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February, 2010

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## Publisher's Note

### *Racing According to Plan*



### Dan Plan

Welcome to the first issue of the 2010 season. While there typically isn't much going on in the form of oval track racing in the upper-Midwest during the winter months, we were able to find something to fill our need for racing. The WSA Snowmobile group put on a two-day show at Raceway Park in Shakopee, MN. The last time I went to an oval track snowmobile race was sometime in the 1970's.

I was pretty young for my first race and don't recall much. I do remember that it was at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds race track, and Dick Trickle was racing. Thirty-some years later, the sleds are much

## Winter time highlights

more radical, put down some darn quick laps and featured some great battles for the lead. My only wish would have been to have more people experience the event. There were plenty of sleds on hand, along with ATV's and motorcycles to put on good show. I think some of the local race fans missed out on a good time.

Three-time Eagle River champion P.J. Wanderscheid was on hand, but came up short to Dustin Wahl in the main event on Sunday. Wahl also picked up a main event win during the Saturday afternoon show, while Juan Pablo Lebens dominated the Lawn Mower races. The layout of Raceway made a great venue for the snowmobile racers, and I truly hope this becomes an annual event.

The SnoCross at Canterbury is another event that we haven't been able to attend for a few years. Watching these guys fly through the air really is something to see. It looks so smooth and graceful on TV or from inside. Even though I'm not a fan of the cold weather, you really have to be outside for a few races to get the full effect. The sleds and drivers sure sound like they're taking a beating when you are outside and up close. Special thanks to the Hentges Racing Team and Craig Heitkamp of Pirtek for access to the clubhouse seats for the night.

### Misc. News and Notes:

#### **RobBob for Governor**

The esteemed founder of this publication, Rob Hahn,



P.J. Wanderscheid leads Dustin Wahl into the first turn during the WSA event at Raceway Park  
*Tom Johnson photo*

The Midwest

**RACING** Connection

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officially announced his entry into the race for the Governor's role for the state of Minnesota. We wish Rob the best, and if he's successful in his bid, we will encourage Mr. Hahn to keep in mind the needs of racers, race tracks and fans.

#### **Mid Am Stock Cars**

We recently ran into 2009 Mid American Stock Car Series champion Paul Neisius. Paul is set to defend his title and had a gleam in his eye when talking about the Mid Am event scheduled on the dirt at Beaver Dam, Wisc. Hat's off the Mid Am group for having some diversity to their schedule with one road-course and a dirt track event. Paul has quite a bit of seat time on the dirt from his early racing days. My early season prediction has Neisius and "The Franklin Flyer" as the top two for the Mid Am dirt show.

*Publishers Note continued on page 4*



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We are also pleased to see the group is working to schedule a show in our home state of Minnesota. It's been a while since the group made their way over here, and even a longer time since they ventured to Raceway Park in Shakopee.

#### Book Reviews

Also in this issue is a book review of the latest work by Father Dale Grubba. I've always enjoyed the work of the Good Father, and his latest creation did not disappoint.

*Paul Neisius is no stranger to dir-track racing, as shown in this shot during the 1992 Thunderbid Open at Kasson Speedway*



this far North since their days of sanctioning the Gopher 50 at Owatonna. The USA Nationals will also have involvement from the World of Outlaws. It is important to note, the WoO group will be involved in the event, but CLS officials will still keep their unsanctioned format and race procedures.

#### Dirt Trackin' at Elko

Elko Speedway will feature 3 weekends (six nights) of dirt track racing this summer. Midwest Modified drivers are on the card for all six shows, and 2010 will feature dirt Late Models in addition to the open wheel action. Also announced was a change for their motocross track. The actual motocross racing will be moved from the area behind the grandstand into a semi-permanent layout in the infield of the track. For fans of two-wheeled action, this should be a great chance to see the entire course at one time. Six events are currently scheduled for the 2010 season.

#### New Start Time for Raceway Park

Raceway Park announced an early start time for events held during April/May and September. The Sunday night action will start at 5:00pm while school is in session, giving those of us with school age children an opportunity to be home well before bedtime.



#### Cedar Lake Speedway, UMP and WoO

Cedar Lake Speedway announced some changes for their annual Masters and USA Nationals events. The Masters will now kick off UMP's Summer Nationals, also known as the "Hell Tour". This is the shot in the arm the Masters needed to gain stature, and many of the UMP drivers haven't ventured

#### UMSS Banquet

Stan Meissner will have more detail in his column on the highlights from the UMSS banquet, but we were on hand as well and enjoyed the opportunity to watch drivers from a first year series be recognized for their accomplishments. The UMSS has practically doubled the schedule for the 2010 season, and series founder, Ron Bernhagen, mentioned they had more requests for dates than they could handle. Not a bad problem to have. Look for the UMSS and IMCA to finalize details between their partnership before the racing season starts.

#### Changes at Kopellah Speedway

Since our last issue in December, NASCAR issued a press release stating Kopellah Speedway in St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin will switch sanctioning bodies starting with the 2010 season. While some people have predicted doom and gloom for local tracks making changes, things really haven't changed that much. I've had several conversations the past few years with Joe Hinkemeyer of Rapid Performance, and think back to a comment he made a while back while discussing some of the changes tracks have made. Joe's comment was "competition is good." I couldn't agree more. Sometimes a change is needed to get things moving in a direction that benefits all parties involved. While there's no argument that Wisconsin has done a tremendous amount to stabilize dirt track racing in the area, I can't help but think the short lived DTRA, followed by the change to NASCAR for Cedar Lake and Superior have lead to some of the improvements made by the big "W".

Time will tell how things progress for Kopellah in the 2010 season. Making their Midwest Modified division the premier class will give a driver with this type of car an opportunity to win point fund money they potentially may not have an opportunity at in the past. Here's to hoping everyone (regardless of sanctioning body) has a successful season in 2010.

**Rock and Race****Paul Pittman**

January 20, 2010: Now that the Chili Bowl is a memory, it is time to reflect on the experience and what it means. As we get set to start in a new direction of "The Infield", I think it is best to perhaps start the year off with one of the year's biggest races. As in the past, I will ask you once again to remember that the opinions expressed in my columns are just that: Opinions. They are my feelings; the way I view things and if you don't agree with them, that is entirely your prerogative. You do not have to read this. You do not have to agree with them. Just keep an open mind and maybe see things through someone else's vantage point.

To say that the Chili Bowl wasn't an experience would be an outright lie. I was asked if I would like to accompany a team to the Chili Bowl to compete. Not doing much except sitting around and watching the thermometer sleep through the winter months, I figured it would be a good experience and if I could help along the way, even better. Besides, the weather in Oklahoma had to be better than it was in Wisconsin, right?

