

THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION

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Spring Classic



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Vol. 27 Issue 1 May 2023

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Publisher's Note Racing According to Plan



Dan Plan

I started off this year doing a couple of things I've never done before. One of them was quitting my full-time job. Several factors led to the decision to quit working on a full-time basis. One of them was to dedicate more time to this rag, *The Midwest Racing Connection*. I'm still working part-time outside of the work I continue to do with here with the paper but I now have more time for short track racing. The other items that factored into the decision to quit were the opportunities to help out with a new podcast and helping startup new YouTube channel.

New year, New agenda

At the beginning of the year, I started helping out PJ Nuttleman on The Racing Nuggets Podcast. A few months later I started spending time on The CLS Show YouTube channel with Marty Gallagher for Cedar Lake Speedway.

One of the great parts of helping out with The Racing Nuggets Podcast and The CLS Show is getting to hear stories from the different racers. Some of them I've known for quite a while, and others I've just watched from the stands. These two shows have allowed me to meet several people in person (or via video conference) for the first time.

It really is a good time listening to some of the stories from the racers in our region regarding their start in racing. Trials and tribulations are a common theme. In addition to talking about short track racing, they delve into their personal life outside of the race track. Some of the stories will make you laugh, and others are just downright heart-wrenching. Bad wrecks, loss of sponsors and health issues have all come up.

Scott Splittstoesser gets my award for fighter of the year. During the recording of the first CLS Show of the year, Scott talked about the cancer treatment he was going through during the 2022 season, all while continuing to race. I talked with Scott several times last year and had no idea what he was going through until March of this year.

There have been numerous great quotes on the episodes recorded this year. My favorite quote this far came from "The New Richmond Nightmare" Chase Viebrock. When talking about going to a Minnesota Wild

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hockey game out of state with his fiancé. He told the story of her catching a hockey puck one-handed while holding a beer in the other hand. Chase then stated, “That’s marriage material.”

The best part of being involved in these 2 shows is the stories that often come up following the recordings. It’s almost like we never should have stopped recording. Lots of laughs and solving all of the problems in the world. Steve Murgic gets credit for being the first one to crack a beer on The Racing Nuggets Podcast, and most others have followed suit. The recordings for The CLS Show take place in my garage. It’s not a fancy production studio, but it seems to work so far. The post-recording sessions have gone on for several hours after the camera’s have been turned off.

Never in my life would I have imagined being part of something like these two shows and having so much fun doing it. I highly recommend searching YouTube for The Racing Nuggets channel and The CLS Show Channel on YouTube. Lots of good content is out there on these two channels, and much more to come as the season goes on.



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Going in Circles



Charlie Spry

Finally got a racing event in by the end of April. Not without difficulty, however, as the 46th annual Spring Classic at Rockford Speedway had to be put off from Saturday until Sunday, April 23rd. Saturday featured a variety of weather, and none of it good. Rain, sleet, wind, hail and very cold temps were present on Saturday. Sunday again featured bitter cold temps, but no precipitation at least.

The Big 8 late models headlined, and they put on a very interesting show as usual. The feature leaders with five laps to go showed scant familiarity with what the finishing results actually were. Jerry Mueller had his car erupt in flames with a resulting crash into the wall. At this point, Jeremy Miller had a comfortable lead and seemingly easy win. I can't begin to do justice here with how things played out after the caution, but Miller didn't win. Dale Nottestad took the win in a close finish over Jon Reynolds, Jr. and Alex Papini.

Papini had moved to Florida a few years ago but came back to race this event one last time. He was racing an older car that had been raced by Ricky Bilderback quite some time ago. Alex always was a driver who could get the most out of an older car, just like his Dad could. He showed he hasn't lost that touch. Reynolds had set fast time earlier in the day and you knew he would be there at the end. Nottestad is the reigning Big 8 champion, so likewise, you knew he would be there at the end.



Jeff Taber photo

2023 Spring Classic



2023 Rockford Speedway Spring Classic winner Dale Nottestad
(Jeff Taber Photo)

Props go out to a couple of late model rookies who raced well today. Rockford regular Josh Lundy has moved from the sportsman division to the late models this year, and was having a good race, nary a mark on his beautiful purple and pink car. He just got caught up in a wreck that he had nothing to do with. He was racing very cleanly.

Also, Shane Radtke Jr., had a good run and finished the race without a scratch on his car. He stayed out of trouble all day and showed well. He formerly raced hobby stocks at Jefferson.

The Mid-Am cars had a caution-filled feature, with Josh Nelms pulling away from the pack once he got the lead. Josh has probably raced just about any kind of car you could imagine, from enduro to super lates, and he has a ton of experience and talent. Clay Curts and Dale Lecus, Jr. ran side by side for a long time, and finally crossed the finish line sideways to finish second and third, respectively.

