

THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION

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Season Ending Special Action



October 2020

Inside...



The Indy Slot Car League



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Publisher's Note Racing According to Plan



Dan Plan

Even with the late start to the season, I've had the opportunity to witness some fantastic racing in person in the upper-Midwest part of the country. After going to Florida several times in the past decade and

Why racing here is better

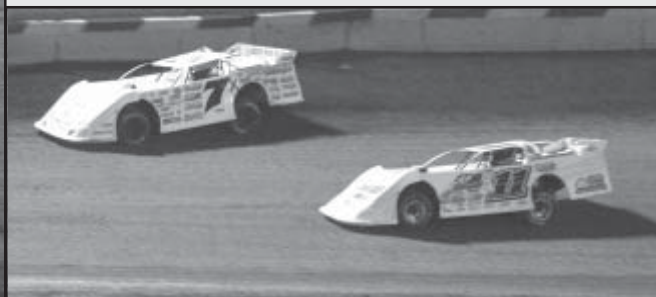
watching all of the racing now available via streaming services, one thing really stands out; short track racing in the upper-Midwest is much better than most parts of the country; both dirt and asphalt.

I've seen guys like Chris Marek and Adam Bendzick or Nick Murgic and Steve Schultz run side-by-side, lap after lap and end up in a photo finish. I've seen Jesse Glenz make a last lap, last corner pass for the win over his friend James Giossi. I've also watched Ryan Bowers and Nick DaRanco swap the lead back and forth at the Richert Memorial. Then Bowers and "The Iceman" Scott Brandt swap the lead at the Legendary 100 on the last lap. There may have been some accidental contact from hard racing in these events, but nothing I saw was intentional contact by any means.

From what I've seen, this type of short track racing is becoming a rarity in other parts of the country, and in particular, south of the Mason Dixon line. (Can I even say Mason Dixon anymore?) Any-

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Scott Brandt made a last lap, last corner pass of Ryan Bowers to win the Sprint portion of the Legendary 100 (left photo), Jesse Glenz and James Giossi are close friends and have spent many weekends swapping the lead amongst themselves this season (bottom photo)



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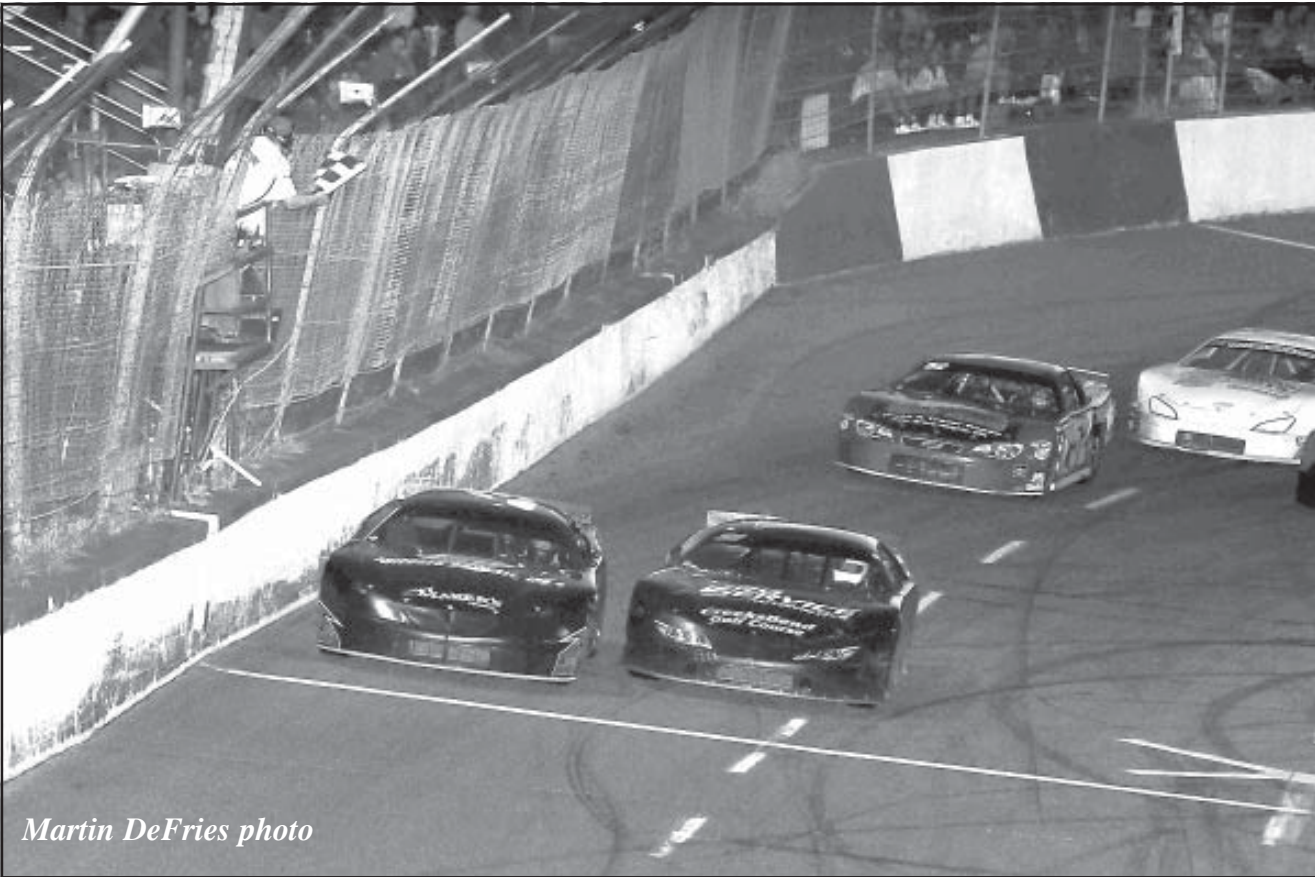
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way, more often than not, drivers in other parts of the country don't attempt to pass anyone; they just use the old "chrome horn" or simply move them out of the way. When one driver gets wrecked or moved out of the way for a win, somebody is going home mad and somebody is going home happy. In a photo finish, they're probably not mad, just disappointed. In our neck of the woods, more often than not there will be an attempt to pass the leader, not move or wreck the leader.

