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THE MIDWEST'S SHORT TRACK AUTO RACING AUTHORITY

December, 2011



The End of a Great Season



Interviews with Track Champs



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Publisher's Note

Racing According to Plan



Dan Plan

It seems that every year, at this time of the season, people will gripe about what is wrong with the sport that we all love so much. I must admit, I can be one of those people at times as well. For the past year or so, I've been receiving a copy of the RPM newsletter, and find the items mentioned in the newsletter right along with the same thoughts that I have. With these two items in mind, I've decided to dedicate the space for this column to what has gone right over the last few years.

Reducing the number of classes, instead of adding to the number of classes

Race fans often accuse tracks of "back gate promotion". One of the tracks we frequently attend, actually dropped one of their weekly divisions a few years ago. The division was attracting a dozen or so cars each week, but the other divisions were in the mid-20's for car counts. In an effort to speed up their program, this class was dropped. While there are several tracks these days that would love to have a division that averages 12 cars, the bottom line was getting the show done in a shorter time frame. While this division was missed by many, in the big picture, keeping fans in the stands by running a fast-paced show, this was a good call.

Five things that went right instead of what went wrong

Cutting laps when car counts are low

Again, some may argue that drivers should be able to run the advertised distance of race events. When you have five cars and the scheduled distance is 25 or more laps, chances are it's going to be five cars going in circles for a long time. In the last year, I saw two tracks play an audible, and reduce the number of laps due to a low car count. I saw firsthand that you don't need 20+ cars to put on a good race. I've also seen a 25-lap, five-car parade a few years ago. Sure, a bigger car count increases the opportunity for better racing, but reducing the number of laps when the cars aren't there, does help. One of the best races I saw this year, only had five cars in the feature, but they didn't race their normal feature race length. Sure, I would have liked to see more cars, but that was the best five-car feature race we have ever seen.

Reducing admission prices

There is no arguing that times have been tough the last few years for the average race fan. I know of several tracks in the upper-Midwest that have actually lowered their general admission prices over the last few years. Yes that's right, it cost less to get into several race tracks in 2011 than it did a year or more ago. From what I could see, this was a good move. I honestly think people go out on weekends with a set amount of money to spend. If they have the chance to spend less at the front gate and have a few bucks left over for a burger and a beverage, they might just be inclined to keep coming back.

Changes in staff

In any position where you have to deal with groups of people, whether it's racing, or life general, it's a good bet that you'll need some customer service skills to succeed. I have witnessed a couple of tracks that have made staff changes in the last few years that have had a profound impact on many people in the pit area. The previous person in the position may not

Continued on page 4

The Midwest

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continued from page 3

have necessarily done anything wrong, but sometimes a fresh face and/or attitude is needed.

Have fun

This one isn't necessarily a new item. There are several events I've attended for many years, and one of the points listed in the rules or discussed in the drivers meeting is typically "have fun." That's what this is supposed to be about. If you show up with a crappy attitude to begin with, chances are you're going to have a crappy night. The phrase "Have Fun" should be part of every race tracks rule book.

Misc. News and Notes:

2010 Superior Track Champion, and NASCAR state champion for Wisconsin, Pat Doar, chose not to defend his titles this year. Instead, Doar hit the road with the World of Outlaws Late Model series. Doar's success continued with the WoO Late Model group, picking up a win on the tour and the Rookie of the Year honors for the World of Outlaw Late Model group.