The four cylinder Bandit division was also present, with a good field of cars. This being a "breakout" division, two early leaders suffered that fate, as first Shawn Bowar broke out early, and then leader Stephen Hillary broke out late in the race while leading. So, Nick Schmidt took over the lead and won. Nick has raced here quite a bit and he knows how to play the breakout game, as he has had to contend with it here and at other tracks. Bart Brockmann placed

second and has also had to deal with the breakout rule, and understands it. Zakary Chanda placed third in a nice run.

Another Bandit driver that went home happy was Tyler Muller. Tyler has raced mostly at the Dells and at State Park Speedway near Wausau, Wi. Hailing from Sun Prairie, Wi., Rockford is a track he has seen a lot of racing at and wanted to make sure he got to race there at least once. He started near the back and used the pick-a-lane cone to his advantage and finished seventh. Going in to the day he just wanted to race clean and get some track time while experiencing a new track. He checked all of the boxes for his expectations and more!

Overall, it was a fun day of racing on a very cold day. I'm going to be spending a lot of time at this track in 2023 for its final year of operation.



Jeff Taber photo

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Talkin' Racin' with Jason



Jason D. Searcy

If you spend time at Elko Speedway this summer, you are sure to see the “Brothers Jorgenson” decal on many of the cars appearing in victory lane.

One of the Brothers Jorgenson is Conrad Jorgenson, and this summer of 2023 will be the 30-year mark since he started racing at Elko Speedway, but actually his love for racing started in Elko (MN) much earlier than that.

Conrad and his brother Dan raced the “Little Elko” quarter midget track beginning in 1974. “Mom never got new drapes and didn’t get central air conditioning while we were racing quarter midgets, we always needed a new motor or a new car,” said Conrad. He won a couple Championships in the Senior Stock division as a kid and developed a real love for the sport.

“The phrase ‘Brothers Jorgenson’ started when we were about 13 years old. One of the dads there at Little Elko called us the ‘Brothers Jorgenson,’ so it all started with the quarter midget race team.” Conrad was the crew chief for his brother Dan early in his stock car career, “we raced a little bit on dirt in the 80’s and my brother drove for the first few years (at ELKO), he won the Thunder Car Championship in 1991 and I started racing in 1994.”

Along the way, Conrad has scored an impressive seven Elko Speedway Championships ranging from the Super Trucks in 1997 to his sixth Thunder Car Championship just last year in 2022. He now has a title in each of the previous four decades he has raced in.

But there have been some ups and downs too, he spent some time racing in the Elite Late Model division and the fun of the sport was starting to wane.

From 2007-2010 Conrad did not race

full-time, “I quit racing because I wasn’t having fun, but then Mike Homan broke his wrist one year to start the season, he asked me to drive his car, I said I would drive it until it isn’t any fun anymore and that was 2011 and I’m still racing today, so it’s still fun,” said Conrad.

Conrad started building cars for other people in the mid 90’s as a part-time side-job in addition to his engineering job, he also worked as a tech guy at the track from 2000-2002 just before starting up his full-time business of building race cars, a business that he named “Brothers Jorgenson” even though his brother Dan was not involved in the business itself. The shop is located in a very convenient location, just four blocks down the road from Elko Speedway, the same spot it’s been for almost 20 years.

Just as Conrad Jorgenson is contemplating scaling down his racing, a new generation of Jorgenson siblings are now having success at Elko Speedway. Julie Jorgenson has been a fixture in the Power Stock division for a handful of years now, she finished runner-up in Championship points in both 2020 and 2021. Now her younger brother Jimmie Jorgenson is also racing in the Power Stock division, he scored his first career win at the last race of the season in 2022.

When asked how his two kids’ driving styles compare to each other Conrad said, “my brother was known as Dangerous Dan Jorgenson, he either won the race or we put a front clip on it, it was just that way. I’m a little more methodical in my racing, maybe a little more laid back. Jimmie is my brother and Julie is the same as me. They are completely different driving styles” said Conrad.

