

THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION

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THE MIDWEST'S SHORT TRACK AUTO RACING AUTHORITY

April 28, 2011 Vol. 15, No. 1

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Photo Gallery



Where Are They Now



Joe Shear Classic Preview



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Publisher's Note

Racing According to Plan



Dan Plan

Welcome to the 15th year of the Midwest Racing Connection. Thank you for picking up a copy of our publication, and we hope you enjoy what you see. We will continue with our same format as we have the last few years, along with a couple of new items along the way.

While good Ol' Mother Nature has not been very cooperative around our part of the country to start off the year, things are quickly taking shape. Many tracks will have their openers in the coming weeks, or have finally been able to get in their season opening shows.

We were lucky enough to make a trip to Texas at the end of March to visit family, and ran into unseasonably warm weather for a few days. The return home has only seen

Early Season Specials

limited warm weather. Of the eight shows I had planned on seeing so far this year, only two have taken place. The early season shows have lead to several discussions regarding scheduling events early in the year in our part of the country. Let's face it, a race track isn't going to make any money if they're not open, and we all want our race tracks to remain open. While it's easy to sit back and wonder why a show would be scheduled at this time of year, the simple fact is that it can work out, and has worked out in past years. We've all experienced 70 degree days in the middle of the week at some point this year. Who's to say one of these warm days wasn't going to fall on a weekend? I know there have been more than a few years in my life, where I was wishing there was a race somewhere close to home, on an early April weekend. If you look at it from the promoters view, it's a whole lot easier to cancel a show that's been scheduled for early in the year if the weather suddenly turns wet and cold. It's not so easy to schedule a last minute show, if all of a sudden, a warm day appears on the weekend in April. The good news is, warmer days are just around the corner.

While it has been cold and wet, the first show close to home we were able to catch was the opening day of the Dirt Nationals at ElkoSpeedway. While the weather may have hindered the car count, the final race of the evening was something a lot of people probably wished they could have seen. Clayton Wagamon and Justin Jones put on what was described by announcer Jim Burns as an old-fashioned match race. It was quite a battle between these two to cap off the night, with Wagamon taking the lead coming out of turn four heading towards the white flag. Unfortunately, as was the case with several other tracks in Minnesota and

Publisher's note continued on page 8



Keith Koski picked up the Pure Stock main event win at Elko during the Spring Dirt Nationals. His well known grandfather was also on hand to watch.

Shawn Swanstrom photo

The Midwest

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The Inside Dirt



Stan Meissner

My aversion to outdoor activities in cold wet April weather has been well documented in these pages. My disdain for the cold is due to actual physical problems and not laziness or wimpiness as some suggest. There was a time when I would spend the day sitting on a bucket out on a frozen lake but that was twenty five years ago, longer than the lifetime of many of my critics. It's tough getting old but I don't expect young people to understand why I ease into each season and sometimes bail out early before the end. Actually I might be willing to endure cold weather racing if it meant sitting in the stands in a snowmobile suit instead of standing for six hours with a camera strap hanging around a body part reinforced by hardware. In spite of my dislike of cold weather outdoor activities the lure of the rescheduled April 23 Cedar Lake opener was becoming more than I could resist and I went through the drill of charging batteries that were not used for the second week in a row. Cedar Lake canceled for the second time and a pending car repair along with not having advance arrangements nixed any chance of a change of plans.

I understand the desire of younger racing fans to get out there and tough it out in order to engage their passion. On the other hand I've been going to these shows long enough to know that there will be another race soon to follow under more pleasant circumstances. Somehow it doesn't seem right to start chasing races before I pull my lawn mower out of the shed and put away the snow blower. Nevertheless, I had originally planned on the Elko Nationals a week earlier but when I saw the Friday and Saturday forecast I empowered myself and decided to sit that one out. I understand that Elko ran the Thursday preliminary show but the remainder of the weekend was

scrapped when it became obvious that Ma Nature was going to make sitting in the stands unbearable on April 15 and 16.

Should promoters put their livelihood on the line and open the gates in less than desirable weather? This is one of those questions that is debated from different points of view every season. If you're a promoter risking it all with a big purse and high gas prices you're probably going to error on the side of caution. Every promoter knows that the fifty die hards who are willing to sit and watch races in snowmobile suits aren't going to pay the bills but if you're the only track that is able to race you might get a larger than normal car count and make up for some of the deficit at the back gate. Unfortunately with the internet those fifty die hards have become vocal critics of tracks canceling and why not, if the show goes on and the promoter loses money it's no loss to them. The die hards get what amounts to a private showing with no lines at the concession or restroom. If you have a family with young children you're probably going to wait for more favorable weather and families are the majority of fans in the stands on any given race night. If you're an old guy like me with metal body parts you're going to secretly let out a sigh of relief when you don't have to endure the elements.

After losing the first two nights of the UMSS Sprint Car season along with the Corn Belt Clash Late Models I was in need of something to jump start the racing bug. Usually that consists of watching some NASCAR racing on television and catching some World of Outlaws audio broadcasts on the internet. My favorite ex Outlaw and current Sprint Cup driver Dave Blaney had a great run at Talladega and provided me with a dose of much needed enthusiasm. Talladega marks the second restrictor plate race that Dave has led and ran with the leaders. That is a huge accomplishment for an under funded single car team but most of the Cup media doesn't seem to understand how talented of a driver Dave really is. Dave came into NASCAR having won the 1995 World of Outlaws Champion at 33 years of age and the Knoxville Nationals at 35. Dave was already making a living with the WoO and circumvented the traditional learning curve that the typical NASCAR prospect starts in their mid teens. Unfortunately much of Dave's early pavement experience was gained at



Former MRC photographer Mark Strausser captured the moment that MRC columnist Stan Meissner became a Dave Blaney fan in 2003. While most in the crowd were there to see Matt Kenseth Stan enjoyed meeting this former World of Outlaws star in person. Ironically this 2003 event was rained out on it's first attempt and required a second appearance

the Cup level and was admittedly a bit rough around the edges. The NASCAR media never forgot what happened during those early years and doesn't acknowledge that Dave Blaney is now a seasoned veteran who has the talent but not the equipment.

World of Outlaws audio became a non factor with two weekends of racing falling to weather nixing events at Paducah, KY April 15, Pevely, MO, April 16, and Salina, OK, on April 23. When the Salina race canceled in the morning Craig Dollansky and Danny Lasoski towed to 34 Raceway in Burlington, Iowa, for the first ever Monster Energy Sprint Series race. Lasoski took the win, Dollansky had contact with Kerry Madsen while running third that ended his night.

Week night racing is going to be a challenge for many of us this season. As if rising gas prices aren't enough I recently found out that I35E is going to be reduced to one lane in both directions from White Bear to the Forest Lake split from May through September for resurfacing. Light rail construction in downtown St. Paul is making it difficult to get around lowertown for those of us who work down

The Inside Dirt continued on page 13

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The Racing Geek



by Jordan Bianchi

Even before the NASCAR Hall of Fame opened its doors, it's been a source of controversy. When plans were announced for a museum to honor the rich history of a sport with roots tracing back to the 1930s, the debate quickly centered on where the Hall of Fame should be located. Logical sites like Charlotte, NC, Daytona, FL and Atlanta, GA, and outside the box locations like Kansas City, KS were frequently tossed about as ideal cities for a building dedicated to those who made a significant impact on NASCAR.

After much deliberation and even more lobbying – i.e. which city would pony up the most greenbacks – the powers that be wisely selected Charlotte as the location.

However, the controversy didn't end there; it only intensified when the inaugural Hall of Fame class was officially introduced. David Pearson, the owner of three Sprint Cup championships and second on the all-time wins list with 105, was incomprehensibly not one of the five people selected. A decision which almost two years later still makes my head shake in disbelief whenever the subject is broached.

Debate and disbelief once again converged last fall when the second list of five inductees for the Class of 2011 was revealed. This time centering on the omission of Cale

Yarborough and Darrell Waltrip, who between them have won a combined six Sprint Cup titles and 167 races.