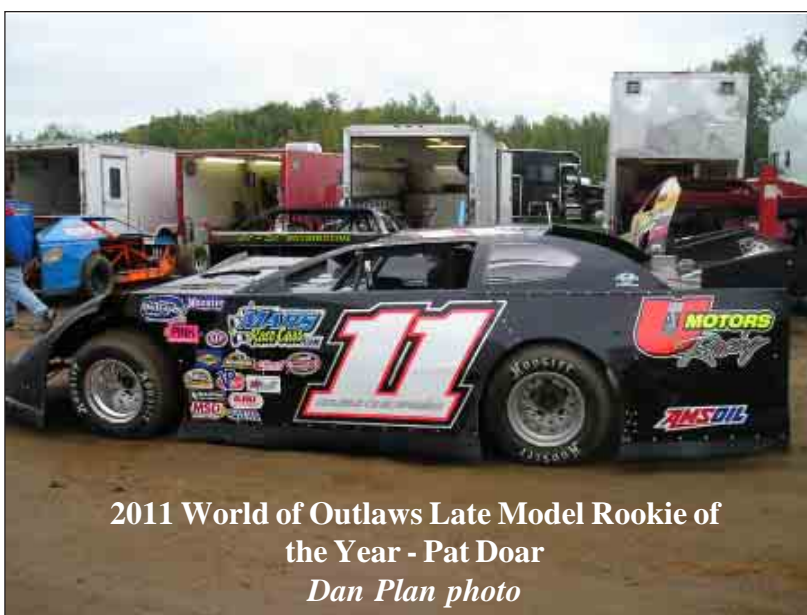
For the second year in a row, a representative from the upper-Midwest will attend the NASCAR banquet as a finalist in their Mechanic of the Year award. Congratulations to Chris Bronstad, and the entire Bronstad gang on this accomplishment.

How about those Busch Boys? I won't get into the debate regarding what Kyle did at Texas at the beginning of November or Kurt's rant with Dr. Jerry Punch, but it does make for good TV. The one item that comes up when things like this happen is people making the statement that a particular driver is a poor role model. I think one item parents forget when making a statement such as this is, it is their responsibility to be the role model. Drivers have made bad choices throughout the history of the sport. It's your responsibility as a parent to tell your kids what is right and what is wrong.



We had many good times with the Host boys in the late 1990's. Our condolences go out to the Host and Larson families.

Martin DeFries photo



2011 World of Outlaws Late Model Rookie of the Year - Pat Doar
Dan Plan photo



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Auto Racing Facts, Observances and Opinions



By Dale P. Danielski

The cold weather is again here and that can mean only one thing for this scribe writing in the off season for MRC: Going retro!

It's reasonably well known that Dick Trickle was preferential to Ford Motor Company for his racing efforts. Hard to knock his success through the years either as he drove the FoMoCo race cars to record performances everywhere. With 1975 and 1976 not so kind however for Trickle racing the Ford products, Dick decided to make a change for the 1977 season. It came in the form of a new Bill Bembinster BEMCO Engineered race car and was fitted with of all things a Pontiac Firebird body. Prototype GM racing engines were also now under the hood and it appeared Trickle's Ford days were done. To go along with the change of equipment Trickle was now also the White Knight instead of using the Purple Knight moniker he had raced under for so many years. Supposedly Tom Steuding who had plenty of good racing years on both dirt and pavement and Dick got together, more than likely one night very late or perhaps in the early morning hours and came up with the idea to change Trickle's name. Steuding had a sponsor known as the White Horse Inn and Trickle thought he'd look good in White so a new name but by no means new persona was the result for Trickle!

It was awhile before the car made its debut but Trickle pulled off the feat in grand fashion winning with an unpainted version on May 15th in the Spring Opener 50 at Wisconsin International Raceway of Kaukauna, WI. A win at WIR was always impressive back in the day as drivers from a four State area would converge for the event and determine who was the best of the best. On this day Trickle put down the efforts of Jim Pierson who was 2nd in a 1977 Camaro, Tom Reffner who had been winning regularly in his new 1977 AMC Hornet, in 3rd, dirt track legend and pretty fair paved driver in his own right, Roger Regeth in 4th in a 1973 Camaro, and Jim Back 5th in a 1973 Camaro.

Interesting to note that Trickle didn't totally give up on Ford race cars as he drove one to the win later that night at Paul's Super Speedway, the dirt track in Depere, WI. It was actually still quite common for drivers after racing on the paved WIR track in the afternoon to take their cars over to a dirt track nearby and race at night.

And as was always the case when you were running well, you traveled as Trickle did the very next week winning the American Speed Association 300 lap race at I-70 Speedway of Odessa, MO. Meanwhile, all the usual suspects were getting things going in high gear as well with Dave Watson, 1974 Camaro, Joe Shear, 1974 Camaro, Marv Marzofka, 1974 Camaro, and Larry Detjens, 1976 Camaro picking up wins at area tracks.

