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Speedweeks 2022

March 2022

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Publisher's Note Racing According to Plan



Dan Plan

This year was my 9th year in a row to visit Speedweeks. The great thing about Speedweeks, is not a single one of them has been the same. While

Random thoughts from Speedweeks 2022

there is typically a rainout at some point, during my visit, this did not. Even without a rainout, I did something different and opted to skip one night at the track, but still had an entertaining evening. This column will include random thoughts from Speedweeks 2022.

I much prefer the action at New Smyrna and Volusia over the big track. The short tracks have what I consider to be real racing.

The drivers running up front in Late Models at Volusia were not the normal fixtures. There are a lot of top teams these days on dirt, and many different drivers were able to pick up Gator trophies. Dennis Erb Jr. had phenomenal start to his season. with wins at East Bay and Volusia.

Early in the week, I was talking with Bond Suss and mentioned I was glad Sammy Smith hasn't been

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The Midwest

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moved up the ladder and will still be running short track Super Late Model races in 2022. It's good for the younger drivers to spend more time for a couple of reasons. They'll continue to learn and they'll continue to build a fan base. Often times, young drivers are moved along too fast. They've got Sammy on a good pace. In my eyes, he accomplished both of these items by winning the World Series Championship at New Smyrna.

The number of current and NASCAR drivers on hand at New Smyrna and Volusia was the largest number I've ever seen. In the past it, it was usually NASCAR drivers on dirt in Modifieds. This year, in addition to the Modifieds, they were in Sprint Cars and Super Late Models at New Smyrna. William Byron,



Stewart Friesen and Ryan Preece ran Super Lates at New Smyrna. Byron won both of the 100-lappers at New Smyrna.

I'll be the first to admit that I wasn't sure of Byron's ability having only seen him in NASCAR competition. Watching him race his way through the field on a short track brought a whole new level of respect.

Donny Schatz still knows how to get up on the wheel. Kyle Larson swept by Schatz on a late race

restart, but Donny dug in and went right back by to take the win.

The night I skipped the races I went to watch Cup practice at the big track in the afternoon and then went to the Midwest is Best party on the beach hosted by Angie and Gregg McKarns. It turned out to be a good decision as both short track events had rain

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Publishers note from page 3




delays on this night. I got to hang out with some cool people, and I was back in my hotel room by 8:30pm. With technology these, I was still able to watch both short track events from my room.

I'm sure the team at Volusia was hoping to have their new surface worked in after the issues at the Sunshine Nationals in January. The surface was better for Speedweeks than it was in January, but it still looks like they have some work to do. To give credit where credit is due, the clay is plenty sticky. A full week after returning from Florida and walking through snow, I still had the Volusia surface stuck on my shoes.

And finally, it's good to know Skip Pollack. Skip takes the time each year to let me know the schedule of events for the vintage and historical events that take place during Speedweeks each year. The annual parade on the beach this year had far more people and cars than I've ever seen. It was truly a great site. The event on Tuesday at the Streamline Hotel is another must see event. Bobby Allison and Red Farmer were in the lobby and a who's who of NASCAR was upstairs on the deck. The stories they tell and the ribbing they give each other is great entertainment. And the best part is, these events are all free to attend.



Ryan Preece ran a Super Late at New Smyrna (top photo), Alex Bowman was one of the NASCAR stars on hand at Volusia and Donny Schatz showed everyone he still knows how to wheel a Sprint Car (right photos)



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Racing Nuggets



PJ "Jacklyn" Nuttleman

He's a racer at heart—but he's making a living for himself being the eye in the sky and a smooth voice in the ears of many racers in the upper divisions of NASCAR. Mike Herman, Jr. was destined to carve out a living through racing.

His father, Mike Sr. started as a Flat Track Motorcycle competitor in Kannapolis, NC and ended up having Ralph Earnhardt help him with his engines. Eventually, the elder Herman started helping Ralph's son, Dale in the 80s, as he was dominating area tracks like Rockingham and Darlington.



Young Mike knew his future in racing was mapped out after looking over at "Superman" with his dad in victory lane after a dominating Dale Earnhardt win.

Mike Jr... or "Herm" as his friends call him, started racing go-karts and eventually moved into NASCAR Late Model Stock Cars, running at Hickory and Concord Speedways. He was quite the versatile shoe, also piloting a NASCAR Modified at Bowman Gray and even running the Hooter's Pro Cup Series.

