

THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION

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THE MIDWEST'S SHORT TRACK AUTO RACING AUTHORITY



County Fair Spotlight

Vol. 28 Issue 4 August 2024

Inside...



Photo Gallery



IndyCar In Iowa



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Publisher's Note
Racing According to Plan



Dan Plan

The end of July and beginning of August represents the time of year when the county fairs in Minnesota and Wisconsin take place. Along with the county

The County Fair

fair atmosphere, these events often times hold short track racing events at the facilities that still have tracks located on the fairground property.

Most of the weekly race tracks I attended while growing up were privately owned facilities. The trips to the county fair races were usually special occasions. We would go as a family, with my mom and sister walking the fairgrounds and me and the old man checking out the racing. What I enjoyed about the county fair races then, was the opportunity to see drivers from different tracks meet at a neutral facility. The same theory pretty much holds true today.

This year I attended the county fair races at LaCrosse Fairgrounds Speedway in West Salem, WI for a rare, mid-summer Super Late Model special event and the Dodge County Fair in Kasson, MN for the annual Thunderbird Open. Based on the number of people I saw in the grandstands; I would rate both of these as successful.

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Dan Plan photo

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RACING
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August 2024

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Publishers note from page 3

Within this issue, you'll read more about the county fair race at LaCrosse Fairgrounds Speedway in Dale Danielski's column on page 8, along with a plethora of photos from Kasson, Faribault and LaCrosse throughout the other pages.

One of the county fair racing events I had hoped to attend, but missed out on was the Rice County Fair. The Rice County Fair racing event was scheduled for the same night as the inaugural Tom Reffner Classic at LaCrosse. Back in the late 1980's I attended one of the last events for Modifieds at the big-half mile at the Rice County Fairgrounds. Since the early 1990's, the big track has been removed and a smaller, infield track has been utilized for enduro type racing. For the 2024 Rice County Fair, the IMCA Oldtimers group scheduled an event for local Midwest Modified (B-Mod) drivers and two of their vintage classes. From the photos and feedback I've received from IMCA Oldtimers board members and fans in attendance, the event was a success. They've been invited back for 2025 and also have the possibility of additional events outside of the fair exist for next season.

In this day and age of race tracks going by the wayside, it is refreshing to see one coming back. Even if it was only for one day, it is good to see.



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Talkin' Racin'
with Jason



Jason D. Searcy

As the saying goes “everyone loves a parade,” but an IndyCar parade at Iowa Speedway was not lovely. 21 Indycar races have now been held at Iowa Speedway since the inaugural race in 2007. July 13th and 14th of 2024 Scott McLaughlin and Will Power added their names to the star studded list of winners at the 7/8th mile oval in Newton (IA). Memorable drivers have won at Iowa including: Dan Wheldon, Dario Franchitti, Tony Kanaan, Helio Castroneves, Ryan Hunter-Reah, Marco Andretti, James Hinchcliff,

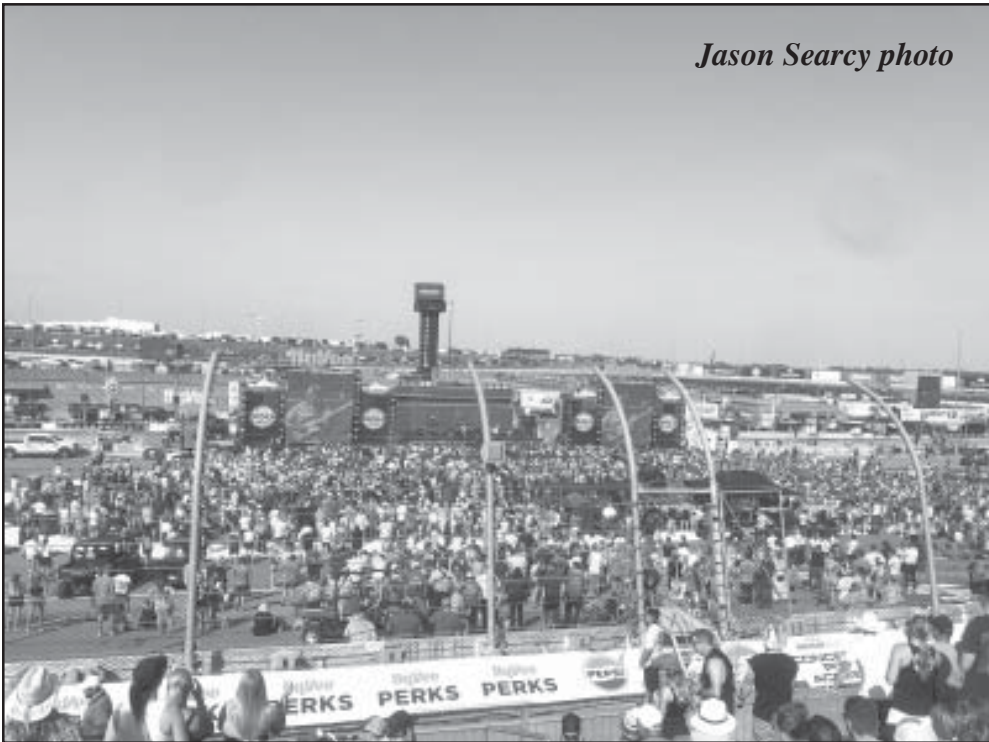
Simon Pagenaud, Pato O’Ward and the king of Iowa Speedway Josef Newgarden who has won there 6 times. Of all those races, the worst on-track product was in 2024.

