

THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION

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THE MIDWEST'S SHORT TRACK AUTO RACING AUTHORITY

March, 2012



Big-8 Champ Interview



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Racing
Observations

The Inside Dirt



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Publisher's Note

Racing According to Plan



Dan Plan

With all of the various forms of information available on the Internet these days (websites, Facebook, Twitter, etc.), it's never been easier to see what is going on in Florida during Speedweeks. When you can instantly see pictures of race cars, the Atlantic Ocean and palm trees; it also makes it a whole lot easier to become envious of everybody that gets to make the trip. It's even worse when you're constantly being sent pictures of your prized Heart O'Texas Speedway can cooler that disappeared at Oktoberfest, shown at numerous locations across the state of Florida. One of these years we'll make our way back down south, but for now, we'll just rely on looking at our computer screen.

While it's nice to keep tabs on what's happening during Speedweeks, you just can't beat being there in person. There's nothing better than the sweet smell of high-octane race gas from a Late Model or methanol exhaust fumes from a Sprint Car at the race track.

With Speedweeks in Florida wrapping up recently, the local racing season is just around the corner. There has been some big news on the national and local scene since our last on-line issue. One of the items on

the national scene that came as somewhat of a surprise to us, was the cancellation of the racing season at Irwindale Speedway. We've all seen, or heard of short tracks closing around the nation in the past few years. Typically, they have been smaller tracks in much smaller markets. Irwindale was a state of the art facility, just slightly over 10-years-old, and was in one of the biggest markets in the country (Los Angeles). How that track didn't survive really comes as a shock. My gut tells me it may have had something to do with building a facility for people with champagne taste, when most of the people that use the facility are on a beer budget.

The other national news release that caught my attention was the announcement of a special short track race at Daytona in 2013. A temporary oval will be constructed on the back stretch. The Modifieds, Late Models and K&N Series will run on Monday and Tuesday night of Speedweeks. While I think it's a neat idea, there's a place just down the road that already runs two of these divisions (Modifieds and Late Models), and has been doing so for 30+ years during Speedweeks. New Smyrna announced they will give the Modified teams the night off during the shows at the big track, but it will be interesting to see how this addition impacts the events at New Smyrna in 2013. Time will tell, and it isn't the first time the World Series of Asphalt racing has had competition for asphalt racers. During one of our first trips to Daytona in the early 1990's, Volusia still had a paved track and a dirt track. Many of the same classes were running at New Smyrna and Volusia during the same time frame. Back then, there were enough cars and race fans to go around. These days; not so much.

On the local scene, a couple of big announcements came out for the ASA Midwest Tour and Big-8 Late Model series. The ASA Midwest Tour has finalized their plans to race at the Milwaukee Mile, with the Big-8 cars. It's been a while since the local Late Models have been able to run at the Mile. Hopefully the Tuesday night show works out for everyone.

Continued on page 4

The Midwest

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continued from page 3

The Big-8 Series 2012 schedule was also recently released, with several new events in addition to the Milwaukee Mile. The Big-8 group will make their first appearance at State Park Speedway in Wausau, WI, along with a special Tuesday night special at LaCrosse Fairgrounds Speedway over the Fourth of July holiday.

The ASA Midwest Tour also modified their schedule with the addition of a second show at Elko for the annual Thunderstruck race. The part about this change I liked the most is the Elko show is now on its own weekend and does not conflict with the National Short Track Championships in Rockford. While there may not be a lot of crossover of fans and drivers

between those two events, those of us that like the opportunity to attend both, can now do so.

In other news closer to home, we were saddened to see the ASA Midwest Tour will not be visiting Raceway Park in Shakopee this year. There was a late addition to the Raceway Park schedule with a 75-lap Hobby Stock/Thunder Car race currently scheduled for Labor Day afternoon. We are not aware of any other specials for this type of car on Labor Day. With no schedule conflicts, one would hope a large field is on hand. It sure would be nice to see a big stock car race again on Labor Day in Minnesota.

And finally, this summer will be the 25th Annual USA Nationals at Cedar Lake Speedway. Despite an afternoon downpour on the final day, all three-days of the show went off without a hitch last year. Each year, there are items that happen on, and off the track, that make you look forward to the next event. I'm not sure how last year's event can be topped, but I think that every year, and it seems to keep happening.