The sad part is, wrecking somebody for a win gets much more exposure than a photo-finish. If I post a video of a wreck on social media, I'm certain it will have 5X the number of views than a photo finish. It's just unfortunate, but just the way it is these days.

It used to be there were only a handful of guys that were "willing to wreck their mother" for a win. Even on the Cup side of NASCAR, they used to only have a few guys that wore black hats. Nowadays, moving somebody out of the way isn't even considered dirty. It's part of the new normal.

My memories of racing as a kid weren't about the wrecks. They're memories of guys charging from the back of the pack for the win or a photo finish. Personally, I still enjoy watching a photo finish more than I enjoy watching somebody get wrecked.



Martin DeFries photo

Chris Marek and Adam Bendzik are just two of the drivers at Elko Speedway that have had a photo finish after running numerous laps side-by-side

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Going in Circles



Charlie Spry

The first of our “home” tracks to declare season champions was the State Park Speedway near Wausau. A beautiful night set the stage for the regular divisions season finale.

Justin Mondeik has had a great season pretty much everywhere he has raced, scoring a reported 13 feature wins thus far in super late model action. He had the season title pretty much wrapped up before the finale, but still ran hard, finishing second in the feature tonight to long-time veteran M.G. Gajewski.

Brian “Butchie” Schramm also had the title pretty much wrapped up at the start of the night in the pure stock division, with Jeff Spatz holding off hard-charging Dave Cabelka to get the win. This was the third track title in a row here for Schramm.

The Mini-Mod division title was also pretty much wrapped up, with Greg Blount running strong all season, recording five feature wins here this season, to go along with more at other tracks.

The Mini-Stock title was the one everyone was watching. Garrett Strachota and Kyle Check were the main players here, with a couple of others still having a chance before the racing began. It was pretty much a matter of which driver would finish ahead of the other as to who would win. Strachota took advantage of a caution and choosing the correct lane on the cone restart to get ahead of check and score the championship.

Eric Breitenfeldt came on strong in this division late in the year, getting four of the last six feature wins here, including tonight. He has raced at several other tracks as well, saying, “This is my first year of racing, and at the start of the year we decided to not even try to chase points, just go race at various tracks and have fun. No stress.” I think he definitely accomplished that!

Dale Louze has returned to racing here in the Mini-Mod division. After selling his car last year, many thought he was done racing, but he built a new car and is in the process of working the bugs out. Fifty years of racing has made him a favorite of many, as he has seen and done it all.

We took in the annual Bev. Aschenbrenner Memorial race at the Marshfield Motor Speedway. Track announcer Brandon Aschenbrenner and his family work hard every year to bring us this annual

event in honor of his late Mom, who was well known to be the “Track Mom.” to many race teams, and they do a great job of it.

The TUNDRA late models took center stage, with no surprise that Dalton Zehr took home the win. This has to be one of his favorite tracks, as he always does so well here. Casey Johnson and Zehr swapped the lead back and forth throughout, with each using cautions to their respective advantages. In the end, it was Zehr who finally pulled away a bit at the end to get the win.

Hated to see Dennis “Barney” Schmidt get his car wrecked, and he later informed me that his car was likely totaled. Dennis was unsure if he was going to keep racing or not. I hope he does, as he is a quality driver and overall nice guy. He is one of the drivers who raced at the former Columbus 151 Speedway, and that is where I got to know him.

The Midwest Dash series for four-cylinder racers was also on hand. This series puts on a good show wherever they are racing at, with a nice mix of locals and traveling racers.

It might have looked like it was going to be a Greg Blount runaway night, as he set fast time and won his heat. However, when the money is on the line you never want to count out Phil Malouf. Phil looked very stout in holding off the challenges of Rockford Speedway point leader Tim Finstad to get the win. Blount dropped out early in the race, but he and the field appeared to have nothing for Mr. Malouf.

Sam Sheahen was racing with the series tonight. He told me that he pretty much has the track title sewed up at nearby SK Speedway near Unity, racing on the dirt, which he said that he prefers. He actually ran off the track on the backstretch, perhaps trying to find a more familiar surface on the dirt embankment? He miraculously gained control and came back onto the track without rolling over.

The vintage cars were also on hand. Larry Bolster took the win, while Bill Lindner announced that this would likely be his last race. Bill has raced for an amazing fifty years, and I believe the car he races in the vintage events is the very same one he raced here when the track was dirt. I think he raced in every vintage event I had seen here in the last several years.

September brought the end of the regular season at the Rockford Speedway, where plenty of interesting things happened. In the late model division, new driver Rhett Barkau came out and won his first feature on only his third try. Rhett is no stranger to racing, however, as he has experience in racing, starting with SCCA road racing in the Formula Enterprise class, and has also recently moved up to the Trans Am class. So, he has raced while turning both left and right! His start at racing was in carts at Sugar River Raceway. He has been impressive and shows his experience.

Rookie driver Willie Nelson has steadily improved throughout the season. The young driver said that he has no prior racing experience except for a couple of times racing karts. And some I-Racing experience.

Veteran racer D.J. Smith was right up in the

points chase but had a couple of bad weeks that kind of did him in. One night, while running second, he came upon the feature race leader with one last try at passing in the turn. He could have given that driver a door shot, moved him, and possibly won. However, he knew he came in the corner a bit too hard to do it without contact, so he spun his car instead of the door shot, thus giving up a sure second position instead to finish last. I think he gained a ton of respect that night with a lot of people. It was a class act by a class driver.

The high school racing association raced for the last time this season. Championship night came down to three drivers tied for the point lead, Tyler Vincetich, Zack Hawkins, and Doug Nighswonger. Hawkins took the heat and feature win to edge ahead and gain the title. Vincetich worked hard and made contact with the wall, with his hood popping up and a small fire ensuing on the last lap. Talk about drama! Nighswonger took what he could get and finished third. All three did an outstanding job and became friends with one another throughout the season. Vincetich gave each of the other pair his schools t-shirt, which they jokingly said they would use for shop towels. Here is the future of racing, folks! Everyone did well this season and the whole division put on some great racing.

