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## *IRA Sprint Preview*



## *The Journey of Gratitude*



February 2022

# Inside...



Speedtalk Driver of the Year



Mission Possible



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## Publisher's Note

### *Racing According to Plan*



**Dan Plan**

Over our little winter break, I had the opportunity to read another phenomenal book by Dave Argabright. The book isn't new by any means (it was published over 15 years ago) but the book is very interesting to say the least. Nate Kane gave me his copy of the book, and I wish I would have gotten around to reading it much sooner. The book is titled "Let 'Em All Go!" which is an autobiography of the late Chris Economaki.

At first, I thought the title was regarding firing people from their jobs, but it is much different than that. You'll have to read the book yourself to find the meaning of the title.

Chris was one of the guys I always enjoyed watching on TV broadcasts growing up. You could tell he had a genuine interest in the sport and a sense of humor as well. I learned from this book that he was a "nuts and bolts" guy and worked on cars early in his motorsport's involvement, and he maintained his mechanical interest throughout his media career.

The book covers the entire motorsports career of Economaki. He even references working on the public

## Another great book

address system at the Minnesota State Fair many years ago.

One of the first things to catch my attention at the beginning of the book was how dangerous the sport used to be. It is simply amazing the amount of danger that was involved in racing in the early days of racing. I've often wondered how anybody lived when seeing some these old cars in person. Chris has many personal accounts of people that didn't survive. Most of us these days are lucky enough to have experienced the sport after numerous safety improvements have been implemented. I couldn't imagine dealing with the number of people that were lost in the sport of the course of his career. The way death was handled in motorsports back (or death in general) is vastly different than modern day. I'm not saying it was heartless or wrong in those days, it's just the way it was back then. You felt sad for a short period of time, and everybody moved on.

As Chris progressed in his career, he had first-hand experience watching racing at the larger scale go from guys from the school of hard knocks to the guys with money backing them take over the sport. Economaki rubbed elbows with everyone in the sport from short track racers to F1, Indy and NASCAR. As I neared the completion of the book, it made me appreciate short track racing that much more. Chris explains accounts on numerous occasions of late-night exploits with drivers from days gone by. Due to the public eye on the upper levers of the sport in this day and age, the average person will never see or have the opportunity to experience these things. That is unfortunate.

On the other hand, these types of activities are still known to take place at the short track level. I've been lucky enough to have had plenty experience with late night shenanigans with several different people in the short track world. I'm old enough to know better these days, but it hasn't stopped me yet.

*Publisher's Note continued on page 4*

*The Midwest*

**RACING**

*Connection*

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**THE MIDWEST  
RACING CONNECTION**



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*Publishers note from page 3*

I never had any aspirations of being the next Chris Economaki. Mainly because I do not possess the skills he had. I'm not quick enough with my words to work the PA at an event, and definitely not comfortable working on TV. I never even had any aspirations of having a racing paper. It just kind of happened and here we are 20+ years later.

