a 12th place finish in an exciting feature race. I was very impressed by his skill, endurance and what I call dirt track composure in all of the races I watched last night. It was a fantastic showing for a true rookie in such a competitive series.

I am looking forward to watching Ryan race this 2014 season with the UMSS. Check out <http://www.umsprints.com/> for race events and current standings. Next up for Ryan is the Spring Sprint Show at North Central Speedway in Brainerd, MN on May 17, 2014.

**THE MIDWEST
RACING CONNECTION**



Vince Peterson photo



Vince Peterson photo



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NATIONALS TOURING
LATE MODELS AND
USMTS MODIFIEDS!

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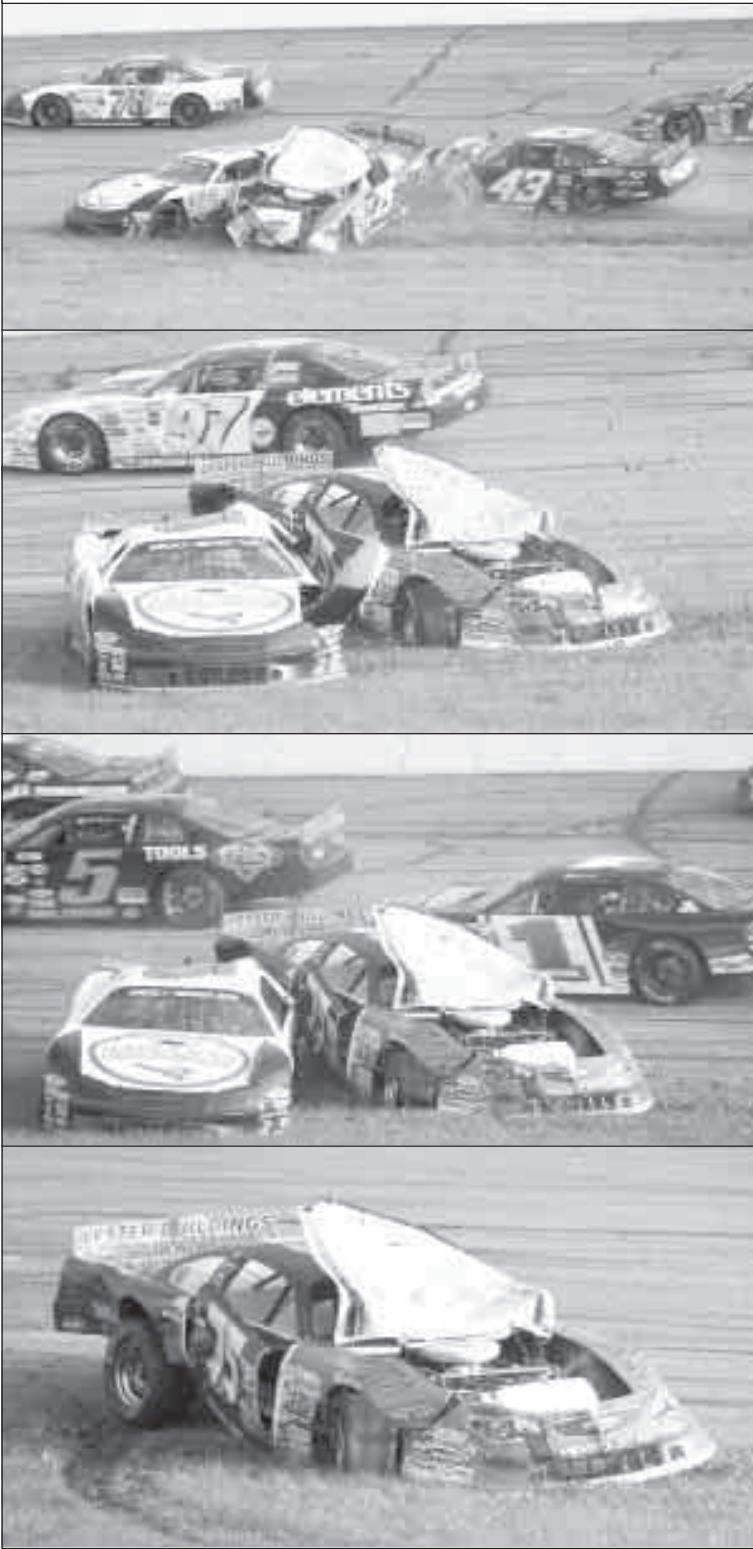
SATURDAY - DAY 3

FEATURING...
UMP DIRT CAR SUMMER
NATIONALS TOURING
LATE MODELS AND
USMTS MODIFIEDS!