Having spent the 2009 racing season on a self imposed sabbatical, just getting back to a track, any track, was a feeling of relief and anxiousness at the same time. Compounding the emotions were the fact that my background is in sprints, not midgets. Just as there are two type of sprint car fans (winged and non-winged), there are two types of open wheeled fans when it comes to midgets: Those who see the midget as a smaller version of a sprint car, and those who see the sprint cars as bigger versions of midgets. I admit, I was the former.

As I soon learned, they are their own monsters in their own right. To me, the sprint car is a as basic even yet as it gets in racing. While many will argue saying that there are so many intricacies in successful race teams that they cannot possibly be that simple, I will remind you that they are the teams going out and spending the money to shave that half ounce of unsprung weight off the car. The ones who do push the envelope week in and week out. Great! I have no

problem with that. They are the ones who continue to make the sport what it has become. They are the ones who carry on the legacy of those who made the sport what it has become today. I, however, am talking about the sprint car that about sixty percent of the nation is running though. Pushing off to have an evening of fun at the track with the hope that they might get lucky enough one night and find themselves in victory lane. Those are the teams I am fondly referring to. A solid chassis, a sound motor that runs as well as can be expected and as many bolt on extras as the racing budget will allow with enough money left over for a few drinks to share with friends after the night is over. Nothing fancy. Just a way to relax with good friends.

As I said, I am new to this midget thing so right off

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Midgets can be a complicated piece of machinery  
*Martin Defries file photo*



[www.racingonline.com](http://www.racingonline.com)

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the bat, I was introduced to a very sophisticated racing machine that, while it may look similar to its relative, the sprint car, is truly very different in many ways, except for the cost that is. That, unfortunately, still makes doing this a dream of many and reality for few. Well, maybe not a few as this year's version of the Chili Bowl drew over 250 entrants from all over the country and a few different countries, all vying for a starting spot in Saturday night's A Main. Do the math: That means you have to be in the top ten percent of the world in order to make the A Main. Even making the cut for the C-Main means that you still scored over a 75% grade. That might be passing in most schools, but in racing, you can go hungry quick like that real quick. Trying to coax as much horsepower as possible out of the motor is also true as in most motor sports, but that is as far as it goes. The Chili Bowl brings out every form and shape of trickery and gadgetry known in an effort to gain the edge. In sprint car racing, something different on a car catches everyone's eyes and draws attention. In the midget ranks, it just means that you are falling behind and need to update your program. Programmable MSD boxes (try doing that at your local sprint car track), cockpit adjustable everything! If there is a gimmick for something, you could find it on the floor somewhere. And it is the accepted norm. Now, before you get your dander in an uproar, I am not knocking it. Hey, it is what it is and as long as it IS accepted, then there is no complaint. From me or anyone else. It is just a matter of trying to wrap my mind around all this and still keep hearing the chant of cutting costs in racing.

I guess my problem is simply from a cost standpoint. Every year we go through this whole ordeal

concerning rising costs in the sport and everyone has a different idea of how to cut them. This will save "X" number of dollars on tires and that will save so much money on engines. Over the years it has become a joke. Unfortunately, no one is laughing anymore. The amount of money that was thrown at these cars for a single race was unbelievable. I asked a couple car owners if they felt it was worth it. While I got no real yes or no answers, the most common answer was "It was because it's the Chili Bowl and we tried". Now ask yourself how many of the 250+ teams that competed will still be around come the start of the actual 2010 racing season? Then factor into that the number of teams that fielded a specific team with a race specific driver for just this event only. Maybe I am just missing the boat here and doing nothing more than being blind to the whole concept. Maybe I am stating the obvious. Maybe I am the only one who feels this way. All I know is that an awful lot of money was changing hands over the week. I knew what the week was going to be like when a hotdog and soda ran \$7.50. And methanol was \$4.00 per gallon and you had to run it because of the dye. Yeah, as many as possible were making sure they were getting their slice of the pie.

Years ago, I was chastised for being critical of promoters and their efforts to draw shows out in various ways in order to try and minimize risk. Wake up! This is racing and that is what it is all about. So now that risk involved is how to minimize the loss expected over the downward turn in the economy since it has now really sunk in to realization: Average Joe is hurting for money and may not be able to take

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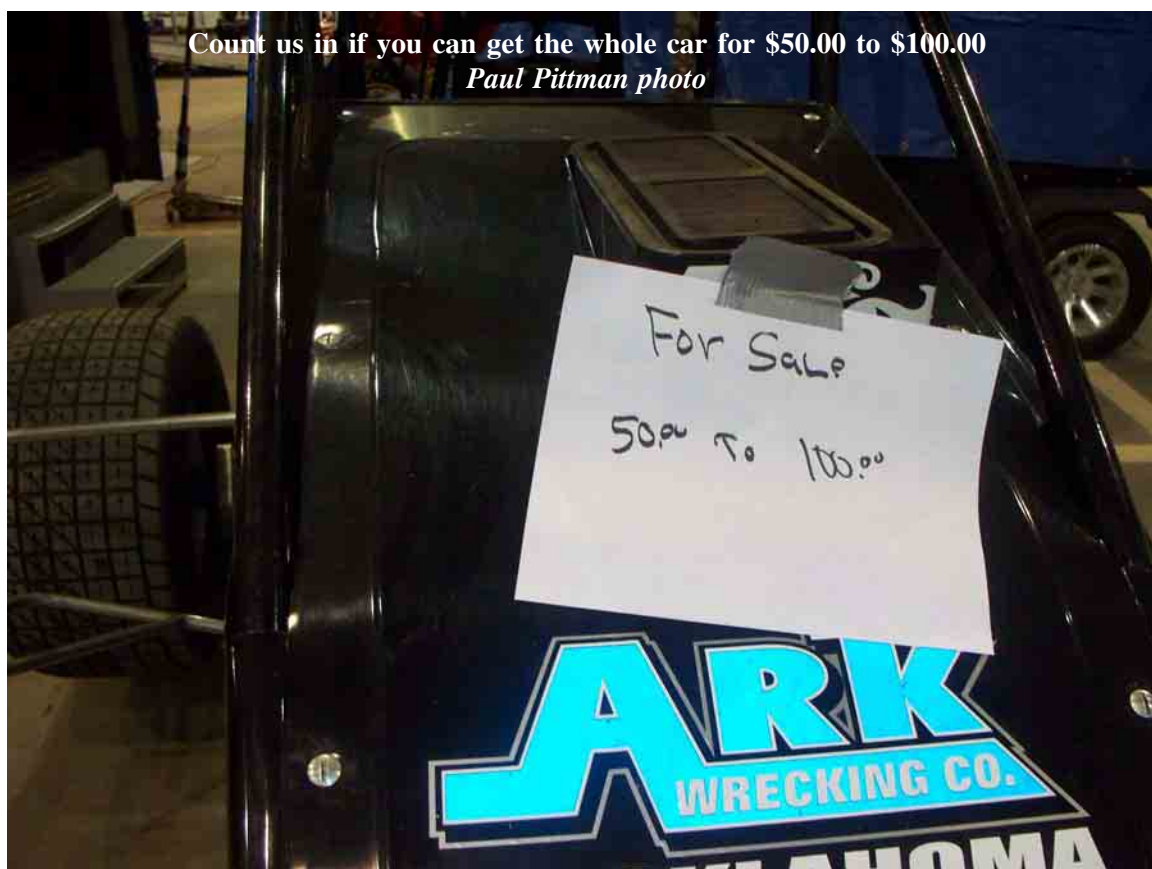
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the family out to the races this year. Uh-Oh! It no longer is a matter of trying to persuade a would be fan to come to the race track or go bowling. Now it is how to survive. According to government reports, the economy has turned the corner and is starting to rebound. Tell that to teams who are losing sponsors or better yet, to teams that just plain cannot get sponsorship help. Tell that to tracks already trying to figure out how to bounce back from a slow season and find ways to increase attendance. Tell that to families that always looked forward to race night but now have to settle for family "game" night because their budget doesn't allow for the night out any longer.

