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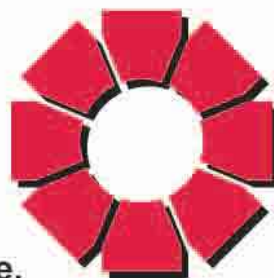
November, 2011



Three 'Fest Winners



All Kinds of Dirt

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Publisher's Note

Racing According to Plan



Dan Plan

During the last month, most of us have watched our last racing events of the year. We were lucky enough to see two shows that have a long-standing tradition behind them, and a new event that attracted a much larger field of cars than we anticipated. The two long-standing shows were The National Short Track Championships at Rockford Speedway and Oktoberfest at LaCrosse Speedway. The new event was the fall version of the Dirt Nationals at Elko Speedway. This column will summarize our visits to these events.

Our trip to Rockford was the first time since the early 1990's we were able to be on hand for all three days

of the event. The Friday night event was one we won't soon forget. I won't go into much detail, but let's just say it reminded us of a combination of two of our favorite TV shows; COPS, mixed together with Madhouse. This night was entertaining from every aspect of on track activity, and off-track activity. If you weren't there, you missed a good time.

This year's Rockford event also featured the Sportsman and Late Model drivers from the ASA Midwest Tour. Defending Sportsman champion, Chris Marek, was well on his way to a strong finish on Saturday night until contact sent him sliding through the infield grass. Fellow Minnesota traveler and, former NSTC champion Bryan Turtle, ended up getting caught up in the melee and went for a wild ride. Marek would rebound for a fifth place finish, with Turtle ending up on the flatbed. Weekly Rockford competitor Doug Bennett picked up the win for the ASA Midwest Tour Sportsman Cars, with Marek picking up his second touring series championship.

The Big-8 race was another one for the record books as Ty Majeski pulled off an amazing feat for a

relatively new comer to the high-banks of Rockford. Majeski was pressured for many laps by Jeremy Miller. Bobby Wilberg threw his name in the hat for the battle for the lead to really spice things up. Majeski would survive contact from Wilberg and eventually hold off Steve Rubeck for the win.

The trip to Rockford also was our first opportunity to see first hand the cars that track photographer Jimmy



Doug Hornickel photo



Doug Hornickel photo

The Midwest

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Ambruoso has been passing along photos of for a few years. The Illini Midgets were on hand, and were they a treat to watch. These cars have to run dirt tires on the pavement, and several drivers went around the

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Jimmy Ambruoso photo

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track like they were on dirt. This group had a decent amount of cars (15 were on hand), and they put on a heck of a show. For a track that featured Midgets as part of their early history, we can only hope the Ilini Midgets continue to be part of this show at Rockford.

Sunday brought the final day of action. For somebody that has had a tough season in Super Late Model competition, Steve Carlson was up to the challenge at Rockford. Carlson worked his way to the front, passed Jacobe Goede just after the break, and cruised to his eighth NSTC crown. For a guy that hadn't been

to Rockford in ten years, it looked like it just like old times for Carlson. Goede made the best of his first trip to Rockford by holding on for second. Nick Panitzke also was making his first start at Rockford, set fast time, and used the tricky bottom groove to make his way to third place at the end of the day.

The Mid Am drivers also made their annual trek to Rockford for the Sunday show. Veteran driver Lyle Nowak picked up the win after a battle with Scott Null. Null would end up getting into the turn 3 wall, ending a good run for the Lake Mills native. Mark Pluer would work his way to second with Danny Church taking third.

While some fans and drivers have coined the phrase "Wreckford" to describe Rockford, I have to completely disagree. Sure, there were several spectacular wrecks over the course of the weekend, but I don't think this is the fault of the track. This event has a lot of history and carries a lot of prestige in the racing world. In my eyes, the wrecks are typically a case of drivers competing at a track they don't normally race at, or local drivers going that extra inch (or foot) to win a big race at their home track. I've seen just as many wrecks during other season ending specials as seen at Rockford.

Next up was four straight days of beautiful weather for the 2011 version of Oktoberfest. The addition of the Futures race to the Thursday night show has allowed fans to see Super Late Model racing on all four days of the event. Colin Reffner picked up the Futures win this year, after looking for a way around Joel Theisen for several laps. This was Reffner's first career Super Late Model win. Reffner has just a few years experience in Late Model competition, and only races once a year at LaCrosse. The youngest



Bruce Nuttleman photo

Reffner has had quite a string of success in a short time at Oktoberfest. Local LaCrosse competitors also wrapped up their season championships on the first night of Oktoberfest with J. Herbst and Danny Gilster crowned as Late Model and Sportsman champions. Andy Moore picked up another feature win to go along with his 2011 championship in the Thunderstox. Other main event winners on Thursday night included Steve Carlson in the LaCrosse Late models, Jake Arneson in the Sportsman and Kyle Stark picking up the Hornet enduro and the famous "Double-O" race.

