

THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION

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THE MIDWEST'S SHORT TRACK AUTO RACING AUTHORITY

January 2019

Inside...



Racing Heroes



Minnesota Asphalt
Driver of the Year



Going in Circles



Rookie Report



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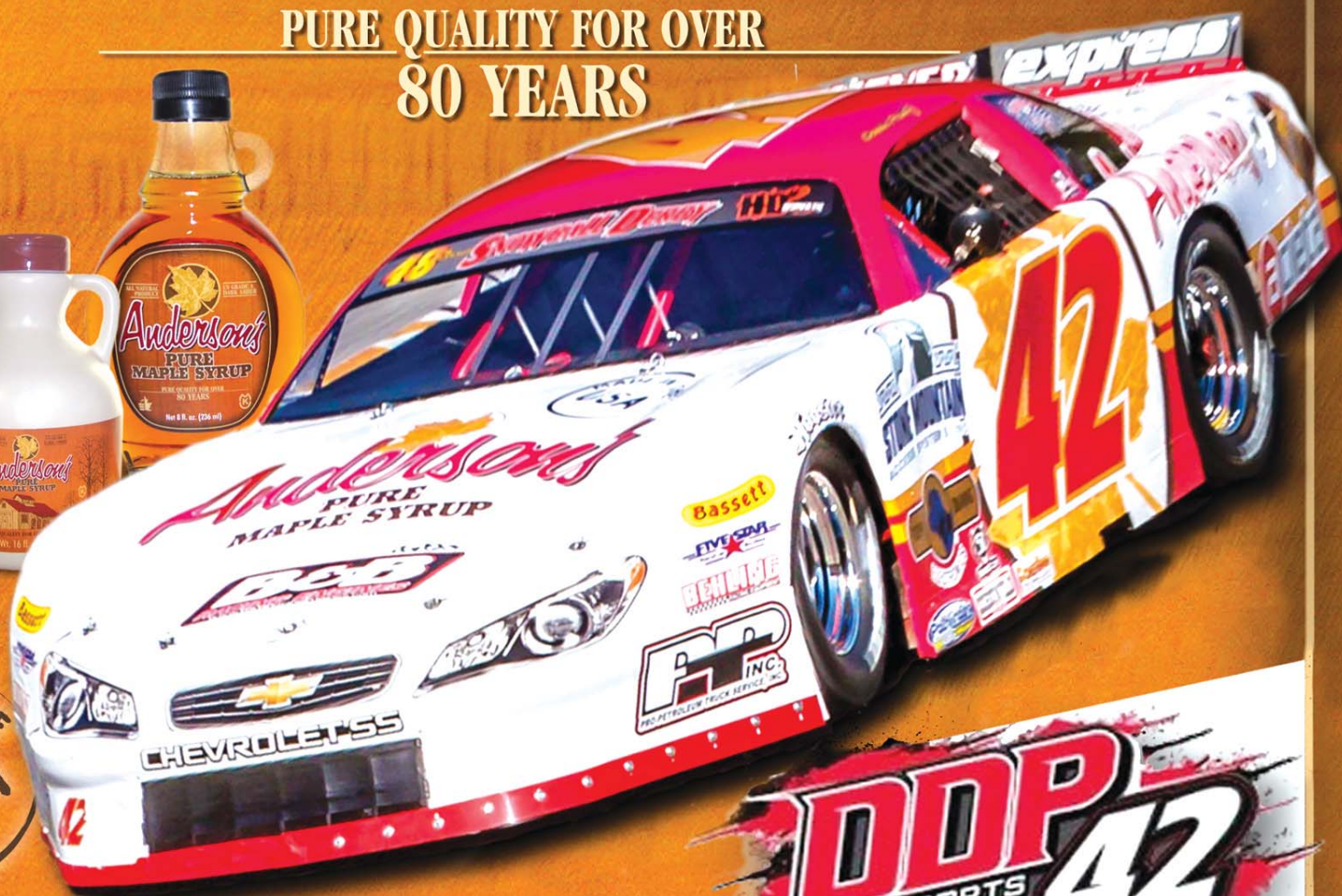
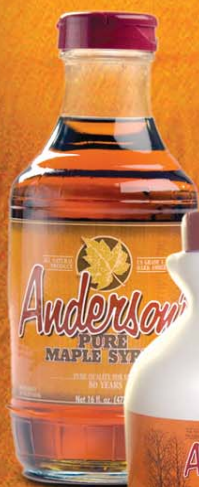
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Publisher's Note

