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THE MIDWEST'S SHORT TRACK AUTO RACING AUTHORITY

October, 2010

Inside...



Two Brothers - Two Titles



The Inside Dirt



Fall Invitationals Part I



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✓Yes



✓Yes



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Publisher's Note

Racing According to Plan



Dan Plan

It's been about a month now since our last issue and a lot of racing has taken place. At the start of September, we attended the 10th Annual Jerry Richert Memorial event at Cedar Lake Speedway. Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would have the opportunity to see 62 Sprint Cars on hand for a single show, unless I made a trip to Knoxville. Stan Meissner had to feel like he was in some sort of open-wheel nirvana with this type of car count.

The UMSS and IRA groups came out in full force, along with 35 vintage cars from the NVSR group. All three groups put on great racing, but the item that impressed me the most was the way the UMSS group started their races. I've never seen Sprint Cars roll slowly through turns three and four and actually start the race evenly at the flagstand. That's the way racing is supposed to be. Although the starts by the UMSS group were impressive, the battle between Scott Winters and Mark Dobmeier for the win in the IRA main was one for the record books. These two drivers swapped the lead numerous times throughout the last half of the event. Along with great racing, there were several spectacular Sprint Car rollovers, great racing all night and the after race food spread in the pits was one that can't be beat.



Dan Plan photo

Fall Specials - Part 1



Vince Peterson photo

Next up was the Legendary 100 at Cedar Lake. There's part of me that misses having separate nights just dedicated to heat races and having the show done early on weeknights, but times have changed, and it seems the drivers would rather run full-shows each night in an attempt to qualify for the big-show on Saturday night. Along with the nightly race events on the track, there were other battles taking place. With the Late Model portion of the weekend being a track and NASCAR point's event, a couple of titles were up for grabs. Chad Mahder had a narrow lead over Brent Larson, and Mahder along with Pat Doar had a chance to surpass J. Herbst in the NASCAR state points. At the end of the weekend, the Legendary 100 champions were crowned. Steve Houle in the Midwest Modifieds, Ben Hillman in the Pro-Stocks, Darrell Nelson in the Modifieds and Jimmy Mars in the Late Models. The Late Model track championship ended up going to Mahder, with Doar picking up enough points to move past J. Herbst and win the NASCAR state championship. The Legendary 100 is a big deal, and you can tell how important it is by seeing the reaction of the drivers that are good enough to take home a trophy. The event can also cause some drivers to take actions that might lead to a "vacation" from the track due to their on-track and post race actions at the scales. It's all part of the show, and one of the things that keeps me coming back. The battle for the state title was quite cool. Going into the event, Doar needed a win and two top-three finishes. Pat had his "A-Game" on this weekend and did everything he needed to do. The interesting part of the battle for the state title is that Herbst ran every race scheduled at LaCrosse. Both Doar and Mahder missed a few NASCAR points paying races for one reason or another during the course of the season. After the NASCAR points were tallied, the "what if's" come into play. What if J. Herbst wouldn't have lost two motors in one night? What if Doar and Mahder would have run all of the dirt NASCAR events? What if Steve Carlson would have run all of the asphalt shows? When it's all said and done, Doar stepped up to the plate and made a home run with his efforts during the Legendary 100.

After three-straight days at CLS, it was time to wrap up the weekend with season championship night at Raceway Park. Chad Walen won the battle on this night, but Adam Royle won the war, defending his track championship in the Late Model division. Other track champions at Raceway Park were; Brent Kane in the Hobby Stocks, Tim Hollen in the Bombers, Ricky Martin in the Figure-8's, Paul Haeg in the Short Trackers and Doug Schmitz in the Mini Stocks. The Figure-8 drivers sure made the highlight reel towards the end of the season, with several grinding crashes in the "X" over the last few weeks. Thankfully, nobody was injured and they can all come out to play again next year.

The Midwest

RACING

Connection

October, 2010

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Following the Legendary 100 was the annual Punky Manor Challenge of Champions at Red Cedar Speedway in Menomonie, Wisc. The Punky is one of my favorite shows, as the crowd is very vocal in Menomonie, and several drivers make their one and only appearance at Red Cedar Speedway. A special guest this year was Jonathan "John Boy" Brown from the History Channel Madhouse TV Show fame. Local racer, race fan and car builder, Chris Loberg has built a relationship with Jonathan and brought him to area tracks this year. I had a chance to talk with Chris before the races at Red Cedar Speedway, and learned how the two developed their friendship. Chris purchased a car off an Internet website during the off-season. The car he purchased was actually Jonathan old NASCAR pavement Modified. Chris didn't know at the time that the car belonged to Jonathon. Things snowballed from there and we've been lucky enough to see Jonathan race a pavement Late Model of Donny Reuvers at Raceway Park, and then a Midwest Modified of Mike Anderson at Red Cedar.

Publishers Note continued on page 4

continued from page 3

I haven't been to Red Cedar Speedway as much as I would like to visit in the last few years, but couldn't help but smile as I walked through the pits and saw drivers with names like Hillman, Mahder, Plank, Prochnow, and Redetzke. I've mentioned this before in my column, but I enjoy watching the next generation of racing families makes their way in this business.

