

# THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION

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THE MIDWEST'S SHORT TRACK AUTO RACING AUTHORITY

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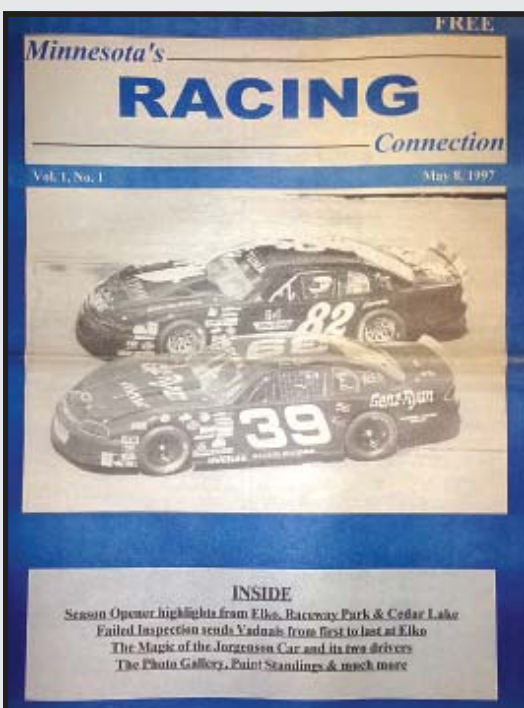
## Inside...



Double Duty



Building Relationships



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## The Big Stage





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## Publisher's Note

### *Racing According to Plan*



### Dan Plan

Even though it has been a few years since I passed the half-century mark in age, there have been several things this year have made me realize how old I really am.

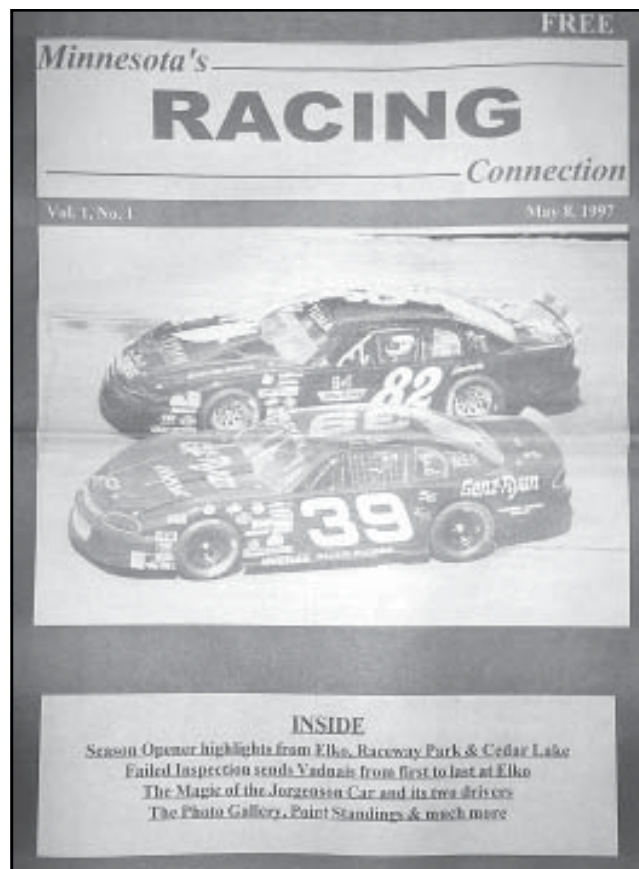
The first item to make me feel old was realizing this little racing paper has been in existence for 25 years. The paper has now reached the point where I've had it longer than the founder. I was recently joking with the Publisher Emeritus Rob Hahn about locating the original electronic file for the first issue. The funny thing is, there are no electronic copies of the first issue. When this paper started, "cut and paste" literally meant cutting a physical piece of paper and using paste (glue) to attach photos and stories to a larger piece of paper. Following these steps, a negative was produced and then a plate for a printing press. These days it is just an electronic file uploaded to the printer's website. Just one of the many things in this world that have changed in the last quarter century.

## I Am Old

Next up on the make Dan feel old list was seeing several guys that I have watched throughout the entire career pick up wins early in the year. A long time ago, Jimmy Mars was once a Late Model rookie. These days he is the grey-haired veteran with his kid now racing against him. Jimmy showed the kids he can still get it done early in the year on the final night of the Legendary Opener at Cedar Lake Speedway, and a few weeks later, Jimmy had a podium finish with the World of Outlaws Late Models at Mississippi Thunder Speedway.

An even older guy picked up a prestigious win in Wisconsin early in the month of May. Rich Bickle is another one I have watched throughout his entire

*Publisher's Note continued on page 4*



*The Midwest*

**RACING**

*Connection*

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*Publishers note from page 3*

career. I first read about Rich years ago in *Checkered Flag Racing News*. Then later on seeing him in person at Artgo and ASA shows in the area. And finally, watching him on TV in NASCAR. These days, Rich has returned to the short tracks of the upper-Midwest. It is no secret the return to the short tracks has been a challenge. There have been a few podium finishes and a few races that just did not pan out. The first weekend in the month of May, Rich showed the pavement kids he still knows how to get around Madison International Speedway during the \$10,000.00 to win Joe Shear Classic.

Another reminder that I'm old was watching Nick Murgic win opening day at LaCrosse Fairgrounds Speedway. On the long drive home, I realized I watched Nick's grandpa (Mike) race at the end of his career and Nick's dad (Steve) through his entire racing career.

The final thing to make me *really* feel old was my first visit in several years to Little Elko Speedway. Little Elko is the quarter midget track located next to Elko Speedway. The quarter midget track in Elko has had some challenges in the last few years with car counts, but 2021 appears to be a fresh start for the Quarter Midget group.

The reason for heading down to Little Elko was due to seeing several social media posts. Numerous drivers and others in the racing community were set to have their kids make their first Quarter Midget starts. Throw in a few families from the racing community that had already been part of Little Elko for a few years, and the Quarter Midget field doubled in size from the previous few seasons.

The part of this day that really made me feel old was realizing I've been around short track racing long enough to have seen the grandparents of most of these kids either racing themselves or working at the big track. I've also seen the parents of these little kids race from the start of their careers through the present day.

Yeah, I'm old.



*Dan Plan photo*



*Doug Hornickel photo*

*Jonathan Eilen (top photo) trades in his helmet for a headset as race director for the quarter midgets at Little Elko Speedway. Rich Bickle (bottom photo in his Joe Shear tribute car) holds off Kulwicki Driver Development Program participant Luke Fenhaus on his way to the \$10,000 win at Madison International Speedway.*

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## Racing Nuggets



### PJ "Jacklyn" Nuttleman

"Why is your husband helping Steve Bachman?" a guy with a beer in his hand questioned me during the second afternoon of racing at La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway.

"Because he wants to," was the best answer I could supply in a short amount of time. The truth is there were A LOT of reasons why Toby was helping Bachman at the track; personal relationships are the biggest.

Bachman's race car is housed at Toby's brother Kevin's shop in Bangor. Bachman works at Wehrs Machine & Racing Products, whose proprietor—Chad Wehrs is a very close friend and associate of Toby's. Plus, Bachman is just a swell guy.

"He's hardworking, genuine, and real good person," Toby said.

According to Toby's recollection, this car that Bachman pilots, was built by Chris and Craig Johnson, along with Steve Carlson. Carlson raced the car for several years, picking up many wins along the way, including the Short Track Nationals at Rockford Speedway.

The car was eventually sold to Ben Pettis, up near the Eau Claire area. Pettis took that car to Victory Lane many times as well and even scored some championships at Marshfield Speedway with it. When Pettis was ready to get out of racing, he sold

the car to Bachman and it continued to perform well.

And then disaster struck. Last year before Oktoberfest Race Weekend, Bachman had a lower control arm break during practice and the car nosed HARD into the retaining wall between turns one and two. It was destroyed. The incident was a huge blow to the team and their budget.

But new life was breathed back into the machine this past winter. Toby and his business partner for TOBYCar, Justin Zmyewski, installed a new front clip onto the car.

"This is way different than what we had on the car previously," Toby explained. "This car was really old. It's now updated to what we do on all of our front ends with regard to geometry, pick-up points, and such."

Bachman says the car handles much better now.

"Hopefully, we have the car balanced now to where it's consistent every week," Bachman said.

"With the front end fixed and then getting the rear updated in the next few weeks, hopefully we can continue to get top fives and find ourselves in the top three come Oktoberfest."