Enough of the clouds of doom and gloom. The Chili Bowl was a learning experience and overall, one that I am now glad to be able to say that I did experience. I just cannot help but look toward the upcoming season and see visions of packed grandstands, promoters with smiling faces and race teams picking money off of the proverbial money tree. Believe what you want but for me, the chili could have possibly been better left in the bowl.



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Over the holiday season, our good friends at Coastal 181 Publishing ([www.coastal181.com](http://www.coastal181.com)) sent us a copy of the latest book by Father Dale Grubba – Alan Kulwicki, NASCAR Champion; Against all Odds

I've heard rumor of this book for some time, really enjoyed sitting down on some of the cold Minnesota winters reading this book. I always remembered Alan as a top competitor in this area of the country. He may not have been a champion with Artgo or ASA, but winning track championships at WIR and Slinger is no small feat, even to this day.

A lot of the items mentioned in the book brought back some memories that I had a feeling of being a part of. No, I wasn't on Alan's crew, nor did I ever meet him in person, but he was the first person from the Upper Midwest to win a NASCAR Cup championship, and that gave me a sense of pride back in the early 1990's. Some memories were good, such as Alan winning his first race at Phoenix, and some memories were bad, like being wrongfully accused of Larry Detjens fatal accident.

The book also reveals sides of Alan, that most of us probably weren't aware of. Once Alan made it to Cup, he was often portrayed as stubborn or tough to work for, but there are some tall tales of the short track days when there may have been some late night shenanigans that Alan coordinated.

My favorite quote that Alan lived by was originally made famous by Vince Lombardi; "Obstacles are what you see when you take your eyes off the goal." Something we all should remind ourselves of from time-to-time.

If you're a fan of short track racing, this is must have item to add to the bookshelf.

# Alan Kulwicki

## NASCAR Champion: Against All Odds



By Fr. Dale Grubba



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## The Inside Dirt



**Stan Meissner**

The continent of Australia was inhabited for thousands of years by indigenous Australians that comprised approximately 250 nations. Australia's eastern half was claimed by the British in 1770 and initially settled by England's deported convicted criminals. The arrival of those "outlaws" at Port Jackson in January of 1788 (now Australia Day) is considered the founding event in the history of Sydney and modern Australia. In the tradition of those early "outlaw" origins the best Outlaw Sprint Car drivers from the United States converge on Australia each year during our winter to race in the land down under.

Australia is approximately the same size as the United States but has one tenth the population and is not blessed with an interstate highway system like the one we take for granted. Travel takes place on two-lane roads with treacherous shoulders and "road train" trucks pulling multiple trailers. Race cars are transported on trucks that use specially outfitted boxes to protect the racing equipment from filling rattling potholes. Despite these rugged travel conditions teams log as many as 25,000 miles racing at local venues or in the case of the well funded teams following the World Series Sprintcars from November to February. This season American drivers with local ties racing down under included Donnie Schatz and Craig Dollansky along with Australian native and part time Twin Cities area resident Brooke Tatnell and his brother-in-law Jerry Richert Jr. who made his first trip to Australia. Local Sprint Car fan and Richert sponsor Doug Poppens made the trip with his wife Nancy providing Sonny with a cheering section. I'd like to say that Richert made a huge impact on the trip but aside from leading one of his Heat races before falling to second behind Max Dumesny. No doubt with a little more experience the long time veteran would have mastered his new surroundings but a four race schedule wasn't enough to get things sorted out to his liking.

The Warrnambool Classic is considered the Australian equivalent to the Knoxville Nationals and Tatnell came into the 2010 version as defending champion. This year Shane Stewart of Indianapolis staged a race long duel with Tatnell to take the top spot with Brooke finishing second. Other familiar drivers that made the A Main include Danny Smith (5<sup>th</sup>), Kerry Madsen (6<sup>th</sup>), Jason Johnson (7<sup>th</sup>), Craig Dollansky (9<sup>th</sup>), Terry McCarl (11<sup>th</sup>) and Jason Sides (12<sup>th</sup>). Jerry Richert Jr. finished fifth in his first Heat, seventh in his second Heat (each driver competes in two Heat races), fourth in the D Main and

did not transfer out of the C Main. The Classic boasted a field of over 80 cars. In addition to his second place finish in the Warrnambool Classic Tatnell won the 29<sup>th</sup> running of the Avenlon President's Cup to record his third consecutive win of that prestigious event. At the time of this writing Brooke had won three World Series Sprintcar Features with two other upper Midwest based drivers, Craig Dollansky and Donnie Schatz, both scoring one Feature win each. Tatnell is currently leading the WSS points in an effort to win an unprecedented eighth WSS championship. Brooke will remain in Australia to finish out their season before returning to the United States where he will be driving the #59 car that Erin Crocker Evernham drove last season.