Racing According to Plan



Dan Plan

For the past several years, one of the common things you'll see discussed during (or following) a NASCAR race is the empty grandstands. It's nothing new, but everybody seems to point it out every week-end NASCAR events take place. Honestly, I don't know what they could do different to make things

I wish I had the answer

better. The NASCAR tracks have all tried a lot of things to bring people back to fill the stands. They even had a giant Ferris wheel at Texas.

To me, the product on the track really hasn't changed from the heyday of full grandstands. There are still a bunch of cars going really fast in circles. That's the point of the sport, and it still seems the same to me today.

Twenty years ago, I had the opportunity to see one of the first NASCAR races in Texas. Dave Blaney was on the pole and Mark Martin shared the front row for the Busch Grand National race. I took a picture of the field on pit road that day, and the grandstand looked about 75% full. It had even rained most of the morning back in 1999, yet people still filled the place when they dried the track. I went back to Texas Motor Speedway again this Fall for the NASCAR weekend in November. It was a beautiful day with temps in the 70's and no rain. It was sad to see how empty the place was for the Xfinity Race.

If you look at the stats from the November 2018 Xfinity race from TMS, on paper it was a better race

continued on page 4

Texas Motor Speedway crowd on the left in 1999, almost full with overflow bleachers in turns 3-4 and the crowd in November of 2018 on the right



Dan Plan photos

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RACING CONNECTION

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651-451-4036

www.theracingconnection.com

Publisher
Dan Plan

Contributing Writers
Shane Carlson
Dale P. Danielski
Jacklyn Nuttleman
Jason Searcy
Dean Reller
Charlie Spry

Photographers
Guy Adams (815-980-0354)
Vance Birno (612-308-3572)
Jeff Blaser (715-498-7544)
Martin DeFries (651-346-1199)
TJ Harron (608-301-5258)
Doug Hornickel (920-563-0993)
Tom Loos (715-370-7895)
Mark Melchiori (414-463-0131)
Bruce Nuttleman (612-860-6622)
Vince Peterson (612-419-6372)
Jess Riedner (608-334-5329)

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Racing According to Plan from page 3

than the one 20 years ago. There were 17 lead changes in the most recent race while the one from 1999 had 11 lead changes. I wish there was a simple answer to get people to come back.

Now, the main reason I went to Texas (or at least the reason I gave my wife) was to visit her family and friends in her home state. I did conveniently schedule the trip during the weekend of the NASCAR race at TMS.

I was looking forward to return visit to Texas Motor Speedway as Johnny Sauter was in the mix for the Truck Series championship and Ty Majeski was in the Xfinity field. It's not often you get to see a driver from this area get a legitimate shot at the big leagues. Johnny's weekend started out well after setting fast time in qualifying. His night went downhill early in the race with a flat tire and then getting caught up in somebody else's mess. While Ty was never in contention for the win, he did well under the circumstances. Realistically, the Roush cars are 15th place cars these days. The Roush program isn't what it was back in 1999 with Mark Martin, but the kid wheeled the 60 car to a 13th place finish at the end of the day. That's 2 positions better than should have been expected of him.

Texas Motor Speedway is a great place to watch a race as a fan. The cars were going 200mph, and you can see the entire track. They also have the big screen TV known as "Big Hoss" on

the backstretch for replays. They say everything is bigger in Texas, and man that was a big TV.

If your schedule allows, I would say now is the time to go to a NASCAR race for a number of reasons. The first thing I noticed was traffic wasn't near as bad as it was in 1999. Traffic in the Dallas/Fort Worth area is a pain in the rear even when NASCAR isn't in town, but I was able to drive in and out of the track several times over the course of the weekend. Another reason is there are plenty of seats to choose from. There are also no lines at the concession stands or restrooms.

