

THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION

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NSTC and the Bahama's



Lessons from the road



November 2020

Inside...



Feel Good Wins



Champions Crowned



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Publisher's Note
Racing According to Plan



Dan Plan

Having the ability to spend time in the pits before and during the races exposes oneself to many things you wouldn't normally know about on a typical race night or weekend. A couple of situations came up to end out my season, that were situations that put

Feel Good Wins

a bright spot on what might have been a terrible weekend for a few racers.

At the beginning of October, I made the trip to Chateau Speedway in Lansing MN for their season ending Autumn Extravaganza. I hadn't been to Chateau in several years, and with a late start to my local race chasing, I figured it was time to make the trip again.

I've spent a lot of time in my life watching the Dickey Brothers race, but very few times since they've switched over to dirt. Matt Dickey was running his Midwest Mod this particular evening. Even though things didn't start out well in his heat race when caught up in a turn 2 melee, Matt would rebound and go on to pick up his first dirt track heat race win at Chateau. There wasn't much time to celebrate, as there was damage to repair for the feature race, but Matt was still able to put on a smile while fixing the damage.

While walking through pits after the heat races and prior to the main events at Chateau, I saw Scott Splittstoesser and his crew with the motor idling and

Publisher's Note continued on page 4



Dan Plan photo

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Publishers note from page 3

looking things over under the hood. I didn't think much about it initially, but shortly thereafter Scott informed me they had a hole in the backside of the radiator after the heat race. They didn't have a spare radiator and were hoping their patch would last. A hole on the front side of the radiator isn't that uncommon at a dirt track, but hole on the back side seemed odd. Evidently a rock flew up, hit the fan, and then the rock was shot forward into the back side of the radiator. Now that's weird. To top things off, Scott was scheduled to start on the front row of the main event.

As fate would have it, Scott was able to get the lead at the start of the main event and the radiator patch held up through several cautions. The win was also the first win of the year for “The Show Stopper.” Racers are usually pretty happy when they win a race, but Scott seemed to have a bit more of a sparkle in his smile this night.



Scott Splittstoesser at Chateau

The next feel good win I witnessed happened during Oktoberfest at LaCrosse Fairgrounds Speedway. During practice on Thursday, I saw Elko racer Eric Campbell come into the pits on the hook. The car didn't look damaged. Turns out the crate motor in the car decided it had enough and one of the rods decided to exit the situation. Eric also had his Modified on hand for the weekend but seemed to be in the wrong place at the wrong time for every on-track

Matt Dickey survived this melee to win his heat race at the Autumn Extravaganza



Eric Campell at Oktoberfest

incident on Thursday and Friday night. To

make matters worse, one of the incidents left the Campbell kid with another motor with a hole in the oil pan. The hole in the Mod oil pan was small and repairable, but still had to be worrisome. On Sunday afternoon, the Cratetoberfest race winner receives a new crate motor.

The race winner also draws

the name of another competitor as the winner of second crate motor. Low and behold, Eric won the main event and picked up another crate motor. Once again, I had a chance to see somebody



with just a bit more of a sparkle in the smile in victory lane.

Even though the season got a late start, it ended up on a good note for these three drivers, and I was happy to be on hand to see it.

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Going in Circles



Charlie Spry

2020 season champions were crowned at the Rockford Speedway starting a week before the National Short Track Championships, with the Sixers and figure-eight division titles being decided.

The famously popular six-cylinder racing division had no less than four drivers having a shot at the title going into the last night. Jason Tyler had led the points most of the shortened season, but it was close from throughout the top four. During the final feature race, the top three all had various troubles, while Dallas Conniff drove to the front to claim the feature win, and ultimately gain his first track championship in the division, surpassing the other three on the final point night.

Nick Schneider took the title in the figure-eight division, his fourth figure eight championship and fifth

title overall. His Dad, Tom, was also a many time figure eight champion, and Nick is poised to equal or surpass his Dad in number of titles won.

The NSTC weekend always brings some great racing in many different divisions, and unfortunately, in later years....rain.

The Friday night show brought out a very quickly run show, with hardly any cautions all night. The American Short Tracker division saw many new cars show up to race, which stymied the efforts of some of the regulars and their points battles. Rookie Shawn Bowar and veterans Tim Finstad and David Russell Jr. were all within grasp of the title before the night began. Visitor Kyle Stark put forth a dominating drive to get the feature win over another visitor, George Sparkman, while Bowar, Russell and Finstad finished further back. Bowar finished ahead of the others in the points chase to take the title.

Robert Hansberry Jr. does not race here often, but when he does, he is usually at or near the front, and so it was tonight. He took the sportsman feature win, while John Robinson II, Minnesotan Jeremy Wolf, and Trevor Robinson battled at the front. Trevor Robinson took the title over his Brother, John, who won the title last year, so it was back-to-back titles for the Robinson brothers, who I know spend most of their waking hours working on and racing stock cars. It is what this family does, and they do it well.

Jon Reynolds Jr. took home his third track title in the late model division. He took the points lead

midway through the season to take the title over Dennis Smith Jr., who looked very strong early in the season, and if not for a few issues late in the season might have won it. It was an interesting season here in the late models in 2020, with several capable feature winners making it up for grabs on most nights. Mike Beyer ran strong all year to finish second over Smith. Former champion Michael Bilderback did not race here all year, but when he was here you knew it. Such was the case on this night, as he took the win over Jerry Gille, who returned after taking a little time off to race a dirt street stock at Sycamore. Jerry showed that he had not forgotten a thing, as he was an absolute rocket tonight.

Cody Armato took home the title in the Bandit division with his purple Dick Trickle tribute racer. Cody raced only a few times in 2019 and learned very fast. Kyle Riedner guest-drove Brandon Johnson's backup car to the feature win over Todd Snow and often-time winner Garrett Braden. Brandon had the engine go south on his primary racer, but he still honored his commitment to Riedner, letting him race the car anyhow. It paid off!

Justin Wagner was strong all year and took the points title in the Roadrunner division. He won the feature over Phil Speciale, who had fast time and was in the hunt for race wins all year.

Saturday brought out the sprinkles after time trials had been completed. The Big 8 late model feature was lined up and ready to go when the sprinkles became a bit steadier. This lasted for quite some time and the races were finally postponed to the following morning.