TICKETS
ADULT \$30 • STUDENT \$15
PIT PASS \$40

Thrills & Spills

Things did not go well for Travis Sauter and Jason Weinkauf during the 2014 version of the Joe Shear Classic at Madison International Speedway
(Bruce Nuttleman photos)



Everybody lined up and ready to go for test-n-tune at LaCrosse Speedway
(Bruce Nuttleman photo)

Scandia Minnesota's Jason Vandekamp captured the 2013 Division IV National Championship for the NASCAR Whelen All American Series. On his way to the national and track championships, Vandekamp won 11 out of 13 Midwest Modified feature races at Cedar Lake Speedway. We recently caught up with Jason as he was getting ready to kick off the 2014 racing season.

How did you get your start in racing?

When I was little, I came with my grandparents here (Cedar Lake) every week. We had to take a nap, and then we would get to go to the races. I always told them I was going to drive here some day and wanted to have a car here. I bought a Street Stock in 2002, and it's been getting better ever since then.

What was it like to visit Charlotte, NC for the NASCAR banquet?

It was a way different experience compared to going to the banquets around here. It's quite a production they put on.

Did you get to tour any of the NASCAR team shops while you were at the banquet?

Yes, we went to almost all of the shops. I think the only one we didn't get to was the Roush shop. My wife has a friend the used to work at

1:1 With Jason Vandekamp



Shawn Swanstrom Photo

Hendrick's, so we had an all access tour there, which was really, really cool. We also met Kevin Harvick when we were at Stewart Haas Racing.

What was your biggest win of the 2013 season?

Probably winning both nights of the Modified Nationals in Alexandria.

In addition to racing for the championship at Cedar Lake Speedway, where else did you race last year?

We ran at St. Croix Valley Raceway (St. Croix Falls, WI) on Friday nights and Granite City Speedway (Sauk Rapids, MN) on Sunday nights and then we went to a few special events along the way.

What are your plans for the 2014 season?

We'll see how it goes. Pretty much the same schedule as last year; St. Croix on Friday, Cedar Lake on Saturday and Granite City on Sunday. Whatever our schedule allows with our babies and where we can travel.



Dan Plan Photo



Stan Meissner Photo

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The Inside Dirt continued from page 6

The third time was the charm as CLS was able to get their season underway on April 26.

Opening weekend is usually a two-day affair and that was

the plan this year but Friday's racing was canceled due to wet grounds. Saturday April 26 was a cool day with rain in the forecast but it wasn't supposed to arrive until after midnight. The days of haulers lined up a mile down County CC for the opener are a thing of the past. Few racers are willing to burn up their racing budget by traveling long

distances just to get started a week earlier. Cedar Lake's opener drew 70 cars which prompted some discussion about car counts on internet boards. I monitored weekly results for all of the area tracks last season and Cedar Lake consistently had one of the better turnouts. I talked to several drivers at the opener who did not have their cars ready so I expect to see more cars as the season progresses.

Opening night winners included Adam Hensel in the Late Models, Lucas Schott in the Modifieds, Dave Mass in Pro Stocks, Skeeter Estey in Midwest Modifieds and Buddy Hanestad in the Hornets. The track was one of the better surfaces I have seen on opening weekend, racing was good throughout the evening and concluded at a reasonable hour.


Cedar Lake hosted the UMSS Sprint Cars for their season opener the following week on May 3. Seventeen UMSS cars showed up for their opener on a rather cold and breezy night making them the top drawing class of the evening. All of the Sprint Cars stayed wheels down on this night and when the dust settled Lee Grosz out of Fargo stood in victory lane. Modified veteran Rick Kobs has taken to Sprint Car racing like a fish to water and finished second in the opener. It's only a matter of time before Rick nabs his first Sprint Car Feature win which I predict that it will happen this season.