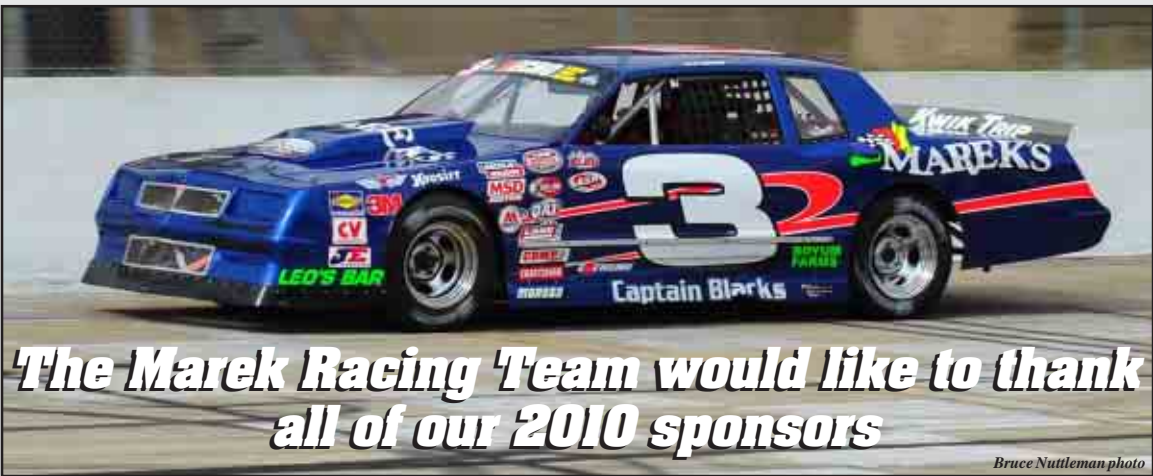


Dan Plan photo

While at Red Cedar, I also had a chance to talk briefly with Ben Hillman. Ben picked up the biggest win of his career the week before at Cedar Lake Speedway, and still had an ear to ear grin when talking about this accomplishment. The Hillman team is keeping with the family tradition and still running Mopar products, which is pretty rare these days. Ben ran away with a heat race win on Friday night and ended the weekend with a third place finish at Red Cedar behind Rick Kobs and Steve Thomas.

Chad Mahder was also on hand at Menomonie and was still focused on the remainder of the racing season. When asked about his upcoming trip to the NASCAR banquet, Chad was quick to point out they haven't put much thought into the banquet, as they still have a number of big races remaining this season. Mahder ended up with a fourth place finish in the Punky behind A.J. Deimel, Jake Redetzke and Justin Fegers. And yes, Justin did make weight at the scales this time.

The same weekend as the Punky Manor Challenge of



Bruce Nuttleman photo

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Champions, Elko Speedway wrapped up their season championships. Donny Ruevers picked up his seventh title in the Late Models with Doug Brown picking up the Big-8 division title. The Thunder Car and Power Stock divisions had tight battles going into the final night. Brent Kane picked up his second title of the year in the Thunder Cars, edging Jack Paulson for the championship, with Rob Schnichels narrowly defeating Dillon Sellner for the Power Stock title. Legend and Hornet titles are yet to be decided,

with a few shows still on tap.

In our next issue, we'll have coverage of the 2nd Annual Thunderstruck Memorial & Thunder Car Nationals, Oktoberfest in LaCrosse and hopefully a sun-drenched day in the Bahama's. There's still quite a bit of racing to go.

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**A.J. Diemel on his way to defending his Punky Manor Challenge of
Champions title at Red Cedar Speedway**
Vince Peterson photo



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Auto Racing Facts, Observances and Opinions



By Dale P. Danielski

With the huge Oktoberfest Racing weekend coming up October 7-10 at La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway in West Salem, WI., we thought we'd take a look by both photo and print at some of those that have competed there through the years.

Of course as is pretty well known now, Tom Reffner won the first ever Oktoberfest race back in 1970 in a 1969 Mercury Cyclone. What folks might not know is that Reffner had raced a 1969 Mercury Comet throughout the majority of the 1970 season. He raced that car at La Crosse but hit the backstretch wall which severely wrecked the machine. According to Reffner, "The backstretch wall would suck you right into it. We hit it and it really wrecked the body on the car so we put a different one on, a Mercury Cyclone. That made a big difference as far as aerodynamics compared to the Comet and we ended up winning the race." Reffner would then race a Cyclone bodied car in 1971 winning a number of races and special events.

It wasn't until 1973 that this scribe was actually able to attend an Oktoberfest but what a race we saw that year. At 200 laps scoring became an issue and when the event was done Rich Somers was given the checkered flag 1st. Marv Marzofka who had led much of the way wasn't buying any of that however and he vehemently argued his point with promoter Larry Wehrs. Marzofka won the argument and ultimately was declared the race winner. Marzofka went a bit under the radar during his racing days but when all was said

OKTOBERFEST THROUGH THE YEARS



Marv Marzofka #91 1973 'Fest winner.
Marzofka won 17 main events during the season.

and done he had won hundreds of feature races!

In the 1970s with the popularity of the sport growing and attendance following suit, companies were beginning to get more interested in sponsoring race cars at the short track level much like they were in major sanctioned events.. That was certainly the case with 1978 'Fest winner Dave Watson who raced his Amsoil sponsored car to victory.