All in all, it's shaping up to be a great season here in the upper-Midwest.

Photos above and left of my prized Heart O' Texas Speedway can cooler on tour without me during Speedweeks

Dirty Talkin'



Kris McMartin

Here in the Midwest we have this nasty thing that we call winter and it can start as early as October and hang on well into April. This unfortunately makes for a relatively long off season for the racing community, when in other areas of the country there are various forms of racing starting as early as February and can

last well into November. The off season in the Midwest is very long and leaves its fans and its drivers waiting through several months without its racing fix.

The racing community is its very own culture and when you are removed from this culture for so long because of the winter season there is a culture shock. We have racing banquets, swap meets, track and series meetings to plan for the next racing season, and even plan big Daytona 500 parties where we can get our racing community together for a few hours here and there but that just leaves us wishing that we were all at the track rather than the venue we happen to be meeting at. For any die hard racing fan or driver racing is a passion you could even say it was an addiction. For some of us more than others the addiction is very strong and unfortunately unless we have enough money to travel around the world chasing races we just have to wait out the winter. Like any junkie with an addiction, both race fans and drivers go through a long period of withdrawal which usually manifests about the time that the NASCAR season ends and it does not end until the first race of the next season. There is no rehab available and for most there is nothing that can substitute.

By the time that April gets here, and the rains start coming down, we just want our racing fix and will do just about anything to get it. We do things like watch weather reports for everywhere within driving distance and gauging what tracks may get their season openers in and which ones may not. We then plan where we are going and what the alternatives may be in the event that the first choice is rained out. We are willing to go and watch even when it is so cold that we have to wear our snowmobile suits in order to be comfortable.

With this winter being so mild and with so little snow there were several times over this particular off season where we were left to wonder why we were not racing. With weather in the 50's over Christmas and again in January it was hard to believe we were in the Midwest at all. This has made the waiting this year even harder than most and as we near March I am looking forward to a warm spring with beautiful weather on the weekends so that the area tracks are able to get their season openers in the books and us fans and drivers can once again be back in the culture that we love so much.



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The Inside Dirt



Stan Meissner

Danica Patrick's move to NASCAR has resulted in the biggest media storm in the history of the sport of racing. Let me make it clear at the outset that I am not one of her detractors and consider myself one of her fans. Sexy commercials aside as a husband and the father of three daughters and four granddaughters I wouldn't dare to be anything but a Danica fan. Considering how outnumbered I am you might say that my life depends on it. I raised my daughters to believe that they can succeed through hard work and determination and to deviate from my own advice by belittling a successful woman would surely be my undoing. If Danica's presence results in the non-race-fan women in my family paying more attention to racing I don't think that's a bad thing. Today's race cars aren't the ill handling beasts of the 1950's so it's no longer necessary for a driver to be a crew cut wearing, cigar chomping, beer drinking ex WWII Marine to handle one. Fitness and hand eye coordination are the most important factors and they can come in small packages.

Big time racing media in my humble opinion tend to be a bit full of themselves. When a NASCAR driver

goes Sprint Car racing they're considered to be out playing around having fun. Never mind that the Outlaws carve out a tough living criss cross the country racing upwards of 100 nights or that it took decades for Tony Stewart to score his first WoO victory. Dirt track racing is real racing but it just happens to play out in a more down-to-earth setting. It's easy to understand how the big time racing media in their suits and air conditioned media centers could look down their noses at grass roots racing. Likewise when Indy Car or Formula One drivers make the transition to Stock Cars they're treated as if they came from an inferior form of the sport and they have no experience. You probably know what I'm getting at, Danica's driving skills have for the most part been overlooked. For that matter, the driving skills of Indy Car and Sprint Car drivers tend to be looked down on by the majority of the Stock Car media.