The UMSS was supposed to be racing for two nights with Saint Croix Valley on Friday and Cedar Lake on Saturday which likely would have boosted the car count. The support was good on this first week and I'm encouraged that we'll be seeing some entertaining Sprint Car racing throughout the 2014 season.

Other night two winners included Chad Mahder in the Late Models, Jason Gross in the Modifieds, Adam Ayotte in Pro Stocks and Buddy Hanestad in the Hornets. I understand that Cedar Lake made some purse adjustments that did not produce the desired outcome. My sources tell me that we can expect further adjustments in the coming weeks. I try to stay out of the push and shove between racers and tracks so I can enjoy the experience of being at the races. The give and take between tracks and racers is something that has been happening behind the scenes for as long as I can remember and it always finds a way of resolving itself.

There has been a disturbing trend around the country lately of tracks closing. Rock Rapids Speedway in Rock Rapids, Iowa, canceled their season before it began. Another track by the name of L A Raceway in La Monte, Missouri, "terminated" their 2014 season after a couple events due to a lack of fan support. Meanwhile the property that the former Fox Ridge Speedway sits on was sold to a party that will be using it for non-racing purposes. Track equipment is being liquidated. Considering how the economy has been the past few seasons I'm not surprised that the number of tracks is on the decline. Grass roots racing unlike other sports depends on regular working people for their entertainment product (race cars). That dynamic makes for some difficult challenges for promoters and racers to find workable solutions.

Dirt track podcasts are becoming very popular so if you're looking for something to listen to I'll share a few of my favorites. My preference when I listen to racing shows are the ones that limit their coverage to dirt racing. I tend to



DICK TRICKLE MEMORIAL GROUND BREAKING + KICK OFF EVENT

SUNDAY, MAY 18, 2014 | RUDOLPH COMMUNITY PARK
Noon - 6:00 PM, Ground Breaking Ceremony at 3:00 PM

FREE ADMISSION!
Food and Beverages Available ■ Silent Auction
Music by Roy Fuller Band ■ Button Sales

DICK TRICKLE MEMORIAL FUND RACE MONDAY, MAY 26, 2014

After meeting with Tom Reffner and Marv Marzofka...
Golden Sands Speedway is pleased to announce that its 2014 Memorial Day Race will be called the:


DICK TRICKLE MEMORIAL FUND RACE

The day will be a great way to start off the fundraising for the memorial that will be built in Rudolph, in Dick's honor and memory. Fans will be able to come out and enjoy a great TUNDRA Super Late Model Race, along with seeing people from Dick Trickle's past, to help raise funds for the memorial. GSS will donate \$1.00 for every ticket purchased that day to the memorial, plus have booths available for fans to donate.

GOLDEN SANDS SPEEDWAY WILL ALSO BE AUCTIONING OFF THE VIP TOWER FOR THE MEMORIAL RACE!
The VIP Tower will include tickets for 30 guests, a hot beef sandwich meal, with potato salad, chips, pickles, soda & beer.

This will be an online auction, available through our website, email phone and Facebook page.
Bids received by email or phone will be posted on Facebook and updated on the website.
The opening bid will be posted April 15th and the auction runs through May 1st.

VISIT WWW.GSSRACES.COM FOR MORE INFO!



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The Inside Dirt continued on page 17

Going In Circles continued from page 5

dirt, saying, “That didn’t go too well. I never won a single race in one-and-a-half years of racing on dirt. Guess it’s just not my thing.” Anyway, good to see Daryl back, as this makes a tough sportsman field all that tougher. Daryl was in contention for the win late in the race, but ultimately finished fifth.

Pat Featherston looked real good, setting fast time in the sportsman division and then backing that up with the feature win, his career first. He will be very tough to beat this year. Another career first went to “Flynn Ryan”

Ostenson, who won his first career figure-eight race. Always nice to see first time winners.

Late model driver Jerry Gille said prior to the races that he would probably have a long night ahead of him. “We are experimenting with the car, and so far, we have learned what to cross off the list to not try again.” Jerry did manage a third place finish behind winner Alex Papini and Ricky Bilderback. Shawn Rickelman easily covered the field in the Roadrunner division feature.