“My plan was for Julie and Jimmie to never race in the same division, but Jimmie wanted to begin racing and Julie just loves the Power Stock class and she wants to stay there and try to win a Championship” said Conrad. “I’ve dreaded those two racing each other but they are in each other’s corner with racing, she is happy when he does good, he is happy when she does good. When Jimmie won his feature, Julie finished third, dropped the car off at the tech barn and ran up to victory lane, they supported each other really



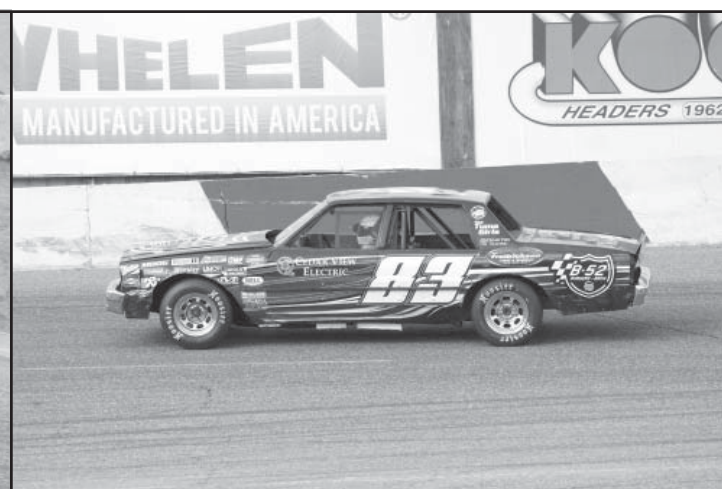
well. We will see how it goes when they actually race each other,” says Conrad.

Another thing to watch in the Power Stock division at ELKO is that Julie is dating Mike Stoer who scored 7 wins in 2022 and finished second in points. With how competitive each of them are, there is sure to be some very interesting post-race discussions this summer. Racing with and against your friends and family is not unfamiliar for the Jorgenson race team, Conrad has had to race against his customers in cars that he has built for many years.

“People question whether I give them the right information when I build their cars, I tell them, I will give you exactly what I have in my car because I think I can outdrive you. A lot of my customers have gotten as good as I have and won races. If they have Brothers Jorgenson on the back of their car, I’m less likely to move them out of the way!” said Conrad jokingly.

“I really try not to move people out of the way, back in my younger years that was not the case. If people were in my way I would move them, but now because of my business and because of winning multiple championships, I think these guys deserve to race too. If there are two cars side by side in front of you, they are racing for that spot, a guy shouldn’t wreck their race trying to get by them. That is one

Talkin' Racin' continued on page 8



Talkin' Racin' continued from page 7

way that I have changed, I don't want to be that guy" said Conrad.

"When guys are side by side holding up the field, I try to pass them on the outside, it's the long way around for sure. At ELKO you can go three wide and not get a penalty as long as you don't cause a wreck, if there is a wreck, it's your fault. Which I think is a decent rule, in the Thunder Car division all of us can race three-wide lap after lap after lap and not have a problem and we've done it plenty of times" said Conrad.

Conrad is planning on racing just part-time in the Thunder Car division this summer, his 30th year of racing at ELKO. He is very optimistic about the season at ELKO, they are building a new Thunder Car for Julie to drive full-time in 2024. They are actually building two new Thunder Cars, an Impala big car and a Monte Carlo little car.

"I haven't seen this many positive people looking for race cars in a decade. There will be three new drivers in the Thunder Cars at ELKO moving up for sure, maybe more," said Conrad.

Brothers Jorgenson has also built a Power Stock this year that will be available to rent, like a developmental car. He already has three people signed up to drive it.

"If people complain that it's an Eve of Destruction every night I tell them I don't care, there are 4,000 people here watching us race. In the past the fans at Eve of Destruction nights would just walk around when the racing was on the track, now the Eve crowds are really into the racing, so I think we made some new race fans," said Jorgenson.

Opening night Eve of Destruction at Elko Speedway is Memorial weekend, Saturday May 27th. Chances are you will see a Brothers Jorgenson car in victory lane and/or a very lively conversation in the pits afterwards.



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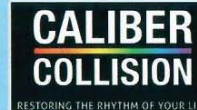
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Photo Gallery



RJ Braun, Jacob Nottestad & Steve Apel at Slinger Super Speedway
Doug Hornickel photo



Riley Stenjem & Brad "JJ" Mueller during the Miracle on the High Banks
Doug Hornickel photo



The Mongoose and The Snake artwork courtesy of Cliff Anderson
Elroy Jackson photo



The restored TQ Midget of "Rocket" Rob Caho
Brewster Baker photo



Ryan Kamish in action during Speedweeks at New Smyrna Speedway
Stroker Ace photo



The North Pole Nightmare - Bill Balog during Speedweeks at Volusia
Russ Wheeler photo



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Hall of Fame Bound



One of the legendary drivers from the area, along with multiple Cedar Lake Speedway track championships, 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. Rick also holds the top 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 Geller Automotive #17.