During that time, Herman would make his professional debut as a spotter for Marc Davis at Joe Gibbs Racing. It was something that he really excelled at with his ability to approach the role with a real racer's perspective.

All was going well until it wasn't. As any racer knows, money—or a lack of it—changes everything. When the real estate bubble burst in 2008 and the economy took a major turn for the worse, sponsorship funding dried up. Even the Herman family paving business took a huge hit when their largest customer ended up having to close their doors due to the financial crisis.

That ended up being the final straw for Herman's full time racing career, but as is often the case—when one door closes, another one opens. His immense talent for spotting started to catch the attention of some key folks in the industry.

He began to spot for Ryan Preece in 2007 in the NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour, as well as Venturini Motorsports in ARCA. He continues to spot for Preece, his longest tenured role, whenever their schedules and availability align.

Herman's schedule is jam packed these days, but very rewarding. He

The Voice of Old School Style



generally spots for about 130 races or more each year. His primary focus is with Roush-Fenway-Keselowski as spotter for Chris Buescher in the #17 NASCAR Cup Series. He also spots for Jeb Burton in the Xfinity Series, Grant Enfinger in the Camping World Truck Series, as well as Gus Dean in ARCA.

He elevates every driver with his ability to deliver more information in mere seconds than an air traffic controller at Chicago's O'Hare Airport. Clear, calm, and concise.

His passion for what he does is unparalleled. Herman spotted 13 races in 11 days this year during Speedweeks. That's actually less than he normally does, due to Preece not running nightly Modified races at New Smyrna this year.

And while his primary role is in the big leagues, his heart is definitely at the short tracks, where his roots are firmly planted. He relishes returning to those

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Racing Nuggets from page 6

events with up-and-coming drivers. Herman has spotted for Ty Majeski over the years at marquee short track races, and even some of his ARCA and Truck ventures.

“It’s been pretty cool to see him grow as a driver,” Herman says of Majeski.

His weak spot was qualifying.”

Admittedly, it was qualifying that put Mondeik in a hole each night, as he couldn’t hit the invert. But as Herman deftly put it, you’ve got to have a love of the hunt for trophies.



“If you don’t enjoy the process of trying to get the win—it’s time to give it up. You gotta enjoy that process,” Herman says.

And he certainly does. He is a real joy to listen to on the radio. I have purchased the NASCAR app strictly to listen to Herman spot. It’s Mike Herman, the driver that gives him the competitive edge in the spotter role.

It can be a stressful job, and one that he openly admits he couldn’t do without the help of a lot of people, like his girlfriend, Kelli who keeps things running like clockwork. She handles a lot of the logistics, getting clothing and other things swapped around in a short time so he can get out the door to head to the next race.

“She’s a hardcore racer and a big part of what I do,” he says. “She was the one who fed me the information so I knew how close it was going to be for me to get from Daytona to the start of Mondeik’s race in New Smyrna.”

Herman works hard and plays hard. And he loves his Old Style beer; something that’s hard to come by in his native North Carolina. Why Old Style? Growing up, he always watched the Cubs on WGN-TV. Wrigley Field and Old Style Beer, two iconic ties to his beloved Chicago Cubs.

Another driver from Wisconsin that Herman has started working with is Justin Mondeik during his runs in the World Series of Asphalt at New Smyrna Speedway.

Just how dedicated is Herman to short trackers? When his driver in Cup—Buescher won his qualifying Duel at Daytona this year, Herman didn’t even go to Victory Lane for the celebration. He had JUST enough time to drive from Daytona to New Smyrna—arriving with one-to-go green for Mondeik’s feature that night.

That’s dedication and a real love of the sport.

Herman brings more than immense talent as a spotter. He’s also a driving coach. He definitely provided a lot of great feedback to Mondeik during the World Series of Asphalt at New Smyrna Speedway.

“Mondeik has potential. He’s like a sponge—asking a lot of questions. He wants a lot of input and was making in-race adjustments to his line at New Smyrna,” Herman said. “He was always passing cars and moving forward.

“I approach it the way I’d want to be spotted,” he says. “It’s almost like an out-of-body experience. I visualize my view from on top of the car, delivering the information they need.”



Herman gets a nice delivery of Old Style every year at the Snowball Derby. As someone in the inner circle of the Majeski team, I can attest that we bring down a lot of Old Style beer for Herman and he puts it to good use.