This event should have been a wonderful showcase of the Indycar series and racing as a whole. The sponsor Hy-Vee brought in 4 of the top musical acts in the Nation to perform either before or after the racing action. Eric Church, Luke Combs, Kelsea Ballerini and Post Malone fans showed up in huge numbers, it was the perfect opportunity to promote racing to an entirely new and young audience, people who are open to motorsports. Instead, those new potential fans were subjected to the ultimate cliché, they just saw cars driving in circles.

Hy-Vee has been a godsend to this event, they helped pick Iowa Speedway up and out of the garbage heap and brought it back to being a first class facility. The Friday pit stop competition and Driver autograph session was great, the drivers were friendly and

upbeat. The weekend concourse booths are more than anyone could ask for, there was entertainment everywhere you looked, and it was a free-stuff jubilee just like the MN state fair. Even though it was incredibly hot with tempera-

IndyCar In Iowa



Jason Searcy photo

tures in the 90’s, the vibe was very good, the opening ceremonies were well done, and the F-16 Flyover was incredible, the crowd was energized, until the race began.

If you just look at the results, the races in 2024 seem similar to the 19 other previous ones, but the racing was very different and not in a good way. Because there was little to no racing to be had. It was a follow the leader parade where the drivers were all forced to drive a very narrow one-lane track. Most of the 500 laps completed during the two day event, no passing was even attempted. Will Power won the Sunday race, he won on fuel mileage and passed all the cars in the pits, at the end of the event he slowed down as the leader so he would not catch cars at the back of the pack because it was nearly impossible to pass, he knew it and so did everyone else.

Comparing the stats, in 2023 there were 2,670 total passes and 698 for position in the two races. In 2024 there were only 396 total passes, that is 6X less action than the previous year, plus only 195 of those passes were for position. The previous 19 races in Iowa averaged 9.1 lead changes, the Saturday day race had 6 lead changes all during pit stops. The Sunday race had a grand total of one lead change also during a pit stop. No passes for the lead on the track all weekend.

Even the drivers themselves seemed embarrassed by the performance “It’s a shame we didn’t put on a better show. I’m sure everybody would agree it was a very boring show” said point leader Alex



Jason Searcy photo

Talkin' Racin' continued on page 9

Talkin Racin continued from page 6

Palou. Former winner Pato O'Ward called it a "snoozefest." The 30,000+ fans who are now paying much higher ticket prices than previous years and also sat out in the 90 degree temperatures and hot sun both days deserved better racing than that.

Whose fault was it?

There is plenty of blame to go around. First of all, NASCAR is the owner of Iowa Speedway, they partially repaved the track for 2024. By partially repaving the track to smooth out the bumps they made the racing groove faster. The 2023 fast qualifier clocked in at 181.578 mph, in 2024 the fast time was 188.248, almost 7 mph faster, making it more difficult to pass.

I don't think repaving the track is the problem, when the track was new in 2007 there were 13 lead changes in that first race. The partial repaving was the problem, because there was no secondary groove. The NASCAR cup drivers were able to bump and race side by side after the partial repave, the Indycar drivers were not.

New tires had little advantage in the IndyCar race, the tire did not slow down, in the Sunday race the entire field raced over 100 laps to start the race without pitting. Small marbles of tire littered the top edge of the groove preventing anyone from even attempting to leave the narrow race line. Street sweeping trucks circumvented the track during each caution to no avail. No cars even attempted to race



Jason Searcy photo

out of the groove and there was no strategy advantage to pit early for tires.

IndyCar had bad timing by unveiling their new hybrid technology motor thus adding 200 lbs of weight to the car and causing numerous delays during qualifying because of technology failures. Poor planning as the teams obviously have not had the necessary practice time to adjust to this change.

IndyCar should count their blessings that Hy-Vee has sponsored the events not only at Iowa Speedway but also at the double header at the Milwaukee Mile (WI) August 31st and September 1st in 2024. The Iowa Speedway IndyCar weekend has been renewed for 2025. Before those events next year, the entire track should be repaved or at the very least they need to bring a tire that has some fall off, something has to be done to make for better racing. If not, they may as well just add in some Shriners in go-karts and a few marching bands because true race fans have no interest in watching another parade at Iowa Speedway.