Friday night saw a replay of the Schermerhorn/Kane battle from the 2010 version of Oktoberfest. The Area Sportsman race is one of our favorites for the weekend and this year was another awesome race.

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Doug Hornickel photo



Tom Johnson photo



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Schermerhorn would hold off "The Freight Train" at the checkered flag, but post race inspection handed the win to Kane. We're already looking forward to the Area Sportsman race for 2012.

The Super Sportsman class saw Danny Gilster make a few modifications to his car to compete in this class designed for some of the other Sportsman type classes in the area. Gilster would go on for the win and also race the same car during the Saturday night Mid Am Stock Car Series feature.

The main attraction for Friday nights the last several years has been the three, 33-lap features named "The Dick Trickle 99." This year's event started off with a bang, as Griffin McGrath and Nathan Haseleu went hard into the turn 1 wall. I'm going to go out on a limb here, but if there were a most popular driver contest during the evening, based on the crowd reaction to his segment wins, Dan Fredrickson would not have won this title. On the same note, if there were a steering wheel toss competition, Griffin McGrath would have won the title hands down. Fredrickson would go on to win two out of three segments, with Colin Reffner

picking up segment number two. Fredrickson's two wins were not enough to overcome an unlucky run in segment two. Neil Knoblock used consistency in all three segments to be crowned the Dick Trickle 99 winner for 2011.

The highlight of Saturday night of 'Fest was the Big 8 main event and the MidAm main event. The Big-8 drivers were out in full force with 55 cars attempting to qualify. Their feature race saw Jon Lemke lead the majority of the event, building nearly a half-lap lead. Skylar Holzhausen tracked down the leader, without the aid of a caution flag, and slipped past Lemke with just a few laps to go. Lemke would hold on to third after being passed by Zack Riddle. This race reminded of the days of a full field invert, as Lemke started on the pole and took off, with Holzhausen starting 16th, chasing down the leader and eventually picking up the win.

The MidAm cars had a bit of a surprise as 16-year old Claire Decker lead the first half of the race. Eventual race winner, and 2011 MidAm champion

James Swan, passed Decker for the lead at the halfway point. Swan would lose the lead on a restart late in the race, but patiently worked his way back to the front and took the lead from Jeremy Spoonmoore with just a few laps remaining.

Sunday of Oktoberfest saw Johnny Sauter cross the stripe first, after leading the entire race. Unfortunately for Sauter, his car did not meet post race technical inspection. Travis Sauter followed Johnny for the entire race, and inherited the win



Tom Johnson photo

official Oktoberfest win. To clarify, Johnny will be scored as the winner in the ASA Midwest Tour record books, and Travis will be scored as the Oktoberfest event winner. Can't say that I've ever seen something like this before, but it gave us plenty to talk about for the last month.

Another recent addition to the 'Fest program is the JMK 63 on Sunday afternoon featuring the Big-8 cars. This is another great opportunity to see how drivers from many weekly tracks that run Big-8 rules stack up against each other. Kyle Shear was crowned the champion of this year's event with Zack Riddle, Jason Schuler and Travis Stanley picking up individual segment wins.

Our final event of the season was the first night of the Fall Dirt Nationals at Elko Speedway. With a race this late in the year, we were unsure as to how many cars would actually show up. Much to our surprise, the pits were overflowing with cars. A big part of this

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Tom Johnson photo



Bruce Nuttleman photo



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was due to the event being the National Dirt Legends event, with 78 Legend cars on hand. The Upper Midwest Sprintcar Series (UMSS) and Cornbelt Clash Late Models also brought nearly 30 cars each. Not a bad way to spend a crisp October evening. Day one winners were Kaley Gharst (UMSS), Lance Mathees (Late Models), and Flynn Ryan Olson in the Modifieds. Over the course of the weekend, there were several last lap passes for main event wins. Ryan Olson ended up with a sweep for the weekend winning both Modified events.

Great North Legends drivers Tim Brockhouse and Michael Ostdiek were crowned champions in their respective classes for Legends. With drivers from across the country on hand, these two gave the home town crowd something to cheer for.

That's a wrap for this column. We'll be back with another on-line issue in December with more driver interviews and columns from our regular cast of characters.