Danica has impressed me throughout her career and it has little to do with her television commercials. Some racing fans complain that Danica Patrick uses her sex appeal to sell but male drivers have done the same thing without a negative word being said. Women have been swooning over commercials featuring drivers such as Kasey Kahne, Jeff Gordon, and Dale Earnhardt Jr. for years. True, those male drivers might not have been wearing bathing suits but I defer to the differences between men and women. The women in my life tell me that they consider commercials featuring fully clothed male drivers "hot" so I have to take their word for it. Sure Danica's commercials tend to be corny and over hyped but they're money grabbers and money equals speed. Anything that brings money and attention to the sport is a good thing. If anyone doesn't believe that sexism is alive and well in 2012 all they have to do is read any racing message board post that mentions Danica in the heading. Don't think for a minute that she's not under a lot of pressure to succeed. Indy Car drivers have had mixed success transitioning to Stock Cars as I'm sure she is well aware. The male dominated sport of racing will put her under greater scrutiny than

any driver to ever climb into a Cup car. NASCAR could be great for her or it could be her undoing, only time will tell. I for one, hope that she does well and proves the doubters wrong.

The biggest controversy surrounding Danica centers on Stewart-Haas Racing acquiring the top 35 spot in the points earned by Dave Blaney for Tommy Baldwin Racing. I have gone on the

Stan Meissner photo



Craig Dollansky started his season with a bang down in Florida when he captured wins with both the All Stars and World of Outlaws. Dollansky is due for a championship and with this could be Craig's year. This picture was taken at the May 1, 2010 Jackson, Minnesota, World of Outlaws show.

record as being a big fan of Dave Blaney through some admittedly difficult years. Whenever Blaney appeared poised to win a race the wheels would usually fall off as literally happened in 2001's Cracker Barrel 500 at Atlanta. Over the years it seems that whenever Dave got into a good situation bad luck would dominate his season and he'd end up losing the ride. I'm still a huge fan of Dave Blaney but he's getting to the age where NASCAR's fascination with the next young phenomenon will soon catch up to him so time is running out on his opportunities.

There is a lot of outrage among some of Dave's fans about Tommy Baldwin's top 35 points sale. I'm going to buck the trend here because I don't think it's going to hurt Dave as much as some think. Dave raced his way into the Daytona 500 and the equipment, sponsor exposure and affiliation with one of the "have" teams will outweigh any perceived disadvantage brought on by having to qualify for five races. Personally I think that NASCAR's top 35 rule is ridiculous. Time trials, Heats and a B Main would be more to my liking. Jimmy Johnson or Dale Jr. time poorly, smack the wall in their Heat and fail to transfer out of the B Main? Too bad, load it up and try again next week. That's what us dirt heads refer to as real racing. Danica didn't make the rules, other teams have transferred points in the past but those transactions pretty much went under the radar.

Danica got caught up in a nasty crash in her Daytona qualifier and handled the resulting interview like a professional. She lined up ahead of 42 other drivers in the Nationwide race and ended up getting turned around by another machine and crashed out through no fault of her own. It's tough to earn the pole position in any racing series and that is exactly what she did in Nationwide though the end results were less than hoped for. In the Daytona 500 Danica tried to steer clear of a spinning Jimmy Johnson on lap two but couldn't avoid him and sustained damage that relegated her to a 38th place finish. I was impressed when she applied the first rule of open wheel racing,



Chris Graythen/Getty Images for NASCAR

continued on page 7

continued from page 6

avoid a direct hit on another driver at all costs. It appeared to from my perspective that she would have ate the wall rather than t-bone Johnson. You learn that respect in open wheel racing from Sprints and Midgets all the way up to F1 and Indy Cars.

In the meantime the bad luck Gods that seem to have plagued Dave Blaney looked the other way on this night. Juan Pablo Montoya was involved in a freak accident with one of the jet dryers while under caution. JPM is very lucky that his car did not become wedged in the wreckage or the outcome could have been devastating. As a former flight deck sailor it was obvious that the Daytona rescue crew never gave much thought to the possibility they'd be fighting a jet fuel fire of that magnitude or they'd have had a better foam delivery system. I shudder to think what might have happened if Jaun had not been able to walk away from the wreck. Fortunately Montoya and the truck driver escaped the inferno and the resulting red flag had Dave Blaney fans doing a rain dance. The Speedway crew was able to patch the charred asphalt and resume the race after a lengthy delay. Some question if that would have been the case if one of NASCAR's favorite sons had been leading. Nevertheless, Dave Blaney salvaged a 15th place finish after the restart and I don't think he'll have any issues staying in the top 35 this season. I'm not a huge NASCAR fan nor do I consider myself an authority but I follow the sport with the emphasis on former Sprint Car drivers. Blaney is benefiting from the TBR deal so that is even more of a reason for me to cheer for Danica Patrick.