Of course it wasn't like others that thought they had the hot set up weren't traveling as well as Bob Senneker of Dorr, MI., ventured over to the La Crosse Interstate Speedway of West Salem, WI., June 5th, taking both 50 lap features as part of the Dr. Pepper sponsored program held there.

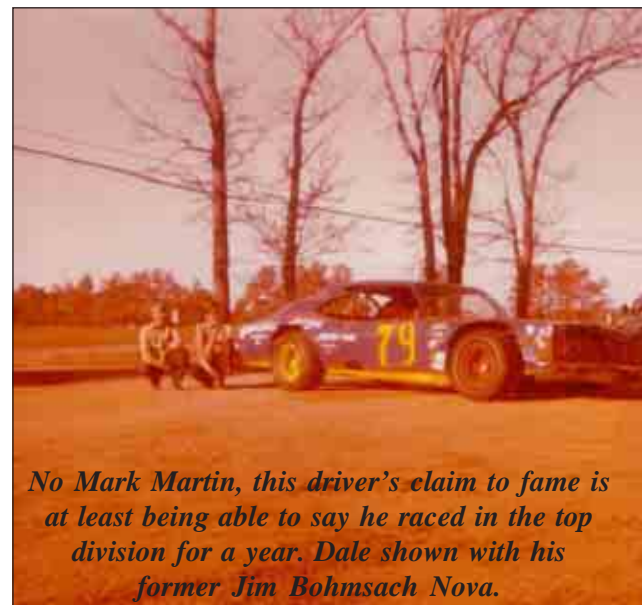
The Art Frigo/John McKarns ARTGO Tour was again a very popular venue and Trickle picked up the 100 lap win at Capital Super Speedway of Oregon, WI., June 18th as part of a weekend doubleheader. Larry Detjens who for a long time was as loyal to Chrysler products as Trickle was to Fords was winning in his new Camaro taking the ARTGO 100 lap main at Grundy County Speedway, Morris, IL., June 19. The wins kept coming for Trickle too as he took big wins at I-70 Speedway in an ASA event there and also at the Queen City Speedway of West Chester, OH., in a 77 lap Feature at that ½ mile track. Note worthy in that event was Wisconsin native Dave Marcis who was now very established in NASCAR Cup competition finishing 2nd.

Mike Miller the Minnesota transport who was now operating out of Wisconsin Rapids, WI., picked up a victory at La Crosse Interstate Speedway along with two at Golden Sands Speedway of Plover, WI., in his 1970 Mustang. Miller was another who liked the Ford Products and kept racing his Mustang throughout the season. Later in the year however, due to significant engine woes Miller did switch to Prototype Engineering Chevrolet power plants, but maintained his Mustang livery.

And that guy Steuding we mentioned earlier was having an excellent season racing on dirt winning special events throughout the State of Wisconsin. To some his 30 lap Feature win July 21 on pavement at State Park Speedway of Wausau, WI., came as a surprise although Steuding was normally quite competitive when he raced on pavement. Steuding beat heavy hitters Trickle, Detjens and Marzofka on this night to win.

Of course when you are winning folks tend to keep track of the victories and during this year it was no different as Trickle, even with his somewhat late start

Going Retro!



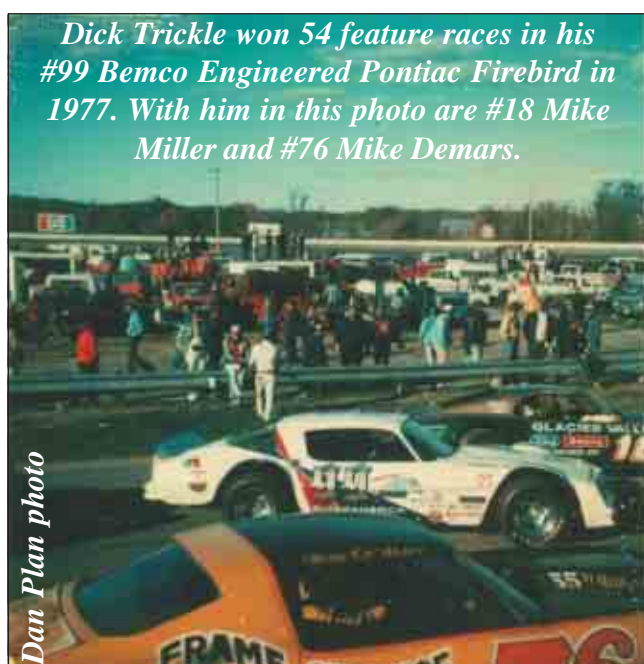
No Mark Martin, this driver's claim to fame is at least being able to say he raced in the top division for a year. Dale shown with his former Jim Bohmsach Nova.

was up to 44 main event checkered flags as of August 3rd.