This year at Fest could be interesting for Bachman—particularly off the track. He and his wife Kelsey are expecting their first child around that same time. Time flies, and it won't be long before that new set of hands will be joining the pit crew, which consists of Bachman's wife Kelsey, his dad, Schmitt, Kevin, John, Kyle, Tusker, Chad, and Toby.

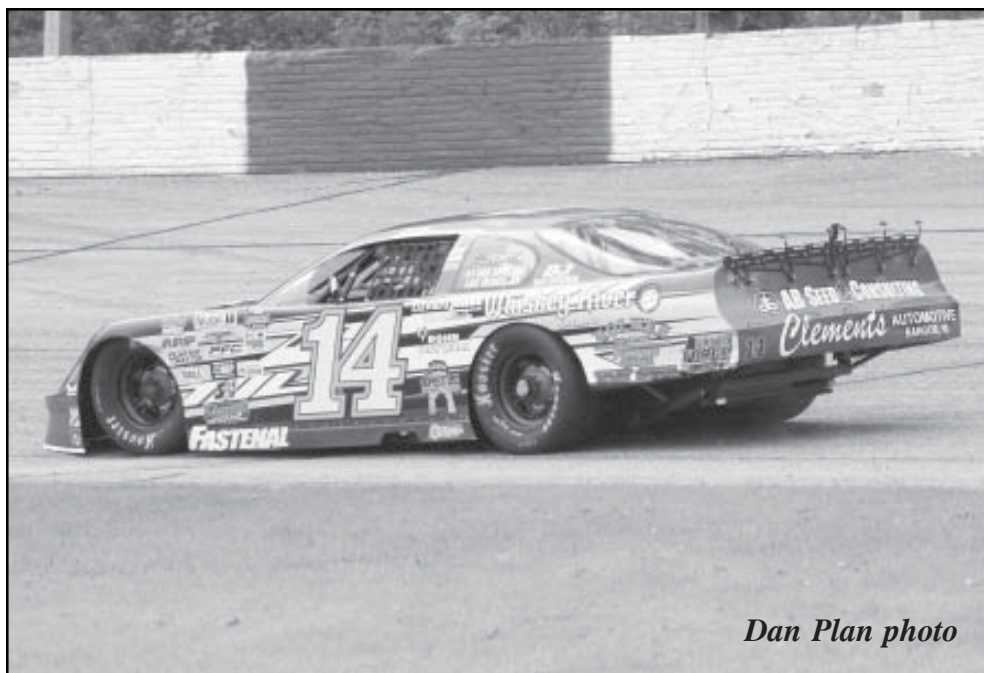
"Hopefully the little one waits to arrive until Monday after Fest," he laughed. "It will be a nerve wracking five days of Fest!"

## The Business of Building Relationships

PJ Nuttleman photo



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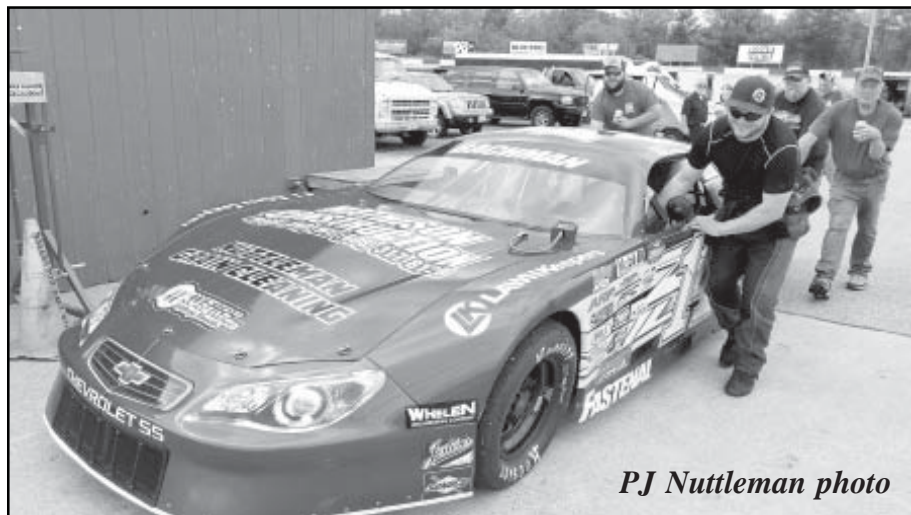
Dan Plan photo

Racing and taking care of a growing family can be challenging. Sponsorships are the key to help keep the dream alive. He's incredibly appreciative for those who have been backing him and were able to ride with him into Victory Lane after the second NASCAR Late Model feature on May 22nd: Wehrs Machine, Ultra Force Machines, Lovejoy Fencing, Mathison Construction, Nuttleman Grain Cleaning, FJ

Buick GMC, American Roofing, Wilwood Brakes, AFco Shocks, Fastshafts, Heider Excavating, and DJ Dan Deicher.

There's an old saying that you should "be careful of the toes you step on today, because they could be connected to the @ss you have to kiss tomorrow." Simply put, treat others as you would like to be treated—it's the Golden Rule in life—and it pays off down the road.

Bachman doesn't kiss anyone's backside, instead he's very good at networking as well as developing and maintaining relationships. And THAT is definitely paying off on many fronts for his career behind the wheel.



PJ Nuttleman photo



## Going in Circles



### Charlie Spry

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused much havoc, and local racing was not spared. Last season was an abbreviated one for most, and Madison International Speedway never really got their season going, save for a couple of attempts.

Things are going much better this season here, with the Joe Shear classic race drawing a great crowd with good racing. Now, it is great to see the regular divisions get a chance to go racing in a weekly show type format. In other words, I will utter a phrase said by many here, "It is great to be back at MIS."

Ryan Goldade is back racing a late model for the first time in about six years. He looks to be very much on top of his game, as he set fast time on the first night out, finished second in the dash, won his heat, and placed fourth in a hotly contested feature won by Zack Riddle, who had just gotten an engine in his car the prior couple of days.

It was nice to see and chat with veteran late model racer Gary Krueger. At seventy-five years of age, Gary is one of the few people racing at that age in the state. Gary has been putting up a battle of his own off the track, fighting Leukemia. The disease is being controlled, and Gary feels reasonably well and looks well. "I am happy to be out there racing, even if it is just in the back of the field, making laps."

Gary has some good people helping him, as his son, Eric, works with him and helps a great deal. Eric has had some crucial battles with his own health issues

as well. Also helping out is another veteran racer, Russ Grossen, who is around the same age as Gary, and also still races. If you figure it out, there are well over 100 years of racing experience between Gary and Russ. That just is incredible. So, I guess they know a thing or two about the sport.

Eric had this to say regarding his Dad, saying, "He has raced for a long time and had a lot of success. Not many championships, but consistent good finishes in point standings at many different tracks, especially Lake Geneva. I think he figured out that over the years his average point finish was 15th. He ran with the best in ARTGO and did well. He just wants to do what is normal for him, race." I personally have always enjoyed chatting with this team. Very good people. Gary is doing a nice job of racing.

Jay Kincaid was racing for the first time here on the "Ring of fire" in the Six Shooters and won on his first try. Before the racing started, I talked with him, and he noted, "I like the banked tracks like Rockford much better, but we will see what happens." He may be changing his mind?

Jay talked about how his Dad also raced at many different tracks, and actually preferred flat tracks like the old Lake Geneva Raceway. As for Jay himself, he said that he had just purchased the Sixer a couple of days ago and just put air in the tires and did some painting on it and went racing. Not bad for right out of the box.

In his past, he had done quite a bit of racing at the newer, banked Lake Geneva track. "I raced in the BIC division there, which was very basic four cylinder cars. I had a rusted out pile of junk that I raced. It still



75-year-old Gary Krueger at speed at Madison  
(Jess Reidner photo)



Jay Kincaid in victory lane  
(Jess Reidner photo)

had the speedometer and dash in it, and I remember looking down to see how fast I was going. It said 85 mph. I thought to myself, I am out here going that fast in this totally rusted out, beat up car, with no rollcage, stock seat, and wearing just street clothes. Hmmm, how crazy is this? But race he did, racing on and off for a few years before the track shut down.

At Rockford, rain plagued the first couple of

*Going In Circles continued on page 8*

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### Going In Circles continued from page 7

weekly shows, with opening night only getting two features completed, and rain winning out completely on the second night.