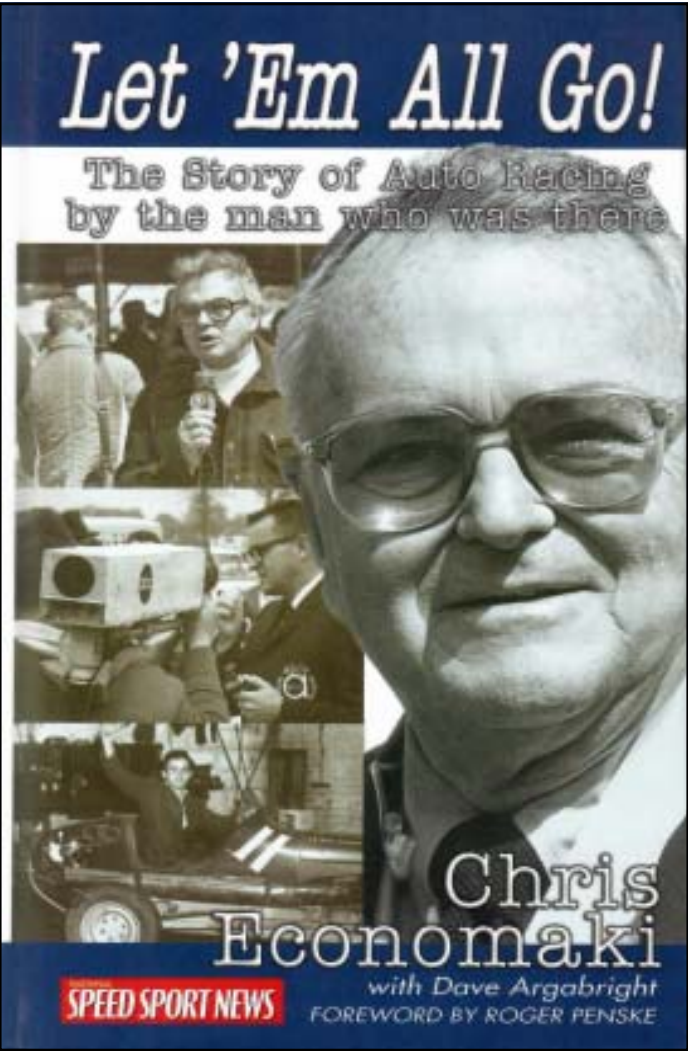
This little paper affords me opportunities similar to the ones Chris experienced. I get to meet a wide variety of people from the open wheel and stock car world of the short tracks. If you're "working the beat" in F1, Indy or NASCAR these days, you're probably never going to hang out with anybody in the race (last place or first place) and have a beer at their trailer. I'm lucky enough to have the opportunity to do that just about every weekend from April through October.

The involvement Chris had in the sport allowed him to get invited to take trips to races on private jets from car owners. I've never experienced anything like that, but I have been invited bus trips and in on an RV trip. That suits me just fine. Having opportunity to hang out with short track racers every weekend is all I could really ask for.

Near the end of the book, Chris describes where things went wrong with Indy/Champ car racing. The biggest thing was moving towards the European model of drivers buying rides, rather than earning them based on talent. Keep in mind, he was making these statements 15 years ago. Unfortunately, since that time, this business model has taken over in NASCAR and is making its way into the short tracks.

It is a fantastic book and Chris was one of those people many (including myself) looked up to. He had a sense of humor and went to a lot of races. That's a pretty cool guy in my book. I'm probably never going to travel to exotic locations for F1 races or rub elbows with people in the upper levels of the sport. I'm OK with that. I make my way to some pretty cool places and rub elbows with people on my level. I can guarantee you this, I could give Chris a run for the money in the fun category with the things I can experience at short tracks these days.

Copies of this gem of a book are available to this day at Dave Argabright's website (<https://daveargabright.com/>) or from Coastal 181 publishing at [www.coastal181.com](http://www.coastal181.com).





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**Talkin' Racin'  
with Jason**



**Jason D. Searcy**

Jacob Goede from Carver (MN) has been named the 2021 Minnesota asphalt driver of the year by Speed Talk on 1360 radio, this is the fourth time Goede has won this award.

Jacob Goede #72 is a Late Model and Super Late Model driver who added to his long list of racing accomplishments in 2021. Most notably he won his 8th consecutive premier division Championship at Elko (MN) Speedway in the Late Model division. He scored four wins, seventeen Top 5 finishes and showed amazing consistency by never finishing out of the Top 10 in any of the 24 feature events at ELKO. He also had success traveling to Wisconsin where he raced at Madison International Speedway and LaCrosse (WI) Fairgrounds Speedway where he won four features including the Big 8 series win during Oktoberfest. Goede also had a nice showing at New Smyrna (FL) Speedway during the World Series of



Asphalt, scoring four Top 5 finishes. Goede was the 2021 NASCAR Advance Auto weekly series Midwest division Champion and finished second in National points, a series in which he was the National Champion in 2019.