Of course with the season winding down it was time for special events to finish 1977 off and Larry Detjens took one of the biggest winning the World Cup 400 at I-70 Speedway. It was the 3rd straight year drivers from Wisconsin had done so in the prestigious event. No event was any bigger than the Rockford Speedway, Rockford, IL., National Short Track Championships and some young upstart kid put all the veterans in their place as Mark Martin captured the 200 lap win in his 1977 Camaro. Of course an event that continues to grow today, the Annual Oktoberfest at La Crosse Interstate, now Fairgrounds Speedway was held with fan favorite Larry Detjens taking the 100 lap Feature event.

And, as for Trickle, he wound up winning just 54 Feature events during the year down from his record breaking 67 in 1972 and other season high of 56 in 1971. Sure, a down year at 54 and of course unheard of in this day and age!

continued on page 6



Dick Trickle won 54 feature races in his #99 Bemco Engineered Pontiac Firebird in 1977. With him in this photo are #18 Mike Miller and #76 Mike Demars.

Dan Plan photo

continued from page 5

Of course we would be remiss if we didn't mention seeing a drivers name here and there in the results column from tracks in Wisconsin during the 1977 racing season. One Dale P. Danielski did compete in the Late Model Division winning a token event on occasion. Driving the 1972 Nova I purchased from fellow racer Jim Bohmsach I have to admit I had a blast during the year. Too bad it was one and done as it was the first and last year I raced!

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



Trickle traveled in style for the 1970's era of racing



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2011 LaCrosse Speedway Sportsman Champion - Dan Gilster

Dan Gilster picked up his fifth track championship at LaCrosse Speedway during the 2011 season. The unique item about Gilster's five championships is the fact that LaCrosse Speedway has a rule in place that requires drivers in support divisions to move up, or sit out a year. The Midwest Racing Connection recently caught up with Gilster to discuss his 2011 championship season, Oktoberfest and his plans for the 2012 season.

LaCrosse Speedway has a rule in place where track champions in the Thunderstox and Sportsman have to move up or sit out a year. What are your plans for 2012?

I plan to do some part-time racing out of town. We'll go to Plover, Marshfield and I would like to try Wausau, since they opened up again this year. I know the Wimmer's are running the track now, and it would be fun to go to a track with the history that Wausau has. I work with Steve Holzhausen, and he said it is pretty nice up there now. We also plan on doing some more family activities too like fishing, camping and stuff like that.

During the past championships, what have you done on your year "off"?

The first year I sat out, I helped Ryan and Brad Powell with their Late Model, and Brad won the championship. I helped him that year, and then on my other years off, I've been doing a little racing and just helping my brother Jimmy in the pits. I'm there every Saturday. It's like a disease; you're just attached to it.

There are differing opinions regarding the rule at LaCrosse regarding the champions of the Thunderstox and Sportsman champion. What are your thoughts?

I've kind of gotten used to it now. When it first happened, my wife was thinking I was going to go nuts since I couldn't race. Now, with the kids and

everything, it's nice to relax. I really do enjoy watching everyone else race throughout the summer. It is fun to watch.

Was your plan to run three divisions at Oktoberfest this year, or was that a last minute decision?

No, it was the plan, but we were going to take it one day at a time. I didn't even send in the entry for the MidAm race, and just paid the late entry fee after Friday. I think it was about 4 years ago, I entered everything ahead of time, and nothing went right that year. This year we decided to go one day at a time, and if things are going good, we'll just keep going.

What type of changes did you have to make between your regular Saturday night LaCrosse Sportsman and the Super Sportsman?

We used my Saturday night motor, with different heads and intake. We had to take it right down to the short-block. We changed the heads, intake, lifters and valve-train. We also added different exhaust by putting headers on instead of the stock manifolds. We could also run the car a little bit lighter and lower to the ground.