1978 'Fest winner #37 Dave Watson with
corporate sponsor Amsoil on board.

Jumpin' Jimmy Back chose to get in on the race car fabricating business and showed how quick his equipment was as Bac-Kar Chassis' won in 1982, '83 and '84 with drivers Jim Back, Tom Reffner and Bryan Reffner behind the wheel.

Of course we would be remiss if we didn't mention Joe Shear who won the 'Fest 5

times. Shear is also the only driver to win it three consecutive years 1994, '95 and '96. If not for Cancer cutting his life short, Shear more than likely would have added to his win total.

A changing of the guard in short track racing was beginning to take place in the late 1980s. The now veteran drivers were still able to win but next generation and upstart racers were making their marks on the sport as names Rich Bickle, Jr., Ted Musgrave, Scott Hansen, Tom Carlson, and Matt Kenseth entered victory lane with 'Fest wins. The 1990's and early 2000's brought more of the same as Terry Baldry, Eddie Hoffman, Steve Carlson, Brian Hoppe and Tim Schendal etched their names in the record books as Oktoberfest main event winners. Hoffman won the event 3 out of 4 years between 1998 and 2001. With the first decade of the 2000's about to be completed another generation of racer is at the forefront with Dan Fredrickson and Travis Sauter the latest victors. The next 10 years will bring more of the same and hopefully we can continue to bring it to you right here with more written words and photos!

Here and there... We'd probably be more inclined to catch additional dirt shows during the year if the events didn't meet each other coming and going in the early am hours. Not that some pavement shows don't run long but late starts, long delays for track farming, and numerous other stoppages really are a problem with the dirt set. Maybe it's due to the higher 1st place pay-offs of said events. Everyone thinks they can win on the first lap!... Speaking of dirt, did see Modified veteran Kevin Pittman take a main event win at the Cresco Speedway in Cresco, Iowa in their 2010 season closer. Discussion at the event had the track more than likely



Five time 'Fest winner #36 Joe Shear. Shear for many years
started his season in February in Florida. This photo is from New
Smyrna Speedway, 1985

racing on a weekly basis in 2011 as this season it was special events only...Happy, Texas was truly that here recently as Rodney Sanders who hails from that town captured the big \$12,000 to win 50 lap feature at Mississippi Thunder Speedway of Fountain City, WI., this past month...Frank Kreyer had a hot and cold day

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*Auto Racing Facts, Observances and
Opinionscontinued from page 5*

at Marshfield Motor Speedway, Marshfield, WI., for their racing season closer as he won the first 50 lap feature of the day before launching his car through the fence and out of the park in the 2nd main. Jeff Weinfurter who has limited his appearances in 2010 went on to win that race...With a feature win and consistent finishes during the year Mark Kraus was crowned the Yellow River Racing Series Champion at the track...Quote of the column from Marv Marzofka

upon retiring from racing. "It took me three years before I could watch a race after quitting. I went to a snowmobile race and almost bought one of those to get back in it, I was just so competitive." Marzofka thought better of that idea and never did return although he does help a grandson that is now competing...

Questions, comments, opinions and other information welcome at Starmaker Multimedia 967 10th Ave N Ste A, Onalaska, WI 54650 608-783-5827 or at dale@starmakermultimedia.com

Photos Below:
Larry Detjens #25 who won 'Fest in 1976 and '77 showed much in the way of professionalism both with sharp looking race cars and well dressed crews upon entering the late model ranks in 1971. Another in that long line of Carlson's that raced at 'Fest this being #4 Tim Carlson, circa 1973. . MRC Publisher Dan Plan says he will buy you a beverage at 'Fest this year if you are the first one tocorrectly identify the driver in this photo, #48 taken at the La Crosse Fairgrounds track in 1974. Hint: He was a prolific winner in Minnesota and hailed from there.



Figure-8 Madness



The Figure-8 drivers at Raceway Park had a rough end to their season. Both of these photos are from same wreck. All drivers were OK and returned to race the following weekend.
Martin DeFries photos



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Jeff Blaser photos



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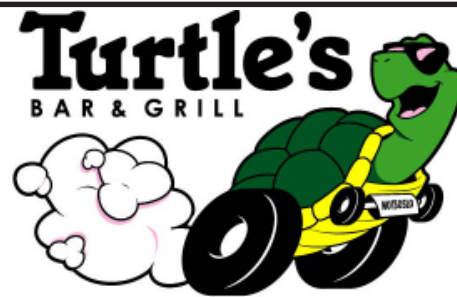
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Two Brothers - Two Titles



Brent and Nate Kane stand by their 2010 championship winning ride (left)

Brent having fun (top right) and then showing the effects of having too much fun (bottom right)



Brent Kane recently captured division titles at Elko Speedway and Raceway Park. The two track titles were actually the first track championships for Kane.

The Kane brothers (driver Brent and crew-chief Nate) set out for the 2010 season with two cars and the intention of running for two track championships. Following pre-season inspection of the new car and some concerns with the configuration of the body on the new car, the plans changed and they needed to utilize their old car at both Elko Speedway and Raceway Park.