Tuesday, as has become the norm, controversy again reigned when the list of 25 nominees for the third Hall of Fame class was made public. This time the uproar wasn't centered on which city was going to host the NASCAR Hall of Fame or which names would or wouldn't be on the list of five inductees. Instead, this go-around of the debate focused on the list of 25 nominees, and which names were excluded.

Most notably, why names like Wendell Scott, Bruton Smith, Rusty Wallace and Ray Evernham didn't somehow find their way onto the nomination list. For those who are unaware, Wendell Scott is the only African-American to win a NASCAR race, and is frequently touted by NASCAR as the "Jackie Robinson of Motorsports." His legacy goes far beyond what he did on the track and mere stats can't begin to tell the tale of how Scott overcame racial prejudice to leave an everlasting footprint on the sport.

(If you want a great summarization as to why Scott not only deserves to at least be nominated, but probably should already be in the Hall of Fame, I recommend reading Jim Utter's column on That's Racing.com. In it, Utter summarizes the case for Scott and the hypocrisy of NASCAR when it comes to continually publicizing the feats of Scott, yet not doing their part to ensure that his legacy lives on by inducting him in the Hall of Fame. Or at the bare minimum, having his name as one the 25 nominees.)

As for the other three names not included on the nominee list – Bruton Smith, Rusty Wallace and Ray Evernham – the history of NASCAR can't be mentioned without including their names and accomplishments.

Smith was one of the co-founders of Charlotte Motor Speedway, and outside of the France Family, few played as prominent a role in expanding NASCAR from a small niche Southeastern sport, to one that is now more relevant than the NHL and at times has had ratings which rival the NFL and Major League Baseball.

Not to mention Texas Motor Speedway, which Smith built from the ground up, is perhaps the finest venue in all of sports and further highlights Smith's role in NASCAR evolving into a mainstream sport embraced by the masses.

The case for Rusty Wallace's inclusion is pretty straightforward. He's a former Sprint Cup titlist, won 55 races in 22 full seasons, is eighth all-time in laps led and is one of only 12 drivers to have won more than 50 races in their careers.

In the minds of many smarter than me, Ray Evernham is on the short list of greatest crew chiefs of all-time. During his tenure atop the pit box for Jeff Gordon, Evernham guided Gordon to three championships and 47 victories. Included among those were two wins in the Daytona 500, four consecutive Southern 500 crowns, two Brickyard 400 titles and three victories in the Coca-Cola 600. Furthermore, the engineer-minded Evernham introduced countless innovations to NASCAR, many of which are still being used to this day.

With the exception of Wendell Scott, who this year should receive a special legacy induction from the Hall of Fame, I'm not demanding the gates of the Hall of Fame be swung open immediately for the trio of Smith, Wallace and Evernham. But their credentials are certainly as beyond reproach as any of the 25 nominees announced Tuesday, and they've more than earned the right at the very least, to deserve consideration by the 54-member voting panel which will convene in October to determine the Class of 2012.

To not include their names on the list of this year's nominees is misguided. Worse, it makes everyone associated with the sport as a whole look ill-informed. Although I understand it's not an easy process weeding through who should make the cut and who shouldn't, the method from picking the nominees to selecting the Hall of Fame inductees, has sadly turned from honoring those who deserve the selection and/or nomination, to criticizing the continued errors in judgment when it relates to anything to do with the NASCAR Hall of Fame. Instead of reflecting and paying homage to those who have earned it through their dedication, sacrifice and hard work.

Too often though, it seems as if these things have continually gotten lost in the sea of controversy the NASCAR Hall of Fame has endlessly and needlessly created.



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Going in Circles



By Charlie Spry

Back to the beginning of April, we realized that we had a chance to attend a local short track race during the very first weekend of the month of April, which is a rarity in these parts. So, on April 2, we took in the opener for the Deery Brothers Summer Series late models at the Dubuque Fairgrounds Speedway, in Dubuque, Iowa.

A surprisingly pleasant evening greeted us, as did 43 late models in the pits, along with a smattering of stock cars and sport compacts. Brian Harris took the lead early from Tom Darbyshire and held off a charging Andy Eckrich to take the win. Eckrich had worked his way up to the front from quite a ways back in the field. Darbyshire took third followed by Tyler Bruening. I've been impressed with Bruening every time I have seen him.

The stock cars seemed ready to destruct each other, as multiple cautions and a few boos from the crowd finally saw Terry Rittmer take the win in the marathon event. Timmy Current and Rob Henry followed.

The four cylinder sport compacts had what was arguably the most exciting feature of the night. Several drivers appeared to take issue with one another, but at the end it was Bryce Garnhart taking the win over closing John Flury. However, post race inspection gave the win to Flury anyhow, as Garnhart had an illegal part on his ride.

What really surprised me was the crowd, or lack of it. While it certainly wasn't a terrible crowd count, there were not near as many people attending than I would have thought. A good series, a good track, talented drivers, and reasonable admission prices. Oh, and good weather! What more could you ask for?

Saturday, April 16th brought us a not-so-comfortable day, with cold temps, wind, rain, and snow. However, Matt Rowe was ready to run his ISS (Impact Survival Series) enduro event at the Columbus 151 Speedway. It was snowing steadily when we pulled in the gate, and continued on for close to half the race, finally stopping and allowing for the track to dry as the cars racing dried the track in the process. I don't recall too many races that I have attended in the snow!

These enduros are a bit different from some, as disabled cars are left on the track as obstacles. Drivers are removed and the cars sit where they lie. This show did not have too many obstacles, as the field seemed pretty strong and able

to keep pace. Gary Stark seemed to have the field covered, although Chris Fifarek definitely gave him a run for the money. The race was marred by a jolting wreck just before the half-way period. Gerald Bowers had his car stall on the backstretch, with another car not realizing this and plowing into the back of his stalled car. The impact was strong, as I noticed the driver being thrust forward upon contact, and when you can see that from across the track, you know that it is a hard hit. Bowers was airlifted via the UW helicopter to UW Madison hospital. Word was that he was released shortly, so that is a relief!

Steve Privett talked with me briefly afterward. Steve dropped out of the race very early, and told me "I was wearing a full face helmet, and the face shield just fogged up on me. I couldn't see a thing. I got some complaints about giving up, but I have to be able to see. There is always another race." Steve is never at a loss for words, and is a great interview, as he always has some funny anecdotes. I fully agree. You cannot race if you can't see properly!

Josh Klopotek made the long haul from the Stevens Point area, dropping out near the half-way point. Josh said that initially he had way too much air pressure in the tires and had to pit to adjust. Then, after returning and running strong for awhile, his brakes went out and he decided to call it a day.

We will now be getting into the part of the season where most tracks will begin operating their weekly shows. Hopefully, the weather will cooperate with all.



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Auto Racing Facts, Observances and Opinions