With 77 Late Model victories at Cedar Lake Speedway in New Richmond, WI, putting him atop a list of talented stars, Egersdorf was among the most feared WISSOTA racers during the prime of his career, 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 (MN) Speedway (the Silver 1000 in 1986, '91 and '99); Red Cedar Speedway in Menomonie, WI (Punky Manor Challenge of Champions in 1986-88 and '99); and ABC Raceway in Ashland, WI (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 the 1991

Gopher 50 on the UMP Summer Nationals at the Steele County Fairgrounds in Owatonna, MN. 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.

For additional information on Rick's career, make sure to check out "The One To Go Show" on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/@theonetogoshow>.) The two episodes with Rick also feature the Legendary Dyno Don Swearingen as a guest. Lots of laughs and good stories in these two episodes. The story about the Canadian Exchange rate is one of the best. Don't miss it.



Stan Meissner file photo



Stan Meissner file photo

Dangerous Dan



Dan Margetta

On Father's Day Weekend a little over ten years ago, I was standing in my usual place on the Slinger Speedway roof on a Sunday night videoing the races, only this night was a bit different as I had a visitor watching the action with me. NASCAR Hall of Famer and 1989 Winston Cup Champion Rusty Wallace was at the track to watch his son Steven race on Father's Day and he came up there to escape the crowd and do some videotaping of his own. As we talked, he asked what I was up to and I reiterated my week which included the Red, White, and Blue Challenge Series White race at Wisconsin International Raceway on Thursday night, Madison International Speedway races Friday, the Milwaukee Mile IndyCar race on Saturday afternoon followed by a super late model special at Dells Raceway Park Saturday night, and finally Slinger Speedway on Sunday night. He smiled, shook his head, and said I liked racing way too much and it probably wasn't good for me in the long run. When a NASCAR Hall of Famer gives you advice, you take notice and over the years, I often wondered if maybe he was right. I'll be honest with you, I have thought about taking vacations to just relax and not be

somewhere at a racetrack or maybe finding other interests and not attend so many races, but in the end the old fear of missing out (FOMO as the cool kids say) prevails and I usually wind up being at just as many if not more races as the previous year.

Then came April 5th this year and a revelation that reaffirmed liking racing this much really isn't that bad at all. It's actually pretty good for you. A little background here, about two years ago I felt something pop in my right collarbone and while it hurt for a while, eventually it became bearable and I never went in to get it checked out. The pain went away but a small lump was there and I didn't think anything about it as I still could do everything activity wise. Just before Daytona this year, that lump began to get bigger and noticeable so I went in as soon as I got back to see what was going on. After several tests, April 5th was the day of the official diagnosis, Diffuse Large B Cell Lymphoma, the most common kind of Non-Hodgkin's. It's totally curable and I'm well on the road to accomplishing just that. Liking racing this much has allowed me to meet so many wonderful and genuine people and a good number of them have reached out through phone calls, cards, letters, texts, and social media messages. Others made sure to say hello at the first race I went to since beginning this deal at Slinger or even waited at my car afterwards just to talk. I think we forget sometimes or maybe take for granted just how many real good friends we make along the way as we travel around chasing this game we call racing. I'm here to tell you I appreciate every one of them and look forward to making even more as the season goes on.

But enough about me, this is a racing paper and a racing column and I did make it to the Miracle on the Highbanks which served as the season opener for Slinger Speedway and the ASA Midwest Tour. Personally, I used the event as a goal to get through the first round of chemo treatments and it felt really great to be able to be on the roof once again operating one of the cameras for the live internet streaming broadcast. It may have been cold, but I guarantee you there was no other place I would rather be. Despite the cold weather, the racing was really good throughout the afternoon as 27 super late models signed in along with the pro late models, modifieds, Slinger bees, and American super cups. Defending Slinger Speedway super late model champion, R.J. Braun threaded his way through lapped traffic to hold off Steve Apel and score his first ASA Midwest Tour victory. Apel finished second to give his team a one-two finish to

NASCAR at the Mile



open the season while early leader Jacob Nottestad finished third. Dennis Prunty and Jeremy Lepak



completed the top five. It was nice to see Bubba Pollard make the trip up from the South to race with the Midwesterners and Wisconsin's Kulwicki Development Driver finalists Levan Van Der Geest and Riley Stenjem were in the field. Stenjem even had NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series point leader Ty Majeski calling the shots in his pits. At the end of the day, it felt really good to be back at the track and I'm looking forward to hitting the next goal of attending the Joe Shear Classic at Madison the first week of May.

A few days after Slinger's opener, a large media contingent gathered at the Milwaukee Mile for a press conference to announce a title sponsor for the return of the NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series on August 27th. The Craftsman Truck Series 175 lap race will be named the Clean Harbors 175 and will be preceded by the Sprecher 150 for the ARCA Menards Series.