Sunday brought out nice temps and clear blue skies, with racing commencing for the Saturday portion first. The Midwest Dash series feature saw Rockford regular Nick Schneider gain the lead and pull away, until George Sparkman caught up. For several laps it didn't look like Sparkman would be able to gain a foot hold underneath to make the pass, but he finally did with two laps to go.

I had a nice chat with Midwest Dash racer Mark Dewey. Mark races with a car that has a close replica of the paint scheme used by his late Father, Richard, who raced a late model back in the 1980's. "As I was doing up the paint, I could feel my Dad there with me smiling down and saying, "Yeahhh." Said Mark. It is a neat thing to do in remembrance. Mark also has gotten some help from another former racer, Wayne Whitford, who raced back in the era of his dad, and helped him as well. Mark has done

Doug Hornickel photo



Going In Circles continued on page 6

Going In Circles continued from page 5

exceptionally well this year, racing with much less money spent on his engine than many others.

The Big 8 late models ran their feature off next, with Ryan Gutknecht, Jacob Nottestad and Michael Bilderback moving to the front. Bilderback got the job done and cruised away to the win. It would not be the last we would hear from this driver on this day.

The local Hobby Stocks came from various tracks to race here, with cars representing Jefferson, Tomah, LaCrosse, Sycamore, and of course, some Rockford Roadrunner class cars. They all came together and put on a very interesting show.

Jim Tate Jr. got the win, but it was fun to watch Jason Stark, Brandon Riedner, Andy Moore and other top drivers from all over race together. They did a real good job competing and racing cleanly with each other. Riedner had a bout with the wall in practice, so while he repaired his car, he missed out on time trials, thus starting at the back of the field. It was fun to watch him and others slice and dice through the pack. Excellent racing by this group, and they should be proud!

The Mid-American cars put on a very interesting feature, with the battle for the win coming down to two cars, Rick Corso and Jeff Wakeman. Corso held the lead with Wakeman hounding him, getting alongside a couple of times but never quite getting into a position to make the pass.

Wakeman has plenty of laps on this track, as he has raced a late model here weekly. The day belonged to Corso, who had just enough to stay out front. It was a very entertaining race to watch, and some pretty clean racing up front. Corso later told me, "I was happy to get the win. It seems like at this track I either do very well or bring the car home in a basket."

The super late model feature was, well, a take no prisoners, no holds barred, rough and tumble short track battle, with seventeen-year-old Max Kahler emerging the victor with a last turn pass. Max would go on to win the Big 8 championship crown at the Oktoberfest race at Lacrosse the following week, capping off a great end of season run. He becomes the youngest NSTC super late winner since Mark Martin, and that is pretty good company.

Two weeks after the NSTC brought us to one of my favorite

events, the Bahama Bracket Nationals at the Rockford Speedway. This event allows pretty much any race car to compete, with cars being divided into groups or brackets by their qualifying times.

Some drivers race only this event during the course of a given season. It was nice to see veteran Ray Swan taking to the track once again, as well as Billy Bob Wiltjer. Mr. Wiltjer told me "We have been coming to this event and racing ever since they started doing it. Just wasn't a good start for us, as the transmission locked up and then resulted in damaging the valvetrain on the engine." This happened on Friday night, so the Wiltjer crew loaded up and went back to their Indiana home and switched engines and transmissions, then made it back to the track with a few hours to spare before qualifying and racing, all with very little sleep. Shaun Wiltjer carries on the tradition of his Dad, racing this event every year, and usually as a top contender. These folks have brought some very unusual cars here in the past, including a racer with a '67 Galaxie body on it.

You never know who you will get a chance to chat with at this event. Case in point, I visited with Iowa driver Jeremy Clement, who introduced me to the owners of the dirt Sport Mod he was racing. Come to find out, brothers Jim and Dennis Williams had some very interesting information, as I found out, they were a big part of the start of the IMCA modified division. "A lot of people don't know the history of these cars and how they got started, and it is

important that it be known," Said Jim.

Back in 1978, Hawkeye Racing News guru Keith Knaack had the idea of a new division which would be very affordable for anyone to get started in. Taking over ownership in 1976 of IMCA, he was looking for a new division to develop. Jim and Dennis actually built one of the first four modifieds in existence, with the purpose of taking them around to various tracks and drumming up interest in the new division. "It was hard to get interest going in it at first," Said Jim. "The tracks all had their regular divisions and weren't all that interested in adding another. Once they found out just how affordable it was, it took off very fast."

The car itself was billed as "A \$300 car with a claim rule on the motor of \$350, with the features paying \$600 to win," Said Dennis. The claim amount was actually \$300 for the motor, but you had to give \$25 to the wrecker operator for pulling the motor, and \$25 to the official in charge of the claim. Dennis told how he got started in it, saying, "Arlo Becker had a junkyard just down the road from us, and we hung around there all the time. It is hard to believe our Mother was OK with me hanging out there all the time at fourteen years old, but she always knew where I was. Once we started racing them in 1979, it

Going In Circles continued on page 7


Jeff Taber photo

Going In Circles continued from page 6

took off pretty fast, and it was my job to dig through the engine pile and find suitable engines to use. Looked for a four-bolt main block, double-hump heads, put bearings in them, did a valve job, and put in a mild racing cam and that was it. There started being a lot of claims, so we made sure we had several engines ready to go.”

Early bodies on the cars were either Pinto, Gremlin, Vega, Javelin or something similar. In only a few years the IMCA modified became perhaps one of the biggest things to hit racing in history. When you see how it has evolved, it is simply amazing. To hear the story from people that were involved in this at the start is a real treat.

Of the four original cars built to drum up interest, only one, built by Bernie Frieden and raced by Mike Schulte, still exists. Jim noted that he did a lot of chassis work on this car, and it won the very first IMCA supernationals event, which was held at the track in Vinton. As for the original car that the Williamses built, it was unfortunately scrapped at the salvage yard.

From this beginning, the brothers began building race car chassis, through their business, Advantage Chassis. “We have always tried to come up with better ideas for things, and some of our stuff got outlawed, but we are always thinking,” Said Dennis. Talk about racing pioneers!