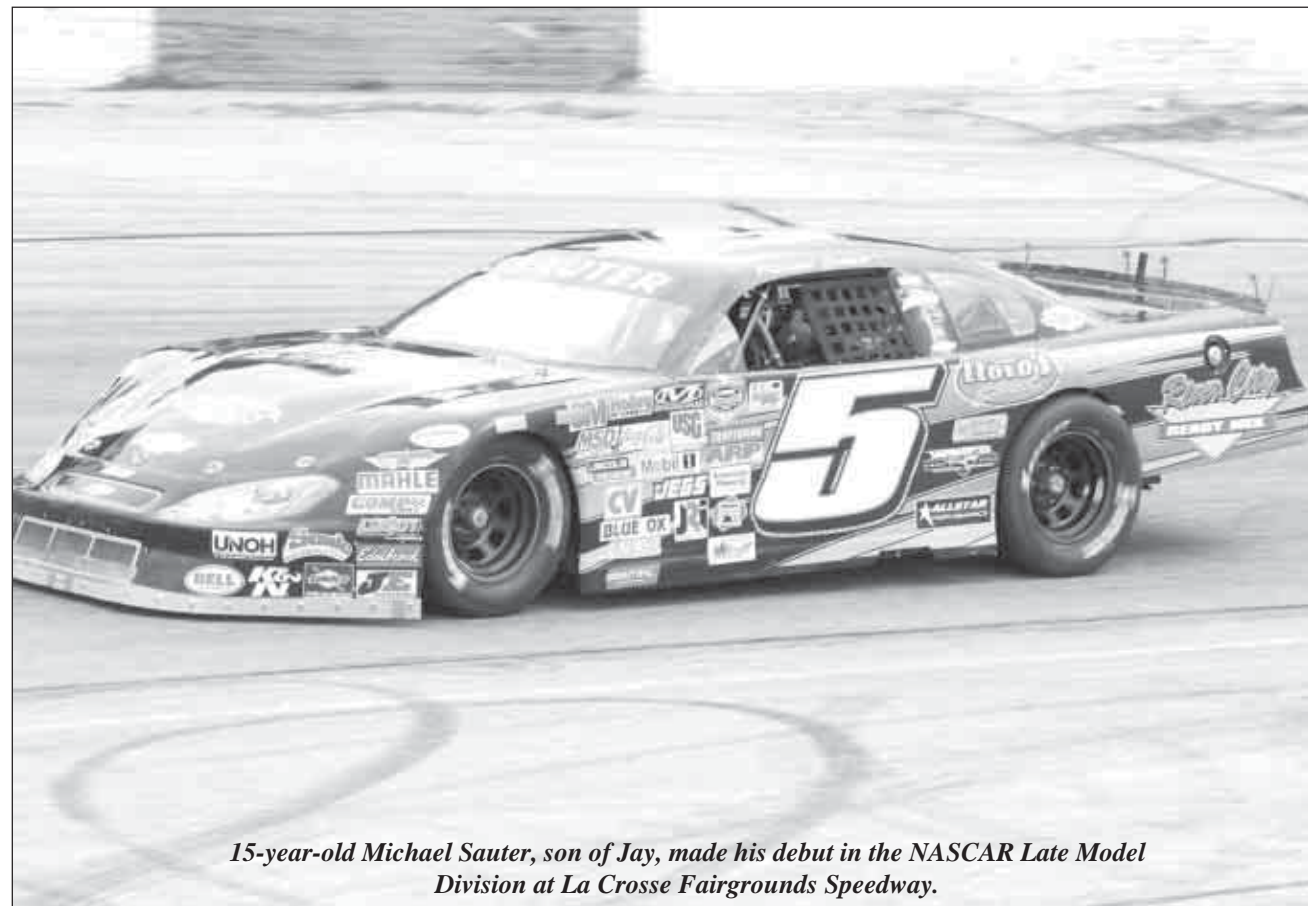
Dale P. Danielski

With winter grudgingly departing it was great to see a track beat the weather here Saturday night as La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway, West Salem, WI., opened its 2011 season with a full slate of racing.

Tough times and economy be damned as an excellent four division field pushing 80 was on hand to do battle in front of an anxious to see some racing crowd of nearly 2,000. When all was said and done it was a familiar face in victory lane after the top billed event of the night, the NASCAR Late Model Feature, as Steve Carlson got off to a quick start taking the main.

Although a perennial winner graced victory circle the night was not without plenty of action, excitement and drama. After an early caution period took out contenders Mike Carlson, Tony Bagstad and Adam Degenhardt, Carlson as usual, took the opportunity to move up from 12th in the field via the outside on the double file restart to near the front of the pack. Shortly thereafter he was in front never to be headed. Todd Korish fought gamely but was never able to pose a real threat and wound up 2nd at the finish. He was followed by NASCAR Late Model Rookie Nick Clements, Matt Henderson and defending LM champion Shawn Pfaff, or maybe not. In post race tech inspection Clements was found in violation of the ride height rule and disqualified which moved everyone up a spot. That put J. Herbst in 5th with Skylar Holzhausen, Bill Niles, Harley Jankowski, Cole Scholze and Jeremy Wagner following. The Herbst finish was noteworthy in that he had to come from the back of the pack twice having been involved in on track incidents. Holzhausen was forced to do the same on one occasion but still moved through the field to finish 6th. Brent Kirchner who is expected to contend for the title this year wasn't so lucky as he was involved in an early caution which meant he had to restart the race at the rear. He decided he didn't want to start in that position and wouldn't go there at which point he was black flagged. Not heeding that warning he was consequently disqualified! Did we say action and drama here tonight!

It appeared after watching the NASCAR Late Model Feature and all its carnage the Sportsmen Division drivers decided to take a bit more cautious approach for their 15 lap main. Brothers Gilster were the show, battling each other



15-year-old Michael Sauter, son of Jay, made his debut in the NASCAR Late Model Division at La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway.

much of the way before Jimmy was able to eke out a close win over Dan in a relatively incident free race.

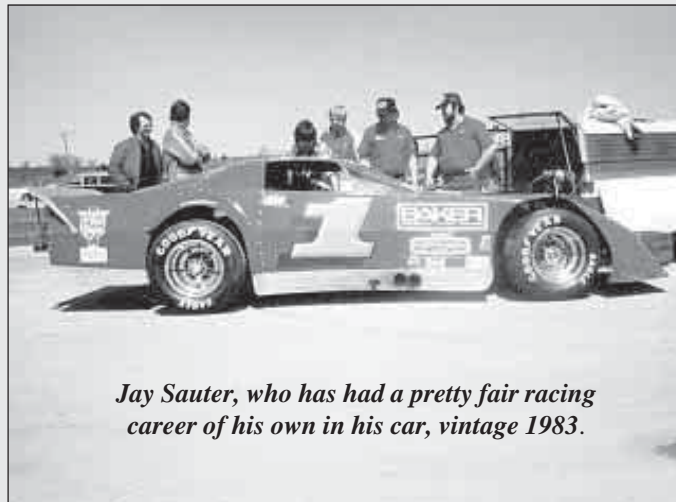
Another familiar face was in victory lane in the Thunderstox division as Adam Moore captured the 15 lap headline event. The new Outlawz division made its debut with John Olson taking the top attraction.

All the aforementioned with a bunch of fun added, best describes the opening night of racing at La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway. Now if Mother Nature will only cooperate and let us move into Spring-like weather we know there is more of the same to come.

Race night notes...Michael Sauter son of Jay made his debut racing a NASCAR Late Model here tonight. At just 15 years of age, Sauter already has a fair amount of experience racing. According to Dad, they began his racing in Karting. "We raced locally for a couple years before competing with the IKF. Having done very well with that it was decided to get into car racing. We thought about starting out in one of the lower divisions of racing, but it seems you can develop a lot of bad habits doing that, so we decided to get right into the NASCAR Late Model Division. We first thought of racing two cars out here in the division with me driving the other car but it just seemed like it would be too much work. Plus I wanted to help my son get started and heading in the right direction." With Chad Wehrs providing the equipment, the team did just that with Michael, after an earlier spin, battling back to place 12th in the feature event. With the Sauter bloodline you have to believe the kid has got a future in racing...One rabbit was very lucky Saturday and probably did make it to Easter

Sunday. Seen running next to the wall between turns three and four during hot laps track workers helped the animal to freedom...for now anyway...The gopher however was not so lucky this week as the J. Herbst machine made short work of him...The cars of Mike Carlson and Tony Bagstad suffered by far the most damage after the evenings racing with both needing to be hauled away via Flatbed trucks...Quote of the column this time around comes from Skylar Holzhausen who will be racing on a near regular basis in a team car to J. Herbst at the track in 2011. "J. has a good feel for his race car. Our styles are real close which helps us in setting up the cars. I think we've got something here." Both cars and drivers were extremely fast but being in the right place at the wrong time hurt both their performances...Here and there...Things should start heating up in area racing as a number of dirt tracks including weather plagued Mississippi Thunder Speedway of Fountain City, WI., and Deer Creek Speedway, of Racing, MN., are set to get rolling by the time you read this. The ASA Midwest Tour will also get their season started at Madison International Speedway of Oregon, WI., April 30 and May 1st...

Dale's Picture from the past



Jay Sauter, who has had a pretty fair racing career of his own in his car, vintage 1983.