Dangerous Dan continued on page 14



Dangerous Dan continued from page 13

Representatives from both sponsors, NASCAR, and ARCA, joined Ty Majeski to make the announcement and build excitement for the August 27th event which will be the second race of the first round of the playoffs and will mark NASCAR's first event at the legendary Milwaukee Mile since 2009. Majeski has had success at the Mile in his super late model but said there wasn't a whole lot set-up wise that would transfer over to the heavier NASCAR trucks.

"Just knowing the track is probably the biggest thing, there's just too big of a different mindset," Majeski explained, "You're off throttle for just a little bit in the super late model and the truck is going to be lifting, braking, tire saving, the whole deal. They're just way heavier and way more horsepower. It's just a different mindset but it's going to be big just knowing the racetrack and the characteristics of what you need."

"I don't know if you are going to have a track mapped for here. I doubt it so I guess we are kind of just going to have to old school it and I don't know who better to have on the box other than Joe

Shear Jr. to do that for a place like this," Majeski continued, "I think between his experience and my experience here, I really think we're one of the favorites coming into this race. It will be the second race in the first round of the playoffs, and I couldn't be more excited for it. There's such deep short track roots here in Wisconsin, it's going to be a great crowd."

"I think Milwaukee has a great fan base that loves NASCAR, there's a lot of great blue collar workers here and that's our fan base so for us to be able to come back and put on a great show for them will be fun to see," NASCAR Senior Vice President and Chief Track Properties Officer Chip Wile said, "This track garners great racing whether it's late models, Indy cars, or stock cars, it always is a good show here."

Wile is no stranger to the Milwaukee Mile, having celebrated in victory lane with Johnny Benson Jr.'s team the last time the NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series raced there and he gave some insight on how the August 27th race came about.

"Spire Sports and Entertainment was really pushing us to look at the Milwaukee Mile so we sent a group up here," Wile continued, "The racetrack is in

great shape, the Midwest is a great fanbase for us in NASCAR so for us to be able to come back to the Milwaukee Mile especially for our 75th Anniversary, it just makes a lot of sense and the truck series is going to put on a heck of a show here in August."

The racing season is off and running in the Midwest as several tracks have opened their season including Rockford Speedway which held the final Spring Classic Big 8 Late Model Series event, won by Dale Nottestad. My racing schedule for May as long as the chemo treatments don't stuff me in the fence, will include the Joe Shear Classic at Madison as well as a three-day dirt late model trip to Lincoln, Farmer City, and Fairbury. I may even hit the NHRA event at Joliet as well before returning for Slinger on May 21st for another super late model event and the Race Against Cancer (wow, this holds a bit more personal significance this year). Memorial Day Weekend will bring another ASA Midwest Tour event at Jefferson as well as Fireworks and more super late models at Slinger and I plan to be there to tell you all about it next month. Until then, I'll see you at the track!



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Racing History



Dale P. Danielski

With many thanks once again in order to Jim Cleveland for his yeoman effort in researching pavement racing on the Central Wisconsin racing scene, we look at the early beginnings of oval track racing for the drivers that would become the best at their craft.

It has been documented on numerous occasions that the famed trio of Marv Marzofka Tom Reffner and Dick Trickle got their starts in racing at the Stratford Speedway of Stratford, WI. A short article located by Jim Cleveland that appeared in the Stratford Journal read: “STOCK CAR RACES IN STRATFORD? It has been suggested that there are enough local enthusiasts to support a stock car race at regular intervals in Stratford. Is there someone in the community that would like to start the ball rolling?”

1959 was part of a period when local auto racing was making a comeback. In the mid 1950's stock car, or jalopy racing had not done well. Reasons were many, including the struggling economy and the constant dust problem. Interest in stock car racing again grew in the late 1950's and a few tracks began

to spring up in Wisconsin. Unfortunately, no other results, or mentions of a racetrack in Stratford were found in 1959 newspapers. It appears though, that the original dirt track planned, did get built and operate, as long time racer and promoter, William “Ace Kasten” assisted in the effort. Kasten was a true pioneer of north Central Wisconsin racing as he was on the ground floor in forming the Wisconsin Valley Stock Car Association. He was also the first president elected for the group. A call came in to Ace asking if he'd help in building the track in Stratford. Ace, along with a number of the association members pitched in laying out the track just South of Stratford on highway 97. Dump truck loads of dirt were brought in, grading took place and Stratford Speedway became a reality. According to Kasten, some racing did take place in late summer of 1959. Ace himself raced there and won.