Terry Ciano plans on racing here in the American Short tracker division all year, after trying last year to do the same, but running into near constant mechanical problems. "This year I started working on the car on January 1st, and have not stopped since. Everything has been re-done. Rebuilt engine and transmission, completely changed the fuel system, made many updates, even a new windshield." The car looks sharp with a kind of turquoise paint job that looks sharp and is eye catching.

Former Sixer racer Tyler Vincetich has moved up to the Roadrunner division racing a car that was formerly owned by Jeff Allendorf. "These cars are way different, and hopefully the racing should be a bit cleaner. I am using way too much brake, and need to get away from that, otherwise I should get better and better with more laps," Said Tyler.

Late model racers Jerry and Tom Gille both plan on racing here all year. Jerry said, "We will see how it goes, right now all year, but that could change. This will probably be my last full year of racing." Jerry also did something he has wanted to do all during his racing career, race on the dirt. For the past couple of years, he raced some with a dirt street stock type car at Sycamore Speedway. "It was a lot of fun," Said Jerry. "It probably will help me on the asphalt as well. I always like my asphalt car to be set up kind of free, so driving on the dirt was maybe not as big of change as with some."

Jerry noted that he has been racing for 36 years, starting in an enduro, then Roadrunner class cars, progressing from there. "In the early days, everything just came together at the same time," Said Jerry. I got engaged, bought a house, and went racing. I told my fiancée (now wife) that I can't afford everything at one time, so she agreed to buy her own engagement ring, and that I would make payments to her and pay here back, which I did."

Finally, after three attempts, Rockford finally got a full show in on May 22nd, with Jerry looking very fast in winning the late model feature that night. He just makes it all look so easy, which is the hallmark of a great racer with a great car setup.

Plenty of new people in the late models here. Moving up from the sportsman ranks are Trevor Robinson, Josh Thiering and Adam Cartwright, while Bill Balmes moves up from the Roadrunners. A great field of cars were on hand.

2020 Roadrunner champion Justin Wagner has moved up to the sportsman division, and former Sixer racer "Beerman" Sean Worman has moved up to the Roadrunner division in a car formerly belonging to Wagner. Austin Fowler raced last year in both sportsman and Roadrunner divisions, and feels that it is a little too much to do, so he relinquished his sportsman ride to the very capable Bobby Frisch, while he concentrates more on the Roadrunner.

The Sixer division looks stronger than ever, as 39

cars were present for their first event of the year here. The aforementioned Jay Kincaid came out with a newly built Chrysler with a Dick Trickle throwback paint job, and ran off with the feature win to go 2-for-2 in Sixer features between MIS and Rockford. There are slight rules differences between the two tracks, so I would guess that Jay will race two different cars at the two different tracks.

The Robinson family has started out strong here in 2021. Brothers Johnny II and Terrance have split the two sportsman class features run this year. Sportsman racer Curt Nighswonger reports that he finally solved his overheating problems by opening up the nosepiece area of the car and other changes.

Looks to be a really fun year at both Rockford and MIS, as things hopefully return to normal.

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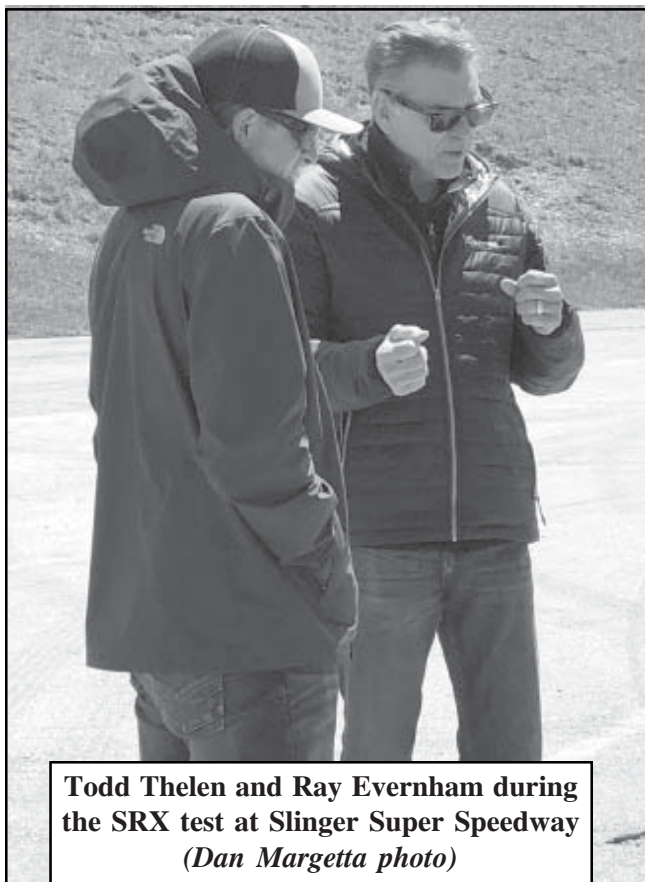
## Dangerous Dan



**Dan Margetta**

Before you go any further reading this column, I want you to sit back, close your eyes, and think about what a perfect vacation would be. Do you have visions of sipping some fruity drink on a tropical island with palm trees and beaches while Margaritaville plays in the background? Well forget all that because this month I'm writing about the vacation day I took from my regular job on May 11<sup>th</sup> where I passed the time watching a single car turn laps around the World's Fastest ¼ Mile Oval at the Slinger Speedway.

This wasn't just any single car test session though, this was the day the Superstar Racing Experience (SRX) series came to town to test their newly constructed machine for the upcoming Slinger race on July 10<sup>th</sup> and I wasn't going to pass up the opportunity to see the brand new cars up close. For those that don't know, the SRX series is the brainchild of a group of racing insiders including NASCAR Hall of Famers



**Todd Thelen and Ray Evernham during the SRX test at Slinger Super Speedway**  
(Dan Margetta photo)

## SRX Comes to Slinger

Ray Evernham and Tony Stewart and is modeled after the old International Race of Champions (IROC) events that last raced in 2006. It's a six-race series beginning in June that will travel to famous short tracks that includes Stafford Speedway, the Knoxville Raceway, Eldora Speedway, Lucas Oil Raceway at Indianapolis, and the Nashville Fairgrounds Speedway, in addition to Slinger Speedway. An all-star cast of drivers will compete in the six Saturday night events which will be broadcast live nationally on CBS. Slinger's July 10<sup>th</sup> event will feature Tony Stewart, Helio Castroneves, Paul Tracy, Tony Kanaan, Bill Elliott, Bobby Labonte, Michael Waltrip, Marco Andretti, Greg Biffle, Willy T. Ribbs, and Ernie Francis Jr. as drivers. The twelfth and final seat in Slinger's event will be awarded to the winner of the prestigious Slinger Nationals super late model event held on July 6<sup>th</sup>.

To be honest with you, my first impression was that the car looked cooler in person than what I had seen in photos. It almost resembled a Matchbox or Hot Wheels car which should be a hit with any kids in attendance. A video game is also out now which should really get the kids excited as well. The car looked like it could take plenty of abuse and had a ton of horsepower which will never hook up perfectly at a place like Slinger meaning the driver would have to hussle the car to make it go. Noted all-around racer Ken Schrader was on hand to do the test driving and following the weeklong test session that made stops at a majority of the tracks on the SRX schedule, joined my partners and I on our LTN Hour radio program to describe the experience.

"There's no off-set on these cars and the frame is actually built off one of those Trans Am cars so it's built to be a road race car more than anything else," Schrader stated, "It's kind of old school...it's just a race car, it's not a special built pavement car to get around Slinger, it's not a special built late model to get around Knoxville or Eldora, it's like the good old days, it's just a race car."

"As we go through our sport one of the things that has hurt us over the years is you know, everything is specialty now, we have our pavement cars and our dirt cars and it didn't used to be like that, we just had race cars and raced them at different places," Schrader continued, "It'll be good, they've got 12 different drivers from different series and different backgrounds running these things and the last thing they really need to do is make these things so they're just stuck right to the track and they don't wiggle or nothing, so they wanted it to be a little bit of a challenge to drive and they are."

Schrader deemed all the test sessions a success and stated the cars surprised the road crew with how well they performed, with Slinger being the place the cars felt the best.