Thanks Speed Talk on 1360 radio and MRC for the recognition and the 2021 MN asphalt driver of the year. MN does have a lot of talent on asphalt, even though we are a small crowd compared to other parts of the country, so I appreciate the award. We had a great season overall, consistency was definitely our strong suit, but couldn't do it without a fast car, hard work, some luck and of course our sponsors and crew.




-Jacob Goede

**Previous winners:**

- 2020- Tim Brockhouse
- 2019- Jacob Goede
- 2018- Baiden Heskett
- 2017- Conrad Jorgenson
- 2016- Tim Brockhouse
- 2015- Jacob Goede
- 2014- Jacob Goede
- 2013- Ricky Martin
- 2012- Jonathan Eilen
- 2011- Chad Walen
- 2010- Brent Kane
- 2009- Adam Royle
- 2004- Dan Fredrickson



*The 2021 Elko champion at LaCrosse Fairgrounds Speedway (top photo) and preparing to qualify at New Smyrna in February of 2021 (bottom photo)*



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New Dirt



Jacy Norgaard

For the second year in a row my racing season kicked off in January. I had originally hoped for it to be at the Chili Bowl but was unable to make this year’s race. Someday I will make it there and I am greatly looking forward to that day. I was then slated to kick the season off with a couple of races in South Carolina. Snow and cold weather had other ideas and forced a cancellation. When I moved to North Carolina from Minnesota, I never envisioned seeing snow all that often, let alone having racing cancelled because of it. With those races postponed my focus shifted to the start of the World of Outlaws Late Model Series season in Florida at Volusia Speedway Park. 46 days after my 2021 season concluded, I left for Daytona Beach and the start of the 2022 campaign.



Jacy Norgaard photo



Jacy Norgaard photo

I had high hopes for the start of the season and three straight nights of racing action to get things started. A new track surface, time constraints, and mother nature had an entirely different vision in mind. Volusia Speedway Park resurfaced their entire track in between their last event in November and their first event of the new year. With a new surface comes growing pains. This is generally true for any dirt track that lays down new clay. The unfortunate part of those growing pains is the sheer brutality in which

people poke fun at the tracks. They ridicule their track preparation, they call them obscene names, and they tell them what they should have done. Insidious remarks fueled by the lack of understanding of just what it takes to prepare a racetrack and to run a show. The logistics of placing new clay on a racetrack are a nightmare. You must source the dirt, hire the crew, find the ideal weather, and then run on the surface. The first couple nights of the new surface probably lead one to question whether the new dirt was a good idea in the first place. Sometimes you take 2 steps back before you can take 1 large one forward. The track conditions and the sheer volume of race cars on the opening night of the season across three divisions made for a long show. In the end the races were postponed due to time constraints and track conditions. Not the ideal starting point for a season and a sure-fire way to bring out the critics in droves. I was disappointed with the postponement and just as frustrated as others. I can imagine several drivers weren’t happy with torn up equipment or adverse track conditions. Those of us who have been around the sport know that it goes with the territory. No racetrack or series wants to race on a less than desirable surface, nor do they set out to have competitors damage or ruin their equipment. The staff at Volusia Speedway Park did everything they could to try and right the ship. The cards just didn’t fall their way.

I left the track around 1:30 AM on Friday morning and stopped at Wawa to get some food and coffee grounds for my AirBNB. The great thing about