The beer makes the trek from Wisconsin to Florida—and eventually to North Carolina where it is shared with a fun bunch. Herman has built a remote control race car track between his house and his race shop: “Mill Hill Stadium.” On any given night, you can catch all sorts of NASCAR characters and other race lovers running their RC cars for fun and majestic hand-crafted trophies. The old school racer, sipping on some Old Styles among his racing brotherhood. It’s a perfect picture.

❑ Herman is old school in every way and anyone who has worked with him has become a better driver because of it.



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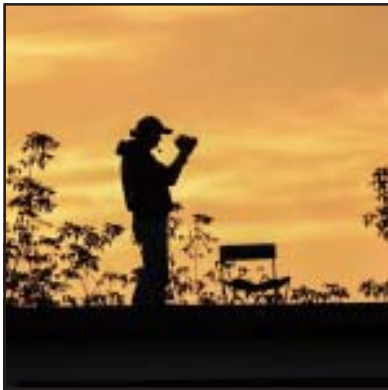
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Dangerous Dan**Dan Margetta**

It's been a few years since I made the trip to Speed Weeks in Daytona, so it felt good to get back this year to kick off my 2022 racing season. Once again, I made the trek with my radio partner and fellow diehard race fan, Brian Schmitt and cheap airfare to Tampa allowed us to hit the ground running as we headed straight from the airport to East Bay Raceway Park for the All-Star Circuit of Champions 410 Sprint Cars. We made good time and only missed the first sprint car heat and I finally got to experience East Bay firsthand before the track supposedly closes in two years. Corey Eliason had the field covered during the A-Main and cruised to the win and after a quick stop for a late dinner at the closest WaWa (another first for me and after hearing the Dirt-on-Dirt guys praise it all the time on their ride home, I'll vouch for them as the food wasn't your typical gas station selection), we headed toward Orlando to find a place to crash for the night before heading to Daytona.

I cashed in Holiday Inn points to get a free room for the night and in the morning we were off to the World's Most Famous Beach. We rolled into town around noon and after signing in at the big track, met

Vado Speedway Park and WatchFYE.tv's Chris Stepan for lunch at The North Turn. The North Turn is a racing themed beach restaurant located at the North Turn of the old Beach course and it's a must stop for every Daytona trip. After lunch and a quick check-in to our rented beachfront condo, it was off to New Smyrna Speedway for the World Series of Asphalt event that featured the touring modifieds in the 76-lap John Blewett III Memorial along with the super late models and pro late models. It was fun to walk the pits and visit with some Wisconsin friends including the James Storey pro late model team and Toby Nuttleman with Justin Mondeik's team. Gabe Sommers had a successful week going until experiencing mechanical issues in practice which sent him home early before we arrived. Speed Weeks is all about hanging out with your racing friends and it was cool to meet Wisconsin Facebook friend Brent Bergholz in the stands before we ended up taking in the evening's action with Slinger Speedway's Todd Thelen and Midwest Racing Connection's own Dan Plan. Matt Hirschman, Derek Griffith, and Connor Jones were the modified, super late model, and pro late model winners on the night with the only down-side being we missed the festivities at the Ocean Deck as the program ran a little long.

On Thursday we headed to the Daytona International Speedway and took a walk through the truck garage to catch up with the Wisconsin drivers set to compete in the series this year. We were able to catch up with Derek Kraus as his Bill McAnally Racing team adds a second truck and makes the switch to Chevrolet this season with an alliance with GMS Racing and we said a quick hello to Ty Majeski who will run full time this year with ThorSport Racing in the #66 Toyota. From there it was off to Volusia Speedway Park and time to get dirty with the Case Construction Equipment World of Outlaws Late Models and the Super Dirt Car Series Big Block Modifieds. This was our first trip to Volusia since they made the improvements to the grandstands and they were impressive. We sat in the top row which now features plenty of room and even a table to set down your food and drinks. Our seats were in the middle of the Marc Johnson Big Block Modified team's section and we

made new friends and learned a lot about the cars that we only get to see at Volusia as they mostly run out East. Dale McDowell scored an inspiring win in the late models as he continues to come back from battling cancer and Matt Williamson was the winner in the big blocks as another successful dirt track racing night came to a close.