Lance Mathees (top), Kaley Gharst (middle) and Scott Winters (bottom). Just a few of the winners during the Fall Dirt Nationals
Martin DeFries photos

Three Winners at Oktoberfest

With the news following the finish of the Oktoberfest main event on Sunday October, 9 we here at *The Midwest Racing Connection* have decide to recognize our own champion of the 2011 Oktoberfest event. The ASA Midwest Tour levied penalties against Johnny Sauter, but will be scored as the winner on the tour. Oktoberfest officials, decided to award the win to second place finisher Travis Sauter.

Our champion is somebody that truly exemplifies the meaning of overcoming adversity. As the old saying goes, it's not whether or not you fall down, but if you get back up. With this in mind we have decided to recognize the timing light as the 2011 champion. After checking with our board of advisors, we feel the timing light overcame the most adversity during the course of the weekend. The timing light was virtually destroyed during qualifying by an errant car. The crew of on-site technicians came to the rescue and brought the timing light back into action in a matter of minutes. The timing light performed flawlessly for the remainder of the weekend and reminded us all how important it is to not give up.

We at *The Midwest Racing Connection* feel the timing light portrays the type of champion we like to see emerge from these events. The timing light could not be reached for comment at the time of publication.



Bruce Nuttleman photo



Doug Hornickel photo

Bruce Nuttleman photo

The Inside Dirt



Stan Meissner

The October 2011 Elko Dirt Nationals concluded the third season for the Upper Midwest Sprint Car Series. I was not able to attend the fall Elko Nationals but judging from the video highlights both nights featured the best dirt track racing that has taken place at Elko to date. Congratulations to Jerry Richert Jr. for winning the 2011 UMSS points title. Chad Patterson and Anna Kouba tied for the 2011 UMSS Rookie of the Year title. Highlights of the UMSS season included the continued progress of Andy Jones who stepped up his Sprint Car program and managed to win three Features while finishing second in the points in his sophomore Sprint Car season. Another driver who came on strong in 2011 was Scott Broty who won two Features and finished third in points.

The UMSS Traditional (non-wing) Sprints enjoyed a very successful first season. If you did not get an opportunity to see the Traditional cars I encourage you to get out next season and catch some of their races. The cars are evenly matched and put on some of the most exciting battles you'll see in any class of race car. The mix of drivers runs the full gamut from seasoned veterans to rookies and the talent level has shown a marked improvement throughout the course of the season as everyone gained more seat time. Kevin Bradwell proved that a driver can come from the unlikely path of Pure Stocks and Hornets and excel in non-winged Sprints by capturing the UMSS TSCS points title in his first year of open wheel racing.

Speaking of a mix of seasoned veterans and newcomers the UMSS winged division is also a perfect example of this kind of mix of talent. Jerry Richert Jr. has made four appearances in Knoxville Nationals A Mains as well as scoring 10 Knoxville Feature wins while racing there weekly. Richert has also won track championships at the Jackson and Husets Speedways during his lengthy career. Brooke Tatnell, a part time runner with the UMSS, scored six UMSS Feature wins during the 2011 season, the most of any driver that ran with the series. As recently as six years ago in 2005 Tatnell was voted the 13th most talented Sprint Car driver

Stan Meissner photo



Andy Jones is one of several drivers that has come from other types of racing to race Sprint Cars with the UMSS. Here Jones celebrates his 2009 Legendary 100 Modified Feature victory.

in the nation (tied with none other than Sammy Swindell) and had a full time ride with the World of Outlaws going into 2006 as a member of their "Mean Fifteen". Unfortunately owners shutting down their teams due to a faltering economy forced the popular Australian off the tour at a time when it was difficult to find another Outlaw ride. A leg injury as a result of a drive shaft failure that required surgery put him out of commission for a good portion of the 2009 season including the Knoxville Nationals. As you might recall Tatnell defied doctor's orders and got back in the driver's seat in time to win his first of two consecutive Jerry Richert Sr. Memorial races. Tatnell's presence at UMSS races when his schedule permits raises the bar for the UMSS drivers and gives them something to gage their progress against.

Andy Jones' roots are in Modified racing. Andy, who might be thought of by some in the Sprint Car establishment as a brash young outsider, has quickly made an impact on the local Sprint Car scene. I had the privilege of getting to know Andy's father Dennis years before Andy ever climbed into the seat of a race car. Keeping up with the Joneses has been a daunting task for Modified competitors around these parts for decades. The Jones family is one of the most successful racing families I have had the privilege of getting to know in my time as a writer. They have enjoyed a great deal of success in the Modifieds and are not intimidated by the switch to another form of racing. Few people know this but Dennis has known Craig Dollansky for decades and Dennis would make his personal truck available to Danny Lasoski when the Dude was in town racing with the WoO at the Princeton Nationals. Laskoski spent some post race party time at the Jones shop so the Jones family has past connections to Sprint Car racing.