**Scott Hansen and Kenny Schrader look over the new SRX ride at Slinger**  
(Dan Margetta photo)

"I think we got around there (Slinger) decent. You could put the throttle all the way down after a couple laps on the tires. When they got the shiny part knocked off them, they would take full throttle so I was really surprised," Schrader said, "They're going to get around there quick, now it's nothing like a super late model as we were running 12.2's (lap times) and the supers get around there at like 11.5 seconds. We ran a 62-lap run and ended up in the 12.2's so I thought that was not bad."

"This is a made for TV series with six Saturday nights in a row starting in the middle of June so it's a pretty big undertaking what they're doing but they're going to run twelve cars every week and they are building sixteen to start with and when they leave for the first race they are not coming back home." Schrader explained as he described some of the logistics involved with the series, "They are just going to go from track to track and they have like a mobile shop with them, so they are geared up to replace front stubs and rear clips and everything. We'll just see how it goes but I think it ought to be very exciting."

The Slinger Speedway SRX race is set for Saturday night, July 10<sup>th</sup> and will be the fifth stop in the six-race series. A super late model race is also on the card and I would recommend including this race on your bucket list of events to attend this season. Ticket information is available on the track website at [www.slingersuperspeedway.com](http://www.slingersuperspeedway.com) and I look forward to seeing you there as we showcase the incredible racing atmosphere we are accustomed to here in the upper Midwest to a national audience.



*Dan Margetta photo*



## Talkin' Racin' with Jason



**Jason D. Searcy**

Race fans enjoy the on-track battles during the race season or even the off-track confrontations in the pits after the race night is over but most fans are not aware of the drama that occurs after the season is finished, that is when the big decisions are made. During the offseason many teams contemplate if now is the right time to make the big jump. Is it time to drive up to the next division? Here are three examples of bold offseason developments as we begin the 2021 race season.

One team full of drivers making a move this year at Elko Speedway is the 7K racing bunch led by a very popular 14-year-old driver #7 Teddy Kottschade from Ramsey (MN) who is advancing up after just one year in the Great North Legends Division to the Premiere Division I NASCAR Late Models at ELKO. The decision was not made hastily, Teddy's parents Jr and Stephanie asked for an honest assessment from three independent individuals who have no stake in the outcome, these guys have spent their entire lives in the sport of auto racing, they were tabbed "the three wise men," the consensus was that Teddy was ready to make the leap. Teddy Kottschade said that he has been inspired by a Wisconsin racing legend, "Alan Kulwicki always challenged himself, even if he wasn't winning, he always looked to move up and take that next step, he took it as a challenge," said Kottschade "I see the Late Model as a challenge to make me a better driver." They bought a local car from former Champion Jon Lemke and have spent the winter fabricating the machine to fit their needs and their much smaller than normal driver. They even had to build custom brackets not only so Teddys seat will fit properly but also so they can slide it back when he inevitably hits his growth spurt. They also had to move the gas, clutch and brake pedals up 4-6 inches, no

adult member of the crew can fit behind the wheel, not even mom. One of the big differences between racing a Legend car and the Late Model is that Teddy is not accustomed to being on the left side of the car, he has raced for ten years in Go-Karts, Bandoleros and Legends, all cars in which you sit mostly in the middle. With Teddy moving up that also means his younger brother Josiah is moving up from Bandos to the Legend car and the youngest brother Jackson will now have a backup Bandolero in the racing stable.

A crowd favorite is moving up to the Thunder Car division at Elko Speedway in 2021, Taylor Goldman #8 from Minnetonka (MN), known as "Rollergirl" because of her penchant to roll over cars early in her racing career, is moving up after over a decade and two dozen career wins in the Power Stock division. Taylor started racing young at the age of 13 in the Bomber division in 2006 and stepped up to Power stocks at ELKO in 2009. Taylor Goldman became a factor, and then a contender, and then a winner, scoring wins by the handful each year until finally becoming the first female regular division season champion at Elko Speedway in 2018. Many thought she might make the move up after that year but the timing just wasn't right, none of the cars for sale were the right fit and Taylor was content staying in the ultra-competitive Power stock division and treating it as another year of learning. After the 2020 season though they heard that the Thunder Car Champion was looking to sell his car and they didn't waste any time, "Bryce Blohm was looking to move up and so was I, it worked out for both families," said Taylor. Goldman comes from a racing family as her father and crew chief David Goldman won the Hobby Stock Championship at Raceway Park in 1997 also winning the Short Track Nationals at Rockford Speedway, "I've always loved the Hobby Stock/

Thunder Cars ever since watching my dad race them growing up," said Taylor "I'm looking forward to the new challenge, I love the look and sound of those cars, it's music to my ears!"

The 2018 and 2020 Elko Speedway Thunder Car champion is also moving up but us fans will have to wait another year to see him race it on the track. Bryce Blohm #37 from Prior Lake (MN) is working on a Late Model that he expects to race in the 2022 season. Bryce raced in the Thunder Car division for four years and had incredible success, winning two championships and a countless number of races including 8 of the 18 features in 2020. Bryce has built upon the foundation his father Daryl constructed by winning the ELKO Thunder Car championships in both 2000 and 2009. "Late Models were never a topic of discussion when I raced in the Power Stocks or even when I first started out in the Thunder Cars, but I think I've grown as a driver along the way and we were able to figure out over the years what makes a good handling car at ELKO, that's what gives us confidence for the next class" said Blohm. Bryce Blohm and his team will spend this year working on the car in the shop, running some practice days and preparing to make a strong debut in the Late Model division at Elko Speedway in 2022. "I feel like now we are ready to take the next step to challenge ourselves with a class that we haven't been in, but we are excited to see what we can accomplish," said Blohm.

Three entirely different approaches on the big offseason decisions from three very respected race teams. They all mentioned the same theme though, challenging themselves to be the best they can be and that's what ties it all together. That drive is what keeps us fans coming back to the track and that's what makes them racers, and that's why we love them, no matter what division they are in.



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**Bickle is Back!**



*Rich Bickle’s racing career has now come the full-circle. After making his way to the top levels of NASCAR, Bickle stepped away from racing for a period of time. Lately, Rich has been running competitively in the upper-Midwest. During the 2021 running of the Joe Shear Classic 200 at Madison International Speedway, Bickle and team arrived with a special, throwback scheme to Shear. It was one of those days you just can’t make up. After struggling earlier in the day, Bickle made his way to the front and held off fast qualifier Luke Fenhaus. Fenhaus had plenty of opportunities to “move” Rich out of the way but raced him clean. It was an extremely popular win for Bickle, and Fenhaus gained a lot of respect from the winner and the fans on hand.*



Doug Hornickel photo



**The North Pole Nightmare**



Dan Plan photo

With 10 IRA Sprint Championships under his belt, Bill Balog (The North Pole Nightmare) has been focusing on the All Star Sprint Circuit of Champions this year. With a rainout at Knoxville, Balog and several others made an unexpected appearance with the IRA at Cedar Lake. Balog would pick up a win in one of the four heat races, but suffered a DNF in the main event.



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Tue. 8/3 - Wisconsin Int'l Raceway, Wisconsin  
Sat. 8/21 - Hawkeye Downs Speedway, Iowa



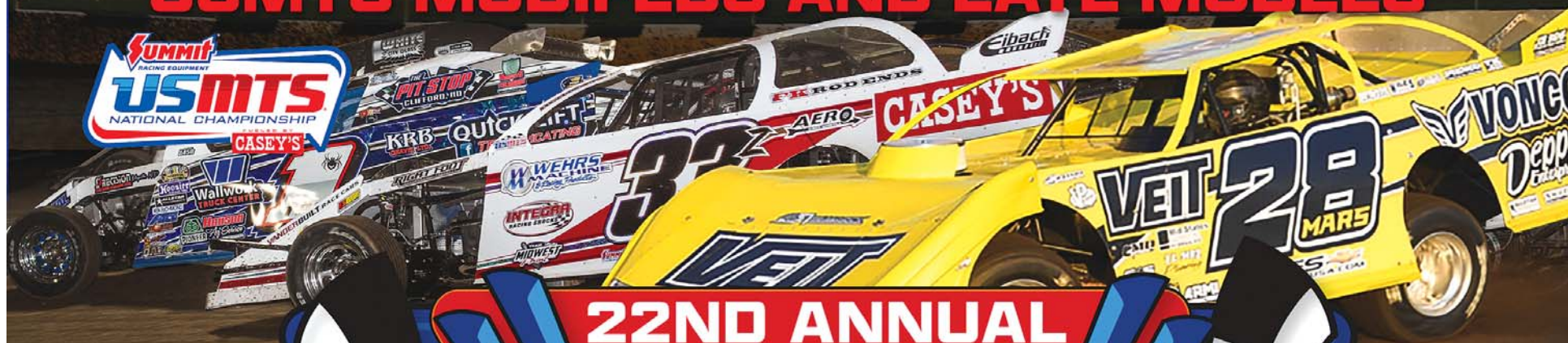
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## New Dirt



### Jacy Norgaard

The first full weekend in May had rolled around and I was ecstatic. The World of Outlaws Morton Buildings Late Model Series would finally be close to home. I had spent the first four months of the year crossing the country in planes and cars and was looking forward to a home game. I headed for the airport to pick up Mike Warren and John Sims, our series PR and Marketing coordinators. We discussed the forthcoming weekend races and what we thought might happen. I predicted that Brent Larson would have a good weekend. My logic was that he had been getting stronger and Mississippi Thunder Speedway was a track similar in many aspects to where he got his feet wet in dirt late model racing.