New Dirt continued on page 9

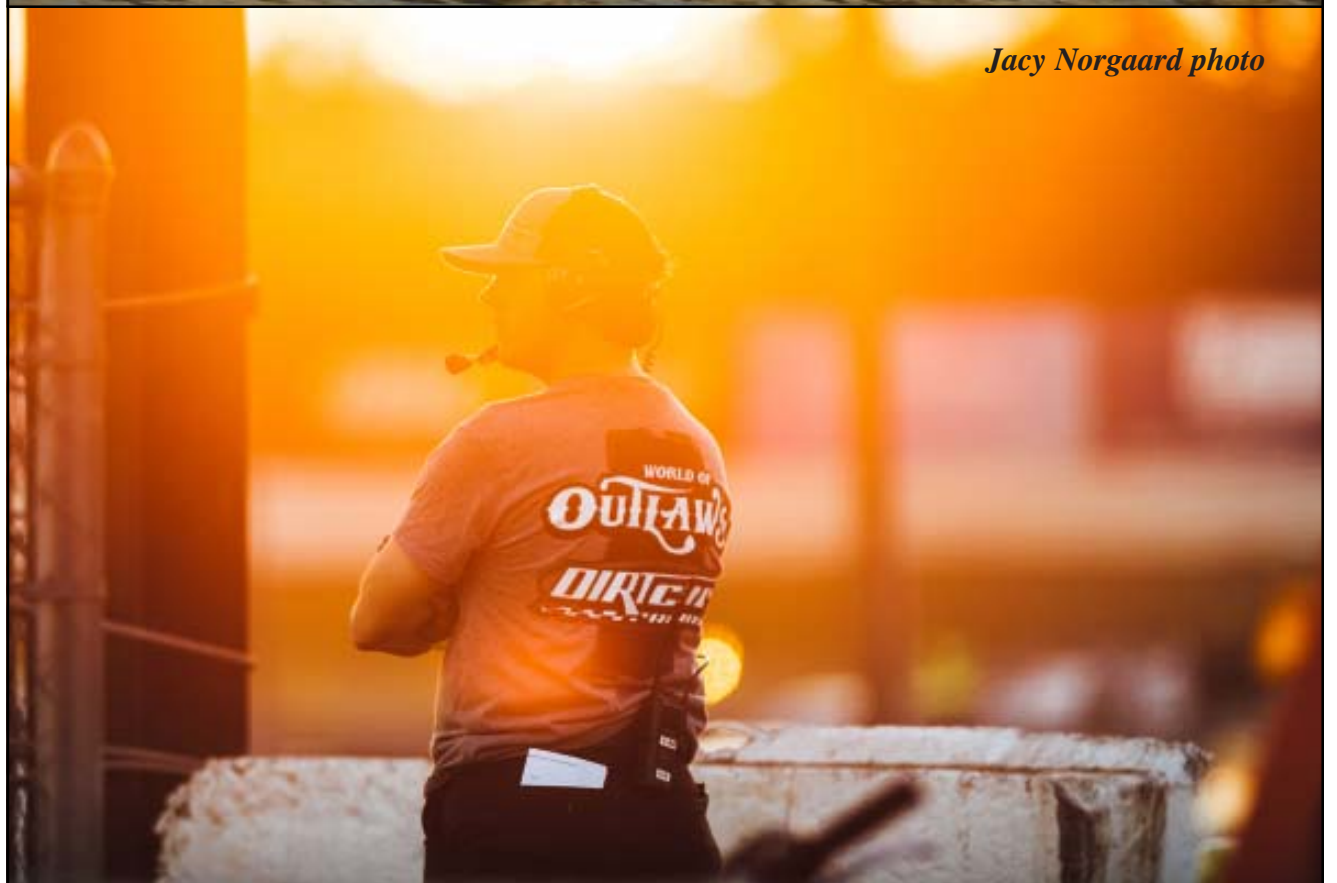


*New Dirt continued from page 8*

racing at Volusia Speedway Park is the ability to rent a condo on the beach. I'm a big believer in taking advantage of my surroundings and enjoying the location as much as I can. I edited some photos and went to bed late, knowing that tomorrow would be a new day and another chance to see some racing. Friday's program started off with the conclusion of Thursday's postponed features. The World of Outlaws Late Model feature ended with a remarkable and heartwarming story. Dale McDowell, 4 months removed from cancer surgery emerged from his car victorious. His first race back and he wins on the national stage. 4 months earlier, he questioned whether he would ever race again. The joy in his face in victory lane drowned out any memories of the night before.

The show progressed on, and a light mist began. The mist continued for quite a while, but we kept on racing. With a couple of consolation races and the features remaining, the skies opened and the rain became heavier. I waited in the tech shed for the announcement and then it came. For a second night in a row the races were postponed. We would be starting early on Saturday and once again make up the features. Groundhogs' day again I thought. I chatted with a few people and left the track. I woke up on Saturday and prepared my camera gear for the day. I then got the notification that the races for that day were cancelled due to overnight rain and the progressively worse forecast for the day. What a way to start the season. Not a single night of racing completed as scheduled. I was disappointed and I was frustrated. None of these things were within anyone's control, yet I found myself disillusioned.