My only complaint from the event was the way NASCAR fans watch races in person. It was about 10 years since I watched a NASCAR race from the grandstand. I forgot how everyone feels they need to stand up when the race starts, wait 10 laps to sit down, and then stand up again on every single restart. I had been walking around the pits and souvenir area for about 4 hours prior to the race. I was looking forward to sitting in my grandstand seat and watching the race. Turns out I had to stand up and sit down 14 times over the course of the afternoon.



Ty Majeski during driver intros at Texas Motor Speedway (top), Majeski and race winner Cole Custer pre-race (above) Johnny Sauter exiting the pits after an early tire change (left)



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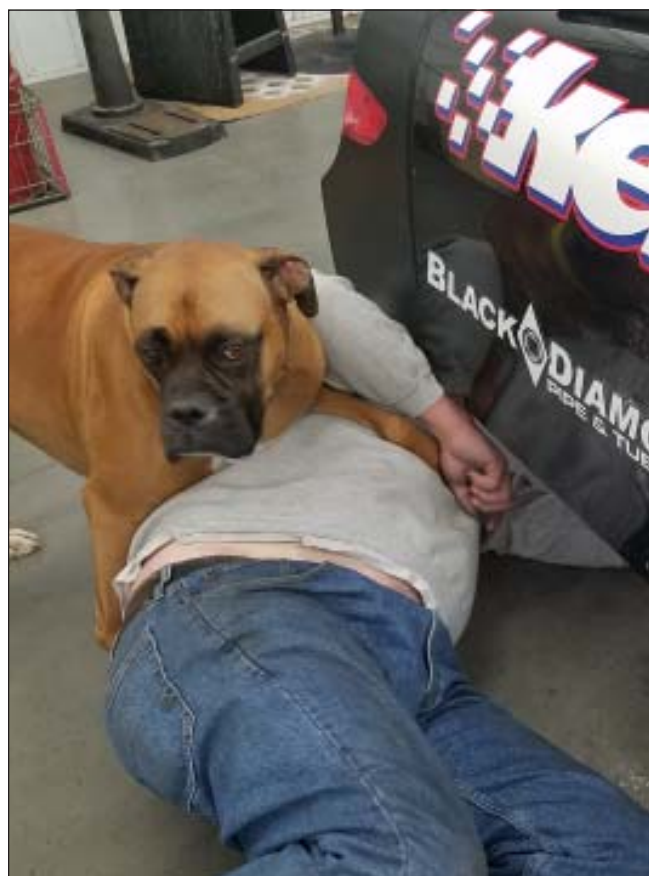
PJ "Jacklyn" Nuttleman

Admittedly, our Boxer... check that, my husband Toby's Boxer, Pudge has not been able to go to as many races as he has in the past. It wasn't intentional by any means, but it was just not as easy to send him along to races this year, mostly due to our schedules.

While it was a bummer for Toby, as he enjoyed having his "buddy" along on road trips, and I'll admit that Pudge had a great calming effect on him, it was probably more upsetting for Pudge.

When race day came along, Pudge could tell that Toby was getting ready to leave and his little nub of a tail would waggle at about 3600 RPM! That is until he realized he wasn't going along. Then the nub would stop and droop. The dejection on his jowly face was piercing.

It was hard to tell who was more heartbroken in that moment—Pudge, Toby, or me.



Nudge from Pudge

That being said, Pudge seemingly "helped" more at the shop this past season. He's logged a lot of hours with Toby there deep into the early morning hours. If that dog could talk, the stories he could tell!

Pudge is a "helper" to be sure. Rarely is he seen away from Toby's side at the shop. He literally keeps a paw on him quite frequently, while he's under a car wrenching on it. Although, sometimes Pudge is just napping under the car while Toby's under it... and to be honest, sometimes they're BOTH napping under the car.