There is a saying about history repeating itself that says "what goes around comes around." This summer Jerry Richert Jr. and his fellow UMSS drivers will race under the same acronym that made his late father famous. The UMSS series held their banquet at Pro Kart Indoors in Burnsville on January 23 and announced that the UMSS is now an IMCA sanctioned series. Arlington promoter Bob Allen was on hand to explain that the IMCA has dropped their head claim rule and will allow wing sliders bringing the rules together for the two series. By combining resources with IMCA the UMSS drivers will be able to benefit from IMCA supplemental insurance coverage and end-of-season contingency awards. Bob will no longer be promoting the Redwood Speedway and stated that four races would no longer be sponsored by Jackpot Junction. The UMSS announced a preliminary 21 race schedule that includes ten nights at Kopellah, Two shows at Cedar lake three appearances at North Central, four combined shows with the Arlington cars at Elko and two at Arlington. The combined shows are series races that will replace the former JJ series with sponsor details to be announced at a later date. The UMSS has been in talks with the management of Ogilvie Raceway and hopes to have the honor of being the series that will participate in the first Sprint Car show at the new track. Ogilvie recently raised some eyebrows by booking a World of Outlaws Late Model race on Sunday July 11, the same night that Cedar Lake hosts their annual World of Outlaws Sprint Car race. Fans of both forms of racing were left scratching their heads wondering why Outlaw officials would book both series on the same night 85 miles apart. I don't think having both forms of racing in close proximity will have a huge impact, the majority of Sprint Car and Late Model fans come from a different fan base. Rather than a liability I consider it icing on the cake, a little something for everybody right here in our back yard during the peak time of the season.

The UMSS banquet saw a surprise visitor competing with the Sprint Car drivers in the Kart races that took place after the awards ceremony. Modified driver Andy Jones will debut a former Stevie Smith Sprint Car with the UMSS and will be competing in select events in addition to driving a Modified this season. One of the goals of the UMSS is to attract new participants to Sprint Car racing and Andy is an example of what the club hopes to accomplish. Jones will be joined by several other rookie drivers who were encouraged by the success of UMSS Rookie of the Year Cody Hahn. In addition to winning ROY honors Hahn finished third in the UMSS points standings. To compliment the influx of new drivers coming from the Modified and Stock Car ranks the UMSS announced that they will be forming an alliance with a local Micro Sprint group as a feeder series. The plan is to add the Micro Sprints to as many as six UMSS shows during the 2010 season. This demographic shift towards Sprint Car racing only makes sense to me. Drivers that have sat behind the wheel of a variety of dirt track machines say there is nothing that compares to driving a Sprint Car. Years ago

Late Model standout Jim Bruggeman who also wheeled a Sprint Car told me something along the lines of "if they only knew how fun it is they'd never go back to Stock Cars." Bruggeman has been spotted several times in Kevin Nickel's pit helping with setup.

Although he wasn't a Sprint Car driver the late J.W. Hunt aka the "strawberry King" was a strawberry farmer from Florida who gained fame as a generous contributor to the sport. When Hunt would show up at a race he would often add excitement by sweetening the purse. Long time Sprint fans will recall the J.W. Hunt strawberry decal displayed by Jack Hewitt. Thought not a strawberry farmer GRP aka Greg Parent has earned a reputation as a generous supporter of racing in the upper Midwest. In addition to supplying trophies for the UMSS banquet the annual GRP dirt track racing trivia contest will have seen the checkered flag wave on its 11<sup>th</sup> season by the time you read this column. GRP came up with the idea of a trivia contest and approached me about hosting it on gotomn.com in 1999. This year the "race" was once again held at the mythical MDTR (Minnesota Dirt Track Racing) Speedway with yours truly as "flagman." Greg gives contest updates throughout the week on area message boards and winners receive cash prizes. You never know who you're going to see pull through the back gate at the MDTR Speedway. This year Greg had this to say in his Friday update:

"When the big yellow and black hauler with South Dakota plates rolled through the pit entrance, MDTR fans were buzzing with excitement. Making her contest debut in the Wolfweld #1AW, it was our first female competitor at MDTR in 2010. Yes fans, Allie Wolfgang had arrived with her crew chief, none other than Doug Wolfgang himself along with her brother Robby Wolfgang. This famous South Dakota racing family needs no introduction, but Todd Narveson kept the fans clued in on the action in the Wolfgang pit area. Soon it was time for the bright yellow "Lone Wolf" entry to hit the track. Allie was smooth and consistent right from the drop of the green flag. Soon she was in the lead pack and contending for a top spot. A couple of tricky corners here and there kept her just behind Todd Boots and Michael P. The lead trio brought the crowd to their feet on numerous occasions, just as the real sprint cars do on many a race night at your favorite track. In the end, Allie whistled under Stan's checkered flag with a fine 35 point tally on her first try. Needless to say, the Wolfgang pit area was crammed with fans following the races."

When she submitted her entry Allie explained to GRP that her dad, who has a great appreciation for the history of the sport, helped provide some of the more difficult answers. It's a thrill to see GRP's contest get that kind of recognition and some of the participants can boast about the time they out guessed Doug Wolfgang on "setup" at MDTR Speedway. Allie's brother Robby helped out with her contest entry as well. Last year Robby participated in several UMSS events but that probably won't be the case this season as Robby will be racing the Phillips floors 7k in the 410 division at the Knoxville Raceway. In addition to running for points at Knoxville the team will be running select 360 races whenever possible. It remains to be seen how much Robby will be racing in our area. Watch robbiewolfgang.com for 2010 schedule information.

Another frequent UMSS and IRA competitor who will be expanding his horizons this season is Scott Winters. Guy Forbrook will be Scott's new crew chief and they will kick off their season in Las Vegas on February 26 with the

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World of Outlaws. No schedule has been posted on scottwintersracing.com to date but I expect to see the 23<sup>rd</sup> at select events in our area. Kent Winters had great success racing at Cedar Lake back when the WISSOTA Sprints were running there weekly and loves to race up here whenever possible. It remains to be seen if we will see Scott in a 360 during the 2010 racing season.

In the last issue of MRC online I mentioned that I would debut my preliminary 2010 schedule in this issue. Before I get into schedule specifics I should mention that I had the opportunity to attend the Cedar Lake banquet at Grand Casino Hinckley on January 9. I was honored to see many of my 2009 photos used in the banquet Power Point presentation and to visit with friends from the Modified and Stock Car ranks. Congratulations to Rick Egersdorf for winning the 2009 Cedar Lake NASCAR Late Model championship. My sources tell me that this was Rick's 13<sup>th</sup> championship that he has won in various divisions since he began racing in the mid 70's at the Cedar Lake Speedway.

The reason I'm mentioning the Cedar Lake banquet in the context of my schedule is that weekly racing at Cedar Lake will no longer be a part of my schedule in 2010. 1999, the year I started writing for MRC, coincided with Cedar Lake dropping the Sprint Car class. To be quite honest that lineup change made my decision as to whether or not I would join the MRC staff a difficult one. After giving it some thought I decided that some type of dirt track racing was better than none. I'll admit to not being much of a Late Model or Modified fan at the outset but I have come to enjoy them and made many friends in those divisions.

