

THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION

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THE MIDWEST'S SHORT TRACK AUTO RACING AUTHORITY



2022 Season Ending Coverage



November 2022

Inside...



Hall of Fame



Going In Circles

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Publisher's Note Racing According to Plan



Dan Plan

I wrapped up my 2022 racing season with a slightly different schedule this year.

I started off the month of October with the \$10k

2022 Comes to a Close

to win Enduro at Cedar Lake Speedway. I invited several members of the Midwest Karting Association from Eau Claire that I used to hang out with. I rarely get to see the kart club members since our track was shut down in 2019. This was an open weekend for many members of the club, and I've only been to a couple of enduros since Raceway Park in Shakopee shut down. This was a perfect show to get together with friends and hang out. The enduro was done right around 7:30pm, giving us plenty of time to have a bonfire and solve all of the problems in the world.

A few days following the Cedar Lake enduro, I was on the road for my annual visit to Oktoberfest at LaCrosse Fairgrounds Speedway. Although it was a bit chilly at times, I never come away from Oktoberfest disappointed. Once again, the drivers from my home state of Minnesota came away with numerous checkered flags and a couple of fast time bullets. Not too shabby for a group of drivers that only has 1 paved short track left in their state.

I could probably fill all of the pages in this issue with all of the highlights from 'Fest, so I'll limit myself to just a few from each night. The on-track highlights for me included the addition of the "Knights" race to go along with the "Futures" race on Thursday evening. Bryan Syer-Keske won the Futures race for the young kids and Derek Kraus won the Knights race for the seasoned veterans. At 21-years of age, Derek Kraus is now one of the seasoned veterans. Friday saw Jacob Goede sweep both of the

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The Midwest

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LaCrosse Late Models main events. Goede would follow that up with a Big 8 Late Model win on Saturday night. My favorite class of the weekend, the Area Sportsmen, also competed on Friday night. One of my home state drivers (Dillon Sellner) picked up a fast-time bullet and defended his Area Sportsmen Oktoberfest title. Sunday afternoon saw Ty Majeski take the Ultimate Challenge and start in the rear of the field. He made his way to the front, only to have transmission issues on a late race restart. Andrew Morrissey and Derek Kraus put on a whale of the show near the end of the 200-lapper with Morrissey picking up a popular Oktoberfest win.

Along with the action on the track, I also picked up a few notable quotes from the weekend at ‘Fest. The quotes came from Eric Heunefield and Tom Carlson. On one of the race starts Saturday

night, the front row wasn’t lined up coming to the green and the start was called off. Eric comes across the PA and states “That was uglier than a pair of bowling shoes.” Good stuff. On Sunday afternoon, Tom Carlson made a last lap, last corner pass on the high side to take a Crateoberfest heat race win. During an inter-



Dan Plan photo



Dan Plan photo

pretty warm for late October and some of the spectators may have been shirtless at some point during the weekend.

The last several times I’ve wrapped up my season at Ogilvie, the weather has not been cooperative. It’s rained or been cold. One year I woke up to 2 inches of snow on Sunday morning in the campground next door. This year the folks at



Doug Hornickel photo

view with Bill “Doc” Niles in victory lane, Bill asked Tom if his experience played a role in making the move. Tom replied, “Yeah, I’ve been here a time or two.”

My oval track season wrapped up with the opening night of the 2022 Topless Nationals at Ogilvie Raceway. It had been several years since I made the trip to Ogilvie for their topless show. Just to clarify, the topless event refers to the cars and not the spectators. The cars must remove their roofs, and all of the spectators are still expected to wear clothing. However, it was

Ogilvie had fantastic weather. I only made the Friday night show, but only a light jacket was needed by the end of the night. Far different than my other visits. I also enjoyed the format of single sets of heats on Friday night. This made for a much more efficient show on a Friday night.

I did manage to sneak in one more motorsports event prior to ending my 2022 season. Although it wasn’t short track racing, an afternoon Demo Derby is always good for a few laughs. We made the trek over to Roberts Wisconsin for the Lions Club Demo Derby. In addition to the standard derby divisions, this one also had a lawn tractor class. I’ve never seen a lawn tractor demo derby and it sure seemed like a good way to get hurt, but everyone made it out unscathed.

This issue will wrap up The Midwest Racing Connection for the 2022 season. The next online issue is currently scheduled for February of 2023.



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Going in Circles



Charlie Spry

The weather during the late summer and early fall months had not been kind to race tracks, particularly, race tracks that race on Saturday nights. Even more particularly, the Dells Raceway Park.

I made it to this popular track for the Saturday portion of the Midwest Championships. This is a three day show that brings in an interesting mix of divisions and cars. This night was no different, with a nice variety of cars and drivers present.

Thirty-one Big Eight late models were present by my count, with a last chance qualifier being needed. With this finalized, the CWRA late models went about running their first feature race, which was won by Paul Paine.

Then, the rain hit. And hit... and hit.

Anyway, this track runs a good show. There is also a definite Columbus 151 Speedway vibe here. The main man here is Jerry Auby, who raced late models for many years at Columbus.