Jason Searcy photo



Racing History



Dale P. Danielski

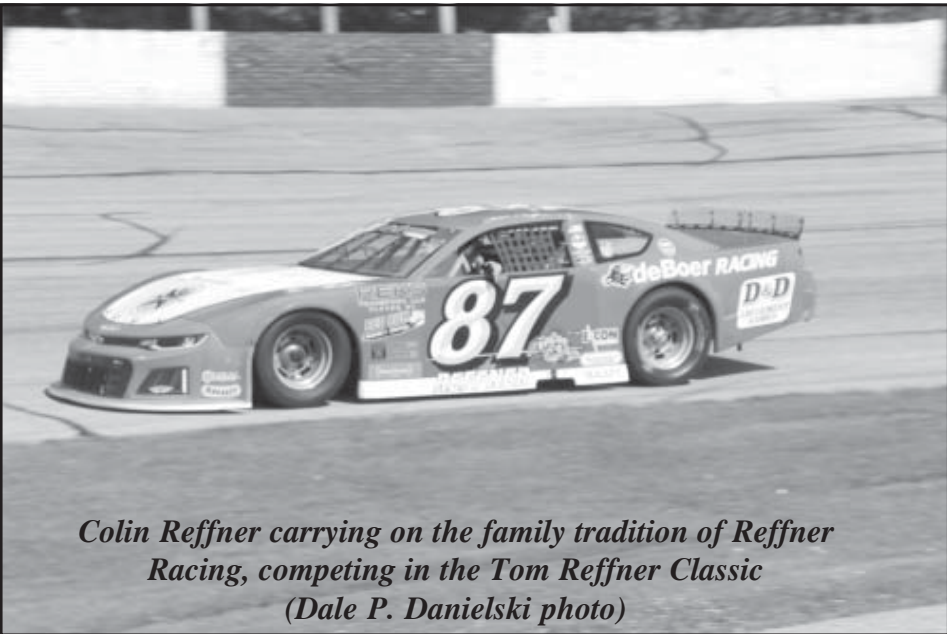
There is just something special about attending the Fair. County Fair, State Fair, you name it. The Fair carries with it an atmosphere all its own. When a racing event is added in, it adds to that great atmosphere ten fold.

We attended the 133rd La Crosse Interstate Fair in West Salem, WI., and were fortunate to catch two stock car racing events, with both providing ample entertainment value.

Tom Reffner has been a household name in the annals of Wisconsin short track racing. Of his 412 career Feature wins, many big wins took place at the unique, 5/8 mile paved

La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway oval. So, it was no surprise after Tom's passing last October that an event would be held in his honor.

Wednesday, July 17th, the first day of the annual Fair was chosen as the date with Super Late Models and the CWRA group participating. With



Colin Reffner carrying on the family tradition of Reffner Racing, competing in the Tom Reffner Classic
(Dale P. Danielski photo)

SOMETHING SPECIAL ABOUT THE FAIR

Sleepy Hollow Auto Group putting up big money for the event, the two 44 lap Features for the Super Lates were set to pay \$8888.88 each. With that kind of money, you'd have thought an Oktoberfest type field of cars would be on hand. Sadly, only 21 cars were entered, and some were no-shows due to not being able to park their too tall haulers in the pits. Please, play me the violin. With all the hired hands of these mega teams, I'm sure they could have managed to get in the pit area what they needed without bringing their big obstruction haulers down. This especially being true, since without pit stops, much less would have been needed. Seventeen cars actually were at the track to race although Carter Christensen smacked the wall in practice ending his day before it even started. That put 16 cars on the clock and that's ultimately what started in each Tom Reffner 88 Feature.

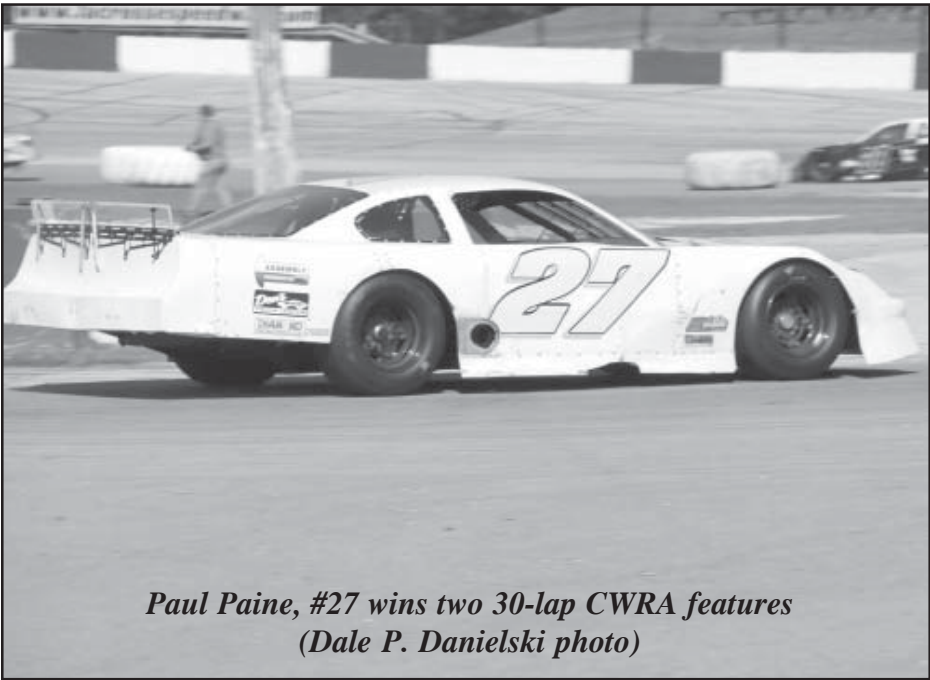
Ty Majeski was one racer that didn't mind parking his hauler in the upper pit, and racing, as it turned out, paid off in a big way. Majeski set the fastest time, one of only two racers in the 18 second bracket and won both 44 lap Features. With that he was paid a bonus bringing his winnings to \$20,000. Overall, the racing was quite competitive but when Majeski brings his A game, which is nearly all the time, he's unbeatable. That proved to be the case tonight.