It's sort of crazy how much Pudge is like Toby. The other day, I brought lunch out to the shop and as per usual, Toby had the TV tuned to "Gunsmoke." He loves Westerns, and apparently, so does Pudge. After

both had a full belly, their eyes were glued to the TV watching Miss Kitty and Marshal Dillon discussing the latest shake-up in Dodge City. I'm pretty sure I even saw Pudge snort along with Toby after Festus described someone being "quieter than a gagged gopher."

They "get" each other—my peas in a pod. When Toby slops mustard on his shirt, Pudge is there to clean it up. Not sure how many races Pudge will go to this year, but we'll see. If he has a say in the matter, via his sad eyes, I imagine he'll be at more than he was this year. Of course, "he" in that sentence could mean EITHER Pudge or Toby. Teamwork makes the dream work. Pawsitively.



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Going in Circles



Charlie Spry

Many tracks are suffering through smallish car counts in certain divisions, no secret there. However, Gregg McKarns and family at the Madison International Speedway are doing something about it in one such division with small car counts.

The sportsman division at that track never really took off much, as normally five to seven cars were competing nightly in this division on the half-mile. So, it was decided to add a little flavor, and change the division to a more open division based on setting a lap time limit of 20 seconds but opening up the division to many more cars.

The new division will be aptly named MISfitz (Get it?) and will allow many more race vehicles and drivers the chance to race here weekly in 2019. The regular sportsman cars will be allowed to compete, but will race alongside Mid-Am cars, trucks, 602 crate late

models, vintage cars, modifieds, dirt cars, and many varieties.

Those turning a lap faster than 20 seconds (but not faster than 19.700) will be allowed one "Mulligan," receiving a warning at that time but allowed to continue in their position, but if they turn a second lap faster than 20 seconds they will be disqualified from that event. The current sportsman cars ran times slower than 20 seconds, so they should be good.

Rules are such as that any car with a stock frame chassis can run any engine, but fab stub cars must run the 602 crate engine. Any treaded Hoosier tire will be allowed, but rules state that they must show 1/32" wear off new tire tread depth.

This is a good move in my opinion. This will give many more a chance to race here and will make it exciting for the fans to see varied cars racing each other. Naysayers will complain about this "Not being racing" with the time limit, but if you have ever seen the Bahama Brackets at Rockford Speedway, then you know that this is simply outstanding racing. I'm looking forward to seeing who all shows up to race and how this comes off. I think it will be fun and I have heard that most if

not all of the current sportsman drivers plan on coming back and racing in the new division as well.

With the 2018 season over now, it is time to reflect on the retirement of a couple of long time drivers in central Wisconsin. First off, long time super late model racer Rene' Scheinoha has called it a career. Rene' was a fixture in the super late model ranks at the Golden Sands Speedway and was always a fan favorite. She was exceptionally good to the fans and was always available to chat and mingle. Rene' started off racing back in 1978 if I remember correctly, starting out in a powder puff event, then moving onto hobby stock cars, racing against the guys. She then moved up to the super late models, racing those cars for many years, winning quite a

few heats and semi-features, and had some real strong runs in features as well.

While seeing a female race nowadays is nothing at all unusual, back when she started racing it was highly unusual, and not entirely embraced. She was a pioneer, so to speak, helping to pave the way for more and more ladies to go racing.



Tom Loos photo

I always enjoyed talking to Rene' at the track about her racing or her menagerie of pets. She will be missed at the track very much!

Another driver retiring is Steve Hauser, who raced for many years at the Marshfield Motor Speedway in the X-Treme four division. I also enjoyed talking with Steve every chance I had, he was a first class racer and person all the way. Very clean racer who will retire as the all-time leader for feature wins at this track and class. Steve's son, Derk, also raced for many years, and pretty much matched his Dad in feature wins, and was likewise, a very class act on and off the track. Derk retired just a short time ago, racing his last race this past year as well. I had the honor of racing a couple of times with this pair, and was made to feel very welcomed to the track by both. Won't be the same without this pair at the track anymore.