Whenever things don't go the way I envisioned or I have a disappointing night of shooting, I try and remember how lucky I am. How lucky I am to get paid to shoot photographs of the sport I love. But sometimes the veil that thought creates fades away. When it faded away on that cold Saturday morning beachside, I had a different thought in mind. I thought about Dale McDowell. I thought about how 4 months ago he received a dreadful diagnosis. I thought about what that must be like to question everything and to wonder if you will ever practice your passion again. Dale sure did. He never thought he would race again. But he did. He made it back to where he belongs. He defeated cancer and came back to show that he still has it. That cancer had not defeated his soul and that you can always come back from adversity. I recognize our situations are entirely different. He had to deal with a life-threatening disease, I had to deal with some cancelled races. But the message in his story is one that transcends any situation. No matter how bad things get or how dim the outlook, there is always a brighter day ahead. But the only way you can see that is to be thankful. Thankful that there is another day, thankful there is another race, thankful you get to keep doing the thing that makes you happy. Dale's smile in victory lane reminded me that there will be more race days.


*Jacy Norgaard photo*

*Jacy Norgaard photo*
**JNP mages from the  
2022 Sunshine Nationals**

This season hasn't started anywhere close to how I imagined. But I have gratitude for being able to shoot another race. Gratitude towards everyone that trusts me to produce images, gratitude to those that support me, gratitude that dirt track racing exists. The journey will not always be filled with joy. There will be moments that feel defeating. But in the end the storms will clear, and the green flag will fly again.


*Jacy Norgaard photo*



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## Chatty Madi



**Madeline Schultz**

The Bumper To Bumper IRA Outlaw Sprint Series is proud to announce their “tentative” 2022 schedule. The series is a huge hit at numerous fairs throughout the season. Some in the upcoming 2022 schedule are the Outagamie County Fair (Seymour) on July 22, the Langlade County Fair (Antigo) on July 29,

*Dave Olson photo*



*The IRA Sprints perform their traditional 4-wide salute to the fans prior to feature race action at each event*

the Kenosha County Fair / Roger Iles Tribute (Wilmot) on Aug 20, Angell Park's Corn Fest (Sun Prairie) on Aug 21, and the Sheboygan County Fair (Plymouth) on Sept 3. My favorite thing at those fairs is the new people that are there because of the fair and how they've never been to a Sprint Car show before. I love the crowd cheering for the slide-jobs and seeing how much they get into it, regardless of if they know the drivers or not.

Speaking of a rowdy crowd, Wisconsin always does the best of having that when the FloRacing All Star Circuit of Champions make their weekend trip on

May 20-22 with a trio of Wisconsin events at Wilmot, Plymouth, and Angell Park. Last year, we saw the 10-time IRA Champion Bill Balog take his first All Star checkered at Plymouth, and then for him to defend his Wisconsin winning streak to win it the following night at Angell Park.

The Hopf Farms Bullring Showdown, also known as ‘the series within a series’, is on the schedule for 141 Speedway and Plymouth Dirt Track beginning May 29 at 141 Speedway, prior to three Plymouth dates beginning with the June 30 Road America “June Sprints on Dirt” kickoff June 30, the Frank Filskov Memorial July 30, the Sheboygan County Fair Sept 3, and concludes Sept 4 back at 141 Labor Day weekend. I personally

enjoy this ‘series within a series’ because it gives people who don’t have the opportunity or budget to run full-time to be able to run for this title. The Hopfs are huge supporters of racing in Wisconsin and I am excited to see this on the schedule again in 2022.