Brooke Tatnell spent the winter of 2011/2012 racing in his native Australia. Highlights included winning his fifth Australian Championship at Adelaide, placing second in World Series Sprintcar points (the Aussie equivalent to the World of Outlaws) and winning the Jack Daniels Nationals at Speedway City. In Tatnell's absence his familiar #59 "Golden Rocket" was driven by none other than NASCAR driver Dave Blaney in Florida Speedweeks competition. Blaney managed a couple of 20th place finishes in Florida based car owner Tom Leidig's machine. The team receives help with their engine program from another well known name in NASCAR, Ray Evernham. It's tough to jump into another type of racing after a long layoff even with World of Outlaw and Knoxville Nationals titles in one's resume.

Pat Doar wheeled his familiar #11 to an eleventh place finish and Rookie of the Year honors with the World of Outlaws Late Model series in 2011. Doar has kicked off his second season with the touring group and took a series best fifth place finish at Ocala's Bubba Raceway Park on February 18. I

look for Doar to improve over last year now that he's more familiar with the tracks and competition.

Another local driver looking to run an ambitious schedule is the driver featured in the last issue of the Midwest Racing Connection, Andy Jones. Andy has put together a 360 Sprint Car schedule that includes events at Nebraska's I80, Jackson, Husets, Knoxville, Lucas Oil Speedway, Little Rock and Tuscon. Andy told me in a recent text message that he is seeking more sponsorship that will enable the team to add even more races to their current 35 event schedule. That's a pretty aggressive Sprint Car schedule for someone who still refers to himself as a "Modified" guy in victory lane. Do you think his casual approach to Sprints is serious or is he just pulling our leg? I'd say that a guy who hangs around Craig Dollansky's shop taking notes might be a little bit more serious about Sprints than he's letting on. Andy's schedule includes plenty of UMSS action so area fans will have ample opportunity to see him race locally.

Jason Meyers shocked the Sprint Car world with his recent announcement that he would be leaving the World of Outlaws tour after winning two consecutive championships. Jason's fourteen race farewell tour will culminate with a March 23rd race at Calistoga Raceway. Jason stated that his reason for leaving the World of Outlaws tour was an agreement to step down when his children reached school age. As a family man I consider that an honorable explanation and applaud his decision. As a racing fan, I'm looking at the developments that preceded this announcement, including an attempt to add a second car to the team with Stevie Smith as driver, and the subsequent loss of one of his ownership partners, just as the deal was coming together. Jason is well educated and his family owns a California construction business so I'm confident that he will succeed in whatever he does.

Cedar Lake's special events schedule is posted on their website at cedarlakespeedway.com. Of particular interest to this writer are the five Sprint Car specials including two UMSS shows, the IRA at the Triple and Jerry Richert Sr. Memorial (with UMSS) along with the annual World of Outlaws stop. Their two-day opener, School Bus races, Pack the Track night, Masters, Night of Destruction, USA Nationals and Legendary 100 round out a nice lineup of special events. Weekly racing fills in keeping the facility busy every weekend from April 6 through their September 22 Enduro with the exception of no racing on Labor Day weekend. I'm hoping to be able to piece together a full schedule this year that will include many of these races. The big Sprint



Stan Meissner photo



Stan Meissner photo

Top photo - Pat Doar at the 2011 USA Nationals. Pat won Rookie of the year honors, and brought his familiar #11 home in 11th place with the World of Outlaws Late Model series. Doar is taking it out on the road again in 2012, and is sure to move into the top 10 in this year's points chase.

Bottom photo - Two time World of Outlaws Sprint Car champion, Jason Meyers, hauls it into turn one at the Jackson Speedway on May 1, 2010. Meyers shocked the Sprint Car world with his recent announcement that he will be leaving the tour to raise his family.

Considering that just a few months ago, preparations were being made to field a two car team with Stevie Smith, one has to wonder if there isn't more to this story. One of Jason's co-owners left the team just prior to the announcement.

shows and several others for sure with my sights set on adding some weekly races whenever possible.

I'm looking forward to seeing you at the races!