Paul Paine is no stranger to short track racing, having raced out of the Twin Cities area for years. That experience came in handy as he won both 30 lap Features for the CWRA group at the Tom Reffner Classic. Interesting to note that they did their racing on the inner track of the La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway. The track is listed as a 1/4 mile oval, but I'd bet it is closer to a 1/5 mile in length. With each end of the track featuring very different turns there is a huge degree of difficulty in setting up a car for it. Paine mastered it, besting a 12 car field, and in doing so got the biggest check and a really cool trophy to go along with it.

To conclude our visit to the La Crosse Interstate

Fair, we caught the Saturday night, July 20th race program which featured NASCAR Late Models competing in a 50 lap feature race. Doesn't seem like a big deal, 50 laps, but the majority of these racers run an 8 or 9 gallon fuel cell. That's more than adequate for the normal 25 lap main, but would it hold enough for 50? As it turns out, no one had an issue and with two caution flag slowdowns everything went just fine.

It was definitely fine for Skylar Holzhausen as he captured his first NASCAR Late Model feature win of the season, holding off a late surge by Jacob Goede. Holzhausen had his car dialed in tonight and appeared on the way to a relatively easy win. That was definitely the case when Goede was involved in



Paul Paine, #27 wins two 30-lap CWRA features
(Dale P. Danielski photo)

an early race skirmish and sent to the rear of the field. He methodically worked his way back to the front though and when the caution flag flew with just 4 laps remaining, he had a legitimate shot at another win. The restart was a double file one with Goede to the outside of Holzhausen. Holzhausen had a nearly perfect restart and edged ahead on the backstretch with a couple laps to go to secure the win.

With Fair food consumed, beverages downed and racing complete, it ended our fun at the fair for this time around. Hopefully we hang in there to attend the 134th.

Here and there...Made our way to the Fayette County Speedway, West Union, Iowa recently and enjoyed some good dirt track racing. With all the rain this Spring and early Summer, it was nice to catch an event at the 3/8 mile Fairgrounds Speedway. The track is trying to include Sprint cars on their weekly program, but it has been a slow process getting cars. At this event three were on hand but by the end of the

Something Special About The Fair
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Something Special About The Fair from page 8

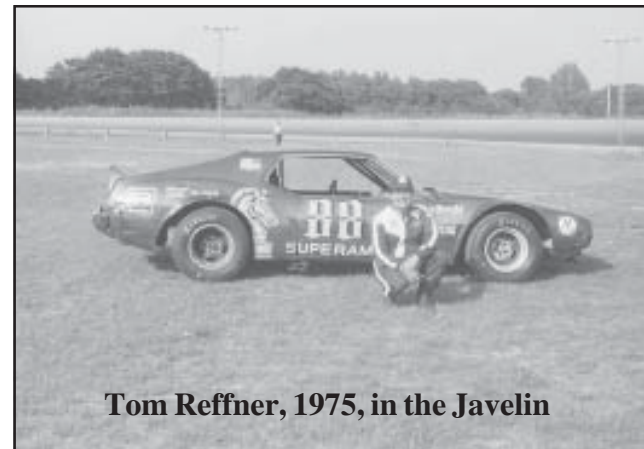
Feature only one was left! Mississippi Thunder Speedway, Fountain City, WI., has suffered through rainouts as well, but not so here Friday night. Late Model, Modified, B Modified, ECO Mods, Hobbystock and Stock Cars all raced on the night...

According to Dan Fredrickson, "I was offered a truck ride with Roush Racing. I said, OK, I'll do that. They came back with, bring us \$100,000 and the ride is yours. I said, no, you should be paying me! As time went on, I wish I'd done that, because today a seat in the truck series would cost 2 Million." Hard to believe we are heading into August already, but of course that means starting to gear up for Champions Reunion 16, as part of Oktoberfest racing weekend. This year's reunion will be held on Sunday afternoon, October 6th.

Event is in the Hospitality Chalet in turns one and two of the grandstands of the La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway. With the passing of legend Tom Reffner this year's reunion will be themed toward Reffner Racing. Looking to bring in special guests for the occasion which is always a great time. Correspondence this year will be to Starmaker Multimedia, 314, 3rd Avenue South, Onalaska, WI., 54650. Phone 608-518-2478. Will have more on the event soon.

On June 8th, 1975, Tom Reffner won the 30 lap Feature at Columbus 151 Speedway, Columbus, WI. On June 18th, 1975, Tom Reffner won the 100 lap Feature at Tri-County Speedway, West Chester, OH.

Quote of the column. "I thought it would just be a fad Tom racing. It went on for 50 years." Dee Dee Reffner speaking of husband Tom starting his racing career in 1959 and having it continue into the late 1990s.