American Short Tracker racer Tim Finstad found himself in the thick of the points race, leading the points by one going into the final night. Perhaps not always the fastest car on track, but he always used the restart cone to his advantage and gained spots when others would not take the chance. “My car works pretty well on the inside groove, so I am willing to go where the others aren’t,” said Tim. On being in the thick of the points race, he noted, “I didn’t start out with the idea of racing for points here. I was going to follow the Midwest Dash series, but with the Covid-19 thing, tracks didn’t open up, and it just happened that Golden Sands and Rockford were the two that ran weekly first, so I started racing at those tracks, did well, so stuck with it and didn’t focus so much on the dash series.” It worked out that Tim won the points title at Golden Sands.

Bandit racer John Triggs debuted a new car and won the feature with it on his second night out with it. It was his first career feature victory.

Took in one of Matt Rowe’s ISS Enduro series races, this one at the Madison International Speedway. Gregg and Angie and everyone involved with this track have seen a very hard and unusual season, with only a couple of events being run. Situated in Dane County, this is one of Wisconsin’s toughest counties to run an entertainment event, with large numbers of Covid cases and a very restrictive environment. The only way they could get any races run at all was with a drive and park situation for a limited number of fans. Then, to top it off, rain was a factor most of the time as well.

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Going In Circles continued from page 5

It was great to be back at one of my home tracks, and I enjoyed the show. You know you are seeing a good enduro when the finish comes down to the final lap, final turn to determine the winner. Jamie Shelley took the narrow win over Scott Vetter, who got to Shelley's door at the end. Could not ask for a better finish! The road course event was very interesting, and I think most of the drivers liked it as well.

Also took in the annual Fall Spectacular at Marshfield, where I even raced myself on the Friday part of the show in the six-cylinder class. Good to see a nice group show up from the Tomah-Sparta Speedway, with Matt Moore getting the sweep.

The Saturday show was interesting, with a tight points battle in the super lates coming down to John Beale and Mark Mackesy. Mackesy won the feature but Beale knew what he had to do to win the title and finished second, winning the track title by three points.

The super stock class didn't race here weekly this year, but they were combined with sportsman cars on this night, and it was an interesting group of cars that showed up, with some really good racing. Brian Back took the win over Brian Weinfurter, but the competition was tight throughout the pack with no runaways.



TJ Harron photo

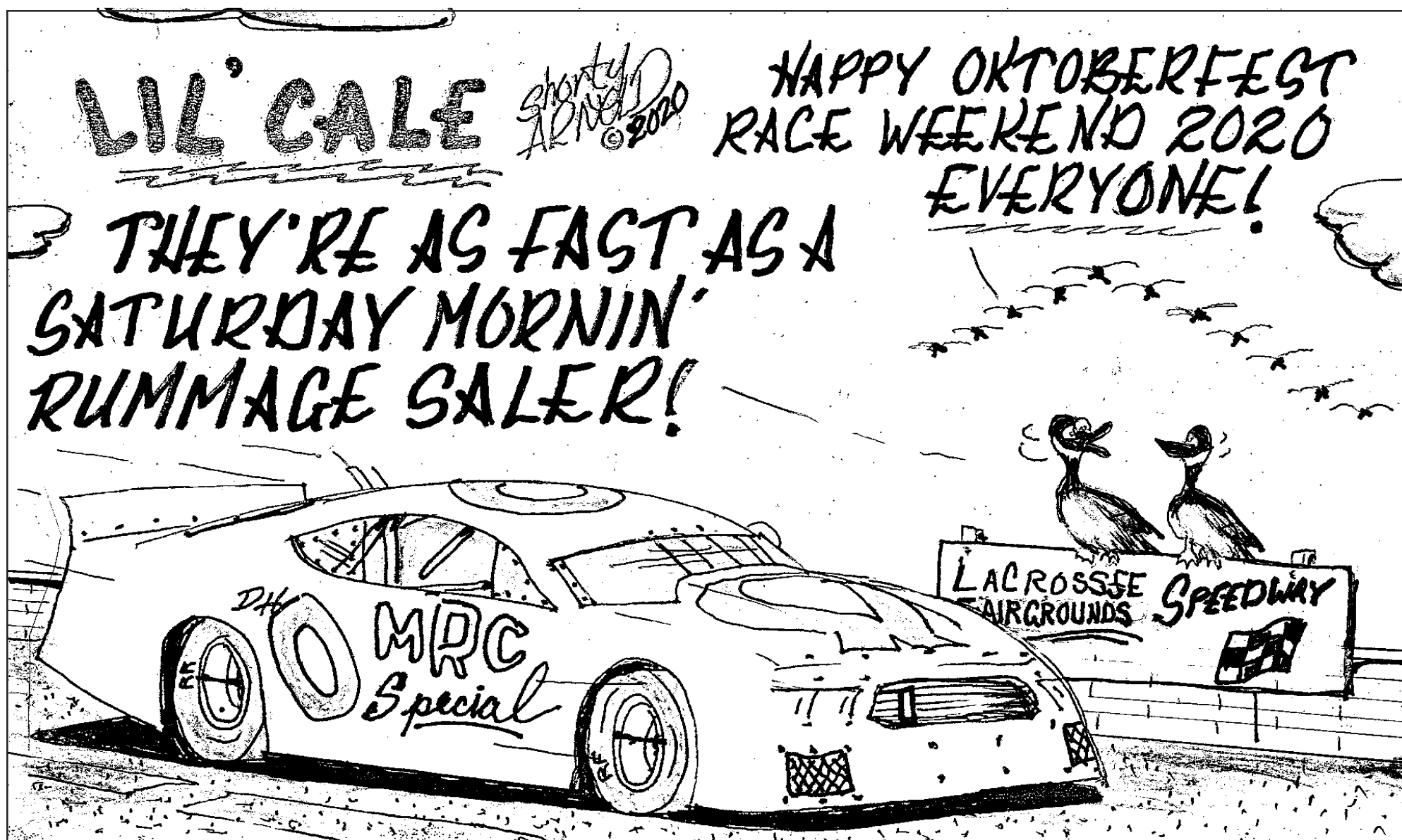
A tight points battle at Marshfield came down to John Beale (5) and Mark Mackesy (12)

Greg Blount looked strong in taking the win in the X-Treme four class, while Tom Lecher drove off with the win in the Bandit class. The pair of John Van Steedum and Craig Lyon took the cruiser feature, as division champ Tyler Kalata and Mike Helbach had the engine grenade in their car at the end.