As you can see, both the UMSS winged and Traditional Sprint Cars are attracting drivers from other forms of the sport and that is one way that Sprint Car racing is going to grow in the upper Midwest. Many of these newcomers were recently introduced to Sprints and do not know or in some cases don't care about the history of the sport nor are they intimidated by the credentials of their fellow competitors. It's good when young drivers see the Sprints race, imagine that they would be fun to drive and decide to give them a try but the influx of new people is going to change the culture just like it has in earlier generations. Older folks like myself remember the concern expressed by veteran drivers for the new drivers when roll cages first came on the scene. The veterans felt that the younger drivers who came up with the roll cages didn't have the same respect for the cars that the veterans that raced without cages had. I foresee the local Sprint Car culture changing in a similar manner as new people get involved. As hard as that might be for some of the old guard to swallow it's going to be necessary for the growth of the sport.

Sadly Indy Car racing suffered a tragic loss at their Las Vegas season finale when this year's Indy 500 winner Dan Wheldon perished in a terrible accident during the early stages of the race. Wheldon's car got over the wheel of another machine and literally flew into the catch fence at over 200 miles per hour. The car caught the air like a big kite and turned in mid air so that the cockpit hit the fence first resulting in unsurvivable head trauma. I'm saddened by the incident but I accept the fact that racing is not and probably never will be 100% safe. NASCAR star

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Jimmy Johnson caused a stir when he opined that the IRL cars should stop running on ovals and restrict their racing to road and street courses. I beg to differ with Johnson’s opinion; does anybody remember the Championship Auto Racing Teams otherwise known as CART? CART distanced itself from oval racing resulting in a split with the oval racing purists that bred the fledgling IRL and eventually led to CART’s own demise. On the other hand I agree with Johnson that today’s Indy Cars are getting to the point where they border on exceeding the ability of some of the tracks to contain them. They have such incredible down force that when combined with high banking they become a big one waiting to happen. The word slow isn’t in the vocabulary of most racers but I think it might be time to reel back the speeds of the IRL cars before one gets into the stands.

The Vegas Indy Car wreck in spite of it’s violent appearance was a perfect storm that potentially could be repeated in any form of motorsports. Keep in mind that no other drivers involved in the IRL wreck were seriously injured and the cars are purposely constructed to break apart and dissipate energy in a crash. If Wheldon’s car had taken a different trajectory he might have walked away and we’d be touting the safety of the IRL cars. If that had happened I think it might have been easy to forget this wreck in time resulting in few if any changes being made. Unfortunately I can’t think of many safety improvements in racing that were not the direct result of a fatality.

Jimmy should take note that Sprint Cup cars are not exempt from the type of perfect storm accident that befell the IRL. I watched the Talladega Cup race and took note of the tight packs produced by restrictor plate racing, especially on starts and restarts. We have seen big wrecks in Stock Car racing with cars getting airborne but the field always manages to scatter and avoid the flipping cars. Not that I ever want to see this but it would be possible in a NASCAR perfect storm for a flipping car to bounce off the tops of several of the tightly bunched pack before the drivers have time to react. Roll cages, energy cushioning walls, new safer cars, all of these factors make Stock Car racing one of the safest forms of the sport. Nevertheless, the weakest link on a Cup car is the windshield which would offer virtually no protection from axles or whole differentials turned into projectiles by a violent crash. A perfect storm does not discriminate between the various forms of the sport and when those kinds of speeds are involved the seemingly impossible can potentially become a reality.

The 2011 season closed out my thirteenth year as a columnist for MRC. When I came onboard in April of 1999 I didn’t have much of a plan but I had a passion for the sport that I wanted to share. Since that time I have attended 397 races at 32 different tracks as a representative of MRC. As one might expect of such a long tenure there have been plenty

of outside distractions. Tracks changed hands, some closed and are no longer operating and new facilities were opened. I welcomed six grandchildren into the world, we all endured the events of 9/11 and that same year I soldiered through a difficult season that culminated in neck surgery. Adult children got married, divorced and remarried and a beloved brother-in-law passed away. Adult kids moved in and out and in and out and in... It’s not too difficult to write a column, a lot of people are capable of doing this, but to hang in there year in and year out through life’s ups and downs is the real challenge. I have tried to do that to the best of my ability and I hope that you have enjoyed the results of my labor.