Had a chat with another modified racer, Jason Schilling Jr. Jason lives near Milwaukee in Greendale, Wis., but travels north to race weekly at 141 Speedway during the regular racing season. “I think there is some of the best competition up there every week, and we want to learn by racing with the best. This is my second full season, and this year we made the feature every point night except for two,” Said Jason. That is quite a feat, as 141 has probably the strongest fields of cars in the state.

While Jason prefers racing on the dirt, he likes to try new things, saying, “We had fun here last year so we figured we would come again. It is definitely something different for us.” Jason made the feature and finished in seventh place in the A bracket.

Crowd favorite Danny Deutsch was present once again. The dirt racer who calls Sycamore Speedway his home track always wows the crowd with his sideways, wheel in the air racing. Usually you hear comments such as “That guy in the 23 car sure is fun to watch.” Danny will tell you that it is all about putting a show on for the fans. He gets it!

One of our former bracket winners was missing this year, as Iowan Mike Loughren passed away only a couple of weeks before this year’s event. Mike always had a big old late 1970’s Ford Thunderbird, and he really made that car go! I always enjoyed talking with Mike and we all really miss him.

Always nice to see people from the long gone Lake Geneva raceway compete here. Joe DeCubellis is a name anyone who attended racing at that track

will remember. Joe told me that this is still the same chassis that he raced at LGR back until the track closed in 2006, although he has updated the rest of it to be in line with Area Sportsman type rules. He also noted that he had not raced for some six years prior to this weekend. Hope we see more of Joe racing in the future.

Vaughnn Lesko pretty much only races this event with his car, which still looks pretty much like it did the last time it drove off the ‘Geneva track. He won a qualifying race on Saturday night to make his feature event.

As for the features on Sunday, the A bracket for the fastest cars saw Dave Edwards get the win when the apparent winner failed tech. Dave has won many features this year at various tracks and now adds this to the list.

The AA was an exciting one, with Bobby Frisch and Cody Clubb going door to door for many laps until on the last lap another car joined the fray, pushing Frisch a bit faster than he wanted to go, and he crossed the line first, but broke out of his time bracket on the last lap, giving Clubb the win.

The AAA feature saw Nick Bruley, Kevin Gress and Jimmy Robinson battle at the end, but after all was said and done, Bruley reigned supreme.

The AAAA feature for the slowest of the eight and six cylinder cars was won by Greg Hentrich, another of the many Iowans present. Greg said he has been close to winning before, but never quite got it done, until now. He held off Mike Nelms and Robby Robinson for the win.

The B bracket for the four-cylinder cars had plenty of action. Enough so that winner Nick Schneider came back from the tail of the pack after getting sent backwards into the pit exit ramp early in the race. Nick’s “never say die” attitude got him back to the front and the win over Ricky Wilson and track AST champ Shawn Bowar.

The BB bracket, also for four-cylinder cars saw Brandon Johnson get the long-awaited feature win. Last year in this event Brandon had his car get destroyed into the wall on the front straight coming for the white flag, so it is justice that this year he gets the feature win. He also provided the best smoky burnout of the weekend!

With all of this being said, it has been a strange but fun year of racing, nonetheless. Hopefully things will straighten out and next year I can get to even more races.

Jeff Taber photo



Talkin' Racin' with Jason



Jason D. Searcy

Even though racing got a late start here in Minnesota in 2020 due to the Covid-19 restrictions put on Elko Speedway, the final standings tally looks very similar to last year. In 2019 each division had about 25 features and this year, thanks to double features nine straight weeks and no rain-outs, each division raced 18 features.

The NASCAR Late Model division at ELKO saw 29 different drivers score points in 2020 compared to 34 in 2019. Jacob Goede had five wins and Chris Marek and Michael Haggar both had four wins, eight different drivers took home a trophy this year including: Adam Bendzick, Steve Schultz, Bryan Wrolstad, Justin Neisius and Andrew Schultz with his first career win.

People were worried about the Thunder Car division when both Eric Campbell and Brent Kane dropped out to race in the new Modified division but the numbers were still consistent enough to put on an entertaining show especially with Jeremy Wolff and Adam Wiebusch scoring wins and returning as full time competitors. 19 drivers scored points this year compared to 26 last year, Bryce Blohm had eight wins and Conrad Jorgenson five, four different drivers scored a win in 2020.

The INEX sanctioned Great North Legends saw an increase in participants from 28 in 2019 to 31 in 2020. Also there were more winners this year with seven compared to six different winners in 2019. Tim Brockhouse had eight feature wins this year, Baiden Heskett had four and Austin Jahr had two. Other winners included: William Sawalich with his first career win, Dirk Henry, Matt Allen and Jon Lemke.

The Power Stocks had 22 different drivers score points in 2020, the same amount of competitors as last year. Eight drivers earned wins this year led by Joe Prusak with six and Julie Jorgenson with five, their winners included: Nick Oxborough, Tom Quade, Mike Stoer, Darin Patnode and two drivers getting their first career wins, Ben Gannon and Brandon Plekkenpol.

The Bando's raced 18 features in 2020 compared to just 12 in 2019, both seasons saw 16 drivers earn points. Four different drivers won in 2020: Ayrton Brockhouse took home seven trophies, Alex Harwig had six wins, Josiah Kottschade had four and Zachary Konop also won a feature event this year.

The WISSOTA Modifieds were in their first year of racing at Elko Speedway and 17 different drivers scored

points, they raced only one feature per night (due to WISSOTA rules) so there were a total of three winners in nine feature events. Bryan Syer-Keske had six wins, Eric Campbell had two and Brent Kane was the other winner in 2020.

Some local drivers did well in the National Standings: Tim Brockhouse was the National Champion in the INEX Asphalt Masters division, and Austin Jahr was the National Champion in the INEX Asphalt Semi-pro division. Cementing the fact that we have the best field of Legends drivers in the Nation racing here in Minnesota. Ayrton Brockhouse was second place in Bandits East for Bandoleros and Alex Hartwig won Outlaws East.

Jacob Goede was fourth in the Advance Auto Parts NASCAR Division I final standings and Nick Murgic sixth in the Nation.

I want to say a big Thank You to the competitors who raced in 2020 and provided some much-needed entertainment for us race fans, this was truly a memorable season for a multitude of reasons.