It was an enjoyable time for me to chat with so many who had raced there and now call the Dells home. It was nice to chat with Dennis "Barney" Schmidt. Now racing with the Big 8 cars tonight, he raced hobby stocks, sportsman and late models at Columbus back in the day. Helping him in the pits was former Columbus late model champion Al Weishoff.

Colton Morgan is racing late models now, and only got a chance to race at Columbus a couple of times in a Bandit. His Dad is Ron Morgan, who was memorable for his '55 Chevy hobby stock. Ron told me that Colton is a fourth-generation racer on his Mom's side, and third on Ron's side of the family. I wonder what gets talked about during family dinners?

McKayla Adams is another fourth-generation racer who races late models here. McKayla's Dad is Tory Adams, a late model racer for many years.

Hannah Raley is another driver whose Dad raced at Columbus, and still races now. Andy raced in various divisions at Columbus.

Nick Nolden has won several track championships here at the Dells, and before that he raced a Bandit car at Columbus, and also has the distinction of winning the last ever late model feature run at Columbus.

Colin Tomlinson is racing in the CWRA late models now but had turned some laps in a Bandit car at Columbus. His Uncle is Andy Tomlinson, who raced street stocks and late models at Columbus with lots of success. In fact, the car that Colin is now racing is the car that Andy did so well with at the Columbus track. Nice seeing these guys once again.

In the Bandit class, Tyler Muller never got to race at Columbus, but his Dad, Mark, sure did. Mark raced street stock type cars here quite a bit, as well as a late model later on. Always nice to see the Muller family.

Jeremy Bredeson got his start at Columbus in the Bandit division, and is now a front runner here and everywhere he goes.

Dan Howard is a former street stock champion at Columbus, and still races a modified here alongside his Son, Cole.

The track taught people well. But, the Dells track is a very cool place for all to get together and race now.

By the way, track announcer tonight was Mike "Spike" Storkson. Spike usually handles driver interviews here, but tonight did it all. I thought he did an excellent job. I knew who most of the drivers were who competed tonight, but there were a few who I did not. Mike clearly told each drivers name, number, hometown, sponsors and everything a fan would need to know. He injected just the right amount of humor, but never at a driver's expense. Well done! By the way, Mike also formerly raced at Columbus in the Bandit division, right about the time I did. He was a good competitor and knows his stuff.

The National Short Track Championships at the Rockford Speedway were up next, and the weather finally cooperated with warm temps and clear blue skies throughout the weekend. Certainly Jody Deery must have used her influence in this, as I don't think I have ever seen such a nice weekend for this event in the past.

Nice to see Kenny Grabow get a win in the Bandit qualifier. I had talked to him prior to the races, and he told of his "new" car that he had just purchased, saying, "We went way down to Mt. Vernon, Illinois to get it. I traded my motorcycle for it, which I hated to do, but I really wanted to do this racing thing. This is something that my Dad and I can do together. He raced years ago at Freeport, so he knows what to do and keeps me in line." With only a couple of previous races on his resume, he learned quickly.

The Sixers came out in large numbers, with thirty-seven of them racing, with another couple having pre-entered but were no-shows. Of the thirty-seven, only a couple were from other tracks, which shows how strong this division is here.

Steven Mueller brought his immaculate Sixer from Wisconsin. The car is built with safety in mind, and has a nice cage and a racing seat. "I'm a traffic cop by profession" Said Steve. "My family does not get a say in my profession, nor do they stop me from racing in my free time, so I owe it to them to make sure I am as safe as I can be in both of them." Steve finished in the runner up spot in the feature to Jarrod

Sutherland, who was racing Justin Tyler's car. Jarrod made the trip from California to race tonight, but he is originally from the area and raced at area tracks quite a few years ago before moving to the land of sunshine.

The Bandit feature saw the winner and third place cars getting the old DQ, with second place finisher Cameron Preisler getting the win after all was said and done. A regular racer at Grundy, several drivers brought cars from this track to compete. They support this track and the specials pretty well.

Kyle Stark ran side by side with his Son, Karter, for many laps and edged the youngster out to get the win in the American Short tracker feature. Karter has already turned some laps in a late model and will be one to watch in the future.

Perhaps the most excited winner of the night was Ryan Smith in the Roadrunners. He was so excited that you could hear him screaming in the car before he got out to get the victory accolades. You have to like that kind of excitement!

Patrick Featherston garnered the victory in the sportsman class feature event over Howie Ware.

Saturday brought another beautiful day as far as the weather goes. Austin Nason set the tone for the night and the weekend by turning in the fastest qualifying laps for the Big 8 cars.

The Midwest Dash series cars were racing on this night, with Karter Stark getting the best of Phil Malouf after a torrid side-by-side battle in their feature event.

Howie Ware finished in second place in the area sportsman feature just like the previous night, but got the win anyhow, when the apparent winner failed tech.

Shane Strothman took the win in the hobby stock feature, and I think this may have been a career first for this driver.

The super lates were on hand for the Jody Deery invitational, with young gun Jacob Nottestad getting the win over Nason in the first segment, and Nason turning the tide in the second segment over Nottestad. By virtue of a faster qualifying time, Nason got the overall.