It remains to be seen how much I’ll be able to go racing next season but hopefully I’ll be able to work something out so I can contribute to MRC on a more limited basis. I want to thank Rob Hahn for giving me the opportunity to write for MRC’s predecessor publication Minnesota’s Racing Connection and Dan Plan for keeping me on staff after the change of ownership and rebranding as the Midwest Racing Connection. Thanks to all the racing teams that have put up with my poking around your pit area while you’re busy trying to prepare for the night’s events. Thanks to the promoters and series directors that have extended their hospitality enabling me to do this week in and week out. And most of all thanks to the fans of MRC who have followed this column for the past thirteen seasons. I will be keeping the gotomn.com website up and running and getting to as many of my favorite races as possible. I’m sure that you’ll run across my stories from time to time.

We’ll see you at the races!



Jerry Richert Jr. at the Princeton Speedway June 25, 2011. Richert’s UMSS Feature win at Princeton was the first of three on the way to the UMSS title. (Top photo)

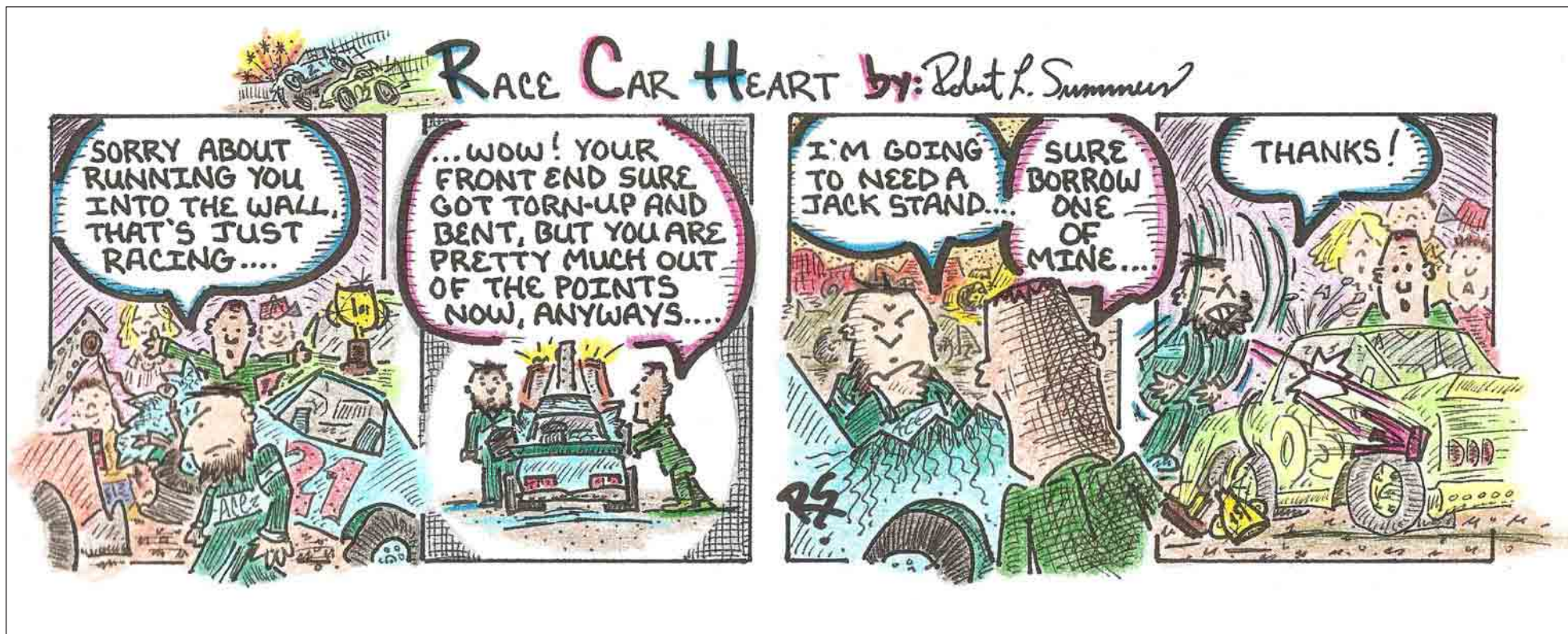
Brooke Tatnell drove Jerry Richert Jr.’s car to his first of two Jerry Richert Sr. Memorial IRA wins in September of 2009. Brooke was back in the car less than six weeks after suffering a broken leg in Pennsylvania. Tatnell struggled to get out of the car in victory lane and more recently has struggled to find rides on the Outlaw tour. (Bottom photo)

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Going in
Circles



By Charlie Spry

With the end of the local race season upon us, here are just a few random thoughts, comments, and other goodies....

Southern Wisconsin Bandit racer, Robby Robinson won his first feature in August of this year, and it came at an unlikely venue. Robby had raced strictly on paved tracks for the past couple of years, and on a whim, decided to give the dirt a try at the Sycamore (Illinois) Speedway one night. He ended up taking the checkers and getting that first feature win on his very first try on the dirt. Robby said that the trophy won was as tall as he was.