Friday found us back at the big Daytona track after stopping for lunch at the famous Brickyard Lounge and Grill. We were informed they had the best burgers in town and they were excellent as this is another great racing themed restaurant to put on your Daytona itinerary. The Friday program was headlined by the NASCAR Camping World Truck Series with qualifying and the season opening race while the NASCAR Xfinity Series and Cup Series cars had practice sessions. We also got our first up-close look

*Dan Plan photo*

at the new NASCAR Cup cars and the many differences are noticeable. We spent some time with Wisconsin's Josh Bilicki who actually drove the new cars at the Daytona test session, and he was able to provide some insight on just how different the cars feel and perform in the draft. He also emphasized just how different they are from the other NASCAR series cars and trucks which means drivers moving up won't have any similarities to lean back on as they enter the Cup Series. We also spent an entertaining amount of time with Johnny Sauter discussing just about anything and everything in the world of racing and got an up-close look at how some of the smaller teams struggle

Dangerous Dan continued on page 11

*Brian Schmitt photo**Brian Schmitt photo*

Dangerous Dan continued from page 10

just to make it to the track. Sauter will be back in a ThorSport truck to begin his limited 2022 schedule at Martinsville. It was also nice to see long-time hauler driver friend Eloy “Nemo” Trevino who informed us he was headed back to the Cup Series to drive the M&M’s hauler for Kyle Busch’s team in the next week. I have had the honor to witness Matt Kenseth’s first Busch Grand National start and first Cup Series win in person at Charlotte so it was extra special to be able to be on hand to see Ty Majeski’s first Truck


Brian Schmitt photos

The Wisconsin Truck Trio of Sauter, Majeski and Kraus. Johnny Sauter will transition to a part-time schedule in 2022. Ty Majeski won the pole at Dayton and will run the full season for ThorSport. Derek Kraus led laps and will run the full season again for McAnally-Hilgemann Racing

Series pole position and have it come at such a prestigious place like Daytona. I made sure to get down there to give him the congratulatory fist-bump before they had to prepare for the race. We watched the Cup practice from pit road, and it was fun to meet and spend some time with another Facebook friend from Wisconsin, Matt Wilbert who remained in Daytona after Gabe Sommers super late model team had to head home early. We skipped the short tracks and stuck around to see the truck race and the Wisconsin contingent did well. Johnny Sauter ran as long as his truck would last before mechanical issues ended his night while Ty Majeski and Derek Kraus both ran up front and led laps. In the end, Majeski fared the best out of them with a seventh-place finish and it was enjoyable to hear him work with Joe Shear Jr. and the team to have a successful start to the season while Kraus was running in the top four when the inevitable big wreck occurred coming to the white flag. Kraus just about had the incident missed before being clipped slightly and sent to the infield grass where most of the damage to his truck occurred which sent him to a 26th place finish.

Earlier on Friday while walking through the ARCA garage I heard someone call out my name and turned to find an old friend I hadn’t seen in a few years. Darrell Phillips raced in the Mid-American Stock Car Series a few years ago out of Illinois and I got to know him when the series visited the Milwaukee Mile. Phillips was in Daytona in his new role as the crew chief for the team Tim Richmond (not the Tim Richmond everyone knows about, but the ARCA Tim Richmond whose family team is based out of Ottawa, Illinois) drives for this season. Phillips admitted he didn’t know a whole lot about the ARCA cars but just couldn’t pass up an opportunity to crew chief a car at Daytona and the team had a pretty good piece after DGR Racing dropped off a car for them following a crash at Michigan last year where Richmond got swept up in other driver’s on-track shenanigans which destroyed his car and broke his leg. It was nice to meet Tim Richmond who is a young kid that came up through the karting and Formula Indy ranks before entering the ARCA Series and he and his father, Dave, assembled a mostly volunteer crew for the Daytona race. We were invited to watch the ARCA race from their pits and we figured it would be a new experience to see the race from the pit road perspective. I’m so glad we did because as the laps began to wind down Tim


Dan Plan photo

Richmond was running third behind the two Venturini Motorsports cars of Corey Heim and Parker Chase. If you really want to experience all racing has to offer, spend some time in the pits of a small team with mostly volunteer crew members as they begin to realize they have a legitimate chance to win the biggest race of the year. You could feel your heart pounding in your chest and the excitement was contagious as they grasped the moment they were in while at the same time feeling the anxiety of knowing they were very close on fuel. As luck would have it, the car shut off coming to the white flag and they had to pit for a splash of fuel which relegated them to an 18th place finish, but I would be that was the most fun


Brian Schmitt photo

that team has had racing and I’m pretty sure they are looking forward to their next race at Talladega.