Dan Plan photos

Dangerous Dan



Dan Margetta

Well...we got it in! I'm talking about the racing season here in the Upper Midwest which concluded this past month with the Oktoberfest Race Weekend in La Crosse and the Falloween 150 at Dells Raceway Park. Both main events were won by Ty Majeski who continued to collect trophies as he wrapped up his successful Wisconsin super late model schedule. Just seven months ago we weren't sure if a single lap would be turned on the short tracks this year and as the checkered flag fell at the final event, I had a feeling of appreciation that in a year of so many negatives, the racers, promoters, and fans worked hard to complete a season and come together to provide at least some positive aspects for everyone. I'll be honest, in the last few years I had become complacent with the racing scene and pretty much took it for granted. Racing was all I really knew, and it was just a given I would spend my time chasing as many races as I could. To try something different, I got into baseball, became a season ticket holder with the Milwaukee Brewers and ballgames began to cut into the racing schedule. While baseball was fun and still is, I discovered (re-discovered might be a better word) that during this year, I didn't have the special and

deep personal connections at the ballpark that I did at the race track. This year was a nice refresher that when I go to a ballgame alone, I watch a ballgame alone, but if I go to Slinger, The Dells, WIR, La Crosse, Golden Sands, Jefferson, Grundy, Wilmot, Plymouth, Beaver Dam and others by myself, not two minutes goes by before I run into old friends or make new ones. Sometimes I wish I could take all those experiences and play them back when those outside the racing circle can't seem to understand why it is I like racing so much.

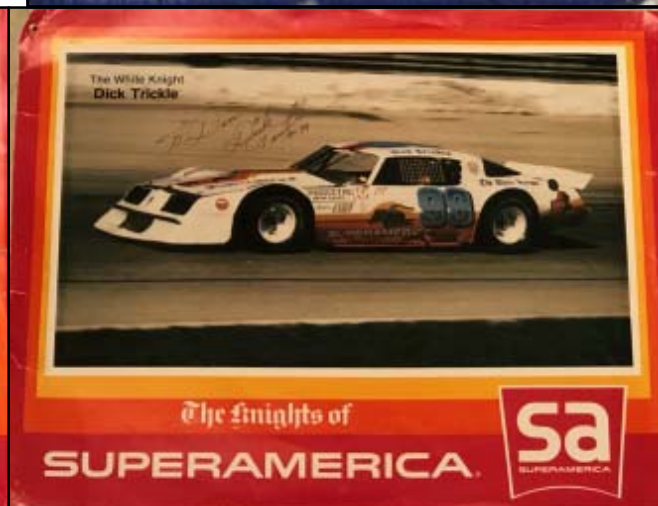
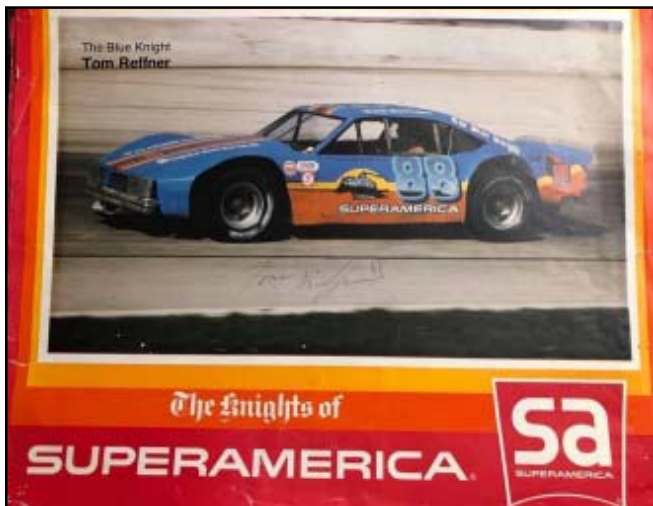
One of the coolest things at the Oktoberfest Race Weekend at La Crosse this year was the appearance of a Dick Trickle #99 SuperAmerica White Knight car in the vintage races. The vintage races are de-



Rick Bickle wheeled this Trickle Tribute Firebird at Oktoberfest

signed to stir up old memories and, in this instance, both the car and the guy who drove it, Rich Bickle, did just that for me. While my dad and I regularly attended Saturday night races at the Hales Corners Speedway since I was about three, one of the first major stock car races I went to was the SuperAmerica 150 ASA race at the Milwaukee Mile when I was eight years old. My dad took me to that one too and in the week before, the White Knight Dick Trickle and the Blue Knight Tom Reffner had their cars at an appearance at the SuperAmerica station near our house. We went to see them and I got two of my first racing autographs. Bob Senneker won the Milwaukee Mile race that year while Trickle finished third (I still have the event patch my dad bought for me) and seeing the vintage car at Fest took me back to that day. It was cool to think back to where I ended up since then I'm sure if you would've told me that one day I would actually get to know the legendary Dick Trickle I'm not sure I would've believed it.

Having Rich Bickle drive the car made it even more special as he was another one of my heroes growing up who later became a friend. I watched Rich race for years and met him for the first time around 1989 or 1990. I had just started helping out Todd Behling and Ed Cluka by answering phones at the LTN radio show and one Sunday Rich actually stopped by to be a guest on the show. In addition to racing locally, he had rides in NASCAR and ARCA and I had him sign the only thing I could find in the studio which was the back of one of those pink phone message slips. His autograph included the four different car numbers he drove that year and I still have it.