So, I'll just say, happy retirement to these drivers! You all provided many enjoyable moments at the tracks!



Dean & Jason Talkin' Racin'



Jason Searcy

Baiden Heskett, 27, from Farmington (MN) has been named by Speed Talk on 1360 radio the 2018 MN Asphalt Driver of the year. The hometown for Heskett is Alvarado (TX) but has lived in Minnesota the last two years. Heskett had an incredible year of racing in the Great North Legends division at Elko Speedway. He won his first Championship by a whopping 288 points, won 11 feature events, scored an incredible 163 passing points, (never finishing worse than his starting position) and he had a TOP 5 finish in all 24 feature events he raced in at ELKO. "Racing in Minnesota has helped me become a better driver," said Heskett "there is a bunch of talent up here and ELKO is the best track to race at in the nation, it's racy and you can go side by side."

In 2018 Heskett won a massive total of 30 feature races at an impressive list of tracks including: Texas Motor Speedway in Fort Worth (TX), Hawkeye

Heskett Named 2018 MN Asphalt Driver of the year



Martin DeFries photo

Downs in Cedar Rapids (IA), Jefferson Speedway in Cambridge (WI), Slinger Speedway in Slinger (WI), Elko Speedway in Elko (MN) and Dells Raceway Park in Wisconsin Dells (WI).

Heskett also excelled at the National level, he was awarded the most prestigious title in all of Legends Car racing. The 2018 INEX

continued on page 10



Martin DeFries photo



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continued from page 9

Asphalt Pro division points title becoming the first ever Minnesota based driver to do so.

In fact, racers from this area did well as a whole with Ryan Braseth from Ulen (MN) winning the Young Lions overall title on dirt and Great North Legends owner Tim Brockhouse from Shakopee (MN) winning the overall asphalt Masters title. Brockhouse, who won the MN Asphalt Driver of the Year award in 2016, is proud of his successful protege "I taught him everything I know, almost."

Baiden Heskett plans on staying in Minnesota for the 2019 season and is setting even higher goals, he is gunning for both the Asphalt and Dirt Pro Division INEX titles. "Texas will

always be my home, but I think I can call Minnesota my home now too." said Heskett.

Here are the past winners of the Minnesota Asphalt Driver of the Year:

- 2017- Conrad Jorgenson
- 2016- Tim Brockhouse
- 2015- Jacob Goede
- 2014- Jacob Goede
- 2013- Ricky Martin
- 2012- Jonathan Eilen
- 2011- Chad Walen
- 2010- Brent Kane
- 2009- Adam Royle
- 2004- Dan Fredrickson

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Auto Racing Facts, Observances and Opinions



Dale P. Danielski

Of course, we are all getting older and nothing bares that out like the passing of racing heroes.

Some recently deceased that had an influence on me include David Pearson, Frank Gawlinski and Nelson Drinkwine.

When I first started getting interested in racing at the NASCAR level my favorite driver was David Pearson. Richard Petty got more of the attention, but Pearson was all the driver Petty was and he accomplished that while racing in far less races than King Richard. What impressed me the most about Pearson was he always seemed to be in the thick of it. They called him the Silver Fox for a reason as he would sit back, analyze the competition, bide his time and emerge for the win right at the end of the race when it counted the most. He used that strategy throughout

and it led to his winning 105 races at NASCAR's top level. Had he raced more, I believe he would have been right up there with Petty in that 200 range. Of course, if he raced more Petty probably wouldn't have won 200. With the two going head to head so often, with one or the other winning, it's amazing anyone else had a chance. The one and only Daytona 500 I attended in 1976 was my first chance to see the two drivers battle. What a Classic that turned out to be as it still ranks as arguably the best ever finish in 500 history. The Slingshot maneuver to pass was at it's finest at this juncture of racing and the two had figured it out better than most. Of course, with the laps winding down Petty made the move by Pearson and pulled away to a substantial lead. It appeared that Pearson had lost speed and the race win would be Petty's. Finally, drawing nearer to Petty, Pearson shot by in a flash in turn three of the last lap. Petty, not to be denied used the maneuver to re-pass Pearson, but contact was made and both drivers crashed into the outside wall, with Pearson ending up in the infield. Petty eventually ended up down there too, but his car wasn't going to move. Pearson meanwhile somehow kept his wrecked car running to inch his way along and miraculously was able to pass the start finish line 1st! Petty with some help finally crossed the line and since the two leaders were a lap ahead of the 3rd place driver wound up 2nd. My one and only Daytona 500 witnessed live and what a race to see my hero of the day, David Pearson.