Got to meet new Roadrunner racer Mack Thompson. "I have always dreamed of racing, and I finally have the chance now. Something always seems to come up and I don't get to race. I bet I've tried to race ten times, and only got on the track once before tonight. See this smile on my face? I will be doing this all the time while racing. It is something I dreamed about doing for a long time." Great to see such enthusiasm and hope Mack makes good and steady progress and has a long career.

Sunday brought sunny skies once again. Can you believe it?

The Mid-Am cars ran their feature first, with some very good racing, only to once again see the

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dreaded DQ take effect on the apparent winner. Eventual winner was long time veteran James Swan, who knows his way around this place.

Big 8 late model racer Willie Nelson had told me that his team had found more speed out of their car recently, and he wasn't kidding, as he had qualified something like fourth quickest on Saturday, all with a very stellar field of 31 very good cars and drivers. Unfortunately, he dropped back in the field at the start of the race, then spun. However, he came back through the field, kept digging, got back up to fourth and pressing for third with only a few laps to go, then got caught up in another wreck which ended his day. Great run, however!

I could fill pages telling you all of the strange things that happened during their feature, but let's just say it was a race where you never wanted to leave your seat.

At the end, it was Austin Nason getting the win over another young gun, Max Kahler. Michael Bilderback was right there in the late stages, but had lost his power steering before the half-way mark, and didn't make it to the end. Dale Nottestad survived, taking third, and Jake Gille was fourth in one very beat up race car.

Special note should be made about fifth place finisher Jayden Dahlberg. In his first year of racing a late model after only racing Sixers before, he drove a very patient and smart race, and was one of the few cars that appeared to have hardly a scratch on it at the end. Smart racing!

Kevin Memoli closed out the day by winning the Roadrunner Rumble feature race. He was a busy guy, as he also raced his late model in the Big 8 race.

Next up for me was a return to the Rockford Speedway in mid-October for one of my absolute favorite racing events, the annual Bahama Bracket Nationals. This event always brings in a lot of drivers from various locales, and it is fun to talk to them and find out where they race and how their season went. Some only bring a car out once a year to this event and that IS their season.

One driver who had one of the furthest travels was Aaron Wilke, who hails from down by St. Louis, Missouri. While he lives so far away, he shares the same name with another Aaron Wilke who raced late models at Columbus (Wi.) a few years back. To add to that fact, they both race(d) with the same number, 8.

Aaron from Missouri grew up in Wisconsin, and has a racing background in the family, as his Uncle, Bill Wilke, was a top competitor in the Hobby stock division at the old Lake Geneva Raceway back in the late 1970's and 1980's.

Just like his Uncle, who raced Chrysler products, Aaron does the same. His current car is a 1973 Dodge Challenger, and his Uncle raced the same thing for a long time.

Aaron has made a few trips to Rockford now to run in this event, and said, "My car right now does not fit well into the rules at too many tracks, so this is the

Charlie Spry photo

perfect event for me to race in." The car actually came from Vermont, where it was raced as a street stock. Aaron re-did some things and has raced it at I-44 Speedway, until that track closed. He then raced in some CRA street stock events, and has also road raced with it. "This car and my others were road raced, so that is why you see the brake lights in the back window of my cars," Said Aaron. He has also raced it on the mile track at Springfield, Illinois.

While living in Wisconsin, Aaron raced at quite a few different tracks, including the Milwaukee Mile and Columbus 151, home to the "other" Aaron Wilke. This came about as he was a frequent competitor in the old Midwest Enduro series, which used full size cars in this type of racing and was a popular series before everyone went to the smaller cars.

Being a Chrysler guy, some of his previous cars were a bit out of the norm, including a '78 Chrysler Lebaron and a Plymouth Scamp. Asked about running these unusual cars and racing Chrysler products in general, Aaron said, "You can get the parts for them, not as easy as a Chevy or anything, but they are out there. However, I tend to try to save money on parts and end up getting cheaper parts, which usually comes back to bite me. I have learned that I have to spend the money and get the good stuff."

Aaron was running well in the brackets until he broke out of his bracket, putting him in with a faster group. His car is very sharp and well built. Here is hoping that Aaron makes the trip every year to race here.

A young driver making his first race ever at the track was Ronnie "Rondo" Haney. Rondo said that this was his first time ever racing here. "I have only raced a couple of previous times at Grundy, and this is only my third race tonight. My Dad was a track champion at Grundy back in '94, so last night in practice I had him take the car out and check it out for me."

"Rondo" did pretty well, and was leading his qualifier, but as you might figure with a driver with limited track time, he was turning faster laps all the time and soon broke out.

Rick Davis hails from Michigan, and made the long trip to race here in his second time at the brackets this weekend.

"I came last year and got wrecked in the heat, but had fun, so came back to try again," Said Rick. He drives a sharp, blue 1973 Camaro. "This is my fourth year racing, but I started out a few years ago, then took time off from racing from 2016 to 2021. other things were going on and I needed to focus on things besides racing. Now, I am ready to go at it again."

*Charlie Spry photo*

While he lives in Michigan, it is not too far for him to race in nearby Indiana. "I raced at New Paris, but also at Mottville and have raced at Kalamazoo (Mich.) Mottville is a very small track, and if you can get it set up to pass on the outside, you're way ahead of the game."