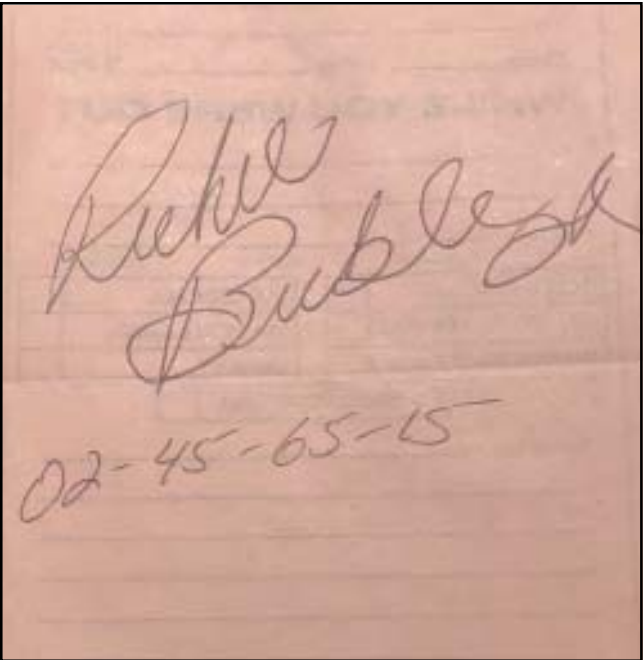


Dangerous Dan continued on page 10

Dangerous Dan continued from page 9



A few years later I was standing on the roof at Slinger Speedway with John Close as he spotted for Bickle when he won his first of four Slinger Nationals and I got to be a part of a pretty insane victory lane celebration. In 1993 I made my first foray into the hallowed NASCAR garage with Bickle's help at North Wilkesboro. I had a media pass to get to the infield and pit road but did not have garage access. Bickle was driving the #45 Gene Isenhauer Ford that had one race sponsorship from Kraft and Bulls Eye Barbeque Sauce and his PR guy Steve Zimmerman told he me could get me garage access if I met him in the infield. I found Jimmy and sure enough he had a sponsor garage pass that I had to take back to sign in. I went back through sign in but the savvy and well-known Hank Schoolfield who was the track's

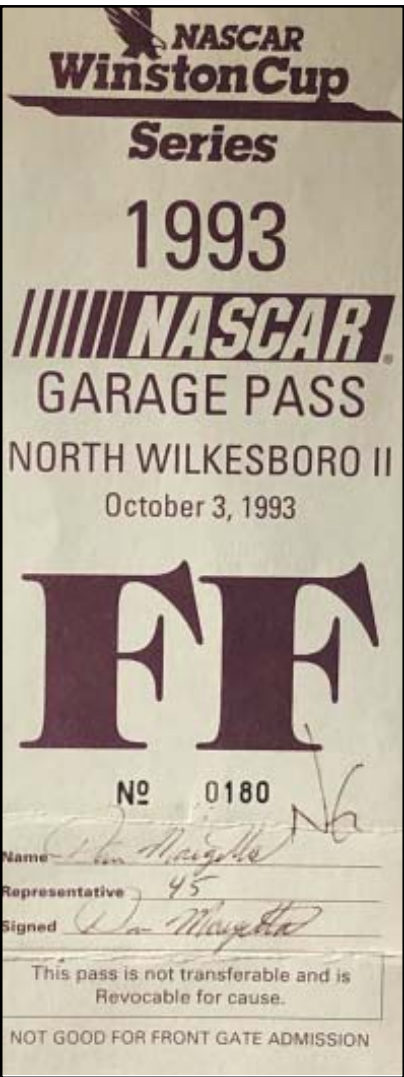


media director immediately recognized me as having been through the process earlier (I can't get away with anything). I nervously explained how I needed to first get to the infield to get the current credential I had, and he grudgingly took back my original one and gave me a new one. Back then you had to sign in again at the garage entrance and when I approached this checkpoint, the official there pulled out a clip board with a list of names for the #45 team. Of course, my name wasn't on that list and I wasn't sure who I was supposed to be so I figured the jig was up. Just then Rich walked out of the garage came over to

say hi and pointed at a name on the list which I signed by and got my garage pass. I put my real name on the actual paper pass in case I got carded on the inside and made my way through the pearly gates. The #45 team didn't qualify for the race that weekend so I kind of had to lay low in there on race day but I felt like I had officially arrived. In the summer of 1994 I was talking with Rich at Madison International Speedway and we were looking at the entry blank for the much anticipated inaugural Brickyard 400 at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. We couldn't believe how rich that race was and that it actually paid \$21,000 plus just to start. The entry blank we were looking at was for the #45 car and he had just gotten the call he would be driving the #9 Melling car in the race so he gave me the entry blank. I kept that too as it had historical significance being the inaugural Indianapolis NASCAR race. I was at Martinsville in 1998 for the steamy hot Fall race when Rich had his best finish of fourth. Ricky Rudd won that day and was beet red from the heat as he laid on the ground in victory lane totally wiped out. Jeff Gordon finished second and I remember walking past him on pit

road afterwards as he looked like a wet noodle with a towel draped over his head. With 50-laps to go, Rich was asking about the Packers score over the radio and I was in his pits after his fourth-place finish and witnessed the emotional ESPN interview by Bill Weber first hand. It was also pretty neat to see Bickle have a strong run at Oktoberfest this year as he made a late charge to finish second behind Ty Majeski.

While the racing season in the Upper Midwest is complete, several local racers have plans to compete in prestigious southern events such as the All American 400 at Nashville and the Snow Ball Derby at Five Flags Speedway in Pensacola. I'm sure all of us race fans up here will support those racers who venture South and who knows, maybe one of them will bring back one of those prestigious trophies as they represent us in the big events.



Auto Racing Facts, Observances and Opinions



Dale P. Danielski

You couldn't ask for a better 4 days of racing, both competition and weather-wise as the 51st Annual Oktoberfest Racing Weekend unfolded here October 8-11, 2020, at LaCrosse Fairgrounds Speedway, West Salem, WI. Great fields of cars in all divisions of racing, along with daytime temps in the 70s made it an event to remember.

I can't recall larger crowds over a 4-day span of 'Fest either. I think in general; people are just fed up with all the restriction and decided, "We are going racing!"