Besides Beale winning the track title in the super

lates, Blount won it in the X-Treme fours, while Chris Tolliver won the Bandit title, Gary Haarklau took the title in the Six cylinders, and John Van Steedum took the title in the skid cars.

More special events on the calendar now as we put an end to the strange 2020 season.



Dangerous Dan



Dan Margetta

As the racing season in the Midwest winds down and everyone makes plans to attend the traditional Fall specials, I decided this month to write about a season that just got underway.

For the 28th consecutive year, the Indy Slot Car League kicked off its season just after Labor Day with the prestigious Trokan Cup, which coincidentally I won but that's not the reason I decided to write about the league. The Indy Slot Car League is exactly what you would think it is, a bunch of grown-ups playing with toy plastic slot cars in basements during the off time of the real racing season and the Trokan Cup comes with a Blatz beer can trophy that like Lord Stanley's Cup in hockey gets to be kept by the winner for a year until next season's event. A total of 55 "drivers" have made starts in the 431 races held since 1993 and the current group consists of about 15 close friends whose main goal is to just have fun. This is evidenced by the YouTube "broadcasts" of the events in which those who fail to make the final four feature event are required to participate in (search IndySlotCar on YouTube). The YouTube videos are

The Indy Slot Car League

silly but fun and sometimes feature character imitations of real broadcasters such as Bobby Unser, Chris Economaki, and David Hobbs. Of the 55 who have raced in events, only 2 were women (go figure) and one, Amy Butler, actually won four races. I hope she's not mad I actually named her in this column as I'm not sure she would like to admit she participated in the silliness. The rest of the guys are already married or involved in long term relationships having for the most part already been hitched before this whole thing started and for the few single guys like me, I'm sure plenty of potential girlfriends googled our names, found the goofy videos, and ran like hell the other way. The cars have to replicate the current actual Indy cars and over the years many of the guys have gotten quite skillful at detailing the HO scale versions and take pride in winning the "Best Livery" award at the end of the season. Each race night, participants pay the race host \$5 to cover food and drinks and throw an extra \$1 towards the Pole to Win Award. That amount grows each week until the pole sitter wins the race and collects the jackpot. The record take for the Pole to Win Award was \$99 which I won a few years ago and as you can imagine we made good use of the 99 singles after the race.

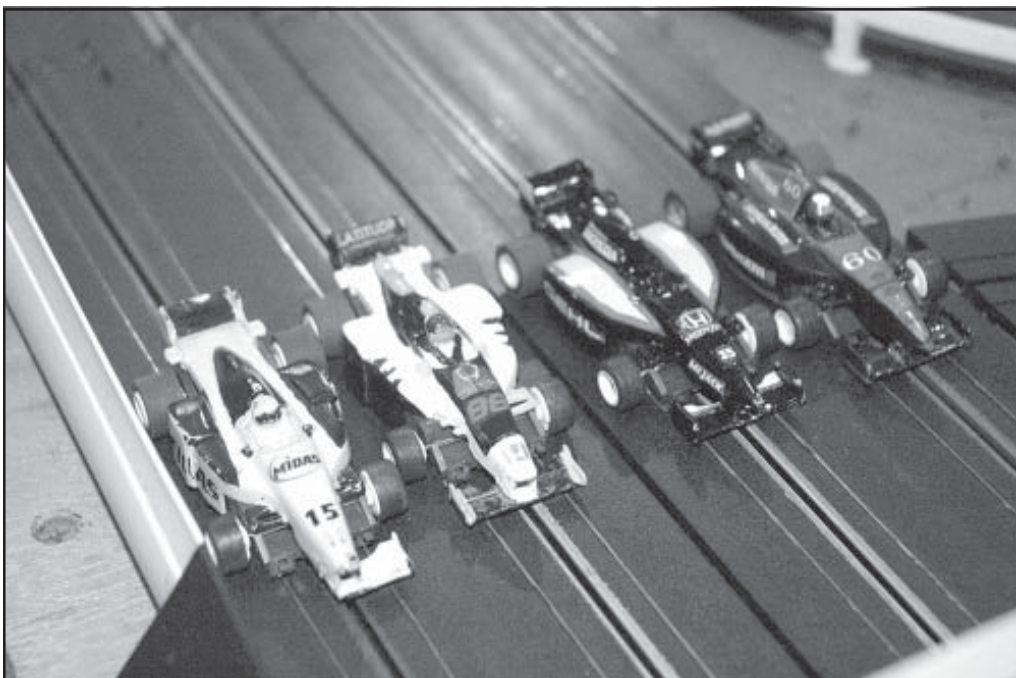
Points are awarded at each event with the overall winner being crowned and getting their name engraved on the crystal Husar's Cup trophy that came from Husar's House of Fine Diamonds in West Bend. Despite having the most wins in the series, I have never won the championship and it's been kind of a running joke over the years. One year after leading the points entering the final race (the HO Indy 500 complete with victory lane milk and a shot of 1975 whiskey from a Bobby Unser Olsonite Eagle decanter) I crashed so hard I actually knocked parts off my car and another year I chose to miss a late season race to attend the premier of the big screen Dare to Dream Alan Kulwicki Story movie in which I had a

minor part. My best shot at a championship was derailed by my arch rival Dean Strom (yes, the same guy you've heard over the PA at Slinger Speedway and the Daytona 500) who wrecked me so hard in a late season race my car flew off the track so far it landed in the basement washtubs. I think I still owe him for that one.