The Camaro is a popular car and finding body parts can be a chore. "The junkyard stuff is going

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away. "I have one more body for the car, and that is all. After that it is going to be hard."

Shaun Wiltjer is a fixture here at this race, and between he and his Dad, they have raced in every one of the 31 brackets events. "Dad raced the first one and I was here but did not race. Then, I started racing in it the second year and we come back every year. We really enjoy this event," Said Shaun.

Shaun also builds race cars, but has cut back in recent years, saying, "It is pretty much just a hobby now. It is getting so hard to make any coin trying to do it for a living." They have built some really cool bracket cars, including a couple of '70 Chevelles, and a '67 Ford Galaxie. "Dad is a Ford guy, and we built that car for him. it was so rusty that when I went to pick it up to load it, it broke in half. We made it into a two-door hardtop from a four door body."

Shaun raced weekly at Kankakee, where he finished in the runnerup spot in points at the dirt track. Among the other cars he has, he usually brings his asphalt Mid-Am car here, but decided to try the dirt car this year. "It is way faster than I thought it would be," said Shaun. "I timed in too fast and broke out in time trials, so I had to dial it way back, but I dialed it back too much and timed in slower than I should have, so now it is going to be hard to not break out." Sure enough, that is exactly what happened, so he did not have a good brackets.

As for the results, Austin Maynard came through the pack to win the "A" bracket. He is a top guy at the South Bend Speedway, kind of dominant, and I can see why.

Kyle Ansolabehere won the "AA" bracket, while his Dad, Louis, won the "AAAA" bracket. The pair make the trip down from Minnesota each year to compete.

Kyle's win was very unexpected, as he actually crossed the finish line running third, but the first two

cars were having an intense battle for the win and both broke out in the last couple of laps.

The "AAA" feature win went to Eric Kewitz, who only started racing four months ago, and this was his first time here. He won a heat on Saturday night to get his first career race win, then got his first career feature win on Sunday!

The four cylinder cars had their own brackets, with veteran Nick Schneider getting the win in the "B" bracket for the fastest cars. He drove a smart race, hugging the inside the whole race to keep his speed down so that he would not break out, but still able to pass and get the lead at the end.

The "BB" feature may have been one of the most exciting, and was also the last race, so some people left and did not see it. They ran three wide for the lead and win, with Ryan Dawson edging out Brandon Vines and Drew Nickel for the win.

Already looking forward to next year, and the thirty-second edition of this very cool show!

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Talkin' Racin' with Jason



Jason D. Searcy

Elko Speedway just wrapped up their 57th season of racing in 2022. The stands were noticeably more full than previous years, this was the first season where every race weekend was an Eve of Destruction event which featured Monster Trucks, School Bus racing and Spectator Drags in addition to the weekly racing. The only exception was the NASCAR ARCA Menards series race which was won by 18-year-old rising star Sammy Smith from Johnston Iowa who grew up racing in the Legends division and won four races at Elko Speedway in 2018.

Jacob Goede #72 won the points Championship at Elko Speedway in the Late Model division. He is now tied with Donny Reuvers who both have 9 premier division Championships at ELKO. Jeff Martin still holds the record with 10 premier division titles, plus three Hobby Stock championships as well. Goede's streak is impressive in that his titles have been in consecutive years ever since 2014.

The 2022 NASCAR Late Model division had 33 drivers compete, compared to 40 last year and 29 in 2020. 12 different winners up two from last year and up four from 2020. Owin Giles #6 scored the most wins this year with four, three drivers had three wins each including Goede, Chad Walen and Jake Ryan.

The Thunder Cars division saw Conrad Jorgenson win his 6th Thunder Car Championship at ELKO. Conrad has now won a Thunder Car title at Elko Speedway in the 90's, 00's, 10's and now in the 20's plus a Super Truck title in 1997.

The 2022 NASCAR Thunder Car division had 22 drivers compete, down one from last year and up three from 2020. 6 different winners compared to 7 last year and only four in 2020. Conrad Jorgenson had the most wins this year with 7 but it was a good three way



Dan Plan photo

battle all season long with Dillon Sellner and Brent Kane both winning 6 each.

The INEX sanctioned Legends division had 16 year old Colin Stocker #8 winning his first big-car title, he was also the ELKO Champion in the Bando division in 2017 and 2018.

The 2022 Legends had 40 drivers compete, up one from last year and up nine from the 2020 total. Nine different drivers won a race this year up one from last year and up two from 2020. Colin Stocker had the most wins with 6, Baiden Heskett had 5 wins and rising star Ayden Brockhouse at 12 years old won 3 races.

The NASCAR Power Stocks had #88 Nick Oxborough winning his 5th ELKO Championship and now four in a row.

The 2022 Power Stocks had 25 cars compete, up one from last year and up three from 2020. Eight different winners this year which is the same number as last year and 2020.



Dan Plan photo

Mike Stoer #08 had the most wins with seven and #57 Jesse Fischer had six wins this summer. The Champion did not have an official win this year but was "top 5" in 20 of the 23 races.

The INEX sanctioned Bando's division was won by Danny Mann #10, it was his first track Championship at ELKO.

The 2022 Bando's had 19 cars compete, up five from last year and up three from 2020. Six different drivers won at ELKO this year compared to just four in both 2021 and 2020.