Tom Reffner, 1975, in the Javelin

Questions, comments, opinions and other information should now be directed to Starmaker Multimedia 314 3rd Avenue South, Onalaska, WI. 54650. 608-518-2478 or to dale@starmakermultimedia.com



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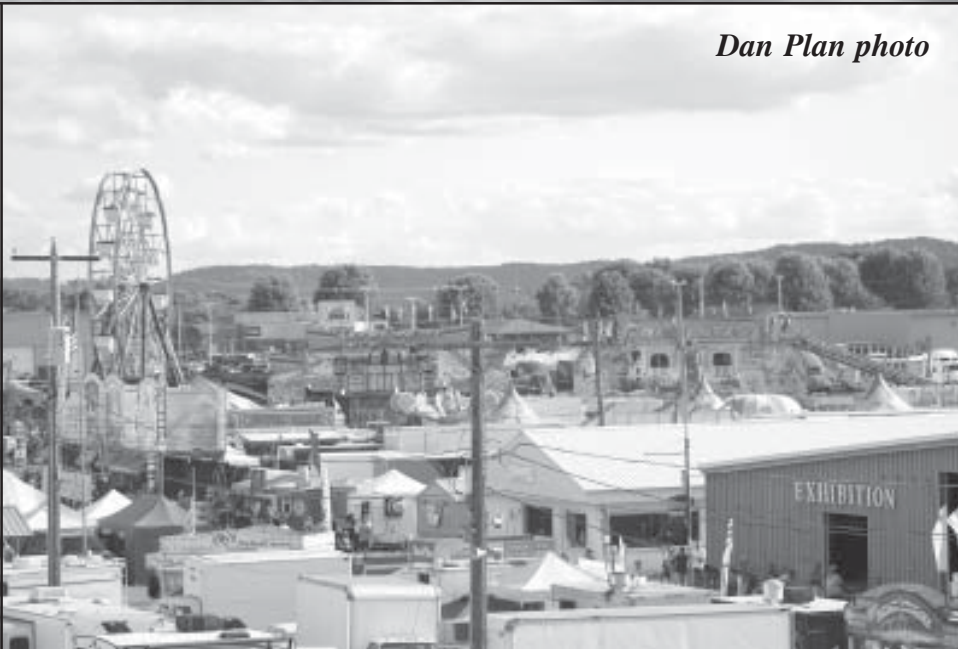
County Fair Spotlight



Dan Plan photo



IMCA Oldtimers photo



Dan Plan photo

Krysta Doughty leads the Hobby Stock field during the Thunderbird Open at Dodge County Speedway in Kasson, MN (top photo.) The crowd watching the B-Mod main event during the Rice County Fair in Faribault, MN (bottom left) and the midway behind the grandstand during the LaCrosse County Fair at LaCrosse Fairgrounds Speedway (bottom right.)



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Photo Gallery



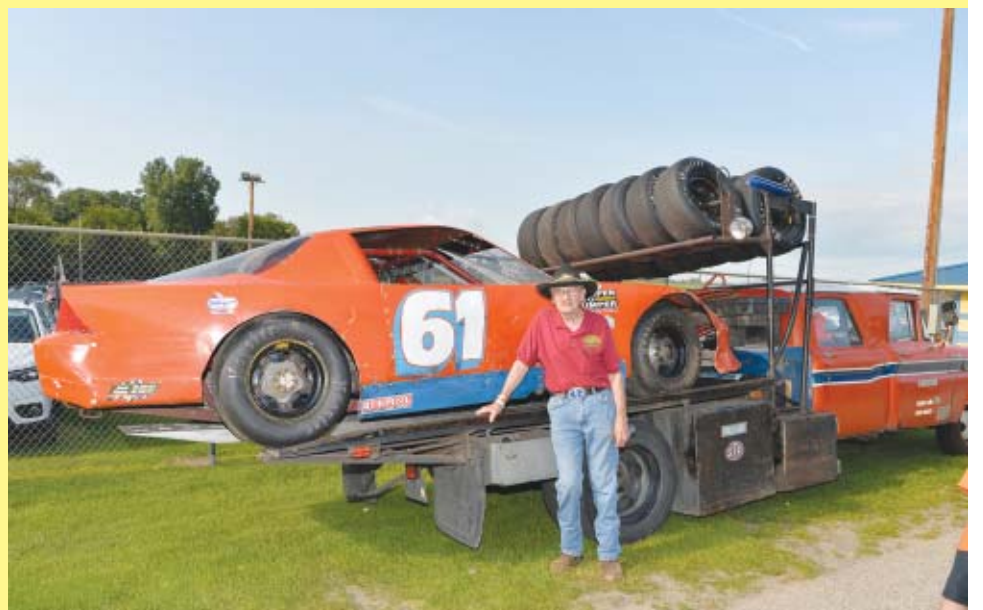
*Ryan Farrell and Gabe Sommers at Jefferson
(Doug Hornickel photo)*



*Jordan DeVoy and Casey Johnson at Jefferson
(Doug Hornickel photo)*



*Three-wide action at Jefferson
(Doug Hornickel photo)*



*The legendary Jerry Eckhardt and his iconic hauler
(Doug Hornickel photo)*



*Brent Kane swept the Thunder Cars two weekends in a row at Elko
(Dan Plan photo)*



*Jake Ryan leads the Elko points going into the second half of the year
(Dan Plan photo)*

THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION

Photo Gallery



*Bryan Reffner alongside Colin Reffner at LaCrosse
(Dan Plan photo)*



*Rice County Vintage Stock winner Ben Behne and Paul Gillund
(IMCA Oldtimers photo)*



*Rice County Open Wheel winner Henry Strube and Paul Gillund
(IMCA Oldtimers photo)*



*Rice County B-Mod winner Kaden Kath and family
(IMCA Oldtimers photo)*



*The Wheeler - Dan Wheeler at Kasson
(Dan Plan photo)*



*Thunderbird Open winner Ryan Wetzstein
(Dan Plan photo)*

MULTI-DAY NATIONAL EVENTS

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Going in Circles



Charlie Spry

The Hobby Stock division at the Lafayette County Speedway is made up of a group that is highly competitive from front to back. Nothing easy here.

One of the drivers who has been making some noise this year at the track is Michael Swenson. Now in his third full season of racing, the Boscobel, Wisconsin pilot is starting to be in the hunt for feature victories every week, and every track that he races at.

He started out just like many do, making laps and getting familiar with the sport. He grew up interested in the racing and naturally wanted to try it, saying, "My Uncle (Greg Swenson) raced at Lancaster in the Limited Stock class in the late 1990's and early 2000's," Said Michael. "That is my only immediate connection to the sport, despite a family literally filled with mechanics and auto body guys. Going to the races at Lancaster on Saturday nights is a great memory from my childhood, and now I get to race there. That is my Daytona 500." Unfortunately, Lancaster only races on one night during their fair.

His first car was one that he built himself, a learning process. "I did a lot wrong," Stated Michael. "I had the cage too far forward and it was hard to add weight where it needed to be." By working with the car and gaining experience, he was able to gain speed

and be much more competitive. That first car was wrecked badly last year at the fair race at Lancaster, so it was time to move onto a newer one that was already professionally built for racing. "I would have been ahead if I would have gone that way when I started racing," Said Michael, "But then I would not have learned a lot of the things that I now know. I did learn a lot and figured some things out so that I was prepared when I did get a better car."

His experience is showing, as he won a feature at Maquoketa, Iowa, late last season, and has had several runner-up feature finishes as well, still waiting to get his first feature win here at Darlington.

Michael has had his share of bad luck and has had a couple of wild crashes, which goes with the territory. One was a rollover here at Darlington where he landed upside down. "I am a big guy, and I have had shoulder surgery before, so it was kind of hard for me to hold myself up to get the belts undone in that position," Noted Michael. The other one was when his car got pretty much destroyed at Lancaster, when a pileup ensued, and another car literally drove over the back of him. That is the night where his first car was totaled out and he got his current car after that.

While he has the one feature win so far, he has also had several runner-up finishes, proving that he is becoming a definite factor every night that he races. His car is painted green, which many racers avoid from superstition. "I wanted to stand out," Said Michael, "There are too many black and white cars. My Grandpa was an Arctic Cat dealer and I grew up around the green and purple so I am used to it."

He lists his upside down venture at Darlington as his worst wreck, but he has many good memories so far, including that first feature win, and even the first time he got a car out onto the track, saying, "Making it out onto the track in a sanctioned race with a car that I built from scratch was very gratifying."

Sponsors on the green #54 include Fillback Dealerships, Murphy's Custom Welding, Cornell Plumbing, Cross-roads Auto, Sure Fire Spray Foam, TJE Construction, Nutrien, and Hyperco. Michael

is married to his number one supporter, Ocean, And their Daughters, Harbor and Cordelia, and his Dad and Uncle Robert. He is employed as a production engineer specialist for Plastic Ingenuity in Mazomanie, Wi.

Finally got a chance to take a trip up to Wausau and the State Park Speedway. With this likely being the last season for this track, I wanted to make sure to get there at least once. I have

a lot of good memories of this neat little track.

It is nice to see veteran racer Tim Nawrocki back out racing again in this possible final year here. The Pure Stock racer is a former track champion here and won many features but took some time off before coming back out this year. His race car started out as a '75 Monte Carlo, and stayed that way for awhile, before Tim put on a late 1980's Firebird body on the car probably some twenty years ago or so. He raced it this way for some time but parked the car a few years back. "It has been five years since it has been raced," Said Tim, "It just sat around during that time and these things don't like to sit. I had to go over just about everything to get it back on the track," Tim won a heat race on this night and ran well, so while the car may look a little beat, it ran well and he drove it well, befitting of a championship level driver.

Mini-Mod racer Brian Marquardt is having fun racing with a new car to him. His racing history is a bit different than many, as he started racing much later in life. "I was fifty-five years old when I started and am fifty-nine now.," Said Brian. "I got started helping Chad Ferge with his car, and then I had surgery that took me out of things for a bit. Chad told me that when I had rehabbed and gotten 100% that he had an old car that I could take out and have some fun with, so I did. It was the car I had been racing the past four years, but I thought it was finally time to get a better car after the old one got totaled last year so now I have this Nissan."