And race they did, as Ty Majeski capped off the weekend with his 3rd Oktoberfest final win. Things actually got started on Thursday with the weekly NASCAR Late Model Champion being determined at the track. And no, it wasn't Steve Carlson or Nick Panitzke. Nick Murgic pulled

through to take the championship as he out pointed Carlson and Billy Mohn for the title. Carlson and Panitzke did however have a say in the outcome as they captured NASCAR LM features over the weekend. Panitzke taking 20 lap wins on both Thursday and Friday, while Carlson also took a win on Friday. Nick Clements who had a stellar season at Lax. took the other 20 lap NASCAR main of the 4 held.

racing was right up there. However, I am totally biased, but the 25-lap feature for the group on Sunday afternoon was second to none. Colin Reffner took the big win, but he had all he could handle with Tony Leis on his bumper at the finish. Greg Back in his first appearance for the group in 2020 led many laps, but a turn one slip up allowed Reffner and Leis to motor by for the top two spots. Back held onto 3rd, with John Beale and Darren Jackson close



Nick Murgic picked up the 2020 Late Model title at LaCrosse Fairgrounds Speedway during Oktoberfest

Dan Plan photo

The closest race ever for the Dick Trickle named race on Friday of 'Fest, saw no less than 6 drivers having a shot at the overall crown in the triple 33 feature race format. Winners of each race were Andrew Morrissey, Chad Butz, and Casey Johnson, but it was Dan Fredrickson being the most consistent, and taking the 2020 Trickle, 99, 'Fest Title.

Was nice to see upstart, Chad Butz take a main event win, as he is a CWRA Stars to Legends Tour graduate. Butz has improved with each racing step he has taken, and a win at 'Fest is certainly a feather in ones cap.

With 17 divisions of racing over the four days, it's tough to pick out the highlight of the weekend, as close competition was the norm rather than exception in all the races. Certainly for this scribe, the Central Wisconsin Racing Association return to 'Fest

behind. Beale, with his finish became the 2020 CWRA, Cedar Creek Rustic Village, as presented by Bentley Trucking, Stars to Legends Tour Champion. Beale and two-time defending Champion Jeff Weinfurter had just 10 points separating them heading into the final, but an early spin by Weinfurter put the season Crown in Beale's hands. With the success of the event, plans are underway for next year, and it looks like CWRA will again appear twice for events at La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway.

continued on page 12



Dan Fredrickson picked up the overall win in the Trickle 99 at Oktoberfest



*Racing Facts, Observances and Opinions
from page 11*

And, even with Covid 19 concerns with the older set, Champions Reunion XII as part of 'Fest, went off without a hitch. A great group of 50 championship drivers were on hand for the show and all were glad to be out on the day! Fun with drivers, cool old-time race cars and displays, made for a memorable experience for all.

Here and there...Have to thank Don's Auto and Truck Center, Don Fowler proprietor, for stepping up with Title sponsorship of the CWRA race on Sunday of 'Fest. Don's contribution increased the purse pay-out as did support from John J. Mayer Insurance. The help is greatly appreciated, and that kind of support will lead to continued success in 2021...One thing is certain when Johnny Sauter is on the track, there will be a point in the race for discussion! That was the case here in the ARCA Midwest Tour, 200 lap Oktoberfest finale, as he and Andrew Morrissey were racing for the lead when contact was made. That put both in the rear for the restart, and

with only 30 laps or so left, negated any chance either one of them had to win, although Morrissey did fly through the field to get 3rd, with Sauter placing 9th. Fans do like excitement however, and with Johnny you always get it!

In the quote of the column department, Tony Leis with plans to race with CWRA in 2021. "I think your concept is fantastic, I loved the competition you had at La Crosse in July and I loved racing at 'Fest. Thanks again for making racing enjoyable again!"

Going back in time, in, on July 11th, 1991, Bryan Reffner won the 2nd 25-lap feature in the Larry Detjens Memorial race. Following Reffner was, Bobby Stolze, Terry Marzofka, Don Woller, Bobby Weiss and Kirby Kurth.

Going back to the year 1978, Dave Watson was the Oktoberfest Champion at LaCrosse Interstate Speedway, West Salem, WI. On May 30th, 1987, it was the Lyle Nabbefeldt Memorial race at Dells Raceway Park, Wis. Dells, WI., with Tom Musgrave and Dick Trickle winning the two 55 lap Features honoring the popular racer. Following Musgrave in the first main was Steve Holzhausen, Steve Carlson, Bob Gunn and Trickle. The 2nd main

finish behind Trickle was Carlson, Rich Bickle, Jr., Gunn, Tom Reffner and Musgrave. The semi-main went to Brian Holzhausen.

On August 30th, 1986, at Wis. Dells Motor Speedway, Wis. Dells, WI., it was Steve Holzhausen winning the 86 lap feature race. Holzhausen was followed to the checkered flag by Dave Watson, Kevin Cywinski, Rich Bickle, Jr., Rick Wateski and Dick Trickle. Heat race winners were Don Stetzer, Spike Lindley, Marty Georgeson and Tom Reffner. Consy winner was John McNamara with Brian Holzhausen winning the Semi-Feature. Trickle set fast time on the night. On the dirt side of things, Midget race car action, on July 19th, 1986, at Angell Park Speedway, Sun Prairie, WI., it was Kevin Olson winning the 50-lap feature. Following Olson was Paul Clark and Chris Maxin.

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@starmakermultimedia.com

Dale's pictures from the past

#37 Dave Watson, 17 Tom Musgrave, #87 Bryan Reffner, #93 Rick Wateski in his popular green colored race cars, #50 Steve Carlson, #78 Steve Holzhausen in one of his Ford products. All Rodney Dykeman photos.



More pictures from the past



#37 John McNamara Comet, #99 Dick Trickle, #94 Early Bob Gunn Mustang, #A3 John Reimer who recently passed away. All Rodney Dykeman photos.

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New Dirt



Jacy Norgaard

I've grown accustomed this year to my race season looking vastly different than years prior. I knew in May when I started that I would likely have to travel due to COVID restrictions in Minnesota. I never would have imagined I would travel to some of the places I have, but I've learned some valuable lessons at every speed plant I have found myself at. By the time September came to an end I had visited 5 racetracks in 5 different states in a wild journey that burned through Virginia, South Carolina, North Dakota, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania.

The marathon of a month started off with a trip to North Carolina to see some of my girlfriend Mikayla's family. Luckily for me there was a World of Outlaws Late Model race just a short drive from Charlotte that Saturday. But before I could partake in the festivities of a southern Late Model race, we went to see her cousin Brandon Lambert race. He's originally from Minnesota and raced at Princeton

Speedway many years ago. He moved down to North Carolina about 15 years ago and started racing dirt a couple years ago. He races a 602 Open Wheel Crate Modified. His primary track is a little bull ring just on the other side of the North Carolina-Virginia border in the mountains called Ararat Thunder Raceway. Brandon has a race shop setup the likes of which I have never seen. He converted a barn on their plantation property into a race shop and wood working shop. The occasional snake slithering around and that goats and chickens in the next room made the experience extra sweet. Lined on his shop walls were several hero cards from drivers back home. Many of these were created 12-15 years ago by photographers I grew up shooting beside and a couple who are still at it today.