I attended the 20th annual Bahama Bracket Nationals at the Rockford Speedway recently. Some people decry the lack of late models racing at this show, as the rules denote “stock stub” only. A few older late models do show up, but in reality, it is the sportsman/hobby stock type cars that perform the best racing. One of the feature races was decided by only a couple of inches, and another by a couple of feet. Proves my notion that the best racing is not always in a “top” division. Always good to see some of the same drivers race this event every year. Ed Hast, John Paul Odegaard, Dubs Anderson, Ray Swan, and Rick Wilson are some of many who come every year to put on a fantastic show. All are appreciated! By



Mark Melchiori photo

the way, Iowan Merv Chandler was the only driver to accept the prize of a trip for two to the Bahamas, in place of the prize money.

Sad to hear of the recent passing of 2010 Columbus 151 late model champion Scott Ollerman. My thoughts and prayers are with the family. Scott got his start in spectator drag racing back in the late 1970’s, and progressed from there.

I was just thinking.... Many tracks use the moniker “area sportsman” for a catchall name for the sportsman division. If you have a sportsman car but are not from the “area,” does this mean you cannot compete?

The Central Wisconsin Mini Stock Association group that races four cylinder cars at Marshfield (Wis.) Speedway reported that they only had one caution in their races all year, that being for a blown engine in one of the cars. Yes, I realize that these are small cars racing on a big half-mile, and they should not have many cautions, but still, that is a record to be proud of by all who race in this group.

Does anyone else feel that when you start the fastest cars up front in a feature event on a paved



Mark Melchiori photo

Teams are encouraged to decorate their pit stalls to promote the fun atmosphere, and a cash prize for the best one.

Three-wide racing also happens in the big car brackets as well. Here Mid-Am champ James Swan (#97) is on the inside of a dirt late model and a vintage car.



Mark Melchiori photo

Three-wide racing is the norm at the Bahama Bracket Nationals, especially in the small car brackets.



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short track, that you are asking for a snoozer?

That is all for now. I’m hoping to do a couple of driver profiles over the winter, so stay tuned!

Dirty Talkin'**Kris McMartin**

Knoxville Raceway in Knoxville, IA is a premier sprint car track. The track is a ½ mile with a dark Iowa soil surface sweeping turns, shorter stretches and little banking. The grandstands hold just a little less than 25,000 fans and the atmosphere is much like a NASCAR track. There is a lot of history at this track and it houses the Sprint Car Hall of Fame. While it is primarily a sprint car track, they have been the host to the Lucas Oil Late Model Nationals for the last 8 years. This is a Late Model event that is not to be missed.

The Late Model Nationals is a 3 day event beginning on Thursday and running through Saturday. This year the weather was perfect for fall racing on all 3 days.

**A Must See Event**

While the track was tacky and fast there was amazing racing and a lot of passing all weekend. There were 65 late models this year including some of the best drivers in the country. The format includes full shows both Thursday and Friday nights and the top 24 in points from the two nights make the 100 lap \$40,000 win feature race on Saturday night. The purse for the whole weekend makes everything from the heats, to each of the features, worth watching.

The town of Knoxville embraces the race fans during the whole event. There are other activities scheduled around the racing, in different parts of town so that the fans are never bored and have other things to occupy their time. This year there was a car show and an auction held at the Hall of Fame and there were many trailers with T-shirts and racing paraphernalia as well. There are a couple of hotels, many restaurants and the camp grounds are clean and cared for, and include permanent bathrooms and showers. There is a small bar directly across the street from the raceway, called the Dingus Lounge, which has grown over the years where race fans and drivers can go after the racing is done and hang around and talk and have a drink. This social time after the races is also something not to be missed.

Next years Lucas Oil Late Model Nationals are scheduled for September 27 – 29 and I am sure that this will be another event that is not to be missed. If you have an opportunity to attend this event it is definitely worth adding to your racing schedule.



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Talkin' Racin'

By Jason Searcy

NASCAR does not hold a top series event in Minnesota, but with General Mills, 3M, Best Buy and Great Clips all sponsoring top level drivers in the sport; they come to race in our great state anyway.

Thursday night October 6th NASCAR Cup stars: Greg Biffle, Trevor Bayne, AJ Allmendinger, Marcos Ambrose along with Nationwide driver Jason Leffler and former Truck series “rookie of the year” Erik Darnell all raced a 30 lap exhibition race in Great North Legends cars against local drivers at Elko (MN) Speedway.