Danny Mann had the most wins with eight and Mark Anderson Jr #57 had six wins, the Bando drivers had the most dramatic and close finishes of any division.



Dan Plan photo

The extended nice weather allowed us to attend some racing after the usual race season ended. The Nitro Rallycross series returned to ERX MotorPark in

Elk River (MN) just like last year but this time they were racing in a new Electric car division called Group E. Travis Pastrana beat Robin Larsson by 3 seconds for the win, the racing action was great with lots of rubbing and bumping near the front. 2009 F1 Champion Jenson Button lost out in the qualifying rounds and did not make the feature event. The crowd

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on page 9*

Talkin' Racin' continued from page 8

was noticeably smaller than last year and I have to admit the absence of race car sounds took away from the excitement. It feels so much different not to hear engine noise when the cars come flying by, this is mainly a made-for-TV event anyway and for this kind of event ERX motorpark is without a doubt one of the best facilities in the world. Action Sports legend Travis Pastrana was extremely happy with the win after the race, he was mingling with the crowd and giving high-fives to anyone standing nearby.

I also was very impressed with the Topless Nationals event held at Ogilvie (MN) Raceway, the track was as smooth as a 3/8th mile dirt track can be and the racing was multi-grooved providing for lots of passing. I'm always amazed at how Shane Sabraski #7A can work through a field of cars, he and Dexton Koch #78K put on a great show in the Super Stock division. The art of finding every extra inch of grip as the track changes from lap to lap was incredible to watch. Plus drivers were encouraged to dress up their cars in Halloween costumes, which proved to be very entertaining. It was a great way to wrap up a fantastic 2022 Race season.

Jason Searcy photo



Jason Searcy photo



Jason Searcy photo



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THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION

Photo Gallery



Travis Patrana rolls across the scales at ERX Motorsports Park
Jason Searcy photo



Andrea Keeney in action at Ogilvie Raceway for the Topless Nationals
Junior Jackson photo



Gabe Somers and Casey Johnson in Oktoberfest action
Doug Hornickel photo



James and Katie Swan after another Midwest Truck Series Championship
Kyle Nuttleman photo



An entire field of topless cars for the Topless Nationals at Ogilvie Raceway
Brewster Baker photo



Jacob Goede picked up his 9th Elko Late Model title this year
Dan Plan photo

THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION

Photo Gallery



Enduro action at Cedar Lake Speedway
(Dan Plan photo)



All kinds of unique decorations at the Topless Nationals
(Dan Plan photo)



Gregg McKarns and Midwest Tour Champion Casey Johnson
(Doug Hornickel photo)



Dalton Zehr signs an autograph for a fan at Oktoberfest
(Doug Hornickel photo)



Jon DeAngelis won the first Falloween 75-lapper at the Dells
(Bruce Nuttleman photo)



Max Kahler won the second Falloween 75 lap main event at the Dells
(Bruce Nuttleman photo)

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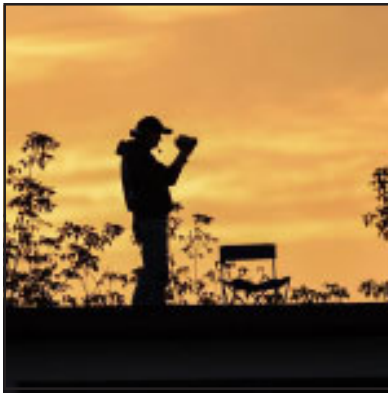


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Dangerous Dan**Dan Margetta**

As the Midwest racing season comes to an end for 2022 and because racers it seems, can't ever slow down, everyone's vision immediately turns to the future and this year's hot topic is national super late model tours for 2023. The SRL Southwest Tour ran some National races in 2022 at Citrus County Speedway in Florida, Berlin Raceway in Michigan, and Mobile International Speedway in Alabama in addition to its normal races in California at Bakersfield, Irwindale, Eureka, and Stockton along with some television coverage on MAV-TV. SRL National also recently announced the popular Rattler 250 at South Alabama Speedway will be part of their national tour in 2023.

The other national super late model tour news breaking this month was the formation of the new STARS National Tour under the Track Enterprises group headed by Bob Sargent. Sargent's group recently purchased the CRA Super Series and the Midwest Tour and formed a partnership with the Southern Super Series to come up with the STARS national concept. The STARS National Tour will consist of ten events, three from the CRA Super Series, three from the Midwest Tour, three from the Southern Super Series and the championship event being the 2023 All American 400 at Nashville. The regional series will also have a complete schedule and their own championships, just three of their events each will count towards the National Tour championship. Much of the details have not been publicly announced yet and speculation has run rampant as to exactly which three events from each of the regional tours would be part of the national championship. Some details were revealed at Nashville during the All American 400 Weekend such as plans for increased purses, a guaranteed \$100,000 national point fund, a standard rule book and inspection process, and a loyalty program toward drivers who race the national tour. A yet unnamed television and/or streaming partnership is planned along with other contingency programs to generate revenue and promote the series.