How long did it take to make these changes after racing on Thursday night?

We quit working at 4:30 in the morning on Friday, and got about an hour and a half of sleep. We were back up at 6:00am, met Ryan Powell in our shop at 7:00am, and scaled the car. It was a long night.

Were there any other changes needed to run with the Mid American Stock Cars on Saturday night?

Just adding the four-barrel carburetor and the Hoosier F-53 tires. There were a few differences in rule between the



Super Sportsman and Mid Am class where we had to run about 100lbs heavier than their cars.

What was the biggest challenge running the same car in three different divisions over three nights?

Making sure I stayed in one piece. Thursday night, we were running pretty hard, and would have liked to win that race. It was Greg Scheck, Rick Schermerhorn and me, right up there for the win. Maybe I would have taken a few more chances if I didn't have to race my car on Friday night. We ended up finishing third on Thursday night to clinch the track championship. That was fun, but I've been trying to win that Super Sportsman deal for a long time. To get a clean sweep in the Super Sportsman was pretty cool.

Why did you decide to race in the Super Sportsman division instead of the Area Sportsman, were you afraid of racing against Brent Kane?

Nope, when I won the track championship at LaCrosse in 2003, I bought everything I needed to race against the Super Stocks in Plover. I bought everything I needed to run up there. When I won in 2007, I ran with the Super Stocks in 2008 at the Dells. I had all of the stuff to convert the car to the Super Sportsman. That's kind of why we stuck with that plan. It's a little more of a racy car, which makes it fun. The horsepower is a little better and it's just a fun class to drive.



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2011 Raceway Park Late Model Champion - Chad Walen

Chad Walen comes from a racing family, with a long history of success at Minnesota race tracks. After helping his dad work on his uncle's race car (Mel Walen), Chad started out racing in the Modified division in 2001 at Elko Speedway. Walen continued on his racing path and went on to pick up his first-career track championship in 2011 at Raceway Park in Shakopee, MN. Walen used consistency and five Late Model feature wins along the way at Raceway to secure the title. The Midwest Racing Connection recently caught up with Walen to discuss his championship season.

Was your goal going into the season to win the championship, or just go for race wins?

The championship has been our goal the last two seasons. Things didn't work out last year, but we were able to pull it off this year

You have two cars at your disposal. Did you use both of them this year, or just concentrate on one car?

We just concentrated on the one car this year. I raced the other car at Elko a few times this year, but used the Raceway car the night we won the feature at Elko towards the end of the season. That was kind of a funny story that night. I was all alone and wanted to go play around with the new car. At the last minute, I decided to take the Raceway car and ended up winning the feature.

In the past, you spent some time racing two nights each week (Saturdays at Elko and Sundays at Raceway). What lead to your decision to concentrate on racing at Raceway Park on Sundays?

Part of the reason was due to the race director that was in place at Elko previously. The other part of my decision to run only on Sunday's was due to my family situation. I was going through a divorce and I also have my own Verizon Wireless store that I need to run. I needed Saturdays for family time and to work at my store.

What was the most challenging part of winning the championship?

Probably the most challenging part was falling behind in the points early in the year. The way the points work out there, it's hard to make up ground. Guys like Curt Mandinec and the folks at Qdoba Mexican Grill really helped out a lot.

Ten or 15 years from now, fans will probably talk about the epic battles between Chad Walen and Adam Royle for the 2011 championship. Will you be exchanging holiday cards with Adam this year?

Well, probably not. Honestly, I think it would be fair to say both Adam and I would like to put this past year behind us.

What are your plans for 2012?

Our plans for 2012 will be the same, go after the championship at Raceway Park. Now that I have the divorce behind me, I'm also hoping to have more time to race at Elko on Saturday's.