Nevertheless, with the addition of 20 UMSS shows combined with the existing IRA and WoO dates and a few visits to Jackson and Arlington I found that I could attend 30 Sprint Car races with a minimum of travel. Since my annual racing schedule comes in at around 30 races I found myself having to make a decision not unlike the one I faced in 1999. After much thought I came to the conclusion that racing is supposed to be fun and I have the most fun watching Sprint Cars. Seeing as my racing travels are supported by the family budget it no longer made sense for me to try to do it all. With that being said here is a rough draft of my 2010 all Sprint Cars schedule:

Ten nights of UMSS racing at Kopellah, two UMSS shows at Cedar Lake, four at Elko, one at North Central and one or two Saturday nights at Arlington. See the umsprints.com website for specific dates. I plan on attending the Jackson Spring Sprint Spectacular and possibly the Friday of the Jackson Nationals, see jacksonspeedway.com for more information. My IRA schedule will consist of the Masters (an opportunity to see some Late Model racing), Elko and back to CLS for the Jerry Richert Memorial. Additional tentative IRA dates include Deer Creek in June, Eagle Valley in July and Rice Lake in August. Details regarding the IRA schedule can be found at irasprints.com. I'll be heading out to see the "Greatest Show on Dirt" with World of Outlaws dates at Cedar Lake, North Central and Deer Creek. The World of Outlaws websites for both Sprint Cars and Late Models can be found at worldofoutlaws.com.

They say that regardless of how old we are or where our path in life has taken us we never forget our first love. For me that first love in racing is Sprint Cars. I don't regret spending over a decade covering all types of local dirt track racing but in recent years I have been spread too thin and finally came to a crossroad after last season. I won't rule out some last minute visits to Cedar Lake, Ogilvie or Kopellah for weekly shows but for the most part I will be covering Sprint Car racing exclusively in my column.

I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome Paul Pittman to the pages of MRC. Paul brings with him many years of experience as a writer, announcer, photographer and webmaster for the IRA. Sprint Car racing has been relegated to the status of a red headed stepchild here in Stock Car and Modified country so MRC's expanded coverage of open wheel racing is a breath of fresh air. I'm looking forward to working with Paul to deliver a one two punch in

MRC and visiting with him when he makes his trips "out west" during the coming season.

My new website midwestracingtalk.com debuted with video coverage of the UMSS banquet and an audio interview by MRC Editor Dan Plan. MWRT will not be limited to Sprint Cars and will include cover both dirt and asphalt. Video was provided by Vance of frypanproductions.com with Dan and myself doing the audio interviews. Vance does the video work for Kopellah and Ogilvie on a weekly basis but I hope to talk him into expanding his horizons a few times this season. Video productions will include both racing footage as well as my first attempts at interviews since 2003's Race Show.

In the next issue of MRC I will review early season racing in Florida and take a closer look at what we can expect during the 2010 season in our area. At the time of this writing Danny Lasoski won the 2010 All Stars season opener at the Ocala Speedway on January 29.

Thanks for reading and we'll see you at the races!

**Modified ace, Andy Jones, is set to make his Sprint Car debut in 2010.**  
*Stan Meissner file photo*





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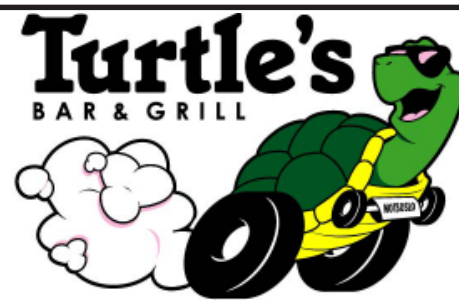


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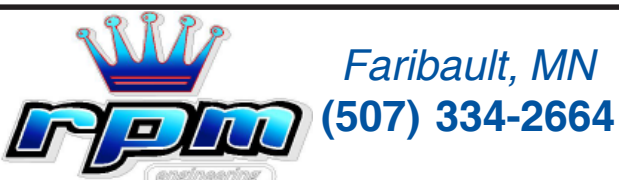
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# In The Drivers Seat



Brian Johnson is one of the veteran asphalt racers in the area that hung up the helmet several years ago, but recently decided to give racing a try once again. To listen to the full audio version of the interview, check out [www.midwestracingtalk.com](http://www.midwestracingtalk.com).

It sounds like you will be back out racing again this year. How did this come about?

*Well, I think mainly we just couldn't find anything to really entertain ourselves after, I believe, twenty-six years of racing. Everything seems to come back to Elko Speedway with my family.*

Whose car will you be driving?

*I'll be driving Joey Miller's car.*

How long has it been since you raced?

*'05 was the last season that I raced, so it will be five years.*

What made you decided to come back out and race again?

*I helped Adam Royle for the last few years, and*

*we had a lot of fun with that. After I quit, I bought a '65 Chevelle, and found out I haven't grown up much as far as driving that on the road. We went from that to a boat. The boat was pretty fun. It was pretty crazy at the landings, pretty crazy on the lake, but for the most part it was relaxing. It seemed like on most Saturday nights, we found ourselves back at the race track. I guess that's what a racing family does – they race.*

You were part of Adam Royle's team the last few years. Were you able to learn some things that will help your program in the coming year?

*Technology and everything changes so much that it probably kept me in tune with racing a little bit.*

You spent some time racing in Wisconsin earlier in your career when there was a wide range of rules for asphalt Late Models. Would you agree that things are much more consistent these days for asphalt racers?

*Yeah, most definitely. You can build a car for Elko and go multiple different tracks and be pretty competitive, versus back in the day. You didn't know if you were taking a knife to a gun fight.*

How does your family help you out when racing?

*My wife does all of the books and everything like that. Things will probably change with my daughters being five years different. It will be interesting to see what part they play.*

Have you set any goals yet for this year?

*Yep, my main goal is to have a good time.*



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## Auto Racing Facts, Observances and Opinions



By Dale P. Danielski

Slowly but surely we are crawling out of our winter cocoon, but before we dive into the latest 2010 racing news let's dig deep once again into the archives and rediscover racing how it used to be.

With most folks already tired of the winter weather in the Northland by this time of year, it was not unusual for many race teams and fans to make the pilgrimage to Florida for Speedweeks. New Smyrna Speedway of New Smyrna Beach Florida and their World Series of Asphalt Stock Car Racing was generally the destination for short track racers and their followers, although taking advantage of some "Big Track" activities came into play as well. To say we witnessed some wild racing during those trips is certainly an understatement. And to top it off, the only thing to match the wild racing were the wild times that were just as big a part of the trips!