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Big-8 Late Model Champion Steve Rubeck



Bruce Nuttleman photo

Steve Rubeck picked up the Big 8 Late Model Series championship in 2011, edging out Dale Nottestad and defending champion Jeremy Miller. We first met Rubeck after picking up the series title at Oktoberfest, and recently caught up with Steve as he prepares for the 2012 racing season. Due to the possibility of children reading this on-line publication, we can't spell out what FIB stands for on the roof of Steve's race cars. Needless to say, the definition we were given for the acronym FIB was very funny.

How did you get involved in short track racing?
I've always been a racer at heart. When I was a little kid, I would get my go kart or motorcycle and make my own track. I was a racer in that sense. When it comes to local short track racing, I was a little bit of a trouble maker in my local area. I just decided that it was time to stop getting in trouble and take my vehicular talents to the legal side of things. We built a short tracker and started racing in 1991. That's where it all started. I haven't quit since.

When and where was your first race?
The first race was in the short tracker for the National Short Track Championships in 1991. We had a Chevy Monza and had no idea what we were doing. We didn't even have a mirror in the car, and I was lapped somewhere around lap five or six. I was about run over a dozen times. When I got out of the

car, I said I never want to do that again. They all thought I wanted to quit, but I was saying that I never wanted to get lapped again.

What would you consider your biggest win at this point in your career?
Geez, that's a tough one. Right now, it would probably be winning in the Big-8 main event at Oktoberfest in 2010.

What would you consider your home track?
Rockford would be my home track. Actually, I have about three that I would consider my home track – Rockford, Madison and the Dells.

How did you end up with the name "FIB" on the roof of your car?
I've got a ton of nick names, and Brad JJ Mueller gave it to me a few years ago after one of his

carnage cruise adventures. Had a good ring to it, since I'm always racing against the cheeseheads. And I know they really hate when we drive on their interstates, and that I like to call Wisconsin, "Illinois State Park", I could use it to rattle the fans or just have fun with it.

You've done some Super Late Model racing in the past, and more recently with the Big 8 type car. What draws you to race with the Big 8 Series?

The competition is the biggest thing. I ran a Limited Late in the 1990's for a handful of years at

Rockford and Madison. Back then, it was time to grow up, or get out and do something. A Super Late Model became available from Kevin Lyon. We built a Super Late in 2001, and once I got into a Super Late, I never wanted to do anything else. I enjoyed everything about those cars; big shocks, big brakes, big engines, big carburetors and everything else. That's why they call them Super Late Models. There's not a lot of places close by for me that I can go with that car. With the Limited Late, it's kind of like that feeling again. We're on a really hard tire to race on. You can't use all of the motor and you can't use the big shocks and other big money items. These cars put it more in the hands of the driver, and show how it should be, or at least that's how I see it. Sometimes we get a little caution happy, but I don't know what series doesn't get caution happy. Everybody is out there learning, but for the most part,

continued on page 9



Dan Plan photo

Rubeck following a Wisconsin Challenge Series win at Rockford in 2006 (left photo), Rubeck in the early Short Tracker days (right photo)



Marty Langenberg photo

continued from page 8

the guys that are out there running side-by-side, keep it clean. I want to be challenged when I'm behind the wheel, and this tire does that. A lot of guys don't like the tire, and sometimes I don't like it, but you just take a step back, figure out a way around it and get the job done. That's what the sport is really about.

You had a couple of nice bookends to your season, winning the season opener at Rockford and capping things off with the Big 8 title. What did you enjoy most about your championship run this year?

I guess taking a car I hadn't driven before. I don't have a lot of time with a Pathfinder car, which is what the Atchisons have for a Limited Late Model. To get the car dialed in as quick as we did, and get it to do the things that I wanted it to do was very satisfying. Not only for me, but for the crew and the owners Tom and Carol. Tom and Carol are awesome. They give you what you need.

What was the most challenging part of winning the Big 8 title?