I grew up watching Brent Larson race Late Models at Cedar Lake Speedway. To see him and I both on the national stage night in and night out is rewarding, but not something I had ever really thought about. After Mississippi Thunder Speedway, it's all I can think about.

The feature rolled onto the track and Brent was starting in the seventh position. A few laps in and he had already worked his way into the Top 5. An impressive feat thus far for a man who has had his fair share of struggles. As the laps clicked by it became very apparent that the B1 bomber was going to be a threat as he drove deeper into the top rankings. Larson was right there with Sheppard and Bruening mixing it up and giving them a real race for position.

Then it happened. The joyous disbelief crowd, the stunned competitors, the surprised crews and officials. Their expressions forever molded together at the exact same moment that the resilience of a team that's never given up, saw their determination turn to prosperity. Brent slid by Sheppard and Bruening and took command of the lead. Like many others my mouth dropped, and I cursed with excitement. But how long would it last I thought to myself. I didn't doubt Brent's ability or his talent. I knew what he could do in a race car. When everything goes your way, it can be hard to keep that spirit. Doubt creeps in and reality is at your back door. If I was thinking it, I can only imagine what was going through Brent's mind. But if he had any of those thoughts, he sure didn't show it. His track positioning only further emboldened his drive as he began to distance himself. While Larson was busy running away to what appeared to be his first ever Outlaws victory, I took a glance over at our announcer Ruben Mireles. We exchanged looks and both mouthed the words, "BRENT LARSON" with big smiles on

## The big stage and all the great moments

Jacy Norgaard photo



our face. We loved to see it.

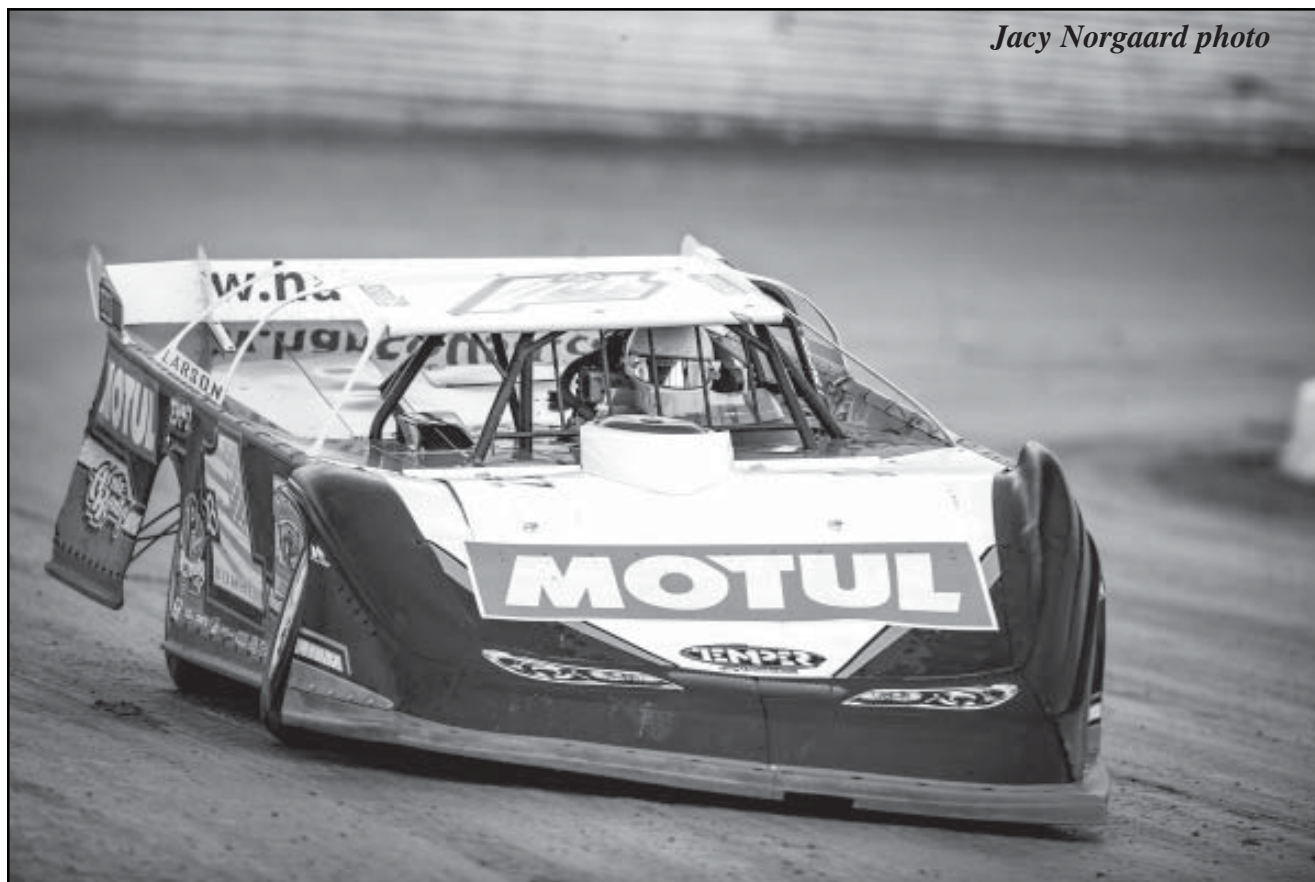
I will always celebrate the excitement of a race and smile when one of our guys is doing well. After all they chose to support our Tour and they deserve all the success that comes their way. Finding that success isn't easy. Winning in dirt late model racing has always been a tall order. Doing so in the major leagues of this sport is among the toughest of tasks. Locally you have far more leniency and ability to make mistakes. Your fellow competitors are more likely to have missteps thus leveling the playing field so to speak. But so many of those on the local scene have a job to fall back on. Racing isn't their career. They can make mental mistakes and flexibility to some extent. That isn't to say they aren't very talented and worthy of competing everywhere, they are. But when you reach a certain level where the hobby has turned into the paycheck, the leniency is gone. If you're off by half a second in qualifying, you're in for a long night. Late model racing at this level requires discipline, professionalism and above all resilience. Very few people understand just what it takes to cut it in racing on a national touring level. They disparage drivers on social media because the results aren't there. As if they could do even a tenth of what these guys do. I'm always tempted to respond and ask them where their race cars are at.

Brent Larson is a man built on resilience with a team that's forged the same way. He may not have the financial resources that others do, but you can't buy tenacity. You can't order the perseverance and determination necessary in a catalog. You must put the work in when no one is looking, ride out the lows of the sport, and always stay hell-bent on proving you belong. He may not have won that night, but he came home second to Brandon Sheppard. A driver who is arguably the modern-day GOAT, one that Larson admitted is, "number 1 in my book."

This career best Outlaws finish for Larson was the culmination of his resilience and determination to prove this was the stage he belonged on. He touched on that in victory lane remarking that, "We're going to try and get one of these one of these days. We've had our learning curve and our struggles, but we're starting to show we belong here."