The foundation for the new series looks promising and now the hard work begins to get all involved

on the same page and make everything come together before the kick-off in the Spring of 2023. I feel to be successful this series will have to correctly balance the needs of four key aspects, the fans, the teams/drivers, the sponsors, and the tracks that will host the national events. So far, I'm impressed with the people I've heard who are doing the leg work on this series and am confident they can manage these aspects while maintaining the integrity and traditions we've all come to love with this sport.

The fans are probably the least complicated of the four aspects to meet their needs. Race fans basically just want a competitive race with a strong field of cars at a nice facility for a reasonable price. Sounds simple right? Actually, with the current pool of drivers and teams in super late model racing, there should be no problem drawing a competitive field of cars for the events and there are plenty of successful tracks fans would have no problem showing up to. The biggest hurdle on the fans side will be to drum up enough sponsorship and partners to pay the increased purses and keep the ticket costs at a reasonable price.

The main needs of the drivers and teams are going to be keeping the costs of traveling down, the purses, and the rules. A logistically sound schedule that doesn't have the teams driving all over the place will help keep travel costs such as fuel and lodging down and the tour is touting significantly increased purses for the national events. They are also committing to a standardized rule book and I think the inspection process needs to be communicated as well to avoid too many "gotcha" infractions in the tech shed well after the fans have went home. The race officiating might be a tougher point to get everyone to come together on based on what I think are some different philosophies between the Midwest and the Southern racers. That difference was pretty evident after the white flag incident at the Nashville super late model All American feature between Matt Craig, Austin Nason, and Cole Butcher that also involved William Sawalich. For those who didn't see it, Craig held the high line at the white flag with Nason alongside him as Butcher dove to the bottom to make a three wide charge as they headed toward turn one. Craig tried to prevent Nason's inside pass by holding him tight on his door and that coupled with Butcher's three wide charge triggered the incident as Nason got sandwiched and nearly turned over as Butcher crashed and collected Sawalich. In the end, Craig was placed at the rear of the lead lap cars for his involvement which strongly angered many Southern fans including some prominent NASCAR players while many Midwest fans applauded the call. The Southern argument was Craig was the leader and turning slightly to hold the inside guy (Nason) on his door was an acceptable defensive move as how was he to know the third-place guy (Butcher) made it three wide which triggered the crash? I agree Craig's move wasn't overly egregious and yes, he was the leader, but in this instance the contact did have a hand in triggering the crash which technically made him involved and I

National Late Model Tour

agreed with the call. Almost all of the Midwest racer posts I saw on social media had a take similar to mine while almost all of the Southern posts called the decision clownish and both sides strongly felt they were right. The contrasts were quite fascinating and it's something that will have to be addressed if there will be a national tour combining both groups.

In order to attract sponsors that are going to be necessary to have the desired purses and point fund contingencies, the national series is going to have to race at facilities that have some form of hospitality and are able to entertain some corporate attendees. The series has already made overtures that it intends to hold the national races at tracks that meet certain activation and hospitality standards. Also, any television partner is going to need facilities to be able to handle all the equipment and personnel needed for a quality broadcast. The series will have to be careful to balance these needs against infringing too much on the fan's needs as if the perception arises too much attention is given to the corporate partners over the regular fans, many unneeded issues could arise especially online via social media.

Finally, the series will have to make sure the tracks themselves receive something for being a part of the schedule. Many of the coveted dates involve already successful events forged deep in tradition that are currently a major part of each track's yearly business model. Some already receive significant sponsorship and even rights fees for these events and it would be wise to assume they wouldn't be too eager to just turn them over without receiving something in return. As I stated earlier, some of the people I have heard working on this series know the motorsports game very well and are well versed on both the competition and business side and all of the track personnel I know especially here in the Midwest, didn't get to be successful from dumb luck. They are all very smart people who aren't afraid of hard work and I'm very confident and excited to see how this whole concept comes together in the coming months.

The opportunities and potential for this to be beneficial and rewarding for everyone is immense. It's been around twenty years or so since there last was a prominent national asphalt short track tour going back to the old American Speed Association days. The old ASA national tour taught local short track racers how to travel and prepared them for all that was involved logistically with a national touring series. It helped them gradually move up the ladder so by the time they were ready for the big time, they had a grasp on all the non-racing aspects that went along with the increased exposure. The SRX Series the last two years proved that short track racing is compelling enough to attract a decent sized television audience and streaming services have also proven there is an appetite for short track racing content. The time could be right for all this to come together with a national tour and it should keep us all busy this winter as we follow all the developments and eagerly await the 2023 season.

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Racing Nuggets**PJ "Jacklyn" Nuttleman**

Am I hanging onto a false jaded feeling to think that the midwest drivers are often viewed as the red-headed stepchildren of racing? Do you feel that way too?

I don't know if it's because so many of the marquee events are considered to be in the south or southeast—but I just always feel like those regions generally look down their noses at racers from the midwest. That being said—when the ARCA CRA Super Series, Southern Super Series, and ARCA Midwest Tour converged to battle for the guitar trophy and about a \$15,000 pay day in Nashville for the All-American 400 weekend, there were plenty of midwest drivers who were on hand to toss their hats into the ring. And many flexed some muscle to show they can give the southern boys a run for their money.