The series began back in 1993 when most of us were in our twenties. My friend since high school, John

Shea who raced with us until moving to South Carolina in 2011, worked with me at the Midwest Racing Newspaper and together we did a five minute radio short track results show that aired Monday mornings on radio stations in Waukesha and Fond du Lac. John also did overnight shifts at Milwaukee easy listening radio station WEZW (EZ104) and we used their downtown Milwaukee studios to put together our show on Sunday nights after the Slinger races. There we met Ev Kamikawa who worked the overnight shift on Sundays and still races with us and Phil Cianciola who was doing news at EZ104 before he moved to the popular Jonathan Green show on WTMJ. Phil was a big Indycar fan (it was CART back then) and it was his idea to build a track in his basement and have a race. I watched the first one and when others decided to build tracks and have races, I participated in the second event. Before too long, a schedule was derived and Phil ran the series and kept track of the stats until he "retired" in 2005. Phil now does his own PhilCast podcast and Mike Kristof, who's better known under his many surnames during his Milwaukee radio traffic days, took over running the series and still does so today. The radio connections enabled us to secure some valuable prizes as promotions people for companies thought what we were doing was cool. During that time we raced for free meals to exquisite restaurants, embroidered Harley Davidson apparel and even a leather Harley jacket. One year Leinenkugel's gave us un-marketed test beer that came in white generic bottles for prizes with the only catch being we had to fill out surveys to rate them as market research. We liked the lemonade tasting beer that later became Summer Shandy and weren't so big on the beer that tasted like Froot Loops that was Sunset Wheat.

Over the years the series has gotten its share of publicity and we have even traveled to conduct races. Tony Perkins, who once worked at WISN, was one of the original racers and when he moved to Indianapolis to work for WISH-TV, we all drove down there to have a race at his condo. Tony had family in the Chicago area and we eventually settled on having his race at their house as it was about halfway between Indy and Milwaukee. When Tony moved to China to cover the Olympics in 2008, his race came off the schedule, but he did return from overseas to enter a few events and he now lives near Tucson, Arizona. We set up one of our tracks at the Milwaukee Mile when CART ran their races and one year A.J. Allmendinger, Katherine Legge, and the late Justin Wilson had a spirited battle with us. I still remember watching Ryan Hunter-Reay make a little girl a lifelong fan after he let her beat him in a race on our slot car track. During its final years, CART actually gave us \$500 for sponsorship which if you think about it should have signaled its demise as I really can't think



Dangerous Dan continued on page 8

Dangerous Dan continued from page 7

of any major racing series that would actually pay to sponsor a bunch of dorky guys playing with toy cars. We have been the subject of stories in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and have been featured on all three major Milwaukee television station sports reports where the sports anchors raced with us. Our races were aired on cable access stations back when that was the fad and Ev and I actually got recognized when we were at the Dirt Late Model Dream at Eldora back in 2009. Believe it or not, a producer from the Today Show in New York contacted Mike last year and plans were tentatively made to send a crew to cover us. The idea didn't survive the final cut so the Today Show never showed up and I'm pretty sure that producer probably got canned for coming up with the idea in the first place.

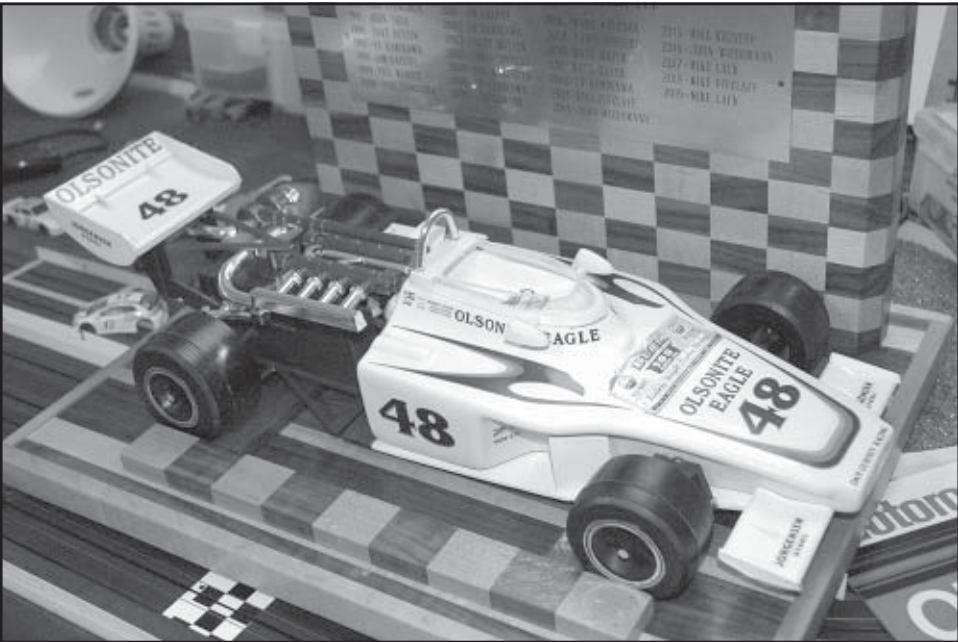
Nowadays we pay our entry fee at the beginning of the season to purchase a pool of chassis that are handed out each race night. This came about because

the creative engineering began to get out of hand when we all brought our own cars to the tracks. One year I got the brilliant idea to put two rear end gears in my car but didn't realize that when it hit the track, the gears turned opposite ways and cancelled each other out which burned up the electric armature in a cloud of smoke. Once at a road course track that featured a lot of tight left hand corners, I doubled up the springs on the right side of my chassis to get through the corners better and actually won the race. I got caught the next week however when I forgot to take the double springs out at the big oval track we were at and my car bounced like a lowrider down the straightaway (oops). The best innovation that really worked was when our scoring system used magnetic read switches instead of the infrared sensors currently being used. A few of us discovered that if we reversed the magnets in the cars so that the armature spun toward the left instead of the normal right, the read switches would score you for two laps for every one lap you completed and you had to make sure not to get too far ahead for anyone to notice. Secrets like that and shaving tires didn't say secret for too long and soon just about everyone was doing something which led to the



club car format we currently use.

The current group also includes Mike Lack who has won the championship six times and John Wiedemann who runs the RacingNation.com website as well as Matt Hayek, Joe "Carnage" Heitz, Bill Black, and Pete Dorn, a wrestling fan who delivers "Pete Downs" to those who wrong him on the YouTube broadcasts. Together amongst all the fun, we've kind of all grown up together and experienced life's ups and downs over the last 28 years. One member, Larry Rotter, passed away in 2014 after battling health issues and others have gone through health scares of their own or have lost loved ones. For something that started as a whim in 1993, the Indy Slot Car Series has provided all of us with great camaraderie over the last 28 years while at the same time offering a nice distraction from life's toughest moments. Even the current pandemic couldn't kill it and as it embarks on its 28th season, it's a great way to pass the off season time as we wait for the real racing season to begin again next Spring.