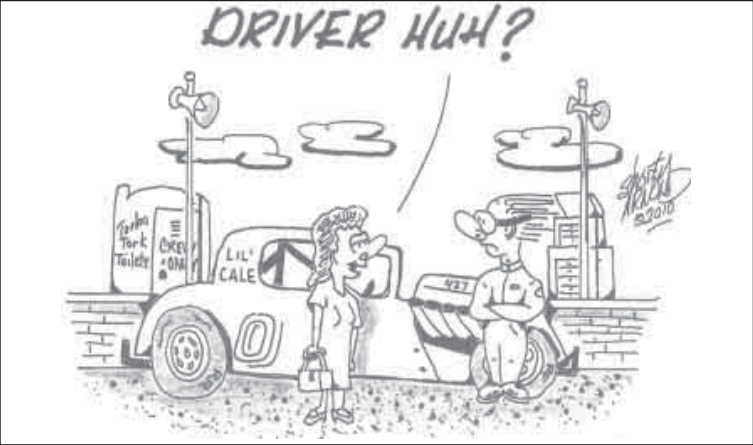
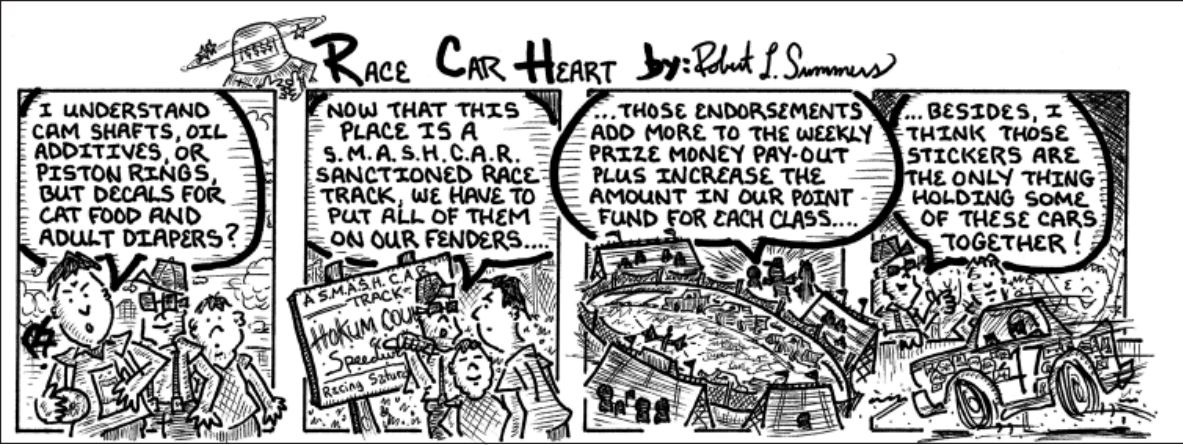
Publishers Note from page 3

Wisconsin on this particular weekend, the remainder of the three-day show was canceled due to wet and unseasonably cold conditions.

Also spotted at Elko was Tom Nesbitt. I saw Tommy as I was leaving to head home for the evening. It turns out Tom was on hand with the whole family to watch his grandson (Keith Koski) race his Pure Stock. Keith would go on to pick up the main event over heat race winner Krysta Swearingen. We were unable to confirm if Nesbitt actually asked to have Champions renamed Nesbitts in recognition of his successful career in racing. Other winners for this evening included; Dave Maas picking up the Super Stock win, Mike Jans won the Street Stock feature and Dan Wheeler picked up the Midwest Mod win.

My second race of the year was a road trip with my dad to LaCrosse. Despite receiving eight inches of snow earlier in the week, the LaCrosse opener went off as scheduled. It's always a treat to new see paint jobs and new cars at the beginning of the year, but something else really caught my attention on this night, the lights. Wow, is the back-stretch well-lit now. Other notable events were the Late Model debuts of Michael Sauter and Nick Clements. Sauter ran smooth and steady all night, but had a late race spin take a way a top-ten finish. Clements moved up from the Sportman division and used the double-file restart to run side-by-side with "The King of The Short Tracks" before settling into third. Clements strong run will not show in the final results for the night, as post race technical inspection found the car too low. Look for a full recap from LaCrosse later in this issue.

And finally.....
One of our new items for this year will be a feature section titled *Where are they now?* Our intent with these stories is to feature individuals who have worked or raced in the past at one of our local short tracks, and moved on to the upper-levels of racing. The first installment features former LaCrosse Fairgrounds Speedway racer Sam Anderson. Sam made the move to North Carolina about six years ago and is featured in this issue. If you know of somebody who worked at a local short track and is now working for one of the "Big League" teams that you would like to see featured in these pages, feel free to drop us a note.



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Where are they now?



Bruce Nuttleman photo

Sam Anderson Melrose, WI

How did you get your start in racing?

Melrose was a real small town, and there were always guys in town that raced. My dad had a car dealership in town which kept me around cars, and I was always real interested in racing. When I was 14 or 15 years old I started going in the pits with some of the guys. That just led to getting a car myself and racing.

What was your favorite moment from racing at LaCrosse Fairgrounds Speedway?

Well, I have to think about that. I have a few of them. Probably the first Late Model win in 2004 was the most challenging thing that we had accomplished. I ended up moving into a Late Model in 2004 after running five years in the Sportsman class. We never thought we would be as competitive as we were, but we were able to get a win. That was probably the best moment we had.

Did you race at any other tracks in the Midwest?

Mainly at LaCrosse, for the first 5 years. When we started racing Late Models, we raced a little bit at Golden Sands and ran a few times at Wisconsin Dells. At the end of the year, we would run all of the specials like Marshfield and Rockford.

When did you realize you wanted to have a career in NASCAR?

I guess almost from day one. It's something that I was always interested in. Like I said, people around town were racing and watching it on TV made me think it would always be fun. I always knew someday I'm actually going to move to Charlotte and pursue it. When the day came, we decided to pack all of our stuff and move down.

What steps did you take to get into the upper levels of NASCAR?

I had a small connection with Travis Sauter's dad Tim Sauter. I knew Travis fairly well, and his dad was running the Busch series at the time and handed me a few leads on jobs. I interviewed with Matt Hill Motorsports at the time. When this team disbanded, they hooked me up with a job at a company called Nitro Manufacturing building the big pit boxes you see on pit road today. We did that for a few months, while continuing to hand out our résumé to race shops. We got a call from Roush one day, had an interview, got the job and I've been here ever since.

What are your job duties?

I work in what is called the Finish Fab department. I started out building all of the exhaust systems for the Nationwide cars. I did that for a few years and then had the opportunity to install the driver seats and safety equipment. A couple of years ago, I moved over to the Sprint Cup shop and install the rear and side windows. We work on all the Roush cars in this department as well as the stuff for Richard Petty Motorsports and the Woods 21 car. We built the car that won the 500 this year. That was pretty special too.

Any tips for others aspiring to have a job in the "Big League"?

You just have to go down on a whim and go for it. You can't ever let anyone tell you that you can't do it. Right now, with the way the economy is, it's a lot trickier. I still say to this day that I was lucky with the timing of when we came down. If it's something you really, really want to do, you just have to go for it. If it's meant to be, you're going to get your chance.