Rockford Sportsman action with feature winner Pat Featherston on the inside
(Jimmy Ambruoso photo)

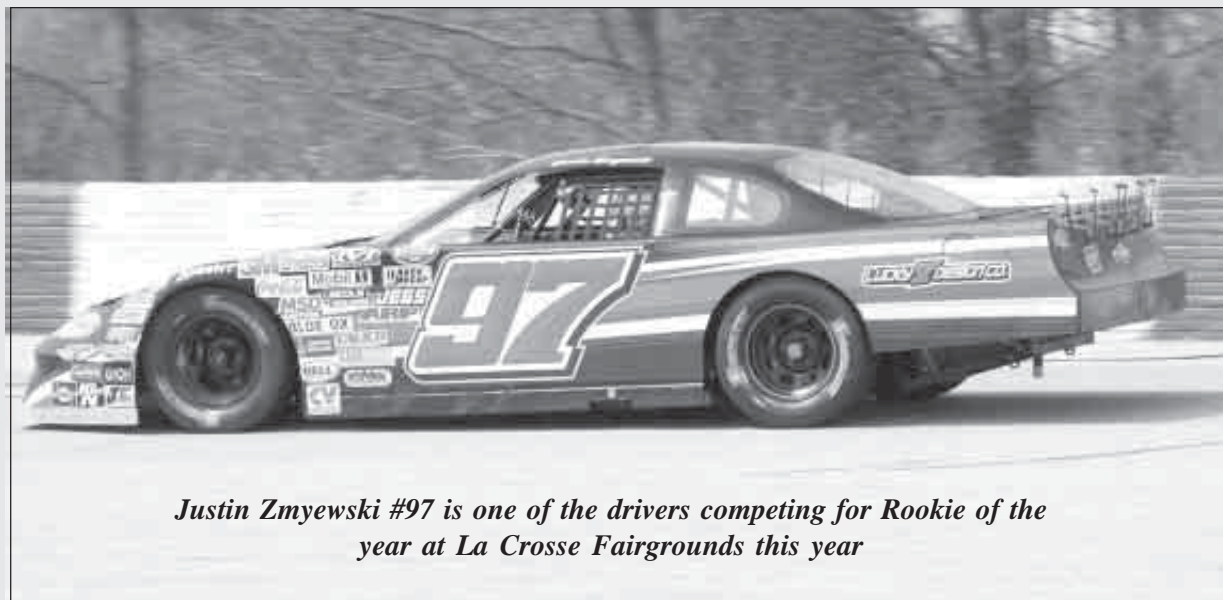
Racing Observations continued from page 8

Here and there... Hopefully the THERE is a track to view racing at and HERE soon as the weather forecast looks good for such a thing to happen the weekend of May 2-4th. We’ll update you on that in our next effort in the June MRC...

And looking back in time, on April 11th, 1971 it was Dave Watson winning the Capital Speedway, Oregon, WI., season opening Feature in his 1969 Chevelle. Joe Shear in a 1971 Chevelle was fast qualifier on the day at 20:26 seconds around the ½ mile paved oval. The second event held there on April 17th 1971 found Don Leach winning the 30 lap Feature event. He was followed by Dave Watson, Joe Jones, Tom Torbleau and Dan Bellard.

Semi-Feature honors went to Wayne Swartout followed by Roger Tofslund, Ray Burkhalter, Bob Austin, and Jim Wipperwurth. Heat race winners were Swartout, Torbleau and Leach with Marv Marzofka setting fast time in his 1969 Torino at 19:91 seconds. Of note, adult admission for the racing at the track in 1971 was \$2.50 with students 12-16 admitted for \$1.50 and kids under 12 free!

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



Justin Zmyewski #97 is one of the drivers competing for Rookie of the year at La Crosse Fairgrounds this year