Martin DeFries photo



Walen and team celebrate their first championship at Raceway Park (left), a young Chad Walen getting his start in racing with Mel Walen's Late Model and Modified Four teams in 1991(right)



Martin DeFries photo

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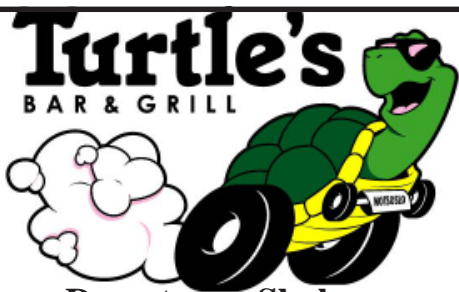


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2011 Top-5 Quotes of the year

Each year, we hear many comments from many people that make us laugh. Here are the top-5 quotes of the year for The Midwest Racing Connection.

You'll make somebody a good wife someday.

Photographer Martin DeFries when I told him that I ironed my own shirt.

How about you stick to writing a paper, and I'll play the music.

Karaoke Dave after one of my music suggestions during Oktoberfest.

I'm going to run a limited schedule on the ASA Midwest Tour this year to keep my rookie status. When I turn 50, I'll run the full schedule and go for Rookie of the Year.

Conrad Jorgenson prior to getting in his car during the ASA Midwest Tour 250-lap event at Elko.

Thanks, I really like reading All The Dirt.

Dyno Don Swearingen after handing him a copy of MRC.

You can't use any of this in the paper.

Too many drivers, crew members, or race fans to count, after talking with them several hours after the completion of the evening's racing program.