While picking up a few early season wins, the old car was put out of commission in an unfortunate incident at Raceway Park while battling for the lead. Changes were made to the new car, and a phenomenal season for an asphalt racer was about to begin. I've often been vocal about the differences between dirt racers and asphalt racers, and how some of the dirt racers seem to find a way to race more than one time per week. Yes, I fully realize this is an expensive sport, but the Kane brothers

made the best of a bad situation and made a full season of racing at two different tracks with the same car. A car, that I must say, races in a division that still allows for some home built technology, and not completely "off-the shelf" parts. That's the way racing was when I first started attending many, many years ago. A tip of the cap is in order for Brent Kane as a driver and Nate Kane as the crew chief for going out on a limb and racing the same car at two different tracks every weekend.

While the team of Brent and Nate racked up 18 feature wins, the season wasn't all fun and games for the Kane brothers. Well, there were some fun and games as noted by the photos above, but there were some challenges along the way. As mentioned above, the original plan of having two cars changed for two different reasons (inspection for the orange car and a crash with the white car). In addition to losing a car, they also blew up a motor, lost a few rear-ends and lost their grandfather during the season. The loss of their grandfather also kept the duo away from working

on their car for a week, as the funeral required a trip to the east coast. I think it's easy for people to forget all of the things that happened during the course of a season when the win total is at 18, and possibly more before all is said and done in 2010. In addition to the two track titles for Brent, Nate also picked up the NASCAR Mechanic of the Year award. Nate also does a pretty darn good Karaoke version of Your Love by the band The Outfield to top it all off.

There's a lot of hard work that goes into accomplishing a feat such as this. I can't help but think back to a conversation I had with LaCrosse Fairgrounds Speedway flagman Greg Oliver earlier this year. Those of us that have been around the sport for a while often talk about the "good old days". For the folks just getting into the sport, watching a driver win two track championships at two different asphalt tracks in one season will be the good old days 30 years from now.



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Going in Circles



By Charlie Spry

Going back a bit, we attempted to take in the season championships at the Madison International Speedway. It seems that this year the Friday night tracks in Wisconsin really took a hit from the weather, and tonight was no different. A light mist hit the track at the start of the Legends feature, the track was dried, and a couple more features run. Then, with eleven laps completed in the first late model feature, it misted again. This was just enough to make a mess of things once again, and after trying to dry the track once again, the towel was finally thrown in, as the track refused to dry a second time.

It is always fun to talk to late model racer Chad "Squirt" Stevens. One of the calmest individuals you will find on or off the race track, he seems totally unflappable by anything. Commenting on this, Chad said, "I've been doing this a long time. Sometimes it is your night, and sometimes it isn't. There is always another night when things go bad, but then you will have a good night, too." Chad knows how to do this, and it helps a great deal in regards to obtaining sponsorships, as most businesses want to have a good spokesman for their venture through a driver such as this.

Orfordville, WI. police chief Dave Wickstrum has completed his first year of racing in the entry-level four cylinder Bandit division. His car was wrecked badly the previous week, and Dave found himself upside down for the first time in his racing career. He came back with a borrowed car tonight, trying to at least finish the season. Dave didn't spend a ton of money on his racing ventures, but had fun, and that is what you should be doing. He is unsure of his plans for next year.

Talked with hobby stock racer Terry Ciano Jr. Terry comes from a racing family that has been around the sport for quite some time. His Dad, Terry Sr., now helps out in the pits, but was quite a competitor in the 1970's and 1980's, and raced all over, including his favorite track, the old, flat, Lake Geneva Raceway, back in it's quarter-mile configuration. Terry Jr. is running well with the hobby stocks wherever he goes, and plans on racing some of the fall specials that are coming up.

The following Friday was the running of the season championship races at Columbus. Although most divisions had already crowned champions, the Bandit division had a little drama, as it all came down to Phil Wuesthoff and Dave Schmidt. Schmidt found himself nine points behind going into the feature, so he had to basically finish ahead of Wuesthoff in order to get the title. Wuesthoff didn't let it happen, as he took the feature win to secure the title.

Scott Ollerman pretty much dominated this season in the late models, and although Steve Dobbratz kept it interesting, Ollerman kept his point lead throughout the season in garnering his first LM track title here. Phil Denikas also had a similar year, leading the points most of

the season, and securing the title down the stretch by doing what he needed to keep ahead and win his first track title. The hobby stock title came down to Andy Raley and defending thunderstock champion Kale Peterman, with Raley finishing ahead of Peterman in the feature to take the title. In the Backup division, it came down to Matt Wachuta and George Wachuta, with Matt taking the track title.

Nice to see Putch Bentley on hand once again. The Iron River, Michigan driver made the long haul once again with his late model, and won his heat race. Putch said that he enjoys racing at the southern Wisconsin tracks, and had planned to do more of it this year. "Everytime I looked at the weather forecast, it said that it was going to rain on Friday, and then I'd look and see that they got half the show in or something. The weather just wasn't good for making the trip this year," Said Putch. The veteran driver got his start on the dirt oval at Crandon, and has also raced dirt mods and street stocks as well as the pavement late models.

Jason Mertes was on hand for the second week with his sportsman car. "I've done some road racing with this car, and having trouble getting it set back up to just trun left," Said Jason. Jason had been racing on the pavement at 141 speedway until that track changed to a dirt surface this year.