Even though Larson came up short of that illustrious

Jacy Norgaard photo



*New Dirt continued on page 16*



*New Dirt continued from page 15*

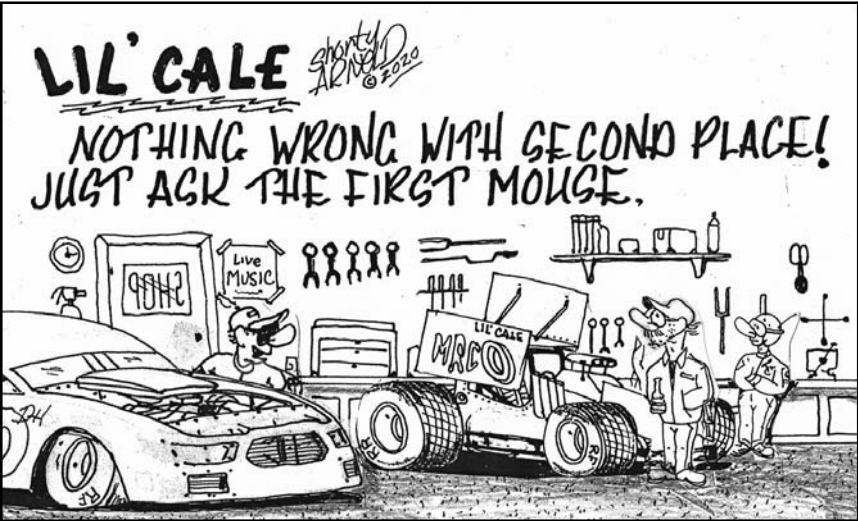
first Outlaws victory, I was super ecstatic for him. After taking initial photos of Sheppard celebrating in victory lane, I then turned my attention to Larson's car parked just yards away. He got out and immediately hugged his wife Melanie and his children, Matthew and Mady. The pure joy on his face and theirs was contagious. It never really hit me until then at just how amazing that moment was and just as equally how amazing our sport is.

Here was a guy that raced every Saturday at my home track growing up. He was part of my story and my upbringing in racing. I grew into photography, and he grew into Late Model racing. And now all these years



*Jacy Norgaard  
photo*

*New Dirt continued on page 17*



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*New Dirt continued from page 16*

later, here we both were on the national stage doing what we love and finding some success at it. In that moment I couldn't help but reflect on where we'd been. To see in real time just how far we had come is a testament to never giving up on a dream. I have no doubt that Brent is going to find even more success at this level and very soon. I can't wait to be there to witness it.

One podium, at one race, at one track, in one season, doesn't mean much in the grand scheme of things. It doesn't propel you to the top of the rankings and it might not change anyone's mind about you. It can however change your trajectory and reinforce your commitment to resilience. But above all it has a way of reminding you of every step you took to get to that point. If even for a fleeting moment, nothing else matters. The smile on Brent's face proved that.

The next night I went to Granite City Motor Park in Sauk Rapids, Minnesota. James Trantina has poured a lot of effort into shaping the 1/3-mile oval into a success. He's making quite the amount of headway and it will be fun to see the track evolve into a Sunday night powerhouse. One cool addition that Trantina has instituted is having two trophies in victory lane for each winner. The driver has to autograph one and then take it to the front stretch and give it away to a young fan. That specific Sunday was headlined by an emotional victory for both Noah Berglund and Brian Riedemann. Berglund is a 16-year-old Micro Sprint racer who's uncle happens to be Granite City flagman, Brian Riedemann. For many years Brian has told me about Noah's racing and all his success. Brian speaks of Noah with a tremendous amount of pride. It just so happened that the first time I got to see Noah race was also the first time Brian got to flag a victory of Noah's. As Noah took his trophy across the front stretch to give to a fan, he was met by his uncle Brian. They embraced and shared a hug.

In one weekend of motorsports across various levels of competition, I was able to witness our sport in its best form. Regardless of the class we race or the position we hold, racing has a way of reminding us of the important things in life. There are lessons in every race we attend. A bad track or low car count may leave us disappointed and fearful for the sports future. But then there are nights like Larson and Berglund, nights that remind us of why we love our sport. Nights that we will never forget. Moments burned forever into our racing psyche.

*Jacy Norgaard photo*


## Stan's Picture From The Past


*Stan Kalwasinski Photo*

*With Dale Danielski semi-retiring from MRC, I wanted to keep the pictures from the past going. This gem was sent to me several years ago by Stan Kalwasinski. The picture is from 1980 at the Dells. Following the 1979 season, Elko Speedway dropped the Super Late Model class. Dan Prziborowski and team towed weekly to the Dells during the 1980 season. Prziborowski came up just one spot short of the championship that season, finishing a close second to Steve Holzhausen.*

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# Double Duty

**NOAH EISENHOWER- YOUNG AND VERSATILE**

*By Charlie Spry*

Finding a teenager racing in the upper divisions at the track by itself is not all that unusual of thing anymore. However, finding one who has the versatility to race on both dirt and asphalt is rather unusual. Noah Eisenhower is one such person who races both.

If you go to the Lafayette County Speedway in Darlington, Wisconsin on a given Friday night, you will see this young man racing his IMCA limited late model on the dirt track there. If you go to the Dells Raceway Park on a Saturday night you will see him racing his UMA asphalt limited late model there on the paved surface.

Noah hails from Freeport, Illinois, and at age fifteen (almost sixteen, now), He already has several years of racing experience under his belt, with plenty of success.

The Freeport H.S. Sophomore got his start in the year of 2010 when he was about age four. He raced at Thunder Valley Raceway, where he won 12 feature events and was named champion.

In 2011, he did the same, racing at tracks in both Wisconsin and Illinois, again winning 12 features at Thunder Valley, again winning the championship. He also won the Bulldog Sprints at Durand, IL.

In 2012, he raced in the Kid Karts once again, finishing second in points at Thunder Valley with 7 feature wins, and also won the Bulldog Sprints once again.

In 2013, he moved on to the super cup cars, winning Rookie-Of-The-Year, finishing 9th in points in the Central States Region points

He again raced with the super cups in 2014, finishing in the top five n every race he entered, winning two features and two heat races. He won the 2014 Driver Development award at the Rockford

Speedway, a track he says that he has enjoyed and had much success at. He also became the youngest driver to ever win a feature at that track, at the age of 9.

In 2015, he raced the super cup cars once again, winning one feature and two heat races in an abbreviated year where he broke his arm and could not compete part of the season.

Back in the Super Cups in 2016, he raced at five different tracks, winning two features and two heat races. He finished third in points and won the Hard Charger award.

In 2017, it was time to move on, and he started racing with the Wisconsin Fastrac Legends cars, racing on a limited schedule in order to keep his rookie status for the following year. He still garnered four top five feature finishes in limited racing.

In 2018, his first full year in the Legends cars, he grabbed 6 wins, getting the Rookie-Of-The-Year award at the Dells Raceway Park, finishing second in points. He was also named the 2018 Illinois State Champion in the Legends Young Lions division.

In 2019, Noah grabbed four wins in Legends racing, finishing 11th in national points in the INEX Young Lions division, and 25th in the nation in the Inex Young Lions asphalt division.