I had never been to three of the tracks; Jefferson, Columbus and Slinger. With the Short Tracker, I raced at Jefferson around 1993, but never had a Limited Late at any of the three of those places. At Columbus, we took the wrong package there. It was just by sheer luck that we started up front and finished second. The racing Gods were with us that day. At Jefferson, I approached that race way too cautiously. I wasn't my normal patiently-aggressive self. I cut my front tire down battling for the lead, and had to pit. We started in the back with less than 20 to go and finished seventh. The last part of race was more my style of racing. Slinger was good, and we finished second at that one. I really like that place (Slinger) and want to go back there. I call it Rockford Speedway on steroids. I had watched a few races at Slinger, and one race came to mind while I was racing. I lead 60 or so laps, and the car got tight around lap 30. Rich Bickle came to mind, because I



Mark Melchiori photo

watched him win a race there with a tight race car, and he went to the high side. I didn't occur to me until the last 12 laps to go to the high-side. The caution had come out, and with the cone rule, nobody went to the outside. With a tight race car, you can do that. We went out there, and the car hung out there fantastically, and finished second. It helps to watch veterans go around a race track.

What are your plans for 2012?

For 2012, I have both of my Super Lates back and should be on track. I'm going to try and run 3-4 Super Late races with the CRA in Indiana. I'm going to try the Red, White and Blue series at Kaukauna. Bruce from B&B does the engines for my Super Late, so I want to go up there and hopefully put another B&B car in victory lane. With the Limited Late, I think we are going to give another shot at the Big-8 title. We might also do some jumping around with this car too.



The Big-8 car isn't a done deal yet. We still need to secure sponsorship for it and that's where everything lies. Unfortunately, you need money to go racing, and money is a little bit tight right now.



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Going in Circles



By Charlie Spry

During the long, cold winter months, I like to take the chance to catch up on my stats for the previous racing season, adding winners to my overall tally. I've done quite a bit of research over the past few years in order to come up with all-time feature winner lists for most paved tracks in Wisconsin, at least as far back as the late 1960's, and in some cases, even earlier. It is an ongoing process which may never be completed, but interesting, nonetheless.

At Columbus, Dave Schmidt's five heat wins in 2011 for the Bandit division gives him a total of 19 here, the all time leader in heat wins for the class.

At Golden Sands, Kyle Genett's three feature wins in

the pure stock division gives him 13 total, which ties Marv Flick for most in the division since its inception.

At Marshfield, Mark Eswein's single super late model feature win bumps him ahead of Eugene Gregorich Jr. for total feature wins here for the division. Eswein now has 29 to Gregorich's 28.

Also at Marshfield, Derk Hauser's single feature win in the CWMSA four cyl. division makes him the all-time leader here for the division, with thirteen feature wins. He passed up Keith Wirtz, Kyle Opelt and Jeremiah Strauss, each with twelve. Derk may be in competition soon with his dad, however, as Steve Hauser won four features in 2011, giving him eleven total.

At State Park Speedway near Wausau, I've only been able to complete my lists as far back as 1971, but do know that Mark Mackesy's three feature wins in 2011 for the super lates gives him 35 total, putting him in third spot. Of course, Dick Trickle leads the way with 64 feature wins, while Tom Reffner is second with 56.

Also at State Park, Chad Dietsche's three feature wins in the mod four class gives him 18 total, making him the all-time leader along with Dale Louze, who also has 18. For a year or two, there were two four cylinder classes running, so the results may be a little different if counted separately, but for the sake of simplicity, I have counted them together.

That is about all of the changes for this year. I am in the process right now of working on stats for Lake Geneva Raceway, which I still need to do quite a bit of research on. I did come across an interesting tidbit of information as I was looking through 1978 results for 'Geneva, as on one night that

**Mark Mackesy is third in wins behind Trickle and Reffner
at State Park Speedway**
Bruce Nuttleman photo



year, the big wheel races were won by Mark English and Jamie Wallace, both of whom have gone on to stellar careers racing automobiles. Mark has won many features in the International division at Jefferson, and is the all-time leader for feature wins for the class there, while Jamie has gone on to win many features in super late models. Start them young!

I have also been collecting stats for heat race victories at Madison, Columbus, and Jefferson as well, and am working on 1994 right now. After looking through so many results lately, I have noticed that in 1978, it seemed several tracks were suffering as far as car counts and fan counts, while in 1994, it seemed that most had strong fields of cars and I would guess, good fan attendance. My own memory seems to play that out.

One trend that seems to be occurring in short track racing as well as society in general, is the trend towards more "corporate" run race tracks, and less of the family-owned tracks. Anyone that knows me, knows that I fully support small business, as it is the backbone of our country. Some tracks have remained in the same family for many years, and I really respect that. Jefferson Speedway has been in the Tucker family for many years, as has Columbus 151 been under the tutelage of the Moore family for many years. Keep on keeping on! What I like about this is, that these tracks usually keep with a tried-and-true racing program, with minimal changes. You know what you are going to get from year to year!