Charlie Spry photo

He has always raced with the number 40, and this year behind the number he added "Years and days," This comes from many things that were mentioned in stories or events that happened in the Bible, including 40 years, days, is the time that God trialed, or probation period, 40 years that Israel had to wait before going into the promised land, and 40 days that Jesus fasted in the wilderness. The number 40



Charlie Spry photo

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Going In Circles continued from page 13

comes up often in the scriptures, so this is the meaning of his number.

Brian has a simple goal in his racing, saying, “I just want to have fun. It is all about having fun and loading it up on the trailer at the end of the night in one piece.” Brian is doing just that, as the car looks sharp even this late in the year. He even led a feature recently for twelve laps and finished in fifth place, a nice run in a very tough division.

The Super Late Model feature on this night was one for the record books. Early on it looked like Justin Mondeik was going to run off with the feature win, but Brock Heinrich chased him down and took the lead late in the race, appearing to edge Mondeik at the line by .005 seconds to take the win. However, post-race inspection saw Heinrich penalized for having his transponder in the wrong place, therefore giving the win to Mondeik, with Heinrich scored in second place. It was an absolutely great race to witness, and both drivers handled the whole thing with class.

Other feature winners on this night included Brad Abt in the Mini-Mods, Jeff Spatz in the Pure Stocks, and Eric Breitenfeldt in the Mini-Stocks.

Took in some shows at Madison International Speedway the latter part of July. I have enjoyed the MisFitz class racing this year. One car that kind of stands out is the open wheeled modified of Dave Edwards. Dave is especially adept at bracket racing on the oval, which fits in good for competing in this timed division. He is the 2019 and 2023 champion in this division here and has fared well at the Rockford Bahama Brackets and any other bracket event he can find. He seems to have found a liking to these kinds of

events.

Being from that area, Dave got his start around 25 years ago, starting off racing at the old Lake Geneva Raceway, in their super stock class after a stint of helping sportsman driver Brian Baker to begin with.

After the Lake Geneva track closed, he kind of bounced around for awhile, racing for a year at Slinger, raced a Late model at Rockford in 2009, raced in the Big 8 series, as well as trucks for about 3 years. In 2014 he got a modified to race and has been racing this on the asphalt wherever he can, including this class at MIS. His worst wreck in memory happened at Lake Geneva. “I got into that wall on the backstretch, and that didn’t take much to send you over if you did that. I rolled over on the backstretch and flew off into turn 3-4. The one thing good about that was that there were no wall in the corners at Lake Geneva, so you had runoff room. We fixed the car back up and were there the following week,” Said Dave.

Like most that raced there, Dave misses the old Lake Geneva track. “We lived 15 minutes away from the track. I would have moved up to late model there if it had stayed open,” Said Dave.

Dave has raced at a lot of area asphalt tracks, but only raced on the dirt a couple of times at Wilnot in his early days in a street stock. “It was not a very good car and we did not do too well,” Said Dave.

On the asphalt side of things, he noted that he has raced at pretty much every track in the area, except for Grundy.

MIS has an annual “Racer’s Reunion” night, which I always enjoy. This year Jim Back was enshrined in the hall of fame here. The first late model champion on the half-mile in 1969, Jim was a top runner wherever he raced. Much of the Back family

was present to receive this award.

The vintage cars were also present tonight. With vintage cars also comes some “vintage” drivers. I always like talking to Le Larsen and Russ Grossen. Le has himself a beautiful early 1970’s Camaro, which was also built in part with Grossen. For Le, he remembered his very first race here in 1967. “It was still the quarter-mile, and I had a ’55 Ford sportsman type car. It was a stick shift, and I was so nervous that my foot kept coming off the clutch pedal. I ended up spinning out and getting slammed into by another car. The guy jumped out of his car and he was a big guy, and I thought he was going to come beat on me, but he rushed over and said that he was so sorry that he ran into me, and then he helped pull the fender out on the car.”

For Russ, he also started racing about the same time. “My very first car was an old Studebaker. I didn’t know what I was doing and I had a lot of trouble with it, and only raced it a couple of times. After that, I got my ’55 Chevy two door sedan and ran in the hobby stocks.”

For Eric Melchoir, he is racing in a car that is a replica of one that his late Father Ed raced for some time. Eric also is a racing history buff. Eric likes going around to various tracks, including some that his father never had a chance to race at.

Steve Rubeck races the Don Leach replica Camaro, the yellow #58 owned by another former racer, Keith Selvog. Keith is a story all by himself and has accomplished much as a driver, car builder, and engine builder. There is quite literally nothing that he can’t or hasn’t done.

Another veteran racer is Tom Gille, who is racing a John Knaus replica Camaro. Growing up as a teenager, Tom worked on the Knaus crew, so the replica is fitting. Another driver like the others above that really knows his stuff.

I really appreciate that the McKarns family has this night in honor of the “old guys.” It is one race that I never miss.

Late Model racer Laney Osborne was present to race for the first time here on the half-mile. Laney has raced at places such as Dells, Golden Sands and Jefferson, but never on a track this big. She did very well. Had good speed, a good line, raced door to door with people, raced clean, did everything you should for your first time on a track. She looked very impressive! A product of the Bandolero division, she runs strong in the Late Model.