Luke Fenhaus fired the first shot by setting the fast time for the field. Gabe Sommers was second fastest making an all-Wisconsin front row and putting everyone on alert that the midwest contingent wasn't here to play around. An early caution when Cole Butcher and Willie Allen tangled set up another spirited battle between Fenhaus and Sommers. Sommers would use the momentum from the outside groove to take the lead from Fenhaus, while Casey Johnson continued to march forward as well, sliding into third.

I popped a cheese curd and took a swig of my beer in celebration of Sommers, Fenhaus, and Johnson



Bruce Nuttleman photo

running 1-2-3. This was going to be a great showing for our guys! Fenhaus snagged the lead back from Sommers and continued to set a rapid pace for the race.

When the competition caution came out around lap 93, everyone ducked into the pits except the leader, Fenhaus. It must have been a mistake as he made a circuit and then rolled down pit road a lap later.

Unfortunately, that would relegate him to the rear of the field for the restart.

On that restart, Daniel Dye spun his tires from his outside groove position near the front, which stacked up the field and it was a chaos with cars spinning and piling into one another. Another midwestern driver, Michael Bilderback ended up being caught in it. I spotted his sponsor, Jim Olson Collision on his mashed-up hood and winced at the cruel irony. Fenhaus who had to start at the rear escaped with mostly minimal damage, but still required some pitting to fix it.

There were quite a few hard contact moves throughout the race, which almost seems to be the norm these days in racing. Butcher and Derek Thorn would tangle and bring out another caution, which set up a William Sawalich – Austin Nason battle. Nason is



Bruce Nuttleman photo

Racing Nuggets continued on page 16

Racing Nuggets from page 15

a Midwest Tour regular from Rockford, IL—but Sawalich is technically from Minnesota, despite running for a southern team fielded by Donnie Wilson. Can we claim him as one of ours? Especially with his crew chief, Bond Suss who has Minnesota roots?

I honestly just love to see folks with midwestern roots doing well in racing. It bodes well for our programs and people up here.

The race continued with plenty of beating and banging—Sawalich appeared to be on his way to claim victory with a massive lead over second place Matt Craig. But Cody Dempster spun with three to go bringing out the caution. I have to believe everyone was on edge with what might happen in these waning laps.

It was basically like a pack of wolves devouring a gazelle. Craig got out front and Nason maneuvered his way to P2 hard charging for the prestigious win. Nason was working on the inside of Craig when Butcher stuck his nose inside of Nason to create a three-wide scenario going into turn 1 as they took the white flag. And that was when all hell broke loose. Some blame Craig for coming down onto Nason as the trigger for the event, others blame Butcher for sticking his nose in to make it three wide with one lap to go.

The gloves were off, and everyone was seemingly prepared to run over their grandmother to take the checkered flag. The only thing certain was Nason was royally screwed in the middle, and he ended up going airborne after contact in the right front from Craig and in the left rear from Butcher. It was one of the most horrific accidents I've ever witnessed in short track racing. Nason's car made HARD impact into the outside retaining wall between turns 1 and 2, as did Butcher and Sawalich.

I don't think I breathed until I could see movement in the cockpits and the announcer finally saying all drivers were OK.

Despite Craig not getting caught up in the incident, officials sent him to the rear for involvement. That made southern fans wildly angry. What is a common rule for us up here in the midwest is not at all implemented in the south. Craig didn't understand why he was being sent to the back and neither did his fans. He didn't understand how he could wreck anyone behind him—or obviously the definition of "involvement," but I certainly understand his frustration if he's never raced with that rule.

Regardless, it set up a final restart that would pit our last two midwest hopefuls—Fenhaus and Johnson against Stephen Nasse for the win. Fenhaus was in a better position than Johnson in P2 to have a shot, but Johnson definitely knows how to make clutch moves to grab a checkered flag too.

In the end, it was Nasse who beat Fenhaus to the line, followed by Gio Ruggiero, Kyle Crump, and Johnson who rounded out the top five.

But as is the case with most big races, it's not over until tech. And unfortunately, our highest finishing midwest driver, Fenhaus was disqualified for having an

ignition box that had the wrong setting on the dial for the chip. The rev limiter is 8000 and that is the norm for what is run with the Midwest Tour, however since this was a co-mingled event with the CRA and Southern Super Series, the rule for this race was 7800 for the setting.

Sad trombone. And a total heartbreaker for Fenhaus and his team who rode a helluva rollercoaster the entire weekend. Unfortunately, it ended on a low note for them. I still think overall, Fenhaus and the midwest racers as a whole flexed some serious muscle against their southern counterparts.

And this should continue to develop as the three series are coming together to create a national tour in 2023 for super late model racers: The Stars National Series. Bob Sargent who recently acquired both the CRA Series and the Midwest Tour unveiled some of the plans during the race weekend in Nashville and hopes to have more details by the PRI Show December 8-10 in Indianapolis.

Learn more about the new series at <https://www.starsnationalseries.com>.

And lest we forget to mention, a midwest father-son duo finished 1st and 4th in the VCTS (Compact Tour Series). Congratulations to Kyle Stark on the win and his son, Karter for a top five finish in Nashville over the weekend too!