Anderson family photo collection

THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION

Photo Gallery



Defending Elko Power Stock champion Rob Schnichels gettin' dirty
Mart DeFries photo



Big-8 Late Model action on the high-banks of Rockford
Doug Hornickel photo



Defending NASCAR state champion Pat Doar will run with the WoO in 2011
Shawn Swanstrom photo



Dillon Sellner moves up to the Thunder Car class at Elko Speedway
Martin DeFries photo



Rockford Speedway Sportsman action
Jimmy Ambruoso photo



The Gilsters ran one-two at LaCrosse Fairgrounds Speedway
Bruce Nuttleman photo

THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION

Photo Gallery



Roadrunner winner Alex Papini
Jimmy Ambruoso photo



Thunderstox winner Adam Moore in victory lane
Bruce Nuttleman photo



Clayton Wagamon and Dan Wheeler - Modified winners at Elko
Martin DeFries photo



Andy Jones hot-lapping his new Sprint Car at Cedar Lake Speedway
Vince Peterson photo



Elko Big-8 Late Model driver Dylan Moore
Martin DeFries photo



Bill Prietzel and James Swan in Mid Am action
Mark Melchiorio photo

UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED ALL RACES START AT 6PM



CEDAR LAKE SPEEDWAY

NEW RICHMOND, WISCONSIN

(Subject to Change)

2011 EVENTS SCHEDULE

| DATE (1) | All races start at 6PM unless otherwise noted (1) | Adult ⁽²⁾ | Student ⁽²⁾ |
|---------------|---|----------------------|------------------------|
| Sat, Apr 23 | NASCAR Racing—Late Models, Modifieds, Pro Stocks, & Midwest Mods | \$15 ⁽²⁾ | \$7 ⁽²⁾ |
| Thu, Apr 28 | OPEN PRACTICE (6-9PM) \$30 per car & driver | NA | NA |
| Sat, April 30 | SPRING SPRINT CAR SPECIAL featuring UMSS SPRINTS, Late Models, Modifieds, Pro Stocks, & Midwest Mods | \$15 ⁽²⁾ | \$7 ⁽²⁾ |
| Sat, May 7 | NASCAR Racing—Late Models, Modifieds, Pro Stocks, & Midwest Mods | \$12 | \$6 |
| Thu, May 12 | OPEN PRACTICE (6-9PM) \$30 per car & driver | NA | NA |
| Sat, May 14 | SCHOOL BUS SPECIAL—Midwest Mods, Pro Stocks, Vintage Cars, and Bus Races! | \$25 ⁽²⁾ | \$12 ⁽²⁾ |
| Sat, May 21 | THE TRIPLE CROWN! \$3,000 to win IRA OUTLAW SPRINT CARS, \$3,000 to win NASCAR LATE MODELS. First 3,000 people in the Grandstands get a FREE Triple Crown T-shirt! (Rain Date for School Bus Races) | FREE | FREE |
| Sat, May 28 | PACK THE TRACK NIGHT! FREE GRANDSTAND ADMISSION! NASCAR Racing—Modifieds, Pro Stocks, & Midwest Mods | \$12 | \$6 |
| Sat, June 4 | NASCAR Racing—Late Models, Modifieds, Pro Stocks, & Midwest Mods | \$12 ⁽²⁾ | \$6 ⁽²⁾ |
| Sat, June 11 | NASCAR Racing—Late Models, Modifieds, Pro Stocks, & Midwest Mods | \$25 ⁽²⁾ | \$12 ⁽²⁾ |
| Thu, Jun 16 | 13TH ANNUAL MASTERS EVENT (JUNE 16TH - 18TH) 7PM start time with night | \$30 | \$15 ⁽²⁾ |
| Fri, Jun 17 | MASTERS Day 1—Modifieds, Pro Stocks, & Midwest Mods (Full show) | \$12 ⁽²⁾ | \$6 ⁽²⁾ |
| Sat, Jun 18 | MASTERS Day 2—UMSS Sprint Cars along with NASCAR Late Models, Modifieds, & Midwest Mods | \$30 | \$15 ⁽²⁾ |
| Sat, Jun 25 | MASTERS Day 3—UMSS Sprint Cars along with NASCAR Late Models, Modifieds, & Midwest Mods | \$12 ⁽²⁾ | \$6 ⁽²⁾ |
| Sat, Jul 2 | 4th Annual NIGHT OF DESTRUCTION featuring a HUGE Demolition Derby! Wildman Clay Gallagher will also entertain with death-defying stunts. Also running NW Modifieds and Pro Stocks! | \$15 ⁽²⁾ | \$7 ⁽²⁾ |
| Fri, Jul 8 | ANNUAL WORLD OF OUTLAW 410 SPRINT CARS (also running Midwest Mods) - 7:00 start time | \$12 | \$6 |
| Sat, Jul 9 | FIRECRACKER SPECIAL—NASCAR Late Models, Modifieds, & Midwest Mods (this is our Annual HUGE Fireworks Display) | \$12 | \$6 |
| Sat, Jul 16 | NASCAR Racing—Late Models, Modifieds, Pro Stocks, & Midwest Mods | \$15 ⁽²⁾ | \$7 ⁽²⁾ |
| Sat, Jul 23 | NASCAR Racing—Late Models, Modifieds, Pro Stocks, & Midwest Mods | \$25 | \$12 ⁽²⁾ |
| Sat, July 30 | 24th ANNUAL USA NATIONALS! (Aug 4th - 6th) 7PM start time each night | \$25 ⁽²⁾ | \$12 ⁽²⁾ |
| Thu, Aug 4 | Cornbelt Clash Touring Late Models—\$5k to win! Also running NW Modifieds. | \$30 ⁽²⁾ | \$15 ⁽²⁾ |
| Fri, Aug 5 | NATIONALS Day 1—World of Outlaws Late Model Quizzing, Hauls, & Dash for \$50k to win event & complete show of NASCAR Late Models | \$12 | \$6 |
| Sat, Aug 6 | NATIONALS Day 2—World of Outlaws Late Model Semi, UCR & 100 lap \$50k to win event & complete show of NASCAR Late Models | \$12 ⁽²⁾ | \$6 ⁽²⁾ |
| Sat, Aug 13 | NASCAR Racing—Late Models, Modifieds, Pro Stocks, & Midwest Mods as well as Easter Pastor Races featuring local area churches. | NA | NA |
| Sat, Aug 20 | 2nd Annual FASTER PASTOR RACE! Pro Stocks & Midwest Mods (Fun Appreciation Day & Elmer Cook Memorial - FREE Corn on the cob!) | \$12 | \$6 |
| Thu, Aug 25 | OPEN PRACTICE (6-9PM) \$30 per car & driver | \$25 ⁽²⁾ | \$12 ⁽²⁾ |
| Sat, Aug 27 | NASCAR Racing—Late Models, Modifieds, Pro Stocks, & Midwest Mods (Fun Appreciation Day & Elmer Cook Memorial - FREE Corn on the cob!) | NA | NA |
| Sat, Sep 10 | 11th Annual Jerry Richert Memorial IRA/KNOXVILLE 410 SPRINT CAR CHALLENGE & UMSS Sprints & Vintage Cars | \$15 ⁽²⁾ | \$7 ⁽²⁾ |
| Wed, Sep 14 | OPEN PRACTICE (6-9PM) \$30 per car & driver | \$18 | \$9 ⁽²⁾ |
| Thu, Sep 15 | THE 5th ANNUAL LEGENDARY 100! (SEPTEMBER 15TH - 17TH) 5PM start time each night | \$20 ⁽²⁾ | \$10 ⁽²⁾ |
| Fri, Sep 16 | Full program of Late Models, Modifieds, Pro Stocks, and Midwest Mods. Top 8 from the A-main qualify for Saturday's main event. | \$12 ⁽²⁾ | \$6 ⁽²⁾ |
| Sat, Sep 17 | Grand Finale—B-Main, best chance to win, and A-main in all four divisions (Late Models, Modifieds, Pro Stocks, and Midwest Mods) | | |
| Sat, Sep 24 | 7th Annual \$10,000 to-win ENDURO! 5:30PM Start Time | | |

Notes: (1) Unless otherwise noted, races start at 6PM. Grandstands open at 5PM. Pro open at 3PM. (2) Students are age 11-16, and kids age 10 and under are FREE except on the dates with footnote 3. (3) Prices noted on the gate, day of the event. Advance discount tickets and/or reserved seats may be available online for this special event at www.cedarlakespeedway.com or call 612-363-0479. Student age for this event is considered 4-16.