On a final note, we recently lost Phyllis Moore from a battle with cancer. Phyllis was an integral part of the old Columbus 151 Speedway and Wife to racer Pete. I had the opportunity to work for the Moore family for a couple of years, and Phyllis was just a super sweet person and a great person to work for. The whole Moore family and everyone there were amongst the best I have worked for/with. My sincere condolences.

Also, Rachel Langsdorf suddenly passed earlier this month. Wife of racer Mike, she was another person that was just a joy to be around. My condolences to Mike and family.



Charlie Spry photo

Dangerous Dan**Dan Margetta**

As race fans in the Midwest we spend a lot of time debating and comparing our own Midwest style of racing with “racing in the South” or “racing out East,” or any other part of the country. We like to tout the race craft and etiquette expected of drivers up here and will proudly put “our” drivers up against superstars around the country and rigorously back them up in heated online discussions. I know I’m looking at the comparisons through Midwest glasses, but I really feel racing is entwined in the cultural way of life here and much more so than any other regions. We “have” to race in the Midwest, there’s no other options, and we will do just about anything to get to the racetrack as both competitors and spectators. That passionate dedication that is part of our DNA up here really shined through in the Slinger Nationals lap money program at Slinger Speedway this month.

The Nationals lap money idea was founded by Dan Casey as a way to show appreciation for travel-

Slinger Nationals Lap Money

ing drivers who came to compete in the Nationals against the strong local contingent. About a week or so before the Nationals, Casey, Craig Zeller (with wife Tricia and sons Tanner and Zack) and Dave Ausloos begin to collect contributions from just about anyone involved in the Midwest racing scene with the idea that the money is awarded to the driver that leads the particular lap the money is posted on. The concept is completely separate from the speedway and 100% is awarded to the lap leaders making it a true grassroots effort. The list of contributors each year consists of race fans, drivers, crew members, race team sponsors, track sponsors, media members, track workers, and just about anyone else who spends time at the speedway. With 200 laps to cover for the Nationals, a minimum contribution is \$20 and often times fans will pool money together to achieve an elevated total to lead “their” lap. One group, the United Race Fans of Wisconsin holds a fantasy challenge 50/50 type game in the parking lot before the race where fans pick drivers to form a team with half the entry fee going toward the lap program. The common way of thinking amongst contributors is that the early laps are usually led by local drivers while the traveling stars usually collect the later laps and the United Fans of Wisconsin always chooses lap 6 to help out the locals. The past few years, lap 6 has been worth over \$1,000 and is a very popular lap to lead. It’s just another example of how passionate the Midwest fans are about their drivers.

Each contributor to the lap money program also gets their name or the name of their business or group read over the PA system during the race night and just about all of the drivers who collect the prizes do reach out with a simple phone call to say “Thanks”. That small recognition and of course a quick phone call from a driver are big motivation factors in getting all 200 laps covered each year and the total amount raised goal has increased with each passing Nationals. The amount to win the Nationals has increased to \$20,000 the last few years and last year Casey and his group equaled that amount with \$20,000 in lap leader money raised.

Once again for this

year’s Nationals, I spent the practice day and early race day assisting Casey, Zeller, and Ausloos in organizing the lap money program. Having met the once lofty \$20,000 goal last year, there were a few whispers of maybe trying to hit a new unheard of goal of...gasp...\$25,000. I rode with Dan Casey on his golf cart scouring the pits and parking lot trying to collect money for the lap leaders while Dave Ausloos had another golf cart to cover the areas where we weren’t. Craig Zeller was back at the base which was Ausloos’ camper recording the laps signed up for and keeping track of the amount collected. It’s quite an operation they have going as this year a special t-shirt was created with some of the bigger contributors included on it. Each contribution is placed in an envelope and the lap number and name and number of the donor is marked down. Then all the sealed envelopes are sorted by laps so they can be handed out at the end of the race once the lap leaders are confirmed.

Not only is the lap leader program a great cause to help the racers, it’s also a great networking event and you would be surprised just how many new friends you can make just helping those guys out. The stories you hear from some of the past Nationals lap leaders who still express amazement at receiving a big bag after the race and opening envelopes of cash like some kind of wedding gift opening are priceless. The program has become extremely popular over the years and the 200 laps get covered pretty quickly as everyone seems to really want to be a part of it. Often times laps have multiple contributors and the totals for certain popular laps, such as lap 99 for Dick Trickle, can pay out quite a bit. One funny story often reminisced about was from a few years ago when Rich Bickle and Dennis Prunty had some run-ins on the track and weren’t exactly on each other’s Christmas card list. I think Prunty called Bickle a “never was” on the PA at the Dells that year and Bickle parked Prunty hard when no one was looking at La Crosse so it was a pretty intense rivalry. Drivers themselves do put money into the program too and that year, Prunty happened to lead one of the laps Bickle bought which obviously didn’t make him too happy. I mentioned before the drivers do call the contributors to thank them which meant Prunty had to call Bickle and thank him for the money which needless to say was awkward. Prunty did call though and the two ended up actually talking which kind of tempered down the feud a bit. Of course, it’s just a funny pit story now a days and the two really haven’t had any issues in quite some time.

This year, contributions were rolling in steady and the \$20,000 goal was met although the talked about \$25,000 was going to be tough to hit. Then, a

*Doug Hornickel photo*