The Kelley Kids



Following in their father's footsteps (Mike Kelley Junior), both Matt and Pat Kelley have been running Modifieds for a few years. Just like their old man, they've been running a variety of tracks and a variety of sanctioning bodies.



OCT 8-9-10-11, 2020



Dustin Doughty (D1) and Eric Olson (70) have a friendly rivalry of sorts. Doughty started his racing career by helping out Ladysmith, WI drivers such as Olson and Rich Bishop about 20 years ago. In the last few years, Doughty moved up to the Street Stock ranks, but has had limited opportunities to race against one of his mentors. During the opening night of the Richert Memorial, Street Stocks were part of the show. As fate would have it, the two drivers lined up side-by-side to race each other. Doughty would go on to win the \$1,100.00 payday.

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The Kid Won First



Matt Bohl photo



Vince Peterson photo

Young Cam Pantizke is joined in victory lane by his parents (Nick and Morgan) after picking up the big win at Thunderhill Speedway. A few weeks later, Cam was able to join in the fun when Nick picked up his first career Dirt Late Model win.

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Kids at the track



Motivational speaker Matt Bohl recently mentioned how he had noticed many short tracks are now allowing youngsters in the pit area. Allowing the kids in the pits lets them see how things work on race night and exposes them to the comradery on race nights. Times change and allowing the younger generation in the pits looks to be a good move for the short tracks.

Pictures from the past



#2 Lowell Bennett in one of the many race cars sponsored by John J. Mayer Insurance, Rodney Dykeman photo. Don Fowler in the Racing #8, Rodney Dykeman photo. Additional pictures from the past on page 14 of this issue.

Racing Nuggets



PJ "Jacklyn" Nuttleman

Remember in the Dr. Seuss story, "Horton Hears a Who," when the little people of Whoville were shouting, "We are here! We are here! We are here!" with all of their might, trying to get someone to recognize their existence? I feel that way about racing in the Midwest with some people.

Name five Crown Jewels of asphalt short track racing.

Pose that statement to some media types in the southeast, and you won't see the Slinger Nationals, the Dixieland 250, or even the Oktoberfest 200 on that list. It would seem to them; the crown jewels are primarily nestled in the south and east. Perhaps these people don't realize we don't get snow in the Midwest 365 days per year? Well, most years, anyway.

According to industry standards, there are several factors that go into what constitutes a "Crown

Jewel" racing event. Not all of the criteria need to be met, but a majority of the factors should be a part of an event to garner the title. Those criteria are: purse, venue, tradition, ability to draw a competitive field, and popularity of the event.

We'll start with the Purse Factor. All three events have decent purses for the winners. At both Slinger and the Dixieland, it was \$10,000 to win and at Fest it is \$5,000—plus lap money at all three races that is put up by sponsors. Personally, I wouldn't sneeze at \$10k or even \$5k to win. While it's not \$25,000—a standard measuring stick for most "Crown Jewels," I can say that there are times that the bonus lap money significantly adds up for a winner of the race.

The Venue Factor: Slinger, often referred to as a mini-Bristol is without a doubt a major venue for auto racing. Wisconsin International Raceway is such a unique track that really challenges a driver. La Crosse Speedway is a momentum race track. There's not a lot of banking, so you have to be able to roll the corners. It's like a mini-Milwaukee Speedway. These are unique race tracks steeped in history.

The Tradition Factor: The Dixieland 250 just celebrated its 34th running, the Slinger Nationals ran their 41st annual event this summer, and Oktoberfest will be firing off their 51st event this year. Hands down all three of these races have long and storied pasts. Wisconsin in particular has such a deep and rich history in the auto racing world. No one can deny that. A cursory look at previous winners of any of these signature events proves it.

Dick Trickle, Tom Reffner, Joe Shear, Larry Detjens, Marv Marzofka, Alan Kulwicki, and Mark Martin just to name a few. These superstars of the past have all laid claim to the checkered flag at one or all three of the mentioned races; some multiple times.

How about the ability to draw a competitive

field? We have had former NASCAR Cup Champions enter and win these flagship races, like Matt Kenseth and Kyle Busch; multiple times. Even the hottest driver in Cup this season, Kevin Harvick has entered one of these races (Dixieland) but didn't win.

If you've been to any of these events, you know how lauded the "provisional"

starting positions can be. Invariably, there are a handful of drivers who were highly anticipated to qualify well and be a threat to win. However, after missing the cut in qualifying and coming up short in a last chance race, they find themselves vying for a coveted provisional.

I could go on and on with the quality of drivers who come to experience major shows in Wisconsin. If most drivers get it—and decide to throw their hat into the ring to compete—why can't commentators in the southeast figure it out? Granted, these critics include the "Winchester 400," which is in Indiana, and technically part of the "Midwest." But it's NOT the ONLY part of the Midwest with historic and highly competitive racing.

The Popularity Factor: All three of these Wisconsin events are jam-packed with fans every year. Just look at any photos from previous events, it's ripe for playing "Where's Waldo? There's tons of people in the stands.

I am baffled how the upper Midwest is seemingly overlooked for the competition and pageantry we bring to the racing table. The competition in and of itself is another whole conversation. Say what you will, but I've been to plenty of races across the country and I stand by my view that drivers in the Midwest are WAY more apt to drive someone clean.

"Midwest Nice" on the track?! Yes, for the most part that rings true. Perhaps it's because many of the racers from the Midwest prefer to spend their money on post-race festivities, rather than repairing a torn up race car?

Don't get me wrong, there are still a handful of jackwagons who drive through others on the track up here. I'd like to think they're few and far between for the most part. That's just not the case down south. There are plenty of drivers who have no problem dialing you out for position; even if it's lap 15 of 150.

Honestly, I'm not trying to make this a north vs. south thing. I sincerely mean that. I just truly believe that the Midwest is grossly overlooked for the level of competition and the quality of shows we have up here; including how they flow.

I'd invite you to put a stopwatch to a caution at a track in the south, compared to one at say, La Crosse. I would bet my last dollar that a Chuck Deery/Gregg McKarns-run show will have the mess cleaned up, cars re-lined up, and going back to green in a fraction of the time it takes the southern tracks to do it. I'm not being disrespectful. This is a fact.