Jacy Norgaard photo



Another cool aspect is that Brandon's girlfriend Rebecca is also a up and coming dirt track photographer. So not only would I get to see Mikayla's cousin race, I would also get an opportunity to share some wisdom with Rebecca.

We ventured to Ararat Thunder Raceway on Friday afternoon. An hour drive or so north of

Winston Salem where they live, the drive reminded me of many drives to dirt tracks. Winding through small towns, cell phone signal popping in and out of coverage area. When we arrived at the track, we were a little confused at first as there wasn't much signage pointing us as to where we should park or purchase a pit pass.

Some very nice track officials helped us out and we got signed in and made our way into the pits. The track is a 3/10 mile oval with the mountains of Ararat surrounding it in the distance. The surface was a smooth red clay and evergreen trees surrounded the back stretch. This made for

some awesome photo angles. The Open Wheel Modifieds are a new class to the area and are unsanctioned which results in many of the local tracks having separate rules. This quickly reminded me of how racing in WISSOTA country was before the sanctioning body was created. I recall my conversation with Tammy Lofdahl, whose father was a founding member of WISSOTA and how our area was just like this. For a moment I felt like I was in a time machine and tried to envision the pre-WISSOTA days. The Open Wheel Modifieds were running double features that night due to a rain out part way through the show the weekend before. Brandon would get two opportunities to qualify, each determining his starting position during the features. I can't recall where he ended up or where he started. The track has poor cell phone reception given its remote location and My Race Pass does not exist there (yet). I've certainly been to my share of dirt tracks and Ararat isn't the RITZ hotel and will probably never have the capacity to host a national

Lessons from the road



Jacy Norgaard photo



Jacy Norgaard photo

New Dirt continued on page 15

New Dirt continued from page 14

dirt track touring series, but it's a gem of a place. The competitors, officials and fans are some of the nicest people I have ever met. They love the racing and they love the track. Certainly, updated amenities and high-profile shows are a ticket to good success in this industry, but it's also refreshing to go to a track where people just have fun. We were all there to enjoy and appreciate the sport of dirt track racing. So, I couldn't post photos to Instagram right away, I will take that any day of the week if I get to cross a track off my list and take in racing in another part of the country.

The next night Mikayla and I ventured to Lancaster Motor Speedway in Lancaster, South Carolina for the World of Outlaws Late Model series event. I've been following the series whenever I can this year and was excited to see a national late model race at a southern dirt track. The place was packed as if COVID 19 did not exist and the track was huge. Some of the longest straight-aways I have ever seen at a dirt track. Brandon Overton would go onto win the feature at a track that I found very difficult to shoot at. The infield was a bit lower than the track and filled with haulers and fans, so there weren't any good spots to shoot from in there. You could shoot just outside the fence on the inside on a small berm that surrounded the track. The issue here though was you were shooting very tight into the field, so it challenged me to mix up what I normally do for shots. The track reminded me of something out of an old racing movie. I appreciate tracks that let me do what I need to do and shoot from whichever angle I deem appropriate. There is an inherent danger in some of the places I stand, but I am always careful and have enough professional experience to know where not to go. The inadequate lighting really made

me appreciate the tracks we had back home though.

We landed back in Minneapolis on Tuesday afternoon and I had a short week at home before heading north to Grand Forks for the John Seitz Memorial race at River Cities Speedway. This annual event is one I have heard about but never had a chance to make it to. I wasn't able to attend Thursday due to work but was in attendance for the rest of the weekend. After a two-hour rain delay, the River Cities Speedway track officials were able to get the track worked in and us back to racing. Defending champion, Aaron Turnbull stole the show on Friday night during the pole dash where he bested Jesse Glenz and Don Shaw to win the pole as the three raced to the checkers. Turnbull would repeat his feat as Seitz Memorial Champion the next night holding off a late charge from A.J. Diemel once again at the line.

Coronavirus restrictions forced the cancellation of the annual WISSOTA 100 at I-94 Sure Step Speedway in Fergus Falls, but in its place the track ran the King of Dirt special. It felt much like a 100 with the large car count, but an obvious void could be felt without the presence of a packed house of fans. Rather than run heat races they opted to run qualifying features for each class. They contested 18 features on Thursday, 25 on Friday, and 14 on Saturday. There are many storylines I could write about from this event, but none are as incredible as Dan Ebert. Ebert looked to be the fastest in the Late Models and Modifieds all weekend and he proved it big on Saturday night. Ebert won the Modified

championship and backed it up moments later with the Late Model championship. A dominating performance that would be rather historic if this were the actual WISSOTA 100. Regardless of what the event is called, being able to win in those two classes on the same night against the competition he had is a rare feat.

The next night my photography buddy Tim Hunt and I traveled to Bemidji Speedway, a track I had yet to visit.

Jacy Norgaard photo

Bemidji is a quarter mile track with a real hometown feeling. It was nice to be back at a quarter mile on Sunday nights as it reminded me of my childhood at Raceway Park. The highlight of the night had to be the Mini Stocks feature. They had several cautions and drivers retaliating against each other that forced the flagman to park them in the infield and let the next feature go. I can't say that I have ever seen a track put an entire feature on time out!

The crazy month of September ended with a 13 hour all night drive from my place in West St Paul to Brookville, Pennsylvania. Tim Hunt (High Side Race Shots) and I decided to head east to shoot the World of Outlaws Late Model Series at Thunder Mountain Speedway. The track was quite the drive through the woods and on some very narrow roads. Friday night turned out to be a historic night as we got to witness the GOAT, Scott Bloomquist return to victory lane in a dominating performance. You can never count a legend like him out, but I couldn't help but think what if this was his last victory? I doubt it is, but sometimes you just never know. I was grateful to get to see him return to form. Brandon Sheppard continued his winning ways on Saturday night and stole the show with a corner 2 pass after the leader made mistake heading towards the white flag. A pretty fitting weekend for Late Model racing I would say with the legend Scott Bloomquist winning the first night out and the man who no doubt will someday rival what Scott has done winning the second.