Back in the late 1970s and '80s our crew from up here in Wisconsin seemed to head down to the sunny south every few years. We always drove and never had it in us to stay overnight on the way down. Drive straight for 21 hours and get the hell out of cold country! In 1976 we had as usual a nice contingent of Midwestern representation in southland. Tom Reffner hot off his great

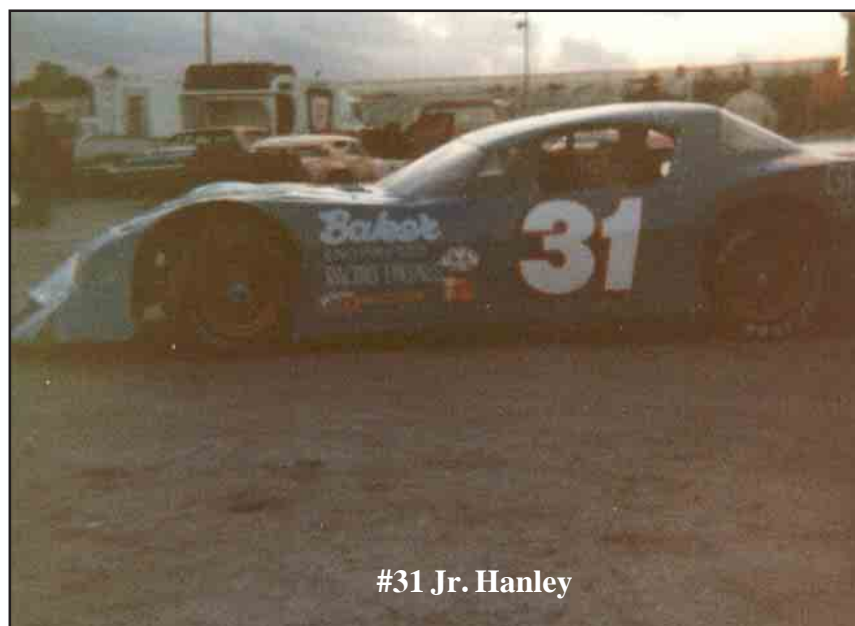
1975 season claimed to have a better car and more AMC Horsepower so he decided to make the trip. Three bad wrecks and problems with the new power plant made his experience less than stellar. Others making the trek included the State of Michigan's "Blue Bird", Bob Senneker, Joe Ruttman and Henry "Butch" Miller. Senneker had his share of on track trouble too but did place well in several events while there. Joe Ruttman meanwhile, brought three cars down to Florida but they spent most of their time parked at the Motel he was staying at!

There is something to be said for enjoying the sights, sounds and nice weather while in Florida I guess. Miller fared by far the worst of the group as he blew his engine, smacked the wall and had his car go up in flames! He was OK, but the car was a write off. One of Chicagoland's finest Ray Young, Rockford, IL., Speedway star Joe Shear, Indiana perennial winner Dave Roahrig, Ohio hot shoes in purple team cars Jack Chambers, Bill Stauder and Marvin Gore along with Jim Bickerstaff were others in attendance. Young was by no means overpowering but was consistent every night and placed well in the 6 night marathon final points for the Series. Shear never really did get untracked but he took his Boyce Chassis car home in one piece at least. Roahrig raced every night and stayed clean for the most part as did the Ohio contingent. Another Ohio guy, John Anderson who was just beginning to make his mark in racing, did win one feature while here. One thing that was really fun to watch was seeing how your region's favorites stacked up against the others in the field who arrived from all parts of the Country and Canada. You just never knew who was going to show up and believe me there were some big time, big track, heavy hitters that usually did. In this year's edition it was Freddy Fryar, racing a Nova built by Daytona 500 winner Pete Hamilton dominating action and taking the overall NSS crown. Donnie Allison in another Nova won but couldn't catch Fryar for the Series title. Jody Ridley, in of all things, a Ford Falcon, was also a winner but not the overall champion. And, if you think the main competition ended there, how about this for a list of entrants competing; Rich Somers, Ray Hendrick, Larry Schuler, Mark and Brad Malcuit, and Darrell Waltrip! Just how many wins do you think these guys ended up having between them including many at the National NASCAR level! Throw in super pavement racer at that time Buck Simmons from Georgia, he later won many races on dirt, and Florida stars Dick Anderson, Bobby Gill, Ray Bontrager, Gary Balough, Mike McCrary, Dave Scarborough, Larry Rogero, and Buddy Griffin and you can see what I'm talking about competition wise. Even cooler was the fact it was easy to find these guys spending time at the many Daytona Beach night life hot spots after the races. It was nothing to bump into Allison or Balough or any number of others, have a couple drinks and some friendly conversation. This led to that and needless to say, on more than one occasion we caught a

great view of the sun coming up over the ocean heading back to the Motel! We always made it back relatively unscathed though, and I guess it was so much fun we went back for more.

More as in the 1981 version of Speedweeks. Racing officials during the New Smyrna Speedway World Series events, to put it mildly were quite liberal in what was allowed car specification wise to race. Often times if the car fit into the shed and onto the scales where tech took place you were legal. In 1981 many of the cars struggled with even being able to do that. It was during the time when wings and spoilers of all proportions were popular and racers pushed the limit to the max. None more so than Gary Balough. Balough showed up with something that looked like it would be better equipped to head off into space rather than around a race track. His new creation got through the tech line (Officials weren't going to DQ it with the very intimidating Balough staring at them) which immediately created a mad scramble from the rest of the field to try and come up with something even remotely as aerodynamic. Sheet metal, tin snips and rivet guns were never in higher demand. Canada star Jr., Hanley was on hand with a radical looking piece but nothing like what Balough raced. Ohio speedster Bobby Tinkham had a sleek machine but made additional aero changes. Dick Trickle, Larry Detjens, Mike Miller and Mike Eddy showed up with reasonably "Stock" cars but by the 2<sup>nd</sup> night of the Series, in order to keep up with the Balough's, had them altered. Eddy even came up with his version of a Balough-Mobile which included a canopy that fit neatly around the driver. Needless to say it was Balough and Hanley doing most of the winning with Hanley eventually taking the 9 night Series crown. Trickle, Detjens, Miller, Eddy and

*continued on page 11*



#31 Jr. Hanley

*continued from page 10*

Tinkham all ran strong but they were no match for the two space mobiles. Of course the World Series events also featured the Eastern States Modified contingent. Richie Evans, John Blewett, and Jimmy Spencer were just a few of the hot shoes in that division. And with their partying reputations you'd



Mike Miller

expect Trickle and Evans and their crews to get together after a nights worth of racing and they did. Stories abound of smashed bar stools, wrecked rental cars, ocean side rendezvous, crashed go-karts up on the Boardwalk and many other late night and early morning escapades, and you know what? You can believe what you want. Whatever you do hear, no matter how outrageous it sounds, it more than likely happened! Oh boy! Here

comes that sun up over the ocean again and we're still at the bar with Trickle.