In 1960 a 1/3-mile dirt track in Stratford did run on Wednesday nights. Results for these events weren't found. 1961 found drivers competing on a 1/3-mile dirt track there for most of the season before the track was paved in late summer. The first event on the paved surface was held on Wednesday night, August 23rd, 1961, with the sport's top dog of the era, Marlin Walbeck, winning the Feature race. Walbeck was followed by Leroy Binder, Ken Pancratz, and Allen Schjoneman in the race. The balance of results for that first race found Woody Schmutzler, Jr., winning the semi-feature, with the consolation going to Dick Shefchik. Heat race winners were Schmutzler, Ken Schaefer, and Bob Messer. Jerry Wagner was fastest in time trials, turning an 18.8 around the considered “partially” paved track. Attendance was estimated at 1,100. Results found for the rest of the season were limited, but Wagner was one that also won in Feature competition.

According to Walbeck, early racing was a rough and tumble affair. “It was almost like a demolition derby. It was pretty much a slam, bang affair.”

Tracks becoming paved greatly improved the caliber of racing however, and Stratford was one, among numerous others, that were paved and created a circuit for drivers. Walbeck claims with Stratford included you could race 6-7 times a week and make good money. “We raced at Stratford, Tomahawk, Wausau, Wis. Dells, Tomah, Adams Friendship and Black River Falls. The one year I made \$35,000 racing and only had

\$500.00 in the car! Tire costs were minimal too, one year I used the same set all summer, so yes, you could make good money.”

Central Wisconsin racers had taken note of the Stratford Speedway startup in 1959, and according to Tom Reffner, it was Marzofka who got the ball rolling for the trio from Rudolph, Wisconsin. His debut was rather inauspicious, but it got better in a hurry. “Marv was working at the Studebaker garage, they had an old Studebaker, and he said, let's go race at Stratford. I said, OK, let's go race at Stratford! So we put a roll bar in the thing, which Ron, Marv's brother told us would be legal. But it wasn't, as between the time they raced at Crowns Speedway, (Wis. Rapids, WI.) and Stratford, they changed the rule where you had to have a 4-point roll bar, and we put just a single bar behind the seat. They wouldn't let Marv run, so we went back home and put some more roll bars in it and went back the next week. He won the semi-feature 1st night out! He won \$40.00 which is what he made working for the week, so we decided we were going to be racers!”



Marv Marzofka in the early days

Stratford Speedway moved into its first full year of pavement racing in 1962 which put the track in with a group of several other asphalt speedways in the area. Racing was scheduled for Wednesday nights with cars from 1937-57 eligible to compete. Marlin Walbeck remained the dominant racer, and would do so for a number of years, showing that by winning 9 Feature races at Stratford alone in 1962. But the soon to be famous trio of racers, Marzofka, Reffner and Trickle were already emerging as legitimate contenders. 1962 found Marv Marzofka winning the Feature event on Wednesday night, August 15th, driving the #75, as ridesharing among the three was the latest thing. They could be found racing different cars with numbers 75, 88, 91 or 99 at any given time.

In 1963 it was Stratford saloon keeper, Forest “Frosty” Damon promoting events. Dave Marcis who was beginning to make a name for himself won an



Stratford Speedway in 1966
(Bob Bergeron Collection)

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early season Feature event on May 5th at the track, with the most prolific victors of the time, Walbeck, Ev Fox, Ken Pancratz, and Augie Winkleman garnering more than their share of wins. Marzofka, Reffner and Trickle were getting more seat time however, and it was Dick winning a Feature race on July 10th. Trickle won, driving the #91, 1957 Chevy. Trickle was followed in the main by Marlin Walbeck, Marv Marzofka and Lyle Nabbefeldt. Trickle won again on July 17th, for the second consecutive week driving the #91 '57 Chevy. Trickle, earlier in his career had a difficult time finding a place to compete, as he was deemed too young. No such problems in 1963 at Stratford. July 24th found the streak continuing, as Trickle outpaced Marlin Walbeck, Everett Fox, and Augie Winkleman for the Feature victory. Walbeck was still the king of racing at Stratford, but momentum was building for the Rudolph, Wisconsin racers.

Marv Marzofka in the #91 Chevy, picked off the 25-lap main event win on May 17th, 1964. Trickle in his own #99 won the Feature on May 27th. Marzofka came back on June 24th to pick up the main event win. Full fields of 30 or more cars were appearing at the events as the caliber of competition stiffened. Trickle and Marzofka continued to win on the year and were getting valuable seat time heading into 1965.

Their winning continued while Tom Reffner in his #88, 1954 Mercury, was beginning to emerge as a favorite. Denny Schwantes stole some of the thunder from the rest of the field winning several Features in 1965.

In what would be the final year of racing under the current rules package, 1966 found "Shoes" Walbeck the hotdog as Trickle, Marzofka and Reffner with their continued success traveled around to other venues most of the season. It's interesting how Walbeck got the nickname Shoes, as according to Marlin, "Mogie Dahl's (Walbeck's mechanic.) son came up with that one day. He looked in the car and where the pedals were, it was all shiny. He looked at me and asked, Shoes did you stand on it? And from

then on I was "Shoes" Walbeck."