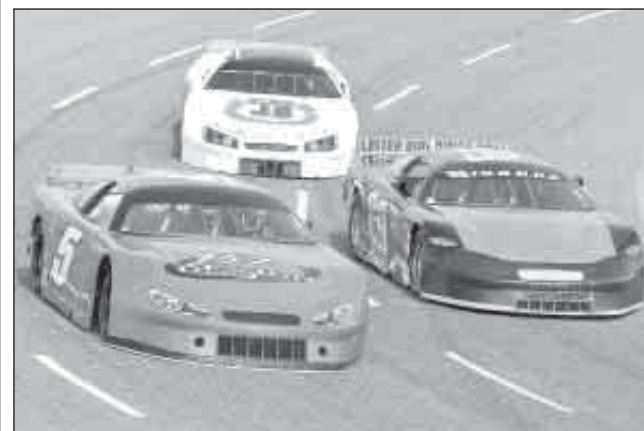
The Inside Dirt continued from page 16

avoid the shows that devote a large portion of their time to Sprint Cup racing so if that’s what you’re looking for you will probably be disappointed with my favorites. I like the Dirt Show with host Klane Dushek. The Dirt Show comes out of the Rochester area and can be found at kowzfm.com. Another podcast that I have been listening to is Winged Nation hosted by Steve Post and Kendra Jacobs at mrn.com. The Motor Racing Network site includes racing shows covering a variety of different types of racing if you’re looking to load up your MP3 player with racing content. Sprint Car unlimited at pennlive.com is another show that I found interesting. The old standby dirtcast.com is still out there as well. I’m not finding an RSS feed for downloading to my player on dirtcast.com so if you locate one please let me know. Dirtcast has a tremendous variety of interviews so it’s a good one to put on your weekly list.

My schedule for the month of May will be built around the UMSS Sprints at Saint Croix Valley Raceway on May 23 and the Cedar Lake Triple on May 31. Some weekly shows are likely to be added as well.

We’ll see you at the races!

Test-N-Tune Action



Derek Lemke, Bryan Roach and Billy Moan shake down their cars at Elko Speedway
(Martin Defries photo)



Outlawz driver, Wayne Smith, gets sideways during practice at Lacrosse Speedway
(Bruce Nuttleman photo)

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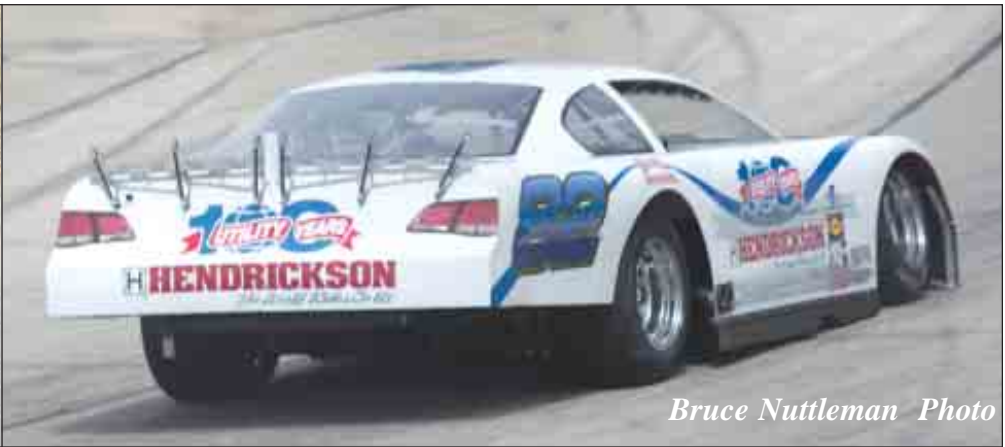
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Martin DefriesPhoto



Bruce Nuttleman Photo

2013 Elko Big-8 division track champion Chris "Cruiser" Marek at test-n-tune (left photo). Runner- up in NASCAR points at LaCrosse Fairgrounds Speedway and Big-8 Series traveler, J. Herbst, (right photo) shakes down his car during test-n-tune at LaCrosse Speedway.



Life-long race fan, turned announcer. Marty Gallagher made his debut on the PA during 57th annual opening night at Cedar Lake Speedway

LaCrosse Fairgrounds Speedway
NASCAR Weekly Racing: May 17-August 23

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LaCrosse Speedway STREET DRAGS
2nd Friday of the Month May-September

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May 24 • Concession Buck Night
May 31 • (2) 20 Lap Late Model Features
July 3 • Star Spangled Spectacular / Fireworks
July 19 • (2) 20 Lap Late Model Features
July 26 • TUNDRA Super Late Models
Aug. 16 • Mid-American Stock Car Series
Oct. 2-3-4-5 • 45th Oktoberfest Race Weekend

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Racing Starts - 7:30

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