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The Masters, June 16th-18th
USA Nationals, Aug. 4th-6th
The Legendary 100, Sept. 15th-17th

DON'T MISS SPECIALS

School Bus Races, May 14th
Pack the Track Night, May 28
Night of Destruction, July 2nd
Firecracker Special, July 9th
Faster Pastor Race, Aug. 20th
\$10k to WIN Enduro, Sept. 24th

SPRINT CAR EVENTS

Spring UMSS Sprint Special, April 30th
The Triple Crown, May 21st
World of Outlaws, July 8th
Summer UMSS Sprint Special, July 30th
IRA/Knoxville Challenge, Sept. 10th



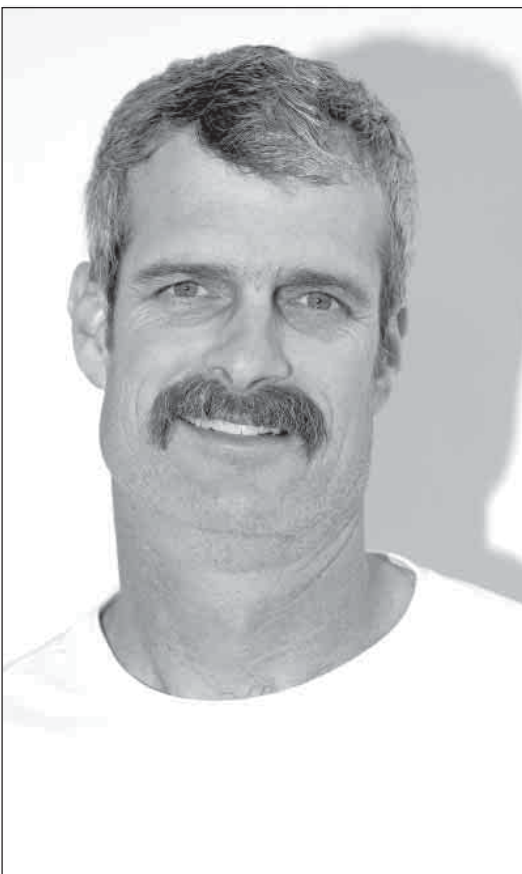
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The Inside Dirt from page 4

there. To add further to my weekday racing woes the budget lot where I usually park has been commandeered to house construction equipment while the new Lafayette bridge is being built forcing me to use higher priced ramps when I'm not busing. Forest Lake residents will be facing some additional challenges as the Broadway bridge (the main Forest Lake exit) will be closed for the entire summer along with reconstruction of most of Broadway from the freeway to Lake Street. Week night racing will require careful planning and some luck getting through the gridlock both at work and in my neighborhood. I'm sure that many of you are facing the same type of obstacle course on your preferred routes regardless of where you live and work so I share your pain in that regard.

After Cedar Lake canceled on April 23 I still had two possible options in Ogilvie and Rice Lake. Instead, I decided to attend an acoustic show in downtown Minneapolis. It's been a while since I've helped out as a roadie but I found it to be a pleasant change of pace.

I'll leave you with a few of my favorite shots from seasons past including one taken by former MRC photographer Mark Strausser. Along with the photos and observations I'm sending my wishes for more favorable weather in the coming weeks. If the weather cooperates I will be attending the UMSS shows at Cedar Lake on April 30 and Ogilvie on May 7. I'm keeping my fingers crossed that I'll see you at the races!



Pat Doar posed for this portrait at Cedar Lake in 2008 but recently announced his intent to race with the World of Outlaws Late Model series. After an appearance at Thursday night practice rumors were circulating that Pat would be on hand for the regular season opener. Unfortunately the weather won out on April 23 and no racing took place as a result.

Stan Meissner photo



Lance Matthees (*right*) no longer races at Cedar Lake on a regular basis but when Deer Creek canceled on April 23 Lance decided to head to Cedar Lake. If the weather had allowed Cedar to get their opener in there would have been a stout field of Late Models on hand. This shot shows Matthees lifting his left front wheel at Cedar Lake in 2005.

Natalie Sather (*left*) of Fargo North Dakota is an example of a driver that did not stay in Sprints very long before trying other types of racing. Sather is currently racing with the NASCAR All American Series out of Huntsville, North Carolina. In addition to her racing activities Natalie competed in the 2006 Miss North Dakota pageant where she was the second runner up. Unlike Dave Blaney who did not begin his NASCAR career until he was in his mid 30's Sather made the switch at a young age. This shot was taken on April 12, 2003, proving that April racing is possible in spite of our miserable spring weather.

Stan Meissner photos

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Coming in the next issue of
**THE MIDWEST
RACING CONNECTION**
*NASCAR Season opening
events from Cedar Lake, Elko
and Raceway Park*

Carlson Takes Opening Night at LaCrosse Speedway

By: Ashley Iwanski

Sparks were flying at La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway Saturday for the opening night of the 2011 season. Steve Carlson dodged wrecks left and right to make his way to the front of the field to win the Kwik Trip NASCAR Late Model division feature.

Three laps into the feature Jeff Baker, Brent Kirchner and Bill Niles were running one, two and three. Then as the three exited turn three, they got three-wide and Baker went spinning to the top of the track collecting Tony Bagstad, Mike Carlson, J. Herbst and Adam Degenhardt.

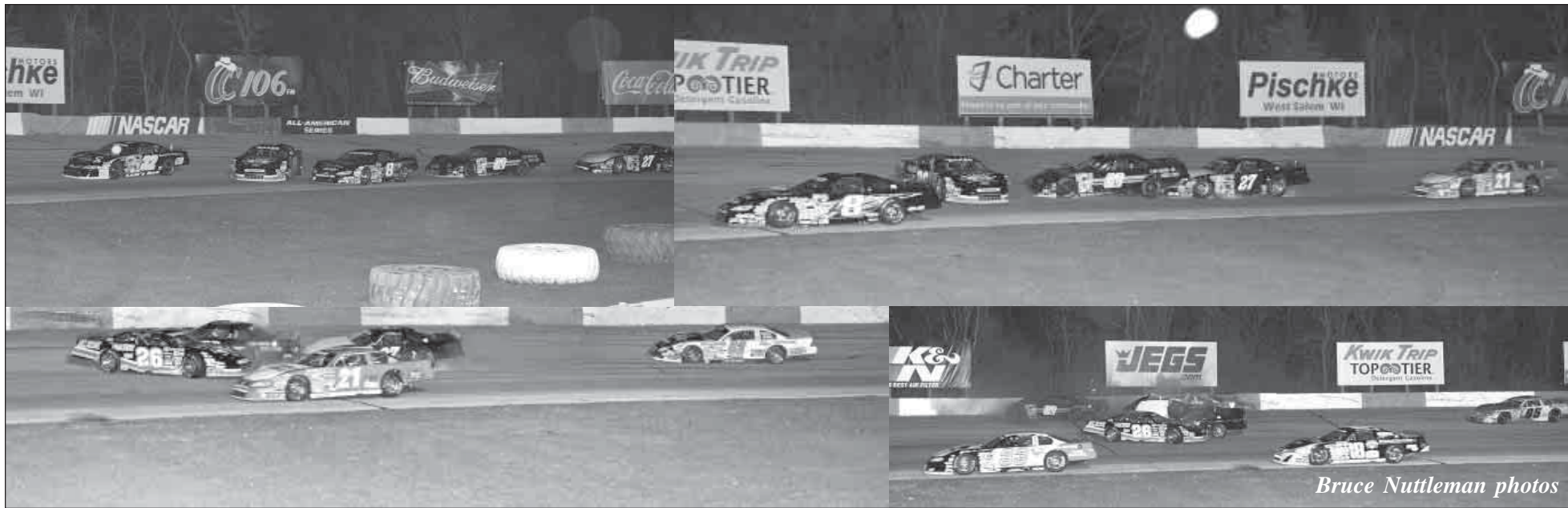
Under caution Kirchner was sent to the rear of the field while Steve Carlson moved to the lead in front of Todd Korish. On lap eight, rookie of the year contender Nick Clements moved into the fifth position and started to work his way forward as leaders caught lap traffic.

With ten laps to go Cole Scholze spun in turn two bringing out a caution and a double file restart. Carlson took the inside line followed by Korish and Shawn Pfaff. Clements was the first driver to pick the outside line and restarted side by side with Carlson. Clements was able to hold onto second for seven more laps and one more caution. But, he couldn't hold off Korish any longer and fell to third where he finished three laps later. Clements was later disqualified for ride height being too low. Korish took the second followed by Matthew Henderson and Shawn Pfaff.