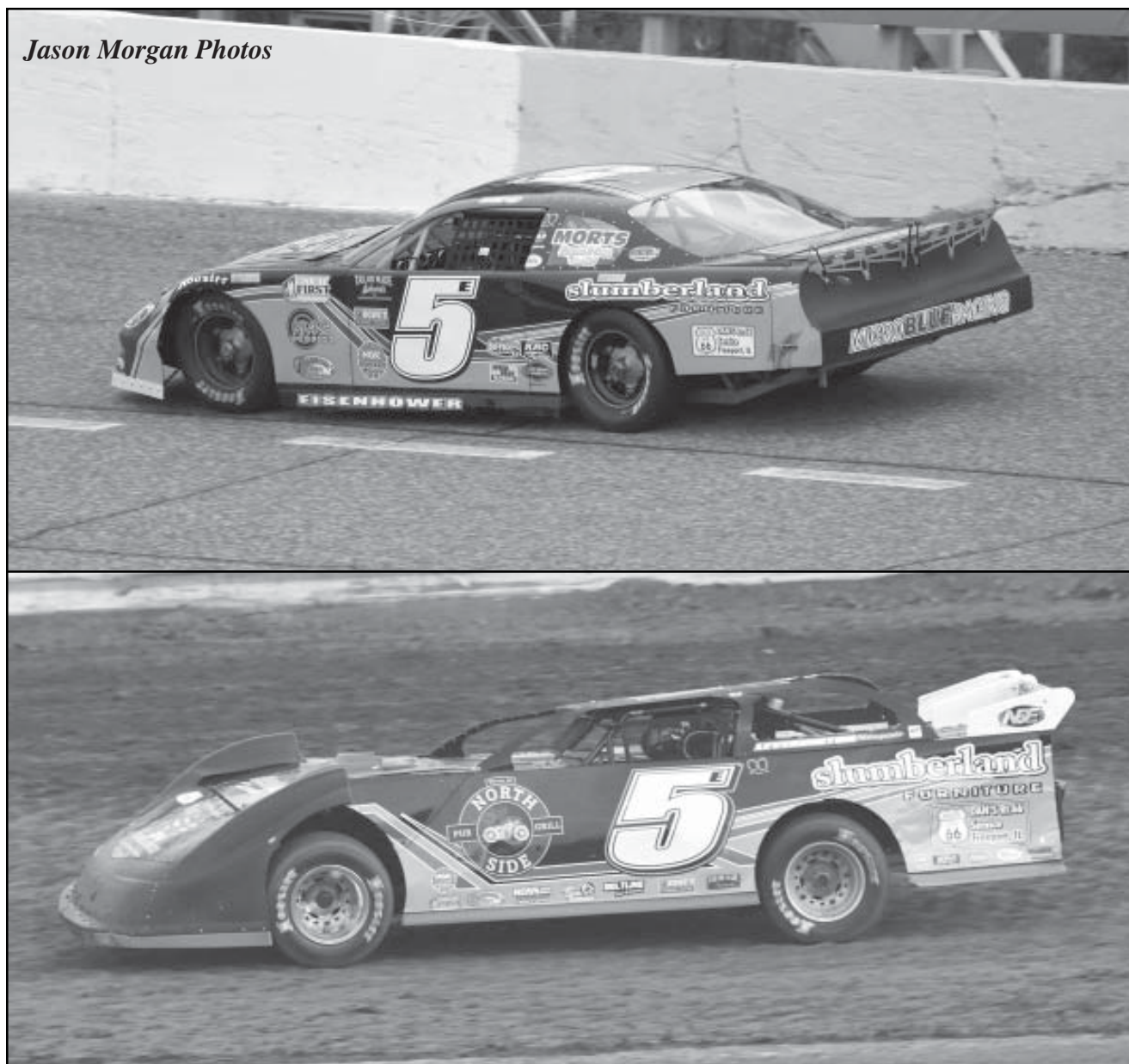
In 2020, he again made a big jump, racing an IMCA limited late model at Darlington on the dirt, and the UMA limited late model on the pavement at the Dells. In his first year in these cars he finished out the season finishing 10th in Darlington on the dirt, and 27th out of 62 cars racing at the Dells.

How did this all come about, you ask? Well, a little bit of history here, as Noah's Dad, Gary Jr., raced in the truck division at Madison International Speedway in the early 2000's, then became an official with the Re/Max touring series. "Dad had quit racing two years before I was born, so I never saw him race," Said Noah, "But, he still is the one who got me into it, and has helped me so much."

He has had other help along the way, as Leverington Motorsports offered him the current dirt late model to race last year, and lots of advice. "We did a lot of work on the car all year, so at the end of the year they just gave us the car," Said Noah. The Leverington family has been involved in dirt racing in the Freeport area for decades, and they still are there when Noah needs some advice. Good people to know when going dirt racing. The car is a Mastersbilt with a Brinn transmission, a former Jimmy Mars car.

On the asphalt side of things, Noah explained,

*Jason Morgan Photos*



*Double Duty continued on page 21*



Double Duty continued from page 20

“We bought that car. It is a pathfinder chassis car with a 604 crate engine, with Kreyer Racing technology.” Again, Noah has aligned himself with good people who help with plenty of advice, as the Kreyer family has been involved with asphalt racing for decades. He also said that a big help has been Brady Bill Racing, who offers up plenty of useful advice and other help. “Brady followed me in hot laps and told me that I was making the wrong line, and driving the pavement more like dirt, and gave me some great advice, had me follow him, and my lap times improved by two seconds,” Said Noah.

Driving two radically different tracks and surfaces, requires two different styles of driving, so I asked Noah if he had trouble going from one to the other on consecutive nights, as Darlington runs on Friday nights, and Dells runs on Saturday nights. Noah replied, saying, “It is easy to momentarily forget where you are, you have to really focus. I have had to remember not to let off in turns 1-2 at Darlington when I think I should, and also to be smoother on the pavement. One thing that helps is that I am not the least bit afraid of a loose race car on the pavement, and in fact, I prefer it a little that way.” So, it is safe to say, that Noah feels that one type of racing can actually help him become better at the other type.

What does the future hold for this young driver, Noah hopes to graduate high school, then attend Purdue university in the field of motorsports engineer-

ing. He would like to get into the field of CNC welding or CAD drawing and see where this takes him. He would ultimately like to advance to the upper levels of NASCAR as a driver, or as a team member. Clearly, this young guy has a good head on his shoulders, and I was very impressed with him. He is very articulate, knows how to talk to people, a very bright young guy who is also talented behind the wheel of a race car. He currently works at Out-Pace racing products, which he says has also helped his racing Knowledge

Quite a few businesses have jumped on board with NDR racing, including Slumberland Furniture, MAS Roofing, Bocker Auto Group, Hooker Harness, Dan’s Route 66 Service, Northside Pub & Grill, and

interview. This is a fun place to watch some dirt racing, it is kind of a throwback, as here open trailers still outnumber the enclosed ones. It is a laid-back, fun atmosphere that I really enjoy. I had been coming here for years a few times per year, just sitting in the stands and enjoying, and even can claim my only dirt racing experience to be here a few times in a four cylinder several years ago, which was an absolute blast! Admission prices are low, concession prices are low, the shows have been getting finished well before 10:00, and they are doing lots of things right!

I have really enjoyed the hobby stock division here since its inception last year. This year there are four drivers/cars who are really fighting it out for feature wins, two of them from neighboring Iowa.

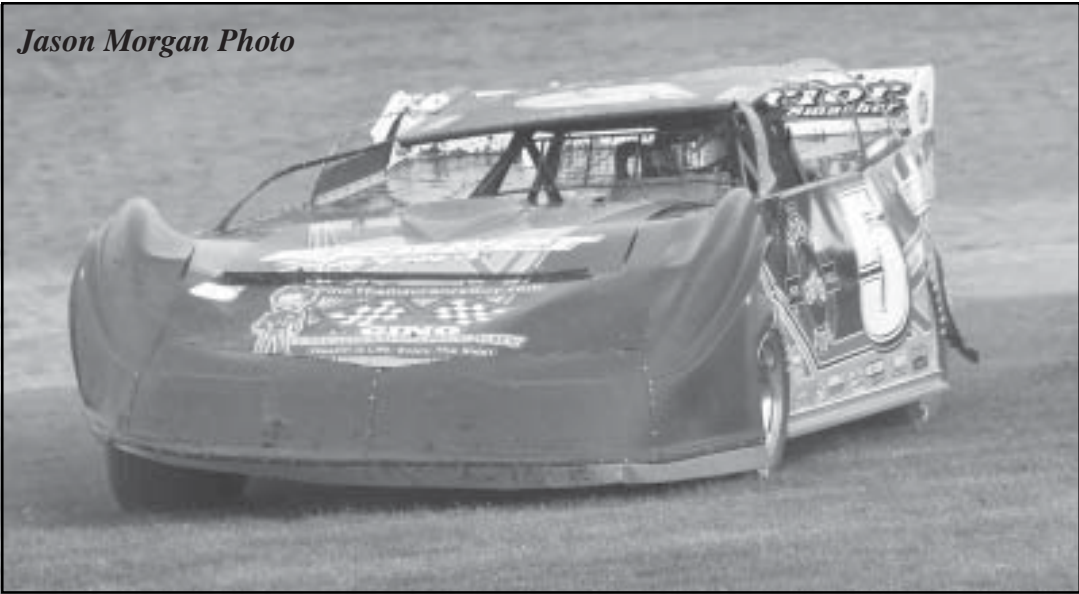
Dakota Simonsen comes over from Fairfax and has done very well. David Crimmins hails from just across the river in Dubuque, while Wisconsin drivers Jimmy Doescher and Don Wilson are right there as well. There are also others who are on the cusp of joining these drivers at the top, and really, from top to bottom, this division is an absolute treat to watch.

Tim Seichter is racing a hobby stock this year here. He was racing with the truck division which was dropped after low counts, and decided to go racing once again in the hobby stocks. He had been helping his two sons with the truck, then one night neither one of them could make it to the track, so he gave it a try at

Lancaster, and the rest is history! A very habit-forming sport. He says that he still has the truck.

Lafayette County Speedway is a great place to watch some good dirt racing, it is a gem of a track nestled in the southwest corner of Wisconsin!