On Saturday we took the trip north to the Marshfield Motor Speedway for the first night of racing of their annual fall classic. The most exciting race of the night was the running of the limited late model feature, with Bo Bennish grabbing the early lead and being chased by first Skylar Holzhausen and then Jeremy Miller. At this point, Kris Kelly joined the fray and appeared to be waiting to see what was going to transpire at the front. Holzhausen and Bennish did a little paint trading, and then Miller did the same with Bennish. After the pair slid off course a bit, Kelly jumped on the opportunity and passed the whole shebang and took the lead and win. I swear that I could hear Kelly saying "thank you" as the lead pair veered off a bit! He also won the super late model feature later in the evening to record two feature wins in one night. I've seen Kelly race quite a bit in both super lates and limited lates, and he seems to run good everywhere and in any division. He really knows how to get it done!

Phil Malouf raced a borrowed Bandit car to the feature win in that division, and he didn't waste any time getting the lead, either. He won both his heat and the feature by passing nearly the whole field in one lap, a pretty incredible feat. Phil also drove his own four cylinder Mod car to the feature win in that division on Sunday.

The division that always amazes me here is the motorcycles. These guys really get it on! Mark Zeidler took the win in a close and competitive race, while the Legends cars also were a part of the show, with Brian Keske getting the win. Charlie Nickel took the win in the Junkyard Warrior division and the cruiser class was won by Scott Ciesielski and Tyler Rodriguez.

In a twist of fate, it seemed that I had to drive four hours to have a class reunion! I was surprised to see a couple that I went to school with in the stands, and even though they live close by and I see them often, it was strange that they chose this same night to travel to a track four hours away. They had come to the area to see another friend that we all hung around with in high school who now lives in Nekoosa, so I was surprised to see him for the first time since about 1979 or so... Really cool!

Unfortunately, I could not stay for the second half of this show on Sunday, but we will hope for next year, as this is one of my favorite fall specials.

On September 17 and 18 we took in the annual Wisconsin State Championships at Jefferson. This was the thirtieth annual event, and we've been to most of them. A few drivers were present who raced in the first couple of

these shows, as John Jarlsberg came out of racing retirement to race in the sportsman division. Art Blakely raced back in the inaugural event in the late models with a #15 car that had been built by high school students as a class project. This time he found himself behind the wheel of a Bandit car. Truman Skoien also was present, and spoke of his hobby stock racer, saying, "I've been working on this car for the past couple of years, just wanted to get back out and do it again. It is a strictly low-budget deal. I raced in the first couple of these events with a Ford Torino, wanted to do it again." Truman told me it had been 2001 since he last raced on an oval, although he has done some road racing.

Long distance racers for the weekend would include Phil Malouf, who came all the way from upper Wisconsin to race in the International class, and the aforementioned Putch Bentley, who came from the U.P. to race his late model.

Enjoyed talking with Golden Sands regular Josh Klopotek, who came down with his group of friends to race in the Bandit division. "I had been racing in the mod four cylinder class, but it got so expensive, I took a step back to the stock class and am really enjoying it. I don't want to spend all my time working on the car, I want to race and have fun. I'm pretty laid-back about it, try to never get upset over anything out there." I think that is a great example of someone who is involved in racing and has a great perspective and honesty. Too many people get so involved and so caught up in the whole thing that it takes the fun out of it, and that isn't good.

Jeff Nowak came down from the Wausau area to race with his State Park Speedway pure stock. Last year several came from this track to race, got put into the sportsman division, and I don't believe any made the feature. Jeff wanted to run in the hobby stocks this time, which is a better fit for this class of car. Some of the hobby stock drivers thought he should be in the sportsman class again, but it was obvious he was in the right class this year. "As you can see, I'm hardly blowing their doors off," Said Jeff. "We were going to try to find an adaptor plate for the carb, but couldn't find one, so Terry (Tucker) said to just add fifty pounds. I can live with that." Jeff has made several appearances at this track, even racing a late model a couple of times a few years ago, and he supports this show every year that he has a car. That really means a lot. The hobby stock class was down on cars for this special, and they needed every car, as besides Nowak and Truman Skoien, Bud Riedner was the only outsider, as he brought his dirt hobby stock to play. Wayne Buchs also brought his Columbus thunderstock.

The sportsman division ran double features this year, and both were among the most exciting races all weekend. Curt Thompson prevailed in the first headliner over Brady Lily, as the two battled hard to the line, and Columbus 151 champ Phil Denikas took the second feature, having to hold off Jefferson champ Chico Riedner and perennial frontrunner Jay Kalbus for the win. True championship racing! A nice field of cars showed in this division.

The late model features were won by Kyle Jarlsberg and Tim Sargent, with several Rockford cars making the show. I've had many fans tell me that they would like to see them go back to fifty lap features for this show, and 35 for the weekly shows, as it puts a sense of urgency into the equation, and there usually isn't much passing after the fifty lap mark anyway. I'm sure many will disagree with this assertion, but why burn up more expensive racing fuel? I have to agree with popular fans opinion.

The hobby stocks also put on a great feature. It looked like Dustin Ward had it won, but Steven Sauer caught up and made a late race pass for the win, working the outside for the pass. Ward stuck to his guns on his favored inside

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The Inside Dirt



Stan Meissner

The Tenth Annual Jerry Richert Sr. Memorial, IRA/Knoxville 410 Sprint Car Challenge was contested at Cedar Lake Speedway on September 11. This was the second year in a row that the IRA was supported by the UMSS 360 Sprint Cars making it the only "all Sprint" show in the upper Midwest. The track held up well through the entire program, the racing was excellent and there was a good turnout in the stands. Thanks to Dan Plan for making it possible for me to spend the night at the track by providing sleeping space in his camper.