**Mark Eswein now has
the most feature wins
at Marshfield**
Dan Plan photo



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Dean & Jason Talkin' Racin'

By Dean Reller

After watching all the action at Daytona, it's time to start thinking about the 2012 season, when a race fan can get out and see the action first hand rather than watching it on a 42 inch HD TV. If only I lived in Florida with all the action around Speed Weeks and the short track racing on both the local pavement and dirt tracks. However, the wait up here in the north is a bit longer, but there will be plenty of great racing to see as this year unfolds.

April has traditionally been cold and wet, forcing many tracks to schedule and reschedule their opening night events. Let's hope that the mild winter that we had will turn into a mild spring and tracks can open on time this year. I have compiled a list of races that I would like to see this coming year and I don't think it covers everything. Local short track action is always exciting and each track offers a unique experience and always plenty of action. Friday nights have long time bullringing Princeton Speedway on my list as I always enjoy the tight high-banked dirt track. For many years I have had an association with the I-94 Speedway in Fergus Falls, it's been a few years

since I have been up there, but I have been hearing great things and I need to find a way to get back out there.

Saturday nights provide plenty of options as Elko Speedway once again will have a great weekly show, with a couple of big races on schedule as well. The one that I have circled is June 2nd, when the ARCA Racing Series makes its first ever visit to the state of Minnesota. This series is the one for many of the up and coming drivers and should be a lot of fun to see some of racing's future stars. Ogilvie Raceway is a new track within the last couple of years and surprisingly, I still haven't made it there yet. Well, this year I plan on checking out the buzz at the 3/8th's mile dirt track.

Rounding out the weekends are two more fantastic options. Raceway Park in Shakopee, "The Action Attraction" looks to live up to its billing as it caps off weekends with Sunday night racing (the figure eight races are nationally known). This year another Sunday night track, Granite City Speedway (formally the Golden Spike Speedway) will be reopening and once again will give me another option to catch a great short track show.

The ASA Midwest Tour opens its season May 5th and 6th at Madison Wisconsin, it's a bit of a drive, but it would be a fun race to attend. The spotlight will shine on the series on Tuesday June 12th with a trip to the historic Milwaukee Mile. Several NASCAR drivers are

Time to Start Planning

expected to participate and I'm still trying to figure out how to make this weekday race and road trip work. Saturday August 18th the tour comes to Elko and returns again on September 22nd. A stop at Iowa Speedway is thrown in between on September 14th, before the big finale on October 7th in the Oktoberfest race at LaCrosse. I'm a little disappointed that the series won't be racing at Raceway Park this year, but I am glad that they added the second Elko race. So, I should be able to catch up with the Midwest Tour at least four times this year.

Over the last couple of years, I have developed a new found interest in road racing and Brainerd International Raceway has two huge events that are on my must see list. The first is May 26th with the NASCAR K&N Pro Series who will be making their first trip to the track. The other must see is the Trans-Am Series on September 2nd. The unique thing to remember with these races is that they run rain or shine, I just have to remember to be prepared.

Finally, a couple of road trips are in order this season to "America's Place To Race", Iowa Speedway in Newton, IA. It's really not a bad or long trip and well

continued on page 12

continued from page 11

worth the drive. The NASCAR Nationwide Series will be there May 20th and August 4th, the Camping World Trucks will be there July 14 and September 15 and the Indy Cars will be there June 23rd. I know I won't be to make all of these but at least two or possibly three I plan to attend.

As I sit in my living room, watching racing on TV, I can't wait until I can see the cars, feel the thunder of the engines and smell (whatever it is to smell), of racecars flying around a track in front of me live and in person. Watching racing on TV is great, but there is no substitute for actually being there.