Maybe the upper Midwest IS like Whoville, and if you're reading this and agree, you're like Horton. Despite not being considered among the "sparkliest" by some—I think we know that major events in the Midwest, like this month's Oktoberfest 200 ARE significant "Crown Jewels" in short track racing. We don't need a talking head from the southeast to say it, in order to make it so.

#MidwestProud #FestIsBest

Bruce Nuttleman photo



Auto Racing Facts,
Observances and
Opinions



Dale P. Danielski

We are getting near the end...Of the racing season that is. Of course, that can only mean one thing, the Annual Oktoberfest Racing weekend, October, 8-11, 2020.

The 51st running of the Classic will again feature about a million race cars competing in 17 or so Divisions of Racing. The weekend culminates in the 200 lap, ARCA Midwest Tour finale on Sunday afternoon. Can Ty Majeski win it again? Will Johnny Sauter keep a cool head and

challenge for the win? Will perennial front runner, Dan Fredrickson win for the 5th time? We'll all get to find out the second week of October at La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway, West Salem, WI.

Of course, this writer will be paying close attention to the CWRA race that will be held Sunday of 'Fest as well. The group is back for the first time in close to 30 years and will race in a 25 lap feature race to determine the 2020 Tour Champion. With John Beale holding a slim lead of 10 points over Jeff Weinfurter it will be interesting to see how things shake out. Noticed in the 'Fest guide booklet from the track that the CWRA Qualifying record is 19:537 seconds by Dick Trickle around the big 5/8 mile oval. Don't think there is much chance that will be broken with CWRA currently racing on the hard compound, Towel City Racing tire.

Everyone is saying since the season got off to such a rough start with a certain Virus floating around, this will be the year of near perfect weather for racing. Let's hope so, and furthermore hope things settle down and 2021 is bigger and way better!

Speaking of better, at the tracks and events we visited this year, once things got rolling, attendance was good. Better even then 2019 in most cases. Can probably attribute that to folks needing to get out of the house and at least do something! Cabin Fever at its worst never bit as hard as Covid did in 2020.

Of course, with 'Fest, comes Champion Reunion XII. This year as/per usual the event will be held on Sunday, October 11th, from 11am-2pm. A great line up of cars and championship drivers have already indicated they will be on hand during the day. Matt McGlaughlin will be bringing a car from his collection, as will Ken Christenson, Jr. Doug Rogers is bringing a car that looks identical to the one Dick Trickle raced during the 1966 racing season. Mike Wall again will present the famous Chicken Coupe, while John "Rags" Reget has the Trickle Mustang to display. Kirby Kurth will also be in attendance and just for the fun of it is bringing the car Trickle last drove at Oktoberfest in 2007. Paul Dolphy has a Trickle Torino look a like racer that he'll

have on display. With a great group of old-time racers coming, maybe they'll suit up and a race could break out! The show is still open to Championship drivers from any series, and Tour, any Division, or a Oktoberfest Feature winner if they are interested in attending. Can't have raced the last three years is only stipulation, so come on over! You can also respond on the Champions Reunion XII Facebook page.

Here and there...Sad to hear of the passing of racer, Larry Sparks. Larry raced for a number of years, mostly in the Central Wisconsin area. Back when there was a hell of a competitive group of semi-feature racers, Larry was at the top of the list. One season he told me he won like 20 semi's in a row or something like that at various tracks on the circuit. That's impressive, I don't care what you are racing! With the #43 on his race cars, Larry will be missed...Long time racer on both dirt and asphalt, Bob Zynda also passed away here recently. Bob rarely missed my Reunions held through the years, and there will definitely be a hole where he'd be sitting this year...Ed Nichols was another Reunion regular. Ed passed away last Fall and it will be very different not talking to him this year. RIP #6!...Don's Truck and Auto, Tomah, WI., will be the title sponsor for the CWRA race on Sunday of 'Fest. You'll enjoy the photo of Don in his racing days elsewhere in this issue... John J. Mayer Insurance will also be backing the CWRA race on Sunday afternoon of 'Fest...Good to see reasonably new to the Super Late Model ranks drivers Mike Sievers and Dakota Blakeslee pick up preliminary race wins here recently. A good sign for the two who again will be racing on the CWRA Tour in 2021...Also good to see interest from tracks heading into the 2021 season for CWRA. Dells Raceway Park, Wis. Dells. WI., Jerry Auby, promoter, State Park Speedway, Wausau, WI., the Wimmer family in charge, La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway, West Salem, WI., Chuck Deery Manager, all indicating they are committed to the group for events next year. The Norway Speedway, Norway, Michigan, will also be in the fold for CWRA racing next year. Contact is still to be made with other Speedways that are likely to host events in 2021 as well...

Going back in time, on August 12th, 1972 it was Larry Anderson winning the last feature of the 1972 season at North La Crosse Speedway, La Crosse, WI., Following Anderson at the finish were Al Kroes, Don Turner, Ralph Bakewell and Dale Pennel. The heat race was won by Turner with fast time honors going to Pete Mahlum at 14.47 seconds. The Hobby Stock feature went to Tim Carlson. As it turns out, the track did not reopen in 1973 or thereafter, so Anderson won the last ever Late Model feature at the 1/4-mile track. On the first night of Oktoberfest 1975, it was Bob Lee winning the Hobby Stock feature. Lee was followed to the checkered by Steve Heinz, Rich Martin, Bob Tippery and Dick Goldsmith. On 10/8/2000 it was Kevin Nuttleman winning the NASCAR 50 on the last day of Oktoberfest at La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway, West Salem, WI. Following Nuttleman at the finish were Steve Holzhausen, Steve Carlson, Dan Fredrickson and Mike Belling.

Questions, comments, opinions and other information welcome at Starmaker Multimedia 701 Indiana Avenue, Stevens Point, WI. 54481 715-344-9072 608-518-2478 or at

Dale's pictures from the past



#7, Bob Zynda. Yellow was Bob's color of choice in his racing days. Rodney Dykeman photo. The #43 Chevelle of Larry Sparks. Rodney Dykeman photo.

Talkin' Racin' with Jason



Jason D. Searcy

This Covid-19 shortened race season at Elko Speedway, which started the second week of August, has been a pleasant surprise on many levels. Even with the uncertainty of the economy, car counts have continued to stay strong, the racing has been incredible and race teams have continued to invest time and money into their cars.