The IRA will return to the exciting Rice Lake Speedway for the first time in several years on Memorial weekend Saturday May 28. Rice Lake Speedway is a 1/3 Mile, Semi-Banked Oval that was first opened 1951, making it the longest running track in Northern Wisconsin. Another star on the 2022 schedule is Sycamore Speedway on May 7th. It has been over 30 years since the IRA 410's have laid their Hoosier Tires on the popular northern Illinois bullring. These dates are the ones I'm most looking forward to!

If you can't be there at these action-packed events, the events will be covered on FloRacing. The Bumper To Bumper IRA Outlaw Sprint Series can be found on FLOSportsTV. IRA would like to thank series sponsors Bumper To Bumper Auto Parts & Service Centers, Hoosier Tire, Osborn & Son Trucking, TW Metals, Cummins Onan, and Sage Fruit. You can find more information about the series at [www.irasprints.com](http://www.irasprints.com) or on social media!

April  
1-2 34 Raceway (IA) w/MOWA  
23 Beaver Dam Raceway (WI)  
30 TBA

May  
7 Sycamore Speedway (IL)  
14 Dirt Oval @ Route 66 (IL) w/All Stars  
20 Wilmot Raceway (WI) w/All Stars  
21 Plymouth Dirt Track (WI) w/All Stars  
22 Angell Park Speedway (WI) w/All Stars

*Chatty Madi continued on page 12*





*Chatty Madi continued from page 11*

28 Rice Lake Speedway (WI)  
29 141 Speedway (WI)

June  
4 TBA  
11 Fairbury FALS (IL) w/MOWA  
12 Angell Park Speedway (WI)  
30 Plymouth Dirt Track (WI)

July  
TBD Dodge Co Fairgrounds ( WI)  
15-16 River Cities Speedway (ND) w/NOSA

22 Outagamie Speedway (WI) Fair  
23 Wilmot Raceway (WI)  
29 Langlade Co Fairgrounds (WI) Fair  
30 Plymouth Dirt Track (WI)



Aug.  
TBD (Wilmot)  
20 Wilmot Raceway (WI) Fair /  
21 Angell Park Speedway (WI) CornFest

Sept  
2 Dodge County Fairgrounds (WI)  
3 Plymouth Dirt Track (WI) Fair  
4 141 Speedway (WI)  
10 Cedar Lake Speedway (WI)  
17 Beaver Dam Raceway (WI)  
23 Dodge Co Fairgrounds (WI)  
24 Plymouth Dirt Track (WI)



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## Racing Nuggets



### PJ "Jacklyn" Nuttleman

The 2022 race season is starting to crackle to life and I thought it would be appropriate to begin it in a way that helps keep our hearts and minds in the right space. I wanted to echo the ritual of starting a race with a little nod to God by doing the same in this first issue of the year in The Midwest Racing Connection. I'm not going to perform an invocation, but I'd like to highlight a man who does that and more at several race tracks across the Midwest.

Many of you may be familiar with Pastor Todd Christopherson and his Team Jesus Racing Ministry around some of the tracks in the area. He is frequently at Madison International Speedway, Jefferson Speed-

way, Rockford Speedway, as well as Oktoberfest Race Weekend at La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway.

Pastor Christopherson's journey from a youngster to where he is now was anything but a straight line. And he is living proof that God uses our weaknesses to achieve greater things.

By his own admission, Christopherson was a pretty rebellious youth. He says he struggled with drugs and alcohol, as well as some gambling issues. It was his sister, Donna and her husband, Pat who played integral roles in his start onto a different path. And that key turning point occurred at their grandmother's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration in Reedsburg.

Donna didn't get back stateside much, due to her husband being stationed in England with the Air Force. Todd didn't think too much of her return, until he was alone with her and saw her crying. She said the only reason she was there was because she wanted to tell him that God loves him and wants him to be safe.

It was a moment that struck him. As a young man, he hadn't thought too much about the impact of what his life choices were having on his loved ones, or even on his future. Seeing the tears in his sister's eyes moved him. And about a month later, she sent him a bible, which he started reading.

It was when he came across the scripture verses in Matthew 7:7-8 that he knew his life was about to change for the better. "Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened."

And so the door to a new chapter in Todd

## Mission Possible

Christopherson's life opened. One of faith and connection for good with others.