Walbeck won the most Features during the season, but #61, Jim Back, who was also a part of the Central Wisconsin gang of racers sneaked in to win as well. Veteran driver #29, Ken Pancratz also made his presence known by finding victory lane in main event competition.

But for reasons not totally known, Stratford Speedway failed to hold events in 1967 and 1968. The track reopened in 1969 under new management but with more stock rule guidelines and also the requirement of racing on "street tires". Other area tracks adopted similar rules but the up and coming racers along with the top of the line group were not interested in that and raced elsewhere. With a shortage of cars and fans it spelled the end for the track.

If you had predicted the great success later on for a trio of stock car drivers from tiny, Rudolph, Wisconsin, most would have thought you were crazy. But meager beginnings produced three racers that set records that will never be broken. It all started at Stratford Wisconsin Speedway. According to Dick Trickle; "The first time I raced there, I rolled the car! To think it would go the way it did was never even thought about." For Tom Reffner; "It was just a lot of fun to be at the racetrack, and we figured out we could make some money at it." Marv Marzofka had a front row starting spot for a feature event, and flagman Sonny Immerfall came over and told him, "You could win this thing." "I stood on the gas and led the whole race. I just left 'em!"

That could certainly be said in general for the outstanding careers of Marv Marzofka, Tom Reffner and Dick Trickle, leaving many in their wake, all beginning at Stratford, Wisconsin Speedway.

Looking back in time, Stratford Speedway results, on Wednesday night, September 6th, 1961, it was Jerry Wagner winning the Feature race. Jesse Meachem, Dick Shefchik, and Allen Schjoneman followed. On Wednesday night, June 20th, 1962, Marlin Walbeck paced the field in the Feature race, followed by Ev Fox, Augie Winkleman and Dick Trickle. On Wednesday night, August 8th, 1962, Augie Winkleman won the Feature race. Next at the line

were Marlin Walbeck, Vic Kopacz, and Ken Pancratz. On Wednesday night, July 31st, 1963, it was Everett Fox winning the Feature race. Behind Fox at the stripe were Dick Trickle, Ken Pancratz and Dick Schultz. On Wednesday night, August 21st, 1963 it was Marlin Walbeck winning the main event. He was followed at the checkered by Denny Schwantes, Dick Schultz and Barney Eckes. On Wednesday night, June 24th, 1964, it was Marv Marzofka racing to the main event win over Dick Schultz, Augie Winkleman, and Dave Marcis. Dave Marcis captured the 25 lap Feature win on Wednesday night, July 1st, 1964 followed by Dick Schultz, Rich Somers, Augie Winkleman, Don Larsen, Gary Kneisley and Jerry Wagner. Dick Trickle won the 25 lap Feature race on Wednesday night, July 22nd, 1964. Behind Trickle at the finish were Marv Marzofka, Marlin Walbeck and Rich Somers. Denny Schwantes won the Feature race, Wednesday night, August 4th, 1965. Marlin Walbeck was second followed by Dick Trickle, Ken Pancratz, and Marv Marzofka. On Wednesday night, June 9th, 1965, Tom Reffner won the 20 lap semi-feature race besting a 14 car field. Ken Pancratz, won the 25 lap Feature on Wednesday night, June 29th, 1966, with Marlin Walbeck, Ron Beyer, Hilarian Michlig and Dick Severson next at the finish. A flash from the past, looking at some of the other racers that competed at Stratford Speedway, to include, but not limited to, #10, Bruno Swiderski, #57 Ron Graveen, #17 Bill Bowden, #4U, Sonny Immerfall, #77 Ed Miller, #32 Verne Piotrowski, #0, Bill Wirtz, #5, Irv Kurth, #55 Ray Hoffman, #6, Norm Van Prooyan, #91, Jere O'Day, #7-100, Dave Unertl, #74, Dave Froggatt, #20 Tom Bump, #X, Lyle Nabbefeldt, #88, Mike Knauf, #91, Moose Peterson, #44, Neil Callahan, #43, Larry Sparks, #6, Duane Trickle, #15, Carroll Pittsley, #63, Al Nowak, #S-14, Pistol Pete, #03, Junior Marzofka, #77, Dick Ketchum, #59, Lee Zophi, #77, Orv Buelow, #44, Phil Bickley.

Questions, comments, opinions and other information welcome at Starmaker Multimedia 967 10th Ave N Ste A, Onalaska, WI. 54650. 608-783-5125 608-518-2478 or at dale@starmakermultimedia.com





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When one track closes, no new ones open

By Dan Plan

Everyone is familiar with the term “when one door closes, a new one opens.” Well, that isn’t necessarily the case when it comes to the number of short tracks in this part of the country. The current trend is when one track closes, no new ones open.