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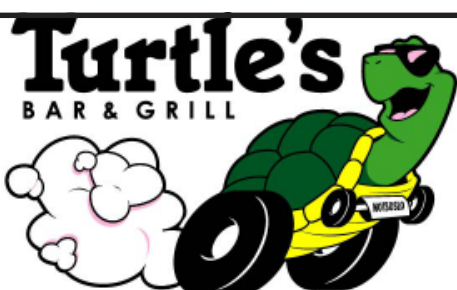
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Auto Racing Facts,
Observances and
Opinions



By Dale P. Danielski

Being less than a winter enthusiast, it’s always nice to have a bit of a diversion to count on to get the racing fix, especially if you aren’t one of the fortunate ones to be able to catch racing action down south this time of year. With that in mind we headed over to Tilleda, WI., for some ice racing action.

A cool little ¼ mile or so oval was carved out there on a pond in the town fed by Henning and Pony creeks, allowing for racing action from the start of January until the end of February weather permitting of course. Even though this winter has seen some very mild temperatures, ice depth here was estimated at

between 12-16 inches which is plenty for full bodied car racing.

And racing they do as the group “Tilleda Thunder On Ice” puts on events featuring 5 divisions of racing which include ATV’s, front wheel, rear wheel, studded and non studded racing machines. The mood here is pretty laid back, and fun is the main operative, but there is a competitive side to this type of racing as after all there is a beginning and an end to each race and a checkered flag is awarded to the first across the finish line! The effort to compete is a dedicated one as well, as more goes into preparing these racing machines than one might think. This is especially true in the studded divisions of racing as a ton of time is put into putting the ice gripping studs into tires on these machines. According to Sarah Scheibe, who has raced here the last couple seasons, it can take anywhere from 8-25 hours to get the right number of studs and the proper pattern in each of the tires used on the racing vehicles.

The racing program here is run very similarly to what we are accustomed to at tracks racing in the summer months. Heat races are conducted leading up to feature events in each division. Unlike many ice venues there is also a payback at the end of the day for all participants, derived from a \$5.00 fan admission fee and the purchase of pit passes by competitors. Tilleda Thunder is a club, so memberships can also be purchased which result in discounted fees to enter each event and also rewards pay at the end of the season.

It really isn’t about the money though; rather it’s an activity that helps to pass the long winter months here in the Upper Midwest. According to Scheibe, “I used to hate winter and the cold, but since I started racing out here it makes it go so much faster. I almost look



Photos - Top, full size cars coming at ya racing. Middle, ATV action green means go. Bottom, And you thought Hoosier tires only worked on dirt or pavement.

forward to winter now!”

Today’s racing action was held on a blustery, cold

continued on page 15

Dale's Photo from the Past

Freddy Fryar #25 in his Pete Hamilton built Nova, was the overall World Series of Asphalt racing winner at New Smyrna Beach Speedway.



continued from page 14

winter afternoon but it didn't deter from the racing competition on the Tilleda pond. In dirt track racing, sometimes you must fend off the cloud of dust flying at you from tires gripping the clay surface, whereas here today we had to shield our eyes from the fine ice particles being kicked up in the air. A unique, but pretty cool phenomenon none the less. There was plenty of ice dust generated today as 41 racing machines were shown on the line up board, some arriving from as far away as Manistique, MI., for events run during the afternoon.

The day's action was very enjoyable and we didn't even find ourselves thinking of witnessing racing down south or for the upcoming summer season. Although after learning that the Tilleda pond produces some pretty sizeable fish we may find ourselves heading back up this way come June.

And dipping back into history in our first ever visit to New Smyrna Beach Speedway, New Smyrna Beach, FL., February 7-14, 1976, Late Model Feature winners were Freddy Fryar, (2) Donnie Allison, Jody Ridley, John Anderson and Gary Balough. OOPS! I guess I was thinking about racing down south!...

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

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MRC Quotes of the month

"What is a more dangerous position – ASA Midwest Tour announcer or the drummer in the band Spinal Tap?" (Anonymous source). *For those of you not old enough to remember the movie Spinal Tap, I would suggest performing a quick Internet search the movie and the history of their drummers.*

"NASCAR's true diversity isn't about helping people with diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds in racing. The true diversity is allowing Micheal Waltrip and Juan Pablo Montoya on the track at the same time as Kyle Busch." (Anonymous source).

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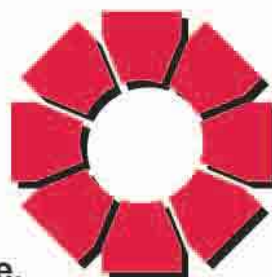
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