It has also been refreshing to see fans show up to watch racing with very little negative feedback and simply just happy to have some LIVE entertainment. I also have noticed many people have taken this opportunity to try racing for the first time. Here is an example of a comment from someone who had never been to a race before; "It was a very fun and welcoming environment, I thought everything ran smoothly when viewed from the outside. The fact that the events are all one right after the other is very cus-

tomers friendly and it feels very family oriented on the whole, even down to the people in the concession stands, they are friendly and upbeat." That does not sound like a sad or depressed individual, it sounds like they actually went out and enjoyed themselves at the race track!

I think the Covid-19 situation might be a blessing for the race community, because of our limited entertainment options, Saturday nights at the track have become a can't miss again for many people. It sparked an excitement even for some kids who have finally gotten bored of their video games and think this racing thing is kinda cool. Auto racing has gotten some attention from the local media recently too with both KSTP and WCCO TV doing segments on young William Sawalich after his first career win in the Great North Legends division. KSTP TV also did a nice piece on the father/daughter race team with Conrad and Julie Jorgenson. Conrad has threatened to retire for years now and there might finally be an actual succession plan in place. Julie is getting closer to her goal of winning a Power Stock Championship and she plans on trying out some races in the Thunder Car next year, also Conrad's son is ready to try his hand at racing a Power Stock so Conrad might be a full-time crew chief soon.

Now that we are getting down to the end of the season at ELKO we can finally also look at the National point standings. Jacob Goede, Nick Murgic and Billy Mohn all were in the Top 10 in the National Division I NASCAR Advance Auto Parts standings. Joe Prusak and Nick Oxborough are both in the Top 10 in the NASCAR Division II standings, the points are extended this year much later than usual, so drivers can race for NASCAR points all the way through the Oktoberfest weekend which will make things quite interesting in LaCrosse.

Two ELKO drivers are leading INEX National points as Tim Brockhouse is number one in the Asphalt Masters division and Austin Jahr is leading the Semi-Pro Asphalt division. William Sawalich is in the Top 10 in the Asphalt Young Lions division for Legends cars and in the Bandoleros Alex Hartwig is

second in the Outlaws East division and Ayrton Brockhouse is second in the Bandits East division. The Great North Legends drivers are well respected all over the Nation and the caliber of cars up here is unquestionably great. Championship night at ELKO is coming into focus with Jacob Goede looking for his 7th straight Championship in the Premier division, Chad Walen has been his closest competitor in the points the entire season. Bryce Blohm is looking to match his father by winning his second Championship in the Thunder Cars but Conrad Jorgenson not far behind in points. Nick Oxborough is looking for his third Championship, he is leading Julie Jorgenson for the Power Stock title. Tim Brockhouse decided to race full-time at ELKO this year and he has gathered in the most wins and leads in points over Baiden Heskett, Ayrton Brockhouse is leading Josiah Kottschade in the Bando points with Alex Hartwig missing some race nights by virtue of racing in Wisconsin.

The Drama might be in the WISSOTA Midwest Modifieds with Bryan Syer-Keske and Eric Campbell going down to the final race to decide the inaugural ELKO Championship in that division.

No matter how it all shakes out I would say the Elko Speedway race season was the bright spot of 2020, even though it was short, it has left us race fans optimistic, the medicine many of us really needed.

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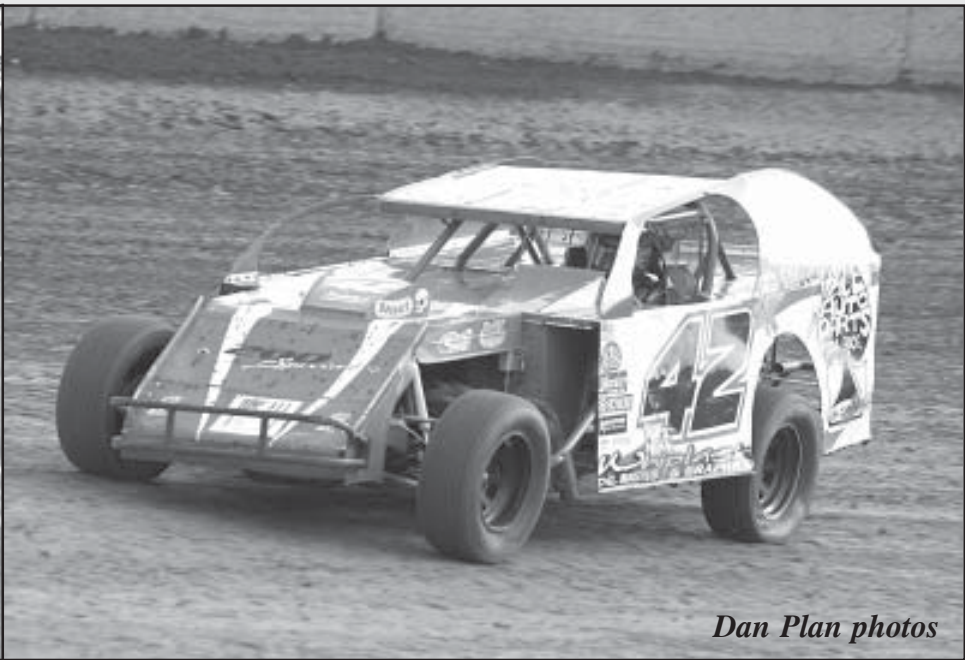


(Doug Hornickel photos)



The Joe Shear Classic was originally scheduled at Madison International Speedway for an early May date, but postponed due to the pandemic. With crowd restrictions still in place for Madison, this year’s event was moved to Dells Raceway Park over Labor Day weekend. A thrilling 3-car battle between Gabe Sommers, Casey Johnson and Johnny Sauter ended with a narrow victory for Sauter.

Two weekends, two different results



Dan Plan photos

Upper Midwest Sprintcar Series (UMSS) Traditional Sprint competitor, Brad Peterson, ended his 2020 season upside down (left photo.) The very next weekend, Brad had the opportunity to return to the division where he started his racing career, racing a Midwest Modified for a family friend during the Fall Frenzy (right photo.)

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