By the later '80s the dirt set was really getting our attention so trips to the Jacksonville and Barberville Florida tracks for racing were in order in addition to

New Smyrna. The word stock had been thrown out in 1985 as it was Wedge Late Models all the way. And again, it was just amazing the drivers from everywhere that would head South to compete. Jeff Purvis during his dirt heyday, Kris Patterson, "Little" John Provenzano, Pete Parker, Black "Jack" Boggs, Leon Plank, Bob Pierce, Larry Phillips, Larry Moore, just to name a portion of the field. Often times these stars wouldn't even make the main so

tough was the competition. The Eastern Dirt Modified crew brought all kinds of talent South as



Daytona 500 winner Derrike Cope

well. Guys you'd only read and heard about were here. Billy Pauch, "Barefoot" Bob Mc Creadie, Jack Johnson, Doug Hoffman, Kevin Collins, Jimmy Horton... unbelievable the talent and all assembled in one place! New Smyrna was still drawing well with guys like Dave Dion, Derrike Cope, David Rogers, Daniel Keene, Steve Grissom, Trickle, and Shear, all showing up.

But perhaps the craziest scenario heading down to Florida was the advertised \$100,000 to win Enduro race to be held at Orlando Speed World in 1987. Yes, \$100,000 for an Enduro race! Except that pay-off didn't happen. The



Billy Pauch Modified

race was to feature current model year luxury cars as in brand new Cadillacs, Lincolns, Mercedes, BMWs, that sort of thing. With a \$1,000 entry fee the promoter expected to get more than 100 cars which of course would have paid the winners share. Less than half that showed up so the winning purse was just \$30,000. Still no small chunk of change and of the cars that did race I'll bet more than a few sustained that much in damage banging into each other which had the large crowd on hand, on its feet much of the time. Larry Moyer won the event and his Lincoln showed much damage on the right side

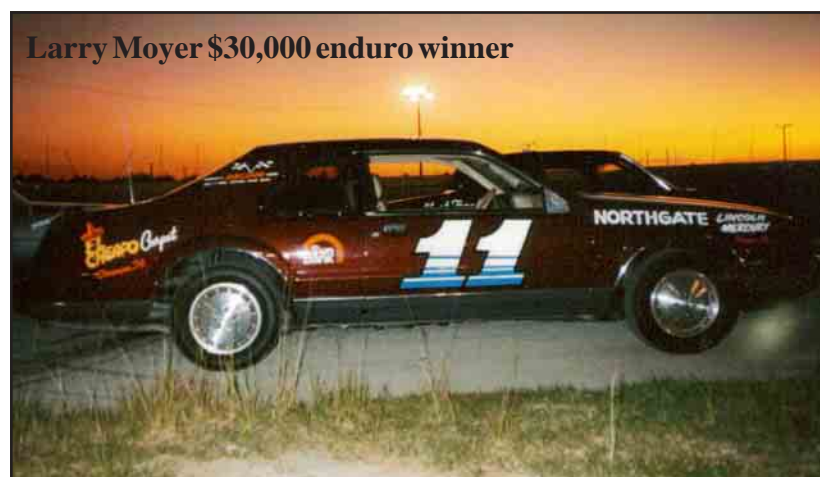
after he blew a tire and ran into the wall. Anyway you look at it, what a fantastic time to be following racing and to get a way from the Cold Winter blues. In some ways those trips may have shortened our lives, but the great fun in experiencing it all

was well worth it. With that are you ready for some racing 2010 style?

Comments, notes, etc., welcome to Dale P. Danielski, at [dale@starmakermultimedia.com](mailto:dale@starmakermultimedia.com) 967 10th Ave N Ste A, Onalaska, WI 54650 608-783-5827.



Freddy Fryar in Pete Hamilton built car



Larry Moyer \$30,000 enduro winner

## Going in Circles



By Charlie Spry

On Saturday night, January 16th, we took the trip up to Wausau to attend the State Park Speedway banquet put on by the WCAR (Women Concerned for Auto Racing). Kind of nice to have a little bench racing in the middle of winter to break up the off season.

Former racer Andy Bartelt handled the mic for the banquet, using his wit to set the tone for the evening. I don't think I have ever seen such huge trophies given away at a racing banquet, all the way down the line. Nicely done. First up were the Mini-Mods, with the top eight receiving very nice hardware. Champion Dale Louze also took home a nice Snap-On tool chest from fellow racer "Snappy" Joe Kuehn for his efforts. Phil Malouf took home second, with Brad Conant grabbing third. "Grandpa" Robert Dalsky was honored as the outstanding driver of the year, with Brandon Bender getting the "HotShot" award. Rookie-Of-The-Year was Josh Wilhite, with Joe Kuehn taking home the award for the best paint and design.

Street Stock champion Wayne Mackesy took home the winners hardware, with Jeff Nowak recording second, and Nick Erickson third. Travis

Volm was named Rookie-Of-The-Year for his fine efforts, which included one feature victory.

The Super Late Models had an abbreviated ceremony, as only two were present for the required amount of races, with Mark Mackesy taking home the championship in dominating fashion, and Tucker Miller taking home second.

A couple of other awards were also presented, with Phil Bickley getting the Pioneer award, and Jim "Jimmer" Lietz taking home the "Helping Hand" award. I was honored to be asked to the banquet to present this award to Jim, as he is a good friend, and really deserves this award, which goes out to the person who is always looking for ways of helping others. We need more of this kind of thing in racing and life in general.

By the time you read this, the new owners of the track, Ron and Scott Wimmer, will have completed rules meeting regarding the 2010 season, so many questions should be put to rest. I spoke with Travis Volm, and he was hoping the rules for the street stocks would stay the same, as he couldn't afford to spend more money, and would probably then run as a pure stock at Golden Sands. The four cylinder racers are hoping to run a combined point fund between SPS and 'Sands, which should work well for them, but many are also concerned with the rising cost of racing.

Super late model champion Mark Mackesy stated that he planned on doing pretty much the same in 2010 as he did in 2009, running the local tracks in central Wisconsin. As for Tucker Miller, he said "I will have all new equipment this year, so I'm excited. I will run the local tracks and also plan on one ASA race." Best of luck to both in 2010.

Mini-Mod runnerup Phil Malouf has started racing in some enduros in addition to his hectic schedule of

racing his regular racers throughout Wisconsin. He says he plans on traveling even more in 2010, maybe to some other states. He ran an enduro in Farley, Iowa in early January in the extreme cold. That's dedication.