Richard Petty was in attendance and signed autographs. He had the longest line of autograph seekers by far, and he signed for everybody with his trademark smile, cowboy hat and sunglasses. In this “what have you done for me lately” world, I was impressed that a guy who has been retired since 1992 was so well received; he truly was treated like a king. When asked about his favorite race car, he mentioned the 1973-74 Dodge because it was well balanced and “it made it easier on me,” said Petty.

NASCAR owner Jack Roush was asked by a fan to autograph their custom Roush Ford F-150 pickup, the crowd laughed and Jack said he would. Well, he DID, he walked right out to the parking lot and signed his name on the dash of the passenger side. The man’s wife then quickly replied, “I guess I’m not putting my

feet up on the dash any more.” Roush also was asked if he was in favor of the new fuel injection coming into NASCAR in 2012. He said it would be much more expensive and would cost as much as \$5000 more per car next year but, “it’s what we need to do,” said Roush.

18 cars competed in the 30 lap exhibition race, former I-94 Raceway driver “Showtime” Tyler Sjoman from Alexandria MN started eighth row inside and slowly worked his way up front for the win followed by Michael Ost diek and Kyle Hansen.

Marcos Ambrose looked the fastest of the NASCAR guys, he was in second place with 10 laps remaining, but then got shuffled back and finished 6th. Daytona 500 winner Trevor Bayne looked good on the track, staying with the top group and finishing fourth, he jumped out of the car and said “this is the most fun I have had in a long time.”

AJ Allmendinger finished 8th and Greg Biffle stayed out of trouble near the back of the pack, it was his first time in a Legends car and he didn’t know what gear to race in, the first segment he was slow in fifth, but shifted to fourth in the final segment and was much better.

Minnesota Motorsports Gives Back



Tom Johnson photo

This event is named MN Motorsports teams give back, money raised during this charity event went to the Minnesota Military Family Foundation. Many military members were on hand to enjoy the festivities at Elko Speedway.

I was impressed with the NASCAR drivers and their interaction with fans and our local drivers. I saw Richard Petty, AJ Allmendinger and Greg Biffle walk through the pits after the races to talk with the local drivers, take pictures and sign their race cars. Even during the pressures of a long season, these drivers seemed to enjoy themselves and give back at the same time.



Martin DeFries photos

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Auto Racing Facts, Observances and Opinions



By Dale P. Danielski

The history books will show that a Sauter won the 100 lap ASA Midwest Tour finale as part of the 42nd Annual Oktoberfest racing weekend October 6-9, 2011 at

La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway, West Salem, WI., but which one?

Johnny Sauter dominated the event leading every lap but upon going through post race inspection was found to have issues with his #43 Super Late Model. The ASA group in these instances allows the driver to keep the win, but no money or points can be kept. The track meanwhile takes the win away along with all points and money and gives the victory to the next driver in line passing inspection. In this case it was Travis Sauter who placed 2nd in the event. Everyone moves up a spot with the unhappy victor being scored last with a disqualification.

So will Travis Sauter be listed as the winner of the event his 2nd in a row, or Johnny Sauter with an



Dan Gilster #23, five-time LaCrosse Fairgrounds Speedway Sportsman Champion

asterisk next to his name? It appears with the two decisions laid down the answer is both! If anyone is out there like me that likes to dig through racing's past they'll be scratching their head when they come across this one 25 years from now.

This year's Oktoberfest was again blessed with fantastic weather and the racing over the four days definitely didn't disappoint either. Thursday action got things rolling with the NASCAR Late Model Championship to be determined. Steve Carlson easily won the 40 lap Feature finale but with his 5th place finish, J. Herbst became the champion, his 2nd in the last three years here. Herbst outlasted Todd Korish who for next year vows to have at least one more car on the track to join in the "Team" car concept that helps immensely in chasing these championships.

The Futures division of Super Late Models were also racing tonight and a huge field of up and coming drivers were on hand to do battle. Collin Reffner picked a great time to capture his first ever Super Late Feature win as he raced to the convincing 25 lap victory over Corey Jankowski, Joel Theisen, Becca Kasten and Matt Tifft. Reffner, who is a third generation driver appears well on his way to a successful career in the sport.

One of the most competitive races on the night was the Sportsman feature as no less than four drivers battled for the win. When the dust, and flying infield grass had cleared it was Jake Arneson taking the win over Greg Scheck and Rick Schermerhorn. Even more impressive for Arneson grabbing the victory was he did it driving with a broken arm! Dan Gilster with another steady season of racing took the

Sportsman Division Championship, his 5th. Of course with track rules stating you must either move up a division or sit out a season it will be interesting to see what Gilster does in 2012. He's had to face this predicament 5 times here now and each found him sitting out the year and racing elsewhere. That's five years of having to miss racing at your local track in front of the local fans! Andy Moore will have to make that decision as well as he was the 2011 Thunderstox Champion at the track for 2011. Whatever Moore decides he went out in style tonight winning that division's feature event on the final night of racing.