Bruce Nuttleman photo



Stark family photo

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ALL DIRT ROADS:

Brent Larson Reflects on 2022 Season, Five-Year Growth with World of Outlaws

By Mike Warren - World of Outlaws

Basketball legend Michael Jordan once said, "Obstacles don't have to stop you. If you run into a wall, don't turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it."

While Brent Larson has faced multiple obstacles since joining the World of Outlaws CASE Construction Equipment Late Model Series tour in 2018, he's never turned around. Never given up. And continues to fight.

Further proof of that will be on display during the World of Outlaws World Finals at The Dirt Track at Charlotte, where the Lake Elmo, MN will officially clinch his fifth-place finish in championship points – the best finish of his World of Outlaws career.

He's also improved his average finish by more than four positions from 2021.

Larson's growth is something he said comes from the experience of battling some of the best dirt Late Model drivers in the country on a nightly basis.

"I think I continue to learn and grow, get more familiar with the tracks, get more familiar with the different tires," Larson said. "And we just continue to grow as a person and as a team. I think our growth has been fairly steady over the past two or three years."

"Last year, we got the most improved driver [award], and this year we're a little better yet. I think it's just a pattern of continual growth."

Any driver who runs a national touring schedule will likely face adversity throughout the season.

This year was no different for Larson, and he dealt with new crew members and his wife Melanie's shoulder injury, who's also his tire specialist.

"Even when [Melanie] wasn't physically at the track or was out with her shoulder injury, we still worked together a lot," Larson said. "I think a lot of my program, in general, has just been overcoming adversity and struggles and challenges."

Those new challenges came on top of old obstacles like travel. Larson's home, just outside St. Paul, MN, is further north than any other full-time Series driver. However, it's only part of how far his team has come in the past few years and how they face that adversity.

"Just being located where I am physically presents a challenge as far as adversity and lack of experience across the different parts of the country," Larson said. "But I think we've learned to overcome adversity largely over the last two or three years, that when we face adversity now, it's not that big of a deal."

For the second consecutive season, Larson came close to scoring his first career World of Outlaws CASE Late Models victory—a second to Mike Marlar at Cedar Lake Speedway in August.

Larson said he enjoyed that experience but is frustrated that he couldn't grab the checkered flag.

"It's both rewarding and exciting to be that close, but it's also frustrating being that close and not being able to close the deal," Larson said. "It's one of those things I look back on a lot and think what I could have done different to win that race. I guess you just hope that thought and that experience allows you to close the deal off the next time you get into that situation."

The final stop in Larson's fifth year on tour is The Dirt Track at Charlotte for the World of Outlaws

World Finals—a place where Larson has struggled at times.

Despite those results, he said he believes he's capable of winning on one of the biggest stages in dirt racing.

"I haven't been real great at Charlotte overall," Larson said. "I've showed some speed at times, but I haven't really put together a great night altogether there. I think I'm capable of it. It'd be a shocker to a lot of people, including me, to pull off my first win there."

"But I look forward to being closer to the front and maybe having a chance. Charlotte's kind of a crapshoot for everybody. Every year you see someone run well there you don't expect to, and I'm doing everything I can to be one of those guys this year."

No matter the World of Outlaws World Finals result, Larson will cap off a successful year with the best showing of his career. It shows that no matter the obstacle he faces, the driver from the "Land of 10,000 Lakes" has shown how to climb, work around, or go through any wall he runs into.



Jacy Norgaard photo

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Egersdorf into the Dirt Late Model Hall of Fame



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Cedar Lake Speedway multi-time track champion and our all-time feature winner Rick Egersdorf will be inducted into the Dirt Late Model Hall of Fame in the summer of 2023.

Not only did Rick win 13 track titles throughout his illustrious career Cedar Lake Speedway, but he sits atop the all-time Late Model win list with 77 victories and also sits in the #1 spot on the all-time win list across all divisions with 104 career wins (77 Late Model, 23 Bomber, 2 Modified, 2 Winged Outlaw Modified) at CLS. He dominated for many years primarily behind the wheel of the iconic orange #17.

Rick Egersdorf Hall of Fame Bio:

Rick Egersdorf, Lake Elmo, Minn.: With 77 Late Model victories at Cedar Lake Speedway in New Richmond, Wis., putting him atop a list of talented stars, Egersdorf was among the most feared WISSOTA racers during his prime of racking up special event victories in the 1980s and '90s. He was a frequent winner of late-season WISSOTA specials at Cedar Lake (the WISSOTA 100 in 1998-99); Proctor (Minn.) Speedway (the Silver 1000 in 1986, '91 and '99); Red Cedar Speedway in Menomonie, Wis. (Punky Manor Challenge in 1986-88 and '99); and ABC Raceway in Ashland, Wis. (Red Clay

Classic in 1987-88 and '98). He found success outside the WISSOTA realm as two-race winner in the original incarnation of the World of Outlaws Case Late Model Series in 1988-89 and captured 1991's Gopher 50 on the UMP Summer Nationals at the Steele County Fairgrounds in Owatonna, Minn. An eight-time starter in Cedar Lake's USA Nationals and a two-time DTWC starter, he was a three-time winner on WISSOTA's Amsoil Series and was triumphant in the first season of the WISSOTA Challenge Series in '99. (Text courtesy of Cedar Lake Speedway press release)



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