But how did he become involved in racing with his ministry? This is probably one of the most delightful twists in Pastor Todd's story. It was his wife that introduced him to the racing community. Cindy Christopherson came from a racing family. Her father, Bill Geohing was a mechanic and crossed paths with Dick Trickle often. Her cousin and their family (The Hayes' from Rockford) also raced.

The couple attended a race at Madison early on in their life together. Pastor Todd noticed that there was no invocation done prior to the start of the races that night. He made a note and called the next week to see about providing that service for them. He was firmly declined.

But part of faith is never giving up. Pastor Todd inquired again after some time, and he was granted 15 seconds—no more—to provide an invocation from the announcing tower at Madison.

Shortly after that, Terry Kunes purchased Madison International Speedway. Pastor Todd reached out in hopes of being able to have better luck with new ownership. Kunes was all about incorporating the ministry services at the track—only he wasn't interested in it for the fans in the stands. He wanted Pastor Todd in the pits with the drivers.

It was an interesting proposition and one that actually provided more fulfillment than he could have ever anticipated. Being able to connect with those highly competitive and proud personalities in the pits was incredibly challenging and rewarding. It required learning when to approach and speak and when to observe and listen. And above all, knowing how to stay out of the way as there are a lot of moving vehicles in the pits!

Pastor Todd and his racing ministry was obviously making a favorable impression and before long, Doug Strasburg with the Mid-American series reached out to him to become a part of their program. The ASA North series did the same. Doors were opening and the ministry was growing.

"This kind of ministry really takes a lot of patience. I'm not just there to preach at them. I'm there to let them know they are loved and I want them to know that God has great plans for them all. It's a dangerous sport and they've been blessed with incredible talent from God," Pastor Todd said.

For me, I will always have the vision of Pastor Todd going car to car, briefly praying with each driver after they have strapped in during driver introductions. That has always given me a sense of peace, and it

*PJ Nuttleman photo*



*Racing Nuggets continued on page 16*



### *Racing Nuggets from page 15*

certainly has for many drivers over the years as well.

“I enjoy starting from back to front to pray with every driver for a safe race, that they stay focused and alert—and be thankful for the opportunity to enjoy this sport that we all love,” he said.

Most of us have experienced that gut-wrenching feeling when someone has had a horrible accident. It is in those moments when Pastor Todd springs into action to help provide a calming force for all. He recalled the horrific accident years ago during an ASA North race at Rockford Speedway when Ryan Carlson was launched up into billboards between turns three and four.

Pastor Todd says his work with family, friends, and crew after that incident really provided the affirmation he needed to know this ministry was definitely on the right path. He said he received much appreciation for his calming presence and felt very useful in his faith and ministry.

By far, the biggest support (other than the man “upstairs”) that Pastor Todd has on a daily basis is his wife, Cindy.

“She is so supportive of this and she understands the racer mentality with her family being involved in racing,” he said. “She is the one to give me a nudge from time to time to keep up with it all.”

“And of course the track staff, drivers, and crews; they are very supportive too. It is truly an honor and a privilege to be able to work with them in this ministry,” he added.

The ministry continues to grow and find welcoming space at tracks across the Midwest with more and more pastors becoming involved. Pastor Todd says that they could use a little more help with the dirt track coverage, but they continue to work on it.

There is definitely something very comforting about having the ability to tap into the power of prayer at the race track. I’m grateful for Pastor Todd and all of the others who perform this ministry for our big race family at tracks across the country. It’s an important part of the sport and can be a great bridge to connect us all.

I’m praying for a safe and successful season for all racers and their teams in 2022. And on that note: Drivers, start your engines!

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## SAWALICH IN THE SOUTH



William Swalich Racing Photo



Wilson Motorsports Photo

*Eden Prairie, Minnesota's William Sawalich started off his season at Crisp Motorsports Park in Cordele, Georgia during the running of the annual Speedfest. Sawalich returns to Donnie Wilson Motorsports for the 2022 season with plans to compete in 17 events in 2022.*

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