With 47 cars for just 38 starting spots, the Xfinity Series qualifying felt like the old days of Cup qualifying where you could feel the tension as teams tried to be fast enough to make the show. Earlier Josh Bilicki told us that a lot more teams than usual had spent the money to rent strong engines due to the large car count and just making the Daytona race was

Dangerous Dan continued on page 12

Dangerous Dan continued from page 11

essential to some team’s season continuing. They took the top 33 cars on time and Bilicki just snuck in as he qualified 31st while Franklin, Wisconsin’s Sam Mayer made the field via a provisional after qualifying 34th. In the race, Mayer charged up through the field quickly and it is apparent that Sam has no problem dropping the hammer and going when he needs to. Eventual race winner Austin Hill ran into the back of him and tore the rear deck cover off his car while coming to pit road under green which ruined his day, but Sam Mayer has a lot to look forward to this year in his first full season in the Jr. Motorsports #1. Bilicki, on the other hand, had a great run and led the most laps he has ever led in a race and came home with a top ten result in ninth place. We made sure to congratulate him before leaving the track as that was more than likely his best overall NASCAR race to date.

We were up early for Sunday, Daytona 500 race day because well, sunrises over the ocean are cool to see and it’s the Daytona 500 and we had a live broadcast of our LTN Radio show to do from the Radio Village in the UNOH Fan Zone. The show

went off flawlessly and the Daytona staff were outstanding to work with and once all the equipment was packed up, we watched the pre-race concert and headed to our seats for the 500. Even though we had media center access, we still buy seats in the grandstand for the main event because you really can’t see anything in the media center, and I can always watch the race on TV at home. Plus, I feel it is important to never really forget what it is like to be a fan and media members can better relate to the fans if they actually experience what they go through with concessions, restrooms, PA Systems, tram rides, and yes even traffic. I liked the way the new cars raced in the 500 and I thought it was an entertaining race overall and I did not leave disappointed. The race had its usual wrecks but didn’t have the massive 20 car pile ups that had become all too common and the finish was pretty exciting as well.

We had a late flight home on Monday so we decided to check out the Champions Breakfast and the celebration ceremony with the winning car, driver, and team. It was a nice ceremony although the Petty Driving Experience cars going around made it hard to hear at times and I would suggest not running those



Brian Schmitt photo

cars during the half hour ceremony in the future. Once the ceremony ended we headed south for a few miles to catch the Space-X rocket launch before finally heading home to bring Speed Weeks 2022 to a conclusion. For me, it’s a week home to catch up on a ton of work at my regular job before heading to Las Vegas for my next Cup race on the first weekend in March.

Sam Mayer (top photo) in action at Xfinity action and Daytona 500 winner Austin Cindric (below)



Dan Plan photo



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The Hawkeye State in Volusia

Iowa residents Ricky Thornton Jr. (left photo) and Ryan Gustin (right photo) both had their best Speedweeks performances to date. Both Thornton Jr. and Gustin picked up Late Model wins at Volusia Speedway Park topping the 50+ car field on hand each night.





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THE HISTORIC NORTH TURN

For the last several years I've attended the gathering at the Historic North Turn. The event is hosted by the owners of the Racing's North Turn Restaurant. I first learned of this event through Skip Pollak, and he has been kind enough to remind me of the schedule each year. The 2022 event was by far the largest gathering of cars and people I've seen in my almost 10-years of attendance. If you get a chance to go to Speedweeks, make sure you check this place out.



Back in the saddle again



After focusing his racing efforts mainly on dirt, the last few years, Joey Miller is ready to run several pavement races again during the 2022 racing season. Joey recently purchased one of his old cars back and made his 2022 debut during Speedweeks at New Smyrna Speedway. Current plans are to run the full ARCA Midwest Tour.



49th Annual RPM Workshop

If you are a promotor or involved with the management of a racetrack, I would highly recommend attending the RPM Workshops held in Daytona. In addition to numerous items to learn, there is plenty of laughter.

Ken Schrader was one of the guest speakers on hand this year. Schrader is a highly entertaining speaker. His stories about owing the bank just slightly more than the amount loaned 20 years ago or mentioning that I-55 co-promotor Ray Marler doesn't drink but Kenny averages things out were just 2 of the moments that had the crowd on hand laughing.

Joe Kosiski was presented the promoter of the year award on Tuesday of the event. Former Midwest resident and now running Vado Speedway in New Mexico, Chris Stepan, picked up the Region 6 award.

Cedar Lake Speedway was presented with the Event of the Year award for the USA Nationals.



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With Flange**

WM463



**Body Mount With
Flange**

WM135



**Threaded Body
Mount**

WM2592



**Hood Pin 2" Long
With Flange**

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