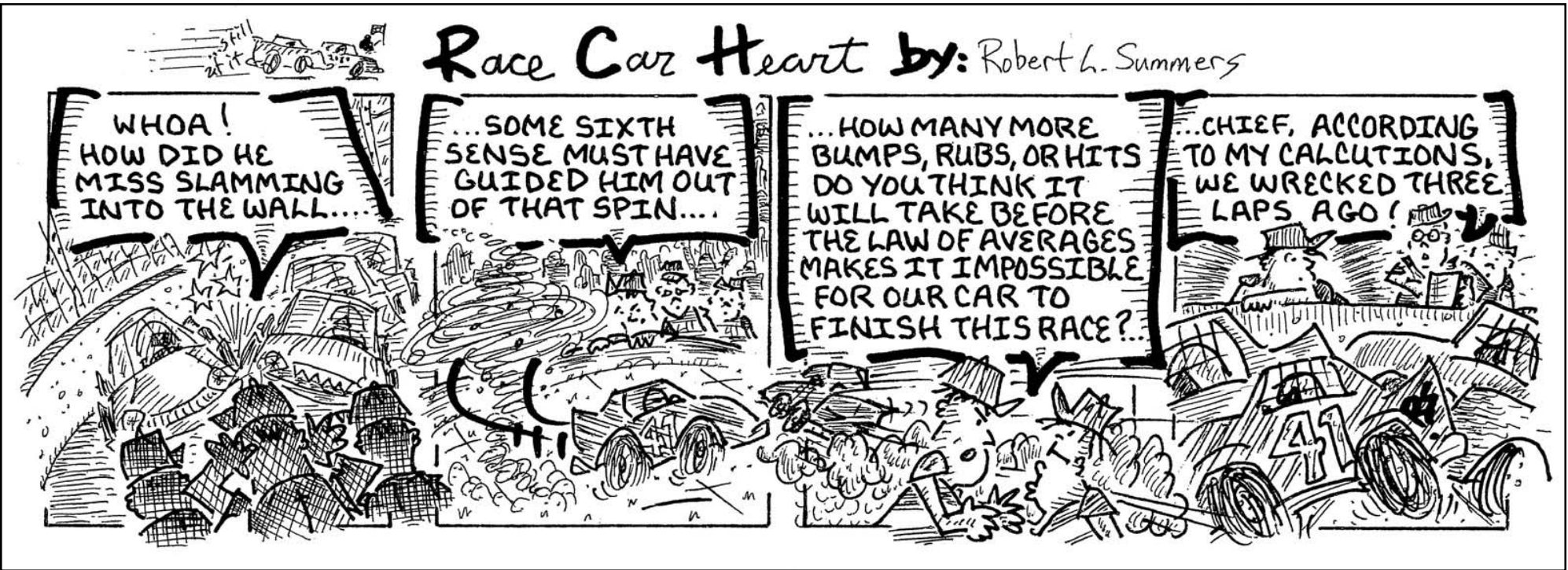
Jason Morgan Photo



Gino The Insurance Guy.

It will be interesting to see what the future brings for this team!

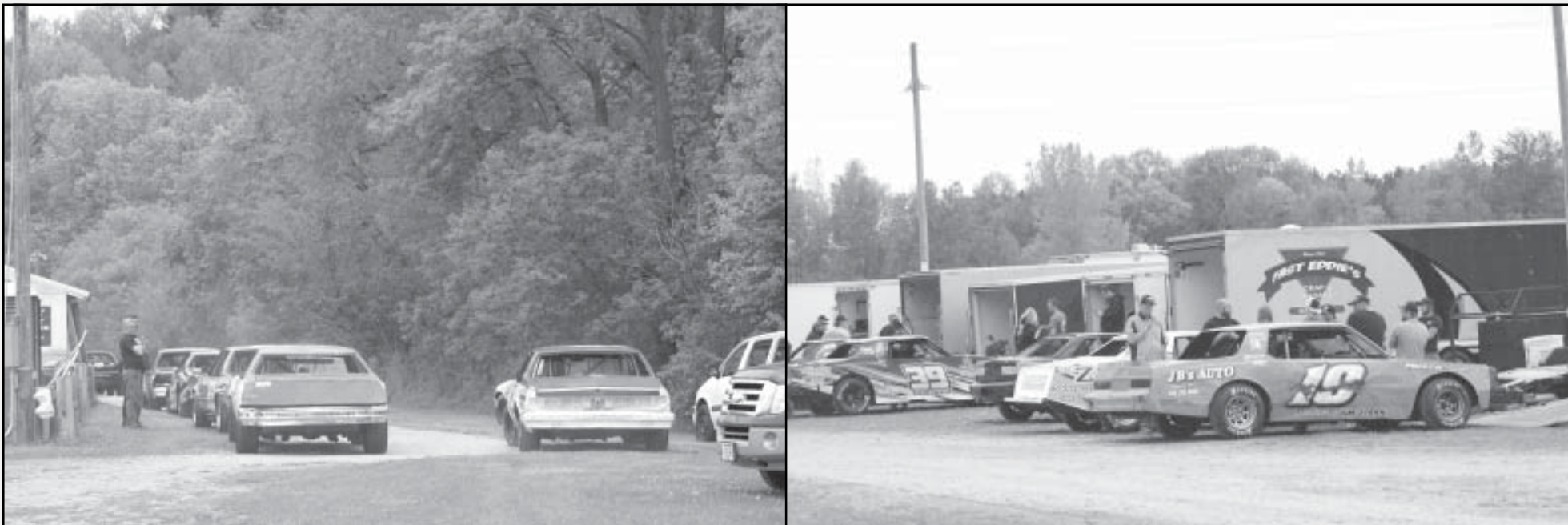
I would like to thank the Lafayette County Speedway for press credentials to the track to do this





# Daytomah

*Nestled on a hillside just West of Tomah, WI sits Tomah Sparta Speedway. The track was brought back to life a few years ago by Greg Oliver and runs weekly on Friday nights. One of the nicknames for the facility is Daytomah. While Daytomah may not have the modern amenities of the track in Daytona Beach, there is nothing wrong with that. The track provides grassroots racing at its best.*



## Bus Race Bonanza!

*The annual Bus Race at Cedar Lake Speedway once again brought several local communities together to cheer on “their” bus. With great weather and being located in the great state of Wisconsin, this year’s event broke the crowd attendance record for the facility. Not just the attendance record for the Bus Race, but the all-time attendance record in the 60+ year history of Cedar Lake Speedway.*



### Auto Racing Facts, Observances and Opinions



**Dale P. Danielski**

*Dale P. Danielski has retired from the Midwest Racing Connection. The retirement is only temporary and he will not be leaving the 6 current readers of his column.*



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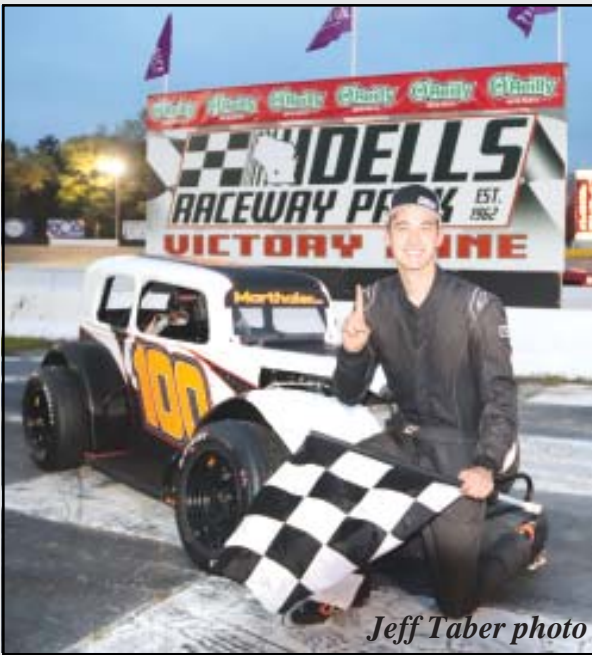
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# Short Track Trifecta



Jeff Taber photo



Jeff Taber photo



Bruce Nuttleman photo

*In his first season in full-sized cars and in the span of just three weeks, Tristan Swanson picked up wins in three distinctly different vehicles. Starting with the Midwest Truck Series win at Madison, Swans went on to win the Modified main event at the Dells the next weekend. The 3-week stretch was capped off with another win at the Dells in a Legend.*

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