With the announcement earlier this year that Rockford Speedway will close at the end of this season, it reminded me of the most recent track to shut down here in Minnesota. The Minnesota State Fair track shut down following the 2002 race (without letting anybody know) and Raceway Park in Shakopee, MN closed 10 years ago at the conclusion of the 2013 racing season. John Hellendrung let us know well in advance of the closing and they had an overflow crowd for their final event.

Rockford Speedway’s closing also got me thinking about the number of new short tracks that have been built in Minnesota during the past 30 years. There haven’t been many. You can count them on one

hand and still have a few fingers left.

The vast majority of short tracks in this part of the country were built in the 1950’s and 1960’s. The only new short tracks in Minnesota I can think of off the top of my head were built in the 1990’s. Three new tracks came to life around this time: I-94 (in Sauk Centre and Fergus Falls) and Deer Creek Speedway were built in the 1990’s. Two of these three tracks (Deer Creek and I-94 in Fergus Falls) are still

up and running well. The other one (I-94 Raceway in Sauk Centre) is long gone.

Meanwhile, the number of tracks that have closed in Minnesota is more than double the number of new tracks that have come to life. Tracks that I’ve attended that are no longer around are; Cannon River Speedway, Minnesota State Fair Speedway, North Starr Speedway, Olmsted County Speedway, Raceway Park, Steele County Fairgrounds and Stillwater Motor Speedway. Others that have closed that I never had a chance to attend include numerous county

fairground tracks, Grove Creek Speedway and WeeTown Speedway. Dodge County Speedway in Kasson used to run weekly, but only hosts a couple of events each year these days, and now the future of Chateau Raceway in Lansing now looks to be in question.

People often assume that when a short track shuts down, everybody will just find somewhere else to race. I’ve seen first-hand this is not the case. When a short track closes, very few drivers continue to race. Most of them just call it quits. That is unfortunate not only for the drivers, but the fans as well.

The closing of short tracks is a trend that I sure hope does not continue. I can’t really envision anyone investing the time and money to build a new short track in Minnesota. Actually, I can’t see a new short track popping up anywhere in the upper-Midwest in this day and age. On the other hand, I sure hope we don’t lose anymore.



Even though it has been closed for over 40 years, the front stretch of Cannon River Speedway was still visible a few years ago

The Minnesota State Fair grandstand demolition following the final event in 2002



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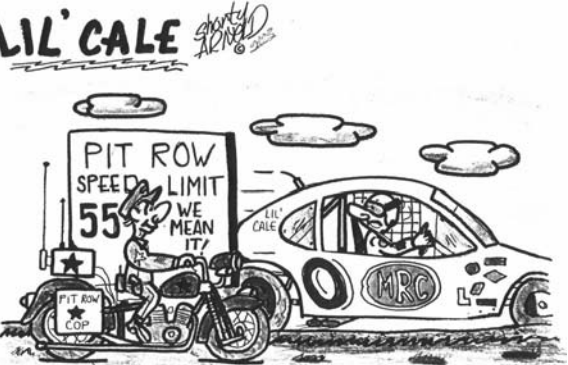
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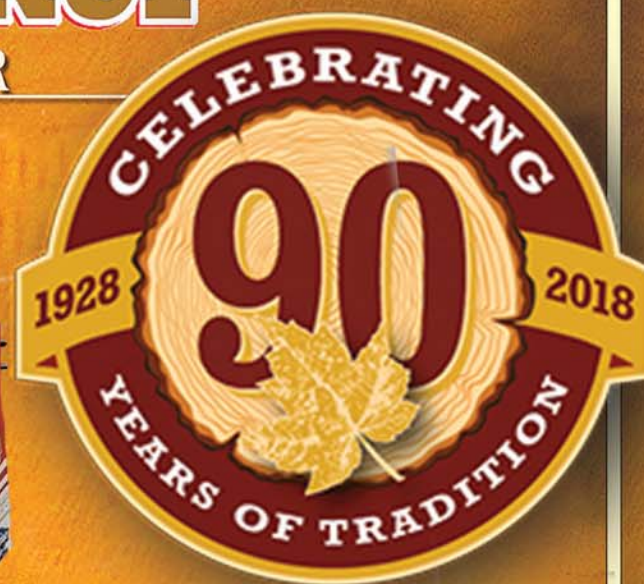
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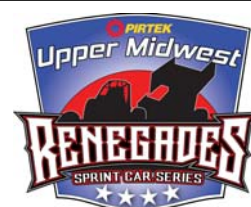
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