One of the most popular races during the weekend is the Dick Trickle 99 which commemorates Trickle and his #99 race cars in three 33 lap features. Best overall finishes in the three determine the champion and a very happy Neil Knoblock took honors this year. Knoblock remembers the days of Trickle racing in Wisconsin as he was just beginning his career as Trickle was moving on to bigger things in the sport. Receiving the race winning award from Trickle himself according to Knoblock was the biggest privilege in his life. You can't say it any better than that and that is exactly what Oktoberfest racing is all about, tradition and racing on one of short track racing's biggest stages.

Skylar Holzhausen put on a passing clinic in the Big 8 68 lap feature event on Saturday driving all the way from 16th starting position to the front to win the event. Holzhausen finally caught race long leader Jon Lemke to take the lead and then held off Zack Riddle

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for the popular victory which amazingly ran green to checkered.

Kyle Shear was Mr. Consistency on Sunday in the JMck 63 event placing 3rd in each 21 lap segment named after promoter extraordinaire John McKarns to win the overall title. Jason Schuler who spends most of his time these days as crew chief for ASA Tour regular Jonathan Eilen hopped in a car for the JMck event and promptly won one of the 21 lap segments! Dan Fredrickson was informed just minutes before the event he would be driving in the ASA Midwest Tour Truck Series feature on the day. It worked out extremely well as Fredrickson went on to win the main event for that series.

Here and there...Andrew Morrissey never did win an ASA Midwest Tour feature event in 2011 but his consistent finishes earned him the title for the year out pointing Jacob Goede and Nathan Haseleu...Skylar Holzhausen on the strength of his \$10,000 victory at Elko Minnesota Speedway was named Rookie of the Year for the series...This year's Champions Reunion was the biggest and best yet featuring over 60 drivers that raced and won from as early as the 1950s into the 2000s. Of course providing much of the entertainment during the day was Dick Trickle who was again on hand. Ernie Tuff was again here and this year brought his 1932 Ford Coupe race car last driven by Jerry "Scratch" Daniels who was also on hand. Donald Denny was a surprise guest during the day. Denny first built and promoted the North La Crosse Speedbowl which was the track in the area before La Crosse Fairgrounds was built. Denny claims he still cringes thinking of some of those first events as in its infancy the sport was very rough and tumble! Great to see dirt track stars Leon Plank and Tom Steuding at the Reunion. Between the two there are way too many victories to try and count!...Another up and coming driver, Cardell Potter won the Stubby Feature race which is open to those who don't qualify for the Trickle 99 feature field. Potter held off veteran Mark Eswein for the win with Joel Theison taking 3rd...Corey Jankowski who it seemed competed in almost all the divisions during the weekend, won the C Feature for Super Late Models on Saturday to highlight his racing at 'Fest 42...Rick Schermerhorn in a thrilling battle won the 25 lap Area Sportsman race on Friday...maybe. Actually the post race inspection found Schermerhorn's carburetor out of spec and the win went to Brent Kane...The novelty Double O event utilizing the big and small track here and featuring Super Late Model, Sportsman, Outlawz and Thunderstox machines was won by the smallest engined car in the race! Kyle Stark drove his 4 cylinder racer to the win beating all the big dogs in the process...Over 18,000 fans attended this years four days of racing known as Oktoberfest. It still amazes this writer that a number of folks who come to the event don't even attend one day of racing! I guess that's just some of the mystique of the event and plans are underway for the 43rd Annual to be held October 5-8, 2012...



Top photo - Neil Knoblock races to the win of the Trickle 99 at 'Fest in a car that sat in the garage all year. Middle photo - Neil Knoblock takes a victory in the Sportsman Division on Dick Trickle night at Golden Sands Speedway, Plover, WI., in 1989. Bottom photo - In another great photograph shot by the late Bob Bergeron, Reunion regular Ed Nichols #6 racing at Griffith Park Speedway.

And back in time, on October 9th, 1960 the first year of racing at the paved Griffith Park Speedway, Wisconsin Rapids, WI., the final event of the season was held. Don Lewis won the Feature and was followed by Jere O'Day, Morrie Piotrowski, Les Katzner and John Moquin. Other winners were Ken Pankratz in the semi-main, Red Nickels in the Trophy Dash and 4th heat, Harold Bertram in the 1st heat, Ray Hoffman in the 2nd heat, Herb Kurth in the 3rd heat, and Lewis who also set fast time on the day...

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

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