In UMSS action Brooke Tatnell led his brother-in-law Jerry Richert Jr. across the line with Robby Wolfgang rounding out the top three. In IRA action Scott Winters once again dominated at CLS taking the win over Mark Dobmeier who finished second with IRA points leader Bill Balog finishing in third. The Memorial race drew 36 IRA Sprints and 26 of the UMSS cars for a total Sprint Car count of 62 cars. This combined total is a Cedar Lake record and provided local Sprint Car fans with a rare dose of Sprints only action. The only other all Sprint shows anywhere near our area take place at Jackson (several specials per season) and Knoxville (weekly shows and Nationals). Jackson is three hours from the Twin Cities and Knoxville is five hours, so neither of those are convenient weekly options. The Jerry Richert Sr. Memorial is a breath of fresh air for travel weary Sprint Car fans and I am thankful that the Cedar Lake Speedway is hosting this event.

Now let's back track a week to Labor Day weekend. I attended both nights of the Mighty Axe Nationals at the North Central Speedway on behalf of the UMSS. I reasoned that with the 4:30 pm start time and a car count of regular classes comparable to their weekly shows they would finish the program early enough for me to make the drive back and forth without having to get a motel room. Wrong! On night one I got out of there at 12:50 am while the Modifieds were still on the track running their Feature. On the second night things moved a little faster and I was out of there by around midnight.

I arrive at the tracks a couple hours before the races to make notes, record audio segments and take some pit shots and portraits. The first day I left at noon and did not get home until 3 am. I got home a little past 2 am on Sunday (actually Monday morning). In North Central's defense they got hit with several inches of rain a couple days prior to the race which resulted in delays for track prep due to rough conditions. Nevertheless, whatever the reason, eight hours is still too much time for families to spend at a race track, and as a Sprint Car fan, it's difficult to sit through over seven hours of other classes to see forty five minutes of Sprint Car racing. A walk through the Sprint pits during the hours of down time between races was like walking through a park with people napping on lawn chairs, reading books, and visiting with friends. I even heard rumors of cribbage games but I did not personally witness any. On both nights, the UMSS ran their Features with only one caution and few delays in their other events which made for a very quick Sprint Car portion of the show when the cars were actually on the track. On the other

area. The North Central Speedway staff should be commended for doing their best under difficult circumstances and I'm certain that the rough conditions were an anomaly.

I had planned on attending the Arlington Extravaganza at the Arlington Raceway on September 25 but a morning rain shower pushed the race back to Sunday. Unable to make the trip on Sunday (in part because of having to write this column) I considered finding another racing opportunity on Saturday. With several roads leading to Deer Creek out of commission due to flooding, I opted for a quiet evening at home watching movies with my wife. In retrospect I think I was the big winner on this night. I would later find out that Tony Norem won at Arlington on Sunday, with Chris Graf in second and Jerry Richert Jr. third. Cody Hahn has locked up the UMSS title and only has to show up at their season finale at Ogilvie on October 2nd.

My photography is done primarily to supplement my writing and promote the sport so I always make it clear that I am not there to compete with their track photographer. The editor of another regional racing publication, summed up my feelings in the following words: "Most people don't see all of the behind the scenes work that goes with this deal. IT'S WORK, not going and having fun. Cameras and equipment get heavy, and there are a lot of hours spent afterwards while everyone else is in bed." He hit the nail square on the head. When a person watches races from behind a lens, they miss out on a lot of the details and do not get the

same perspective they would get in the stands. It's work and a sacrifice of time and resources but I'd be a liar if I said that I haven't ever had fun doing it. On the other hand, over the course of a dozen years, there have been plenty of nights that it felt more like a job and I'd have rather been doing something else. The point is that when I cover a race I'm not a freeloader taking advantage of the tracks as some people seem to think.

My first MRC column appeared in the May 6, 1999 issue and was titled "An introduction to a new

columnist". The only contributors to that 1999 issue still affiliated with MRC are myself and photographer Martin DeFries. Having never missed a deadline in twelve seasons I guess that you could say I have a streak going that even Favre would be proud of. I'm not saying this for bragging rights but simply making a point of my longevity and support of this publication. If I was covering Cup racing I could sit home on my recliner, watch the races and write my column on a laptop without ever getting up out of my chair. That isn't a knock against Cup writers; it's simply a fact that a great deal of their material must be derived from a television screen because unless they're either based in the southeast or have a generous travel budget they're not going to attend many races. Grass roots racing is a different animal, you can read results online and might even find some of the bigger races streamed on the web, but for the



Stan Meissner photo



Stan Meissner photo

hand the Stock Cars and Modifieds had a difficult time completing two consecutive laps in their races without lengthy delays to untangle wrecks and pick up pieces. The weekend was salvaged by some awesome Sprint Car Features, with Cody Hahn scoring his first ever Feature win on Saturday and Chris Graf winning a gold Axe on Sunday. I would probably go to the Mighty Axe again but next time I'll be sure to get a room and spend the entire weekend in the Brainerd

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groove, and may have wished he would have moved up the track a bit.