Jimmy Gilster and his brother Dan Gilster finished one and two in the North Country Contractors Sportsmen feature. Jimmy Gilster started the race in the twelfth position, one spot ahead of Dan Gilster. The pair worked their way to the front of the field and with four laps to go Rob Mason spun out on the front stretch. From there it was a four lap shoot out to the finish. The Gilster brothers battled it out until the checkered flag waved and Jimmy Gilster came out on top.

Brad Warthan won the Second Over the Line Novelty event by finishing second. He and Jake Krueger put on the brakes to see who could hold off crossing the finish line first. Later, in the United Auto Supply Thunderstox feature Warthan again finished second, but it was Andy Moore who took the win. Warthan was running second behind Andy Moore with one lap to go when cars started spinning in turn four. Warthan got caught up in the mess, but restarted third. He then jumped to the outside of Moore when the green flag waved for the last lap, but Warthan wasn't able to get a big enough run to get around race winner Moore.

Mary Schill photos



Bruce Nuttleman photos

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Rubeck Rolls to Victory Lane in Rockford's 64th Opener

By Jordan Kuehne

Someone needs to let Steve Rubeck know that it's only April. The talented hotshoe was in midseason form tonight during the Rockford Speedway's historic 64th season opener, raining on his fellow competitors' parade en route to a dominant opening night victory in the 30-lap Stanley Steemer NASCAR Late Models main event.

Flashing the speed that won him fast qualifier honors during last weekend's Spring Classic Big 8 Series event, Rubeck took control from the outset of the feature with a lap three pass of Brian Johnson Jr, never looking back on the way to the winner's circle. In other action, young 15-year-old Austin Nason held off a late race charge from several contenders to grab the Bargain Hunter Sportsman trophy while BJ Sparkman showcased his veteran guile to snag the Budweiser American Short Trackers' headliner. Alex Papini and Howie Ware saved the best for last, closing out a fast-paced evening with a slam bang door-to-door finish in the 20-lap Mtn Dew RoadRunners and leaving fans roaring their approval after Papini prevailed by a yard.

Brian Johnson Jr. jumped to the front of a 17-car field to start off the 2011 Stanley Steemer NASCAR Late Models season in exciting fashion, leading the opening two laps of the 30-lap main event before falling victim to Steve Rubeck's rocketship.

Rubeck swiftly extended his lead to five car lengths while the action picked up in the back of the pack as Jon Reynolds Jr. and Ryan Carlson went door-to-door for fourth. Carlson took the position after a five-lap duel and didn't wait long to challenge for a podium spot, diving to the bottom of the racing surface and pushing past Wayne Freimund for third as the halfway mark came and went.

Reynolds Jr. followed the trail that Carlson blazed and grabbed fourth with little effort as Freimund dropped to the fringes of the top five.

There was no challenging for the win on this night though; running away from the field out front, 'The Mayor of Monroe Center' commenced his campaign for 'Best Driver' on the 2011 Late Model ballot in convincing fashion, cruising through a caution-free 30 laps to collect a dominating feature victory.

"We weren't gonna come here but a few people told us we had to come here," Rubeck offered. "The boss Carol

decided we were gonna come. Unfinished business from last week (where Rubeck finished second in the Spring Classic) basically. This car is just awesome on the bottom and I'm gonna go where they're not on the bottom."

After Brian Johnson Jr. was disqualified during post-race tech inspection for a non-conforming part, Ryan Carlson inherited a second place finish while 'Driver X', Jon Reynolds Jr, moved up to third. Wayne Freimund jumpstarted his season with a solid fourth and Kyle Shear had another strong effort to finish fifth.

Earlier in the evening, defending Stanley Steemer NASCAR Late Models champion Tim Sargent set fast time with a blazing lap of 13.864 seconds to grab the early lead in the new season-long qualifying competition, the Nason's Landscaping 'Fastest Bullet' Award. That was the highlight of the evening for Sargent though, as the Rockton driver slapped the wall in a heat race and suffered a disappointing 15th-place finish. Two-time Late Models champion Jerry Gille also struggled on opening night after a scary incident in qualifying left the veteran behind the eight-ball the rest of the night; Gille rallied to a ninth-place effort in the feature.

When the green flag waved on a new season for the Budweiser American Short Trackers, former rookie of the year Scott Hoeft held the top spot in the 25-lap main event. An 18-car field followed Hoeft's lead as fast qualifier BJ Sparkman made his move early, surging into the top three before grabbing second from Nick Letsinger with just eight laps in the books.

With his teammate in sight, BJ Sparkman used the bottom line to track down Hoeft and went door-to-door with the leader, snagging the top spot with 12 circuits remaining.

Hoeft quickly came under fire from Letsinger and Nick Cina Jr. as a three-way duel for the second spot emerged with the laps clicking off at a rapid pace. Letsinger continued to feel his way around the asphalt searching for a line around Hoeft, finally pulling even with three laps left as the front pack worked around lapped traffic.

With the white flag in the air, Letsinger's back end came out from underneath him and his run for second ended as the wheelman deftly kept his car off the frontstretch wall and out of harm's way.

Neither Letsinger or Cina Jr. offered up much of a challenge to BJ Sparkman as the long-time contender bounced back from a rough 2010 campaign with a quick start to the new year. Sparkman found victory lane on opening night to aid his quest for a fourth Budweiser American Short Trackers title.

"We had a good car from the drop of the green flag," the venerable veteran admitted. "It got around there smooth and I

had to worry about the lapped traffic. Certainly feels good to get that first win out of the way on opening night after waiting until midseason last year."

Hoeft earned a runner-up finish as Letsinger landed in third. Nick Cina Jr. and George Sparkman finished in fourth and fifth respectively wrapping up the top five.

The 2011 Bargain Hunter Sportsman season got off to a quick start as young gun Austin Nason zoomed to the front when the green flag waved on the 20-lap headliner.

Defending champion Matt Berger quickly picked off three cars to maneuver into the bridesmaid's position as 2010 Mtn Dew RoadRunner champ Robert Roush dropped from his front row starting spot to fifth in the opening two laps.



Jimmy Ambruoso photo

Berger utilized his experience to work over the 15-year-old leader, harassing Nason and searching for traction on the bottom of the high-banked oval. While Nason and Berger duked it out up front, Justin Sellers and Matt Lundberg joined the fray and made it a four-way battle for the top spot.

Lundberg slipped up on the bottom line as Berger fell into the clutches of Sellers' run on the high line, surrendering second after a tense battle for the position. With a three-way battle taking place behind him, Austin Nason eased his way to a two-car length margin and held on for a caution-free opening win and the early advantage in the standings.

"I wanna thank Berger for racing me clean tonight," Nason acknowledged afterwards. "The car was tight and I had to chop it a bit in the corners to keep it straight. We've prepared all winter for this and we built the car from the ground up. We're definitely looking forward to a strong season this year."

Sellers slipped into second while Lundberg landed third on the last lap, pushing past Berger and grabbing the spot in the midst of the dash to the checkers. Roush managed a top-five to begin his Sportsman career.

Alex Papini rolled to an early lead while Gene Marocco settled into the bridesmaid's position of the first 20-lap Mtn Dew RoadRunners' feature of the 2011 season.

Jeff Allendorf and Arlen Roush wasted no time going at it for a podium spot, bumping and banging for third place

continued on page 16



Jimmy Ambruoso photo

Big 8 and Mid
American Stock Car
Series Highlights from
Rockford Speedway

Rockford Speedway opened their season with the running of the 34th Annual Spring Classic. Bill Prietzel held off a last-lap charge by James Swan to win the Mid American Stock Car Series race, with Dale Nottestad picking up the win in the headline event for the Big-8 Late Models.

Photos by Jimmy Ambruoso



continued from page 15

before Allendorf grabbed the position by a nose.

Papini quickly came upon lapped traffic and was negotiating his way through the 23-car field when the first caution of the year flew for a solo trip through the spin cycle by Josh DiGiovanni with six laps in the books.