Frank Gawlinski for a period dominated Chicagoland racing and since his name ended in ski, I had to be impressed as few drivers with a name spelled like that won that much! Gawlinski ventured over to Wisconsin and did quite well, but nothing like when he raced in the Chicago, IL., area. He really got around the tiny Raceway Park oval track in Blue Island and I think that really helped him elsewhere. Between 1978 and 1998 he won 215 total features at

Racing Heroes

Blue Island, Grundy County Speedway of Morris, IL., and Illiana Speedway of Schererville, IN. That's impressive!

Nelson Drinkwine raced at numerous tracks when the sport was really picking up steam in the 1960s. Always competitive, Drinkwine held his own against the hotdogs of the day. I remember an occasion where Dick Trickle had obligations elsewhere, so he put Drinkwine in his potent Ford racer. Drinkwine not only ran competitively with the car but won in it! I always enjoyed when Nelson attended the racing reunions I put on through the years. He was definitely a character! Getting older and sorry to see these racers are now gone.

Here and there. As noted earlier, we attended the ISS Creepy Classic at State Park Speedway October 27th and witnessed 120 cars take to the starting grid! Not that many finished, but what a wild race. When all was said and done, it was Kyle Stark taking the win, his 3rd of the year and the \$6,000 paycheck that went with it...Failed to mention previously that Mark Chalet was the Thunderstox Champion at La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway for 2018. That is the first championship of any kind for Mark, and congratulations are in order... Had fun as emcee for the CWRA portion of the Banquet at Ho Chunk Gaming in Baraboo, WI., here recently. Special for me on the night was awarding Tom and Dee Dee Reffner the Lifetime Achievement award for their dedication to racing. Couldn't have gone to a more deserving

*Racing Observances continued
on page 12*



Dale's Pics...Chicagoland hotshoe, Frank Gawlinski as seen at the 1978 National Short Track Championship, Rockford Speedway, Rockford, IL.(left) The crashed, 1976 Daytona 500 winning machine of David Pearson.(middle) and Nelson Drinkwine in his Chevelle in 1966.(right)

Racing Observances from page 11

couple...Looking back in time on Friday night, June 25th, 1965, it was Nelson Drinkwine winning the feature race at Tomah-Sparta Speedway. Following Drinkwine at the finish was Marlin Walbeck, Everett Fox, Dave Marcis, and Marv Marzofka. Semi-feature honors went to Dave Larson with non-qualifiers winner Dave Baumgarten. Heat race winners were Ralph Kapinski, Bob Taylor Nubs Foth and Fox. The dash win went to Dave Balliett with fast time honors going to Marcis at 16:43 seconds...On Sunday afternoon, May 4th, 1969, Nelson Drinkwine won the 30-lap feature race at Golden Sands Speedway, Plover, WI., behind the wheel of the #99, Dick Trickle, 1967 Ford Fairlane. Following Drinkwine at the finish was Marlin Walbeck, Tom Reffner, Ron Beyer and Bill Wirtz. semi-feature honors went to Don Rodah, with the consolation race winner, Keith Kemnetz. Heat race winners were Don Raddle, Les Katzner, Rhoda and Jim Back. Fast time honors went to Back at 13:80 seconds...On Sunday afternoon, May 11th, 1969, it was Nelson Drinkwine, again, in the 1967 Dick Trickle Ford Fairlane taking the 30-lap feature win at Golden Sands Speedway. Marv Marzofka, Marlin Walbeck, Tom Reffner and Jim Sauter followed. Semi-feature honors went to Dale Walworth. Ray Hoffman won the consolation race with Heat race victories going to Les Katzner, Stu Nitzke and Marzofka. Jim Back set a new track record in qualifying touring the high banked 3/10ths mile oval in 13:54 seconds. Thanks to Jim Cleveland for the info. In 1991, Frank Gawlinski won his 6th Tony Bettenhausen Classic, winning the 100-lap main event at Illiana Motor Speedway, Schererville, IN. Back on February 15th, 1976, it was David Pearson winning the NASCAR, Daytona 500 at Daytona International Speedway, Daytona Beach, FL. Following Pearson at the finish was Richard Petty, Benny Parsons, Lennie Pond and Neil Bonnett.