Kyle Stark swept the weekend in the International class, winning the preview feature on Friday night, and the championship headliner on Saturday, while Bill Sweeney won the Raod Warrior feature on Friday, and champ Bill Reynolds won the feature on Saturday, making for another weekend of “paying the Bills.” Madison regular Kyle Padfield won the Bandit feature on Friday, while Dave Schmidt won on Saturday.

The following weekend we took a very short drive to the Madison International Speedway and their annual Fall Classic. This event has suffered cruel fate at the hands of Mother Nature in the past, but all went well this year. The Friday portion saw a continuation of the late model feature that was attempted some three weeks ago, plus another complete feature to determine the track point title. After all of this, the late models also ran the regularly scheduled feature for the classic champion. Plus, several other divisions ran heats and/or last chance races plus features. Lots to finish in one night.

Former late model and hobby stock racer Mike “Spike” Storkson was on hand, and has been racing a Bandit lately this year. “Dad is going to race the hobby stock next year, at least that is the plan,” Said Spike. “It’s been a long time since he raced, but he has the itch to do it again, and this is the same car he raced many years ago. As for me, I’m having a blast racing the Bandit car here and there, and that’s probably what I will do next year too. I could do some updating to it and it would be a good International car, too.”

Brad Conant and his teammate, Brandon Bender made the long trip down from Antigo to compete in the American Short Tracker (RWD-four cyl.) division, with Brad jumping out to a huge lead in the feature, looking like a sure winner. However Rockford standout George Sparkman and Aaron Rude both tracked him down to finish 1-2. Brad did hang on for third, saying afterward, “I was looking good out there, thought I had it won, but the car started filling up with smoke. I went through the grass in time trials, as the sun was in my eyes and I couldn’t see the turn. I didn’t realize it until later, but I cracked the oil pan. I knew something was wrong out there and just had to hang on at the end.” This was Brad and Brandon’s first time ever at the track.

Nice to see Chuck Garetson back out with a late model. It was reported that it had been seventeen years since he last raced. I remember Chuck with an immaculate white Monte Carlo street stock, number 12. He was very tough to beat, especially at the Dells. Now he is racing with the number 2. He did an aborted attempt at late model racing many years ago, I think only racing a couple of times before getting out of the sport. Just goes to show that once you are a racer, you are always a racer.

The hobby stock division was added to with the addition of several regulars from the Dells track, with Dave Trute taking the win. Bill Zeman saw he sky as he and Don Fassett both collided on the frontstretch in the feature. Zeman drove the car off the track with Fassetts bumper caught underneath, while Fassett returned to action later.

Dale Nottestad won the continued late model feature to open the show, while Jason Hicks took the win in the second race. Zack Riddle won the overall title for the season championship night

races, while Brady Liddle won the Fall Classic headliner. Riddle, Nottestad, Wilberg, Ryan Goldade, Chad Stevens, Jeremy Miller, and Scott Broughton look like they can manage to run at the front at any time and in any race.

Saturday’s show included an appearance by the super late models. Once a mainstay of this track and most in southern Wisconsin, only a few tracks now race them weekly, most of those in the central part of the state. Drivers such as Danny Darnell, Bryan Reffner, Dave Feiler, Nathan Haseleu and others once raced here frequently, and it was nice to see them here again. Feiler made a pass on Andrew Morrissey to take the win in a good race. I was impressed with Blake Brown, who worked his way up to third and might have had a chance for better if the lead pair hadn’t run off to such a huge lead.

The Mid-Am cars suffered through one of those nights where it looked like everyone just wanted to get the race done and over with, as it was far from trouble-free. James Swan even suffered from hard hit and subsequent rollover. You know it is a hard hit when the car being hit gets rolled onto its roof. Everyone was okay, and miraculously, Swan returned to make a few more laps. Points leaders Brian Back and Lyle Nowak both suffered damage, with Nowak continuing on to a decent finish. Jeremy Spoonmore held



James Swan ended up on his roof at MIS, but returned to action
Doug Hornickel photos



The Inside Dirt from page 11

most part, you have to go out and get your hands dirty to cover it. As a result, covering dirt track racing requires a great deal of time and travel expense and that leads me into my final subject.

I have found some measure of success in writing, taking photos, creating websites, creating digital graphics and producing internet audio. On the other hand, I’ve got a flawed business plan when it comes to monetizing those skills to help support my work. Case in point, I believe it was last season that Dan Plan gave the photographers a plug by encouraging racers and fans to purchase photos. Dan’s article hit home with me, racing photography is very competitive and I’m at a disadvantage because I have to split my time between photography and other tasks. One example I can point to came earlier this season at a UMSS race. I agreed to do some media work for the UMSS this season so my web address is on their website and victory lane sign and my logo is displayed as a decal on their cars. Unfortunately my efforts on behalf of the series do not guarantee photo sales and to illustrate the level of competition at one UMSS show there were 14 UMSS Sprint Cars and five photographers. Since I restricted my coverage to Sprints those 14 cars were my entire potential customer base as compared to a customer base that included every car in the pits for the other shooters. Another thing that puts me at a disadvantage is that I travel from track to track so I have to respect the territory of the track photographers. As a result whereas most of the photographers are free to concentrate on sales, my photography benefits the tracks and the publications but does little to help offset my expenses.