On the restart, Roush moved up to third while Terry Ciano Jr. negotiated his way into fourth. Papini built up a cushion out front while Howie Ware blew past Allendorf and Ciano Jr. to continue his charge through the field.

The leader ran into trouble while passing a lapped car with five laps remaining, slowing him up as Ware dodged cars and dove to the bottom of Marocco for second. After Papini's slip up, Ware began to reel him in, slicing the deficit to a car length with two laps left. Ware dropped to the bottom and got alongside Papini for the lead with the white flag in the air.

Papini briefly edged out to a car length advantage down the backstretch before Ware closed the gap. Coming to the checkers, Papini managed to get a run off of turn four that propelled him to victory by a mere three feet.

"This car was so fast tonight," Papini stated. "We had a broken axel, motor problems, the engine wouldn't go, all in the last two weeks. We were up late last night putting tires on it and fixing the suspension to get this thing put together and I have to thank all my sponsors and my crew for helping me find victory lane tonight."

Ware's mad dash netted him a second while Marocco took third. Terrance Robinson finished fourth as Allendorf closed out the top five.

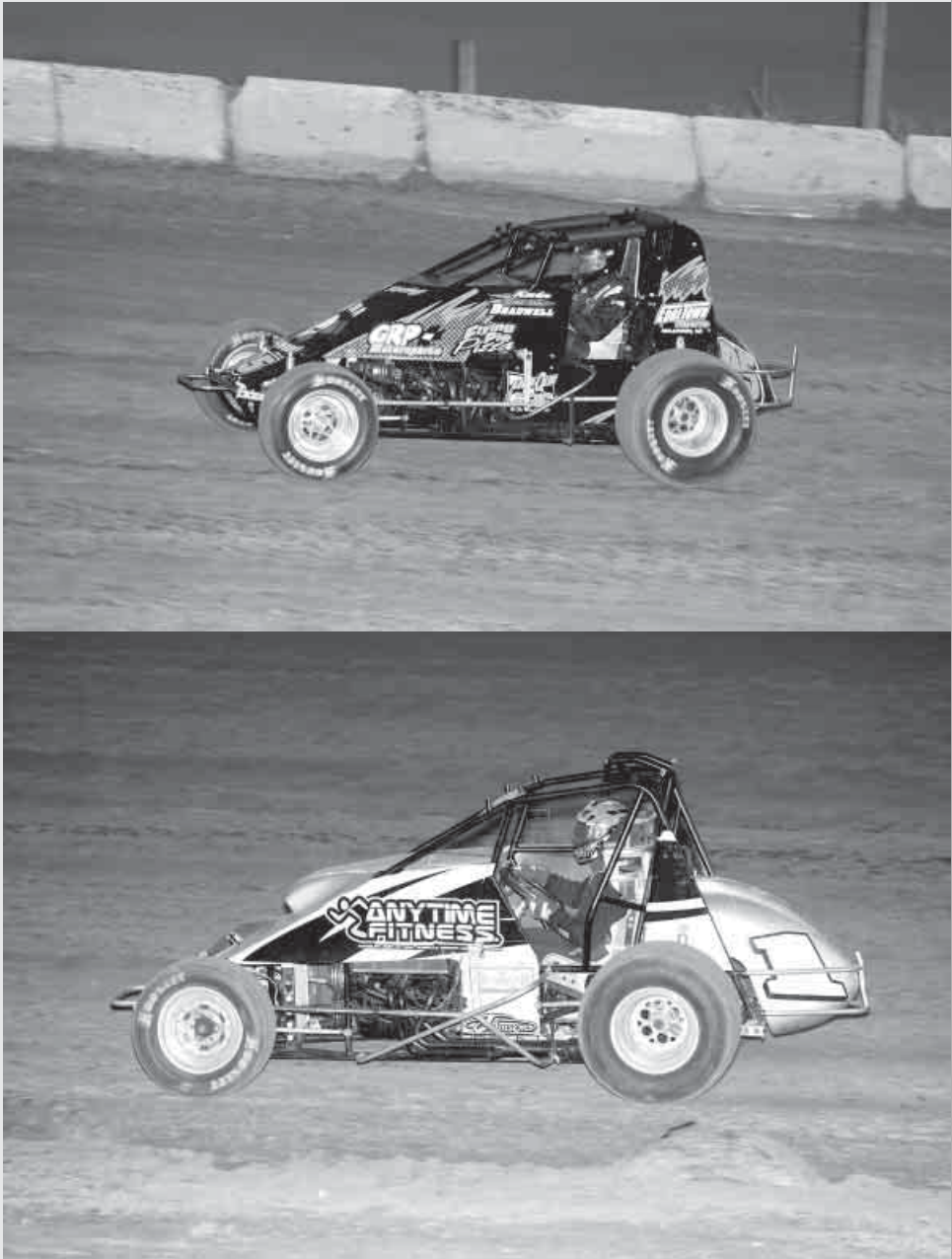
In the opening Sam's Drive-In RoadRunner Challenge of the year, Adam Cartwright and his friendly fan survived the Fan/Driver Egg Toss with a successful 70-foot toss to claim the win sans car.

Jason Van Hise lost control of his egg after having it in his grasp forcing the former RoadRunner Challenge titlist to settle for a hard fought second to commence his year.

Non-Winged Sprints Return
to the Midwest

Over the winter months, the Upper Midwest Sprint Car Series (UMSS) announced the formation of non-winged division titled the Traditional Sprint Car Series. Several meetings were held leading up to the 2011 season, with events scheduled at ten different tracks for their inaugural season. The new series will run in conjunction with the UMSS winged Sprint cars at many of their shows, giving open wheel fans an opportunity to see two different types of Sprint Cars in the same show. Pictured in the 95 is Kevin "Rocket Man" Bradwell and the 1 is Jeff "Race Doc" Pellersels.

Vince Peterson photos



Joe Shear Classic Review/Preview

The second annual Joe Shear Classic held last year at Madison International Speedway featured all of the excitement a short track could ask for. The event also featured the debut of two new touring divisions (Sportsman and Truck series) from the ASA sanctioning body. Steve Carlson is typically known for saving his equipment and waiting until the closing stages of the race to make his move. An uncharacteristic qualifying run had Carlson starting near the front of the field, due to the ASA Midwest Tour inversion. Carlson took the lead early (lap 29) from Illiana Speedway track champion Jeff Cannon. Rookie sensation Ross Kenseth stepped up to the challenge and made Carlson work for the win, with Cannon holding on for third. The new touring series saw Jerry Wood (Trucks) and Bobby Wilberg (Sportsman) pick up the inaugural wins for their touring series.

This year's event will follow the same format as the 2010 event, with all three touring series holding the opening shows during the Joe Shear Classic. What can we expect this year? Two items come to mind for us. The first item we are looking forward to most is the

debut of double-file restarts. This is a sure-fire way to generate side-by-side racing. The second item will be the quantity and quality of cars. With the show at MIS being the first event of the year for all three series, a large field of cars should be hand on in hopes of having a good run towards the 2011 championship in each of the three touring series.

Joe Shear Classic Winners:

2009 – Nathan Haseleu

2010 – Steve Carlson

2011 – ???

2010 Joe Shear Classic winner - Steve Carlson
Bruce Nuttleman photo



2009 Joe Shear Classic winner - Nathan Haseleu
Doug Hornickel photo

ASA Midwest Tour Sportsman series debut, with eventual winner Bobby Wilberg and Jay Kalbus on the front row. Scott "Chico" Reidner and 2010 champion Chris "Cruiser" Marek in the second row.

Bruce Nuttleman photo



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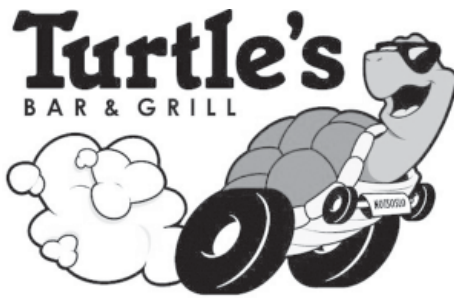
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