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

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the Bird & the Bear

The racing tales of
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JOE VERDEGAN

Rookie Report



Allen Stettner
Newport, Minnesota
UMSS Traditional Sprint Rookie of the Year

Allen Stettner is the 2018 Upper Midwest Sprintcar Series (UMSS) Traditional Sprint Rookie of the year. Allen is a third-generation driver, starting out in the Street Stocks in 1993. Along with his dad (Tom) and grandfather (Eugene), several uncles and cousins have been part of the short track community in the upper-Midwest dating back the late 1940's. The Midwest Racing Connection recently caught up to Allen just prior to the end of the year.

On a scale of 1-10 how would you rate your performance last year?

I would rate it a six. A good friend of mine Rollie Lallier ran the car for 14 races and made me an offer I couldn't refuse. I had destroyed my Modified and was looking for another one. He sold me this car for what a good roller would have cost for a Modified.

What was your favorite part of the season?

It would have to be the heat race win up at Ashland. The only other time I was at Ashland I was 14-years-old. We were watching Ronny Jones run at the Red Clay Classic. The first time there behind the wheel, I won a heat race. Not only was it my first heat race win a Traditional Sprint Car, it was my first heat race win in several years. I was pretty excited about it.

What was the worst part of the season?

That would be blowing up my motor the week after the Outlaw Nationals at Cedar Lake. Spun a cam bearing in it and then I got injured cleaning up my daughter's graduation. Fortunately, thanks to a lot of help from my cousin Pat Kelley and my dad, the two of them pulled the broken motor out. Pat had a short block and I was able to build the rest of the motor in my garage and they helped me put it back in. Blowing up that motor set me back, but thanks to my family I was able to get the car back on the track 2 weeks later.

Where do you think you could improve for future races?

The first thing we are doing is building a brand-new motor for next year. I hope to be closer in horsepower instead the gap between me and the guys that consistently run in the top 5. The big things are more seat time and experience. I've jumped around to just about every class, but I had never driven a Sprint Car before. I feel at the age of 45 in February, I'm going to stick with this class. I can afford to do this on my own without breaking the bank.

What are your plans for the 2019 season?

We are going to run the full season with the Traditional Sprints, as long as no major catastrophes happen. We'll for sure run every race at Cedar Lake. I think they have us on the schedule 14 or 16 times this year. Hopefully Mother Nature is a little bit calmer and lets us race more.

How much did your family help your racing program?

I do 90% of the work on the car myself at home. My dad lives over a hundred miles away in Sturgeon Lake, so he's not always around. I have 2 good friends will help me in the garage when they can and came to the races every night except for 2.

Vince Peterson photos



Rookie Report



Billy Mohn
Elko, Minnesota
ARCA Midwest Tour Rookie of the Year

Billy Mohn captured the 2018 ARCA Midwest Tour Rookie of the Year award. Taking an unconventional path in racing, Billy basically started his racing career in Late Models in 2006. The second-generation driver followed in his father's footsteps with the racing bug. Mike Mohn was a top competitor at Elko Speedway and the old NASCAR Northern Series and continues his involvement with Billy's racing program. *The Midwest Racing Connection* recently caught up to Billy as the new year is about to begin.

On a scale of 1-10 how would you rate your performance last year?

I would say it had its ups and downs, but I'd give myself a 7 on the performance side but maybe a 10 for the effort. We sure tried and put the effort in. All in all it was a good year.