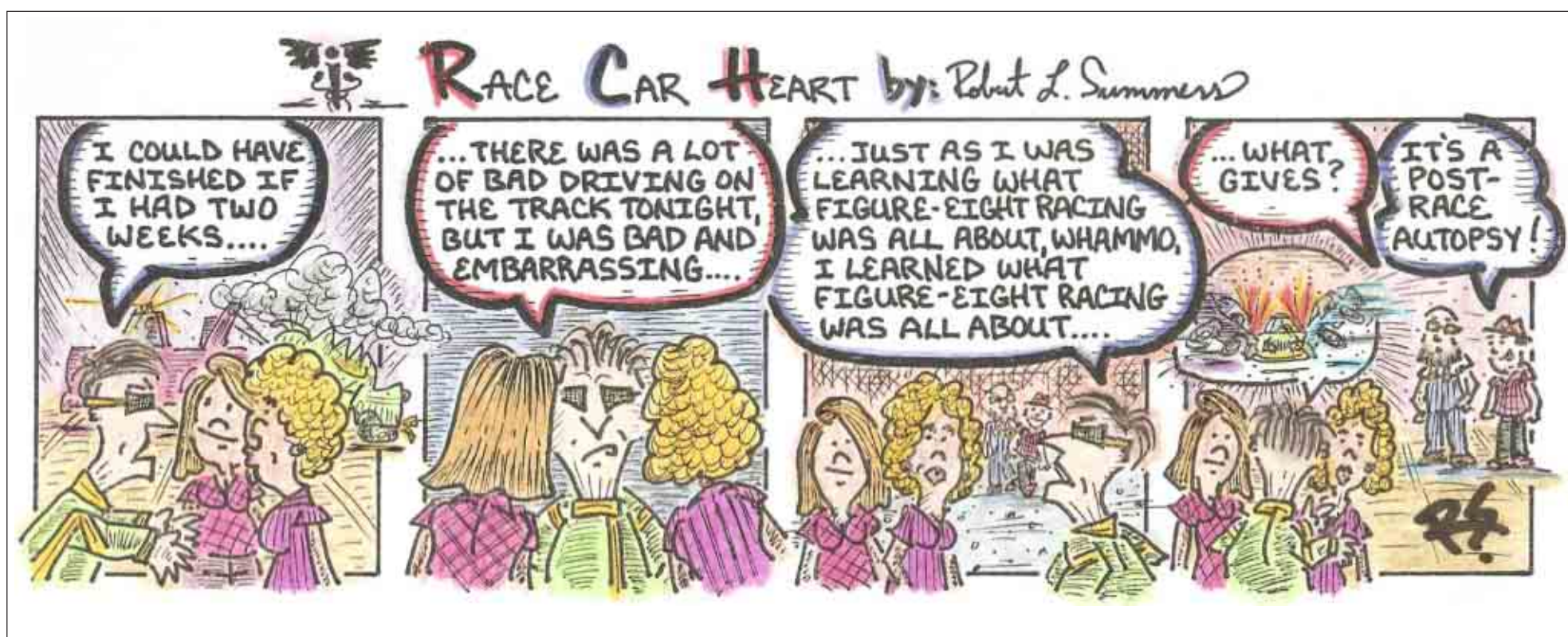
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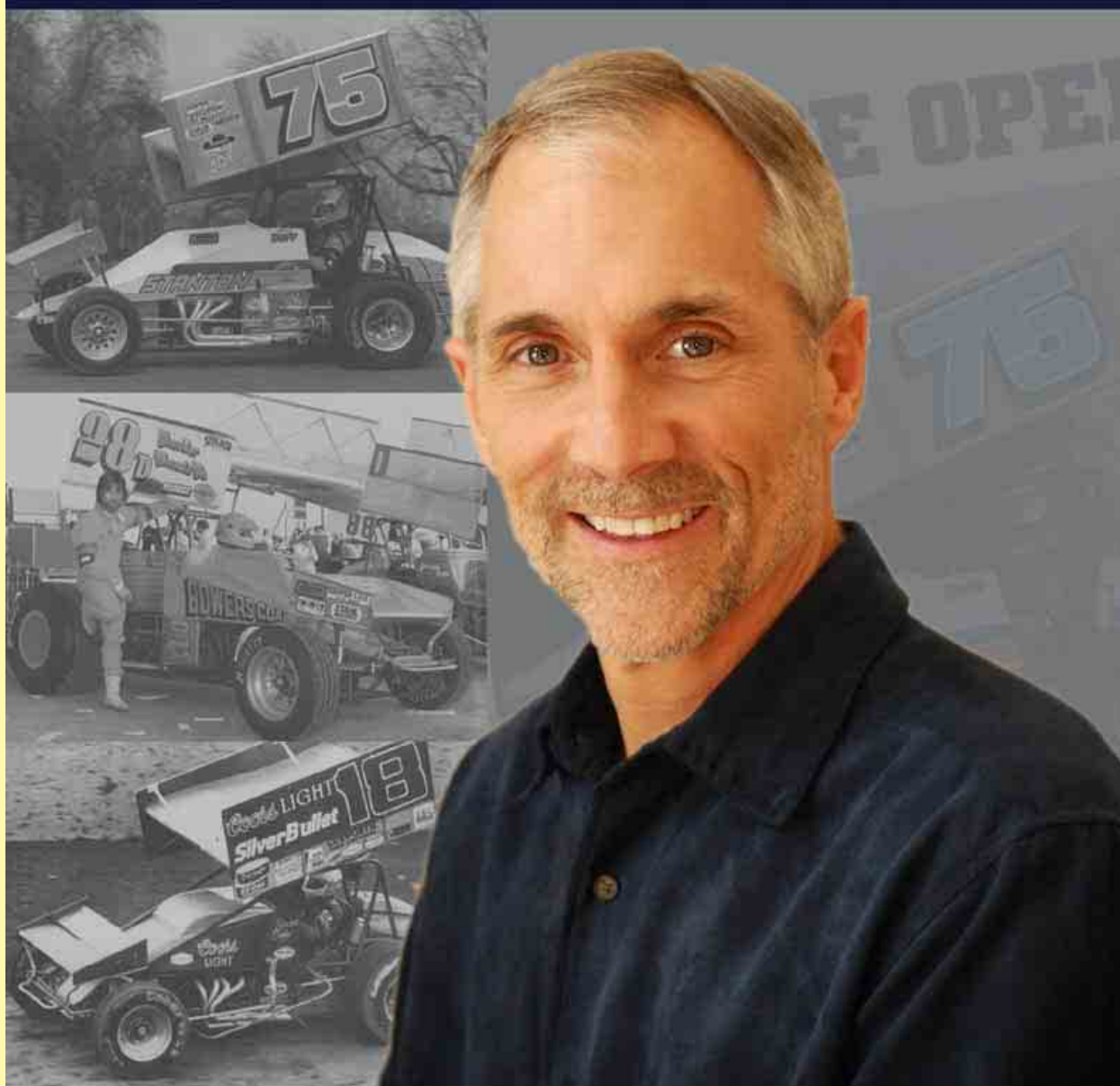
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