I've always been impressed with Mini-Mod champion Dale Louze. He has raced for many years in everything from Bomber cars to four cylinder cars to sportsman cars, and even ran a VW Karmann Ghia with late models when an early compact division was disbanded in the 1970's. He has raced on pavement, dirt, and even on the ice. I recently had a chance to ride along with Dale while he raced on the ice at a local venue. Even on the ice, he rarely bumps anyone. I don't believe he touched a car during the whole time I ran with him. It is impressive to see people who can race like that, with respect for their own and others equipment. By the way, Dale let me take his car out for a few laps afterward, and racing on the ice is not as easy as it looks. If it seems like I have a ton of respect for veteran drivers.... I do. The veterans have stuck with it for many years, because they know how to make the racing dollar stretch, and still have fun and win.

On another subject, 2010 might be the year of the V-6 racer. Several tracks are adding this type of car to their weekly shows in an attempt to take advantage of so many of them becoming available as possible race cars. We shall see how many get built and how it goes. If it takes off anything like four cylinder racers did several years ago, there will be many more race cars around. I believe, once again, the secret will be in keeping the cost down.

Not much else going on right now. Just waiting for Spring. Stay warm!



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## The Racing Geek



by **Jordan Bianchi**

They're like the golden ticket of the NASCAR world. Every driver wants one, but yet only a select few actually get them. What I'm referring to is a ride in a competitive car with the backing of a big-name sponsor supported by an owner who gives you all the proper tools to be successful.

The caveat however is that with the proverbial golden ticket comes expectations and with expectations comes pressure. Here is The Racing Geek's list of the drivers who are most under the gun in 2010. And to be fair, below that, are my five crew chiefs that undoubtedly will have the spotlight shining the brightest on them in the coming year.

### Drivers

#### 1. Dale Earnhardt Jr.

When you're the son of a seven-time Sprint Cup champion and one of the greatest drivers of all-time, there's going to be pressure on you regardless of what you do on the track, good or bad. Add in the fact that you drive for the best owner in NASCAR – an owner who's other three cars finished the year 1-2-3 in the standings – and it's easy to see why no driver will have more pressure on him this year than the driver of the 88 car.

#### 2. Kevin Harvick

Kevin Harvick likes to think he's a big-time driver who deserves to be mentioned in the same breath as the Johnson's, the Stewart's and the Gordon's of the sport. The difference being is that all those drivers have won Sprint Cup trophies, not to mention a race in the last two-years. Harvick has done neither. With Harvick being a free agent at the end of the year,

he's going to have to do something, like maybe win a race, to show that he's worthy of a ride with one of the premiere teams in NASCAR. Ball's in your court, Kevin.

#### 3. David Ragan

When Mark Martin left Roush Fenway Racing at the end of the 2006 season, Jack Roush surprisingly picked David Ragan to fill the seat of his famous number 6 Ford. Unfortunately, Ragan has done little to prove that he deserves that ride. In 110 Cup starts, Ragan has yet to win a race. He's accumulated in three full year's only eight top-fives and 19 top-10s. That's unacceptable; no matter how off Roush Fenway Racing was in 2009. If those stats don't improve dramatically by the end of 2010, Ragan's golden ticket will certainly be taken away.

#### 4. Carl Edwards

Carl Edwards isn't in danger of losing his ride. But Edwards will be under a different kind of pressure this year. He has to prove that he's the driver who won nine times in 2008 and who was the consensus favorite to win the championship last year, and not the driver who was shutout of victory lane in 2009.

#### 5. Denny Hamlin

The spot that Carl Edwards found himself in last year at this time is the same spot that Denny Hamlin now finds himself in. Hamlin has become the trendy pick – and rightfully so – to take down Johnson. Whether Hamlin can handle the expectations and thrive in that role, will go a long way in dictating what kind of year he will have.

### Crew Chiefs

#### 1. Steve Letarte

The numbers don't lie and the numbers say that Letarte is a more than capable crew chief with nine wins, since taking over the seat atop the 24 pit box in 2006. The numbers also say that Letarte's driver Jeff Gordon has a lower winning percentage now than at any point in his career and doesn't appear to be any closer to winning his fifth championship. Right or wrong that burden falls at the feet of Letarte.

#### 2. Steve Addington

Mr. Addington has two things to prove this year. The first one is that Kyle Busch's disappointing 2009



Jason Smith/Getty Images

season wasn't the result of Addington being a poor crew chief. It had more to do with Kyle Busch being Kyle Busch. The second thing Addington needs to prove is that he is a suitable replacement for Pat Tryson, who seemingly willed the 2 car into the Chase last year. If he proves incapable of replacing Tryson, Addington's reputation will take yet another severe hit.

#### 3. Dave Rogers

Being the crew chief for Kyle Busch is a double-edged sword. Yeah, you're working with a driver who may possess more talent than any other driver in NASCAR and is certainly going to win races. On the other hand, you are working with Kyle Busch. Enough said.

#### 4. Lance McGrew

Being the crew chief for Dale Earnhardt Jr. is a lot like being an offensive lineman in football. When things go right, you get little to no credit. However when things go wrong, the finger almost always gets pointed at you. That's Lance McGrew's world in 2010. Have fun with that.

#### 5. Bob Osborne

Bob Osborne works for an owner who is notorious for having a short leash on his crew chiefs and an owner who has never been shy about replacing them. All of which means if Carl Edwards's crew chief has a year like he had last year, in which his team went winless and was regarded as one of the biggest disappointments in NASCAR, Osborne might need to start updating his résumé.

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# THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION

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Jacobe Goede in Vintage Snowmobile action  
*Martin Defries photo*



Matt Goede in Vintage Snowmobile action  
*Martin DeFries photo*



Cedar Lake Speedway Modified drivers honored at their banquet  
*Stan Meissner photo*



Cedar Lake Super Late Model top-five  
*Stan Meissner photo*



Martial Law at the Metrodome  
*Jacy Norgaard photo*



WSA Action at Raceway Park  
*Tom Johnson photo*

# THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION

## Photo Gallery



The late Richie Evans at New Smyrna in the 1980's  
*Dale P. Danielski photo*



Gary "Hot Shoe" Balough's creation that changed asphalt racing  
*Dale P. Danielski photo*



Tim Olson and Steve Einhaus with the ASA Midwest Tour top-5  
*Doug Hornickel photo*



ASA Midwest Tour Champion - Steve Carlson  
*Doug Hornickel photo*



Raceway Park Figure-8 drivers  
*Martin Defries photo*



Raceway Park Late Model top-five  
*Martin Defries photo*