What was your favorite part of the season?

It's pretty hard to pinpoint one. Running in the top-5 or top-10 of the Midwest Tour is pretty tough. Just getting the respect to go run with those guys is pretty cool, run side-by-side and race clean.

What was the worst part of the season?

I would have to say my lowlight was the definitely the Dixieland 250. Nothing we did made the car go any faster all day. There was a lot of people there that missed a lot of work to come out and help. It definitely wasn't the performance I was looking for and ended up with a DNF after I tore the right front off the car.

How much did your family help your racing program?

My family is a huge part. We have Airgas that supplies us nitrogen, but other than that, everything comes out our pocket. And it's not just mine or my dad's pocket. Our crew members Mark and Tim pay their own way in. Jarry Royle pays his own way in when he can show up. It goes much farther than even our family. It's pretty cool to have people like that on your side. It would be a lot harder to afford it if you didn't have people like that on your side.

Where do you think you could improve for future races?

I think our program is good. As any racer knows, the financial stuff to buy new parts here or there. I think we need to work on some of our half-mile and up stuff. Other than that, I feel when we show up at the shorter tracks, we're going to run pretty good during the race. We just need to be more consistent overall at every race track.

What are your plans for the 2019 season?

The plans for 2019 are still up in the air, depending on sponsorship or not. Last year cost quite a bit, but we had a ton of fun. I think we're going to start off at Madison for the Joe Shear Classic and see where that takes us. We would love to run the Midwest Tour full-time again, but right now it's just a race by race basis.



Bruce Nuttleman photos



OCT. 3-4-5-6, 2019

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Prior to the Xfinity race at Texas Motor Speedway in November, I snuck over to the backstretch to check out Lil' Texas Motor Speedway. Much to my surprise, 2018 Legends Masters Champion Tim Brockhouse was on hand. Tim did not participate on this day, rather lending helping hand to his brother Tony. The best quote I heard was one of the people in the Legends pits referred to Tim as the Dale Earnhardt of Legends racing. I would say that was an accurate assessment.

While the race was not a national event, they did have some Texas size trophies on hand for the competitors.

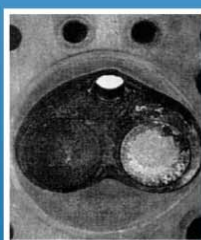
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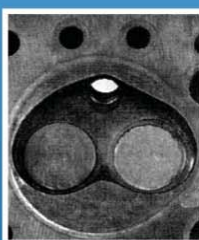
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Christmas Entertainment

By Dan Plan

Just before Christmas, Matt Bohl invited all of the drivers that he sponsors to an invitational go-kart race at Pro Kart in Burnsville, Minnesota.

The qualifying races were a little chaotic, as drivers tried to work their way into the main event. I can honestly say I've never seen a driver get parked 2 times in one night, but Scott Splittstoesser now has this distinction.

The main event reminded me of the old IROC races. Back in the day, drivers from different racing disciplines were brought together to compete in identically prepared race cars. Indy car, NASCAR and road racers all competed against each other. I thought it was pretty cool to see Dirt Late Model driver Jesse Glenz, battle with Sprint Car driver Ryan Bowers.

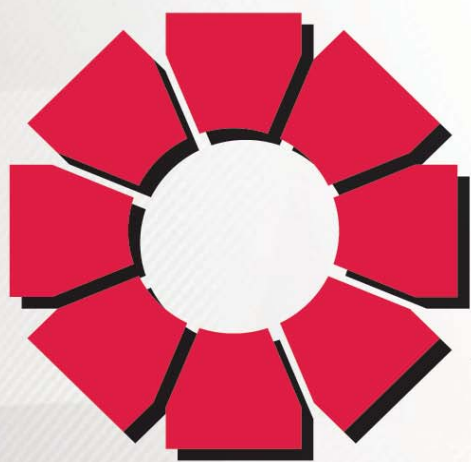
I gotta say, for a cold night in December, it was a good show.



Dan Plan photo



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