It has been a pleasure writing this column for every issue of MRC since May of 1999 but it looks like my streak is about to come to an end. The purpose of writing about this subject is to let you know why you won’t be seeing as much of me next year. My plan going forward is to continue to maintain my websites, gotomn.com and midwestracingtalk.com, as well as to continue to contribute to the racing publications but on a more limited basis. I’m not sure what affect these changes in my routine will have on the frequency of this column. I will keep you posted on my plans for next season as they develop.

Special thanks to the UMSS for helping to make my 2010 season possible.

Thank you for reading this column and we’ll see you at the races!

off a strong Mike Litchfeld for the win.

Likewise, the Big-8 cars also seemed to be on a path to destruction. Dale Nottestad proved his strength once again in taking the victory over Steve Rubeck, who also ran his super late this weekend.

Overall, it was a nice show, good field of cars, decent admission prices, and although the weather threatened, it never rained during the races on either night, and a nice crowd was on hand, especially on Saturday night.

Dale Nottestad won the Big-8 main event at MIS
Mark Melchiori photo



IMCA Super Nationals

The Midwest Racing Connection Mystery Photographer took a trip down to Boone, Iowa for the IMCA Super Nationals. The event is known for its enormous car counts (nearly 300 Modifieds alone), quick track farming process and the infamous Boone catwalk



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The Racing Geekby *Jordan Bianchi*

You can quit writing the eulogy and you can stop digging the grave, because the Drive for Five is very much alive for Jimmie Johnson.

After finding himself in the unusual position of being written off one week after a 25th-place finish to open the Chase for the Sprint Cup, Johnson rolled into Dover a man on a mission. Determined to reestablish himself in the championship race and show the garage that the Lowe's team wasn't going to rollover and give up after one bad race. Mission accomplished.

Before an announced crowd of 88,000 people (a very generous estimate), Johnson flattened the competition by starting on the pole, leading a race-high 191 laps and cruising to the checkered flag 2.6-seconds ahead of Jeff Burton. More importantly, in winning and leading the most laps, he accumulated the maximum 195 points a driver can get in any one race. And in doing so, jumped from sixth in the standings to second, and trimmed Denny Hamlin's point lead from 92 to a very manageable 35.

While it may have been his sixth victory of 2010 and the 53rd of his storied career, it's easy to think that this win was as important, if not more so, than any of the victories Johnson has notched since putting a monopoly on the title four years ago. The funny thing

is, he doesn't see the AAA 400 as a statement-race, simply because he doesn't concern himself with such trivial matters. He's focused on the big picture; which of course, is winning championships. "I'm not so concerned with statements," Johnson said post-race. "At the end of the day, I'm just concerned about where I am in the points, what the deficit is."

In retrospect, with all the talk this season about how vulnerable the 48 team has looked and how it appeared as if his title reign was coming to an end, Dover may become the race where we look back and determine that this is where Johnson won his fifth championship. Not only because of what he was able to do this weekend, but for what his competition for the title wasn't able to do. As two of Johnson's main competitors, Denny Hamlin and Kevin Harvick, took their eyes off the prize and become more concerned with matters that ultimately are inconsequential to them winning the championship. Hamlin on Friday decided to candidly speak his mind about the penalty NASCAR handed down to Clint Bowyer. Making no bones about the fact that he thought the 33 team has been racing with less than legal cars for awhile now. Words that set off a chain of events that came to a head Saturday afternoon when Bowyer's teammate, Kevin Harvick, took it upon himself to send a message to Hamlin that his comments weren't appreciated in the form of driving into the left rear of Hamlin's car. Instead of focusing on making their cars better for the 400-mile grind that was Sunday's race, both drivers and teams subsequently spent the remainder of final practice fixing their damaged cars and not fine-tuning them for what was to come the next day.

As this spectacle was taking place, and seeing their rivals were more focused on settling petty feuds, all Johnson and crew chief Chad Knaus could do was sit back with a knowing smile. "We've lived all that stuff," said Knaus, who won his 50th race as a crew chief. "We've had suspensions, fines, and all that kind of stuff. Everything that's possible to be done in the sport from a negative and a positive, we've unfortunately been involved in. We don't

really pay a lot of attention to what goes on outside of our four walls. We worry about our racecar, our toolbox, try to make it right." That attitude was reflected on raceday. The 48 was dominant, while Hamlin and Harvick each struggled. Hamlin had what he called a "mediocre day" in finishing ninth, whereas Harvick struggled with a loose car late and finished 15th.

Although Hamlin should be happy with a top-10 run on a track that has been his own house of horrors, you have to wonder if his day could have been even better had he not interjected himself into the middle of a controversy that he had no business being in. If you're Kevin Harvick, figuring out the handle of your racecar is a far more important thing to do in practice than using your bumper to deliver messages. As for the guy who everyone had written-off a week, he's already moved on to next week's race at Kansas. "For me, what people want to read into, what they want to think about today's performance, that's fine. We're moving on. We have to go to Kansas and do the job again."

The good news is, we don't have to spend time this week writing any more eulogies. Because as we learned at Dover; the 48 team is very much alive and well. Likely sending a shiver down the backs of everyone in the garage.



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