September was a grind in airplanes and automobiles from the South to the Midwest and to the East. The biggest thing it taught me was to always appreciate how good we have things here. I visited some tracks that were seriously lacking in areas of

*Jacy Norgaard photo**New Dirt continued on page 16*

New Dirt continued from page 15

comfort we take for granted back home. Good lighting and dust free tracks are something I always appreciate and even more so now that I did a bit of traveling in September. Racing may be a bit different in other parts of the country, but the one thing that did not change is the way I felt while being at the track. I'm grateful to have gotten to cross some tracks off the list and become exposed to dirt track racing elsewhere. Sometimes when you step outside of your bubble and go see things from a different point of view, you realize that things aren't so different after all. Racing is racing and we all love the sport the same.



Racers Reunion and CWRA at 'Fest



#9 Matt McGlaughlin Edsel race car. Amazingly, this car has raced on the Milwaukee Mile, Elkhart Lake, Watkins Glen among other high profile venues (left photo.) John Beale 2020 CWRA Stars to Legends Tour Champion (right photo.) Dale P. Danielski photos.

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PJ "Jacklyn" Nuttleman

My husband has been spending a tremendous amount of time with a girl named Ella. I'm not jealous though. I'm actually quite supportive.

Ella is the name of the car that Ty Majeski has piloted to numerous wins this season. She's the hotrod with the neon yellow-green accents. She's visited Victory Lane five times this year; not bad for a limited schedule. Ella rolled into Victory Lane at the Rattler, the Slinger Nationals, the Dixieland 250, the Oktoberfest 200, and most recently, the Falloween 150.

The old saying of races being won in the shop is a mantra for many teams, but it is especially true for

Toby and the group of guys in this team. They have "shop night" twice a week—year-round, and can generally be found working even on Saturdays in the off-season.

I joked on Facebook after the Oktoberfest win that Toby was already working on Ella for the Falloween. And he did the same thing after they won the Falloween, only now Ella is being prepared for a possible run at the Governor's Cup in New Smyrna. If things don't come together for that race—the focus is on getting her prepared to be the backup for the Snowball Derby in Pensacola.

Either way, Toby's got his hands all over Ella. He's currently maximizing what can be done to her within the rules down south. Racers are able to run 4bbl carburetors down there. Toby's an all or nothing kind of guy, so he's not just changing the carburetor in Ella; she's also getting her exhaust tweaked.

Toby says, "More air in, means more air out." The move to a 4bbl carburetor with exhaust modifications translates to roughly 100 more horsepower.

Ella is essentially a thoroughbred. However, she's playing second fiddle to Lizzy when it comes to the Snowball Derby. Lizzy is the car with the neon red/orange accents and chrome numbers.

I questioned Toby about why Ella—a car that is a five-time proven winner this year with Majeski, is being put on the bench for arguably the biggest race

of the season.

"Lizzy's special too," Toby quipped.

I should tell you that Toby loves every car he's ever built. He takes things very personally about them. It's downright painful whenever he is facing the prospect of selling one of them. The relationship he's developed with these machines is real; frighteningly so.

Seemingly hurt that I was minimizing Lizzy's prowess, he reminded me that she had won at Kern County Raceway. That was a \$32,000 payday for Majeski and the team.

I nodded and added that Lizzy darn near won the Snowball Derby last year before the restart debacle that destroyed her and the shot at victory. That statement garnered a scowl from Toby. It's a memory he'd just as soon forget.

Needless to say, the boys are going to be loaded for bear at this year's Snowball Derby. That race has been a real monkey on their backs, particularly this past year.

So until the next race—whether it's the Governor's Cup or the Snowball Derby, Toby will continue to run his hands all over Ella and Lizzy, ensuring every nook and cranny is given a little love. It's essentially a threesome with Ella, Lizzy, and Toby.

I'm not jealous. Really, I'm not. However, I'm grateful race cars don't fit in the bedroom.

Two Girlfriends and a Wife

The two girlfriends

Ella on the left and Lizzy on the right are the two girlfriends competing with PJ for time



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Wisconsin Super Late Model Trifecta



Dan Plan photo



Bruce Nuttleman photo

Casey Johnson scored what one might consider the Trifecta of Wisconsin Super Late Model racing. As the 2020 racing season in Wisconsin came to an end in October, Johnson won championship titles in the ARCA Midwest Tour, TUNDRA Super Late Models and Alive for Five Series.

Fest and Falloween



Bruce Nuttleman photos

Ty Majeski started out his 2020 season in the NASCAR Truck Series. Through a series of unfortunate events, another driver took over the seat of his truck late in the season. This twist of fate was a blessing for short track race fans as Majeski returned to his roots. During the month of October, Majeski raced 2 weekends, picking up another Oktoberfest win at LaCrosse Fairgrounds Speedway and a Falloween win at Dells Raceway Park.

Living another life

By Dan Plan

A couple of years ago, my prized possession (a 1972 Nova) was broadsided by a deer on a country road. I was crushed, but it was just metal and could be repaired. The hood was salvageable and sold to another Nova owner. The bumper and fender were pretty used up, but I couldn't bring myself to just throw them away. I've had the car for over 30 years and it just didn't seem right to throw these parts in a scrap heap. Prior to Oktoberfest this year, I reached out to members of the Upper Midwest Vintage Racing Series. I knew several of their competitors used Nova bodies and

thought these pieces could still be used on a vintage race car. Sure enough, Robert Fitzpatrick reached out to me just prior to Oktoberfest and was looking for a Nova bumper and fender. I was more than willing to put the parts in the RV and deliver them to Fest. We did get a few strange looks in the campground and pits as Lucas Grossing and I delivered the bumper and fender to Robert on Sunday morning.

The neat part of this deal is Robert doesn't have just any old Nova. It's not a newer Super Late

Chassis with a body thrown over it. It's actually an early 1970's leaf spring, stock stub Bemco Chassis Nova originally driven by Bob Jusola.

To me, that was more than I could have hoped for. Parts of my car will finish out their useful life on a race car that I actually had a chance to see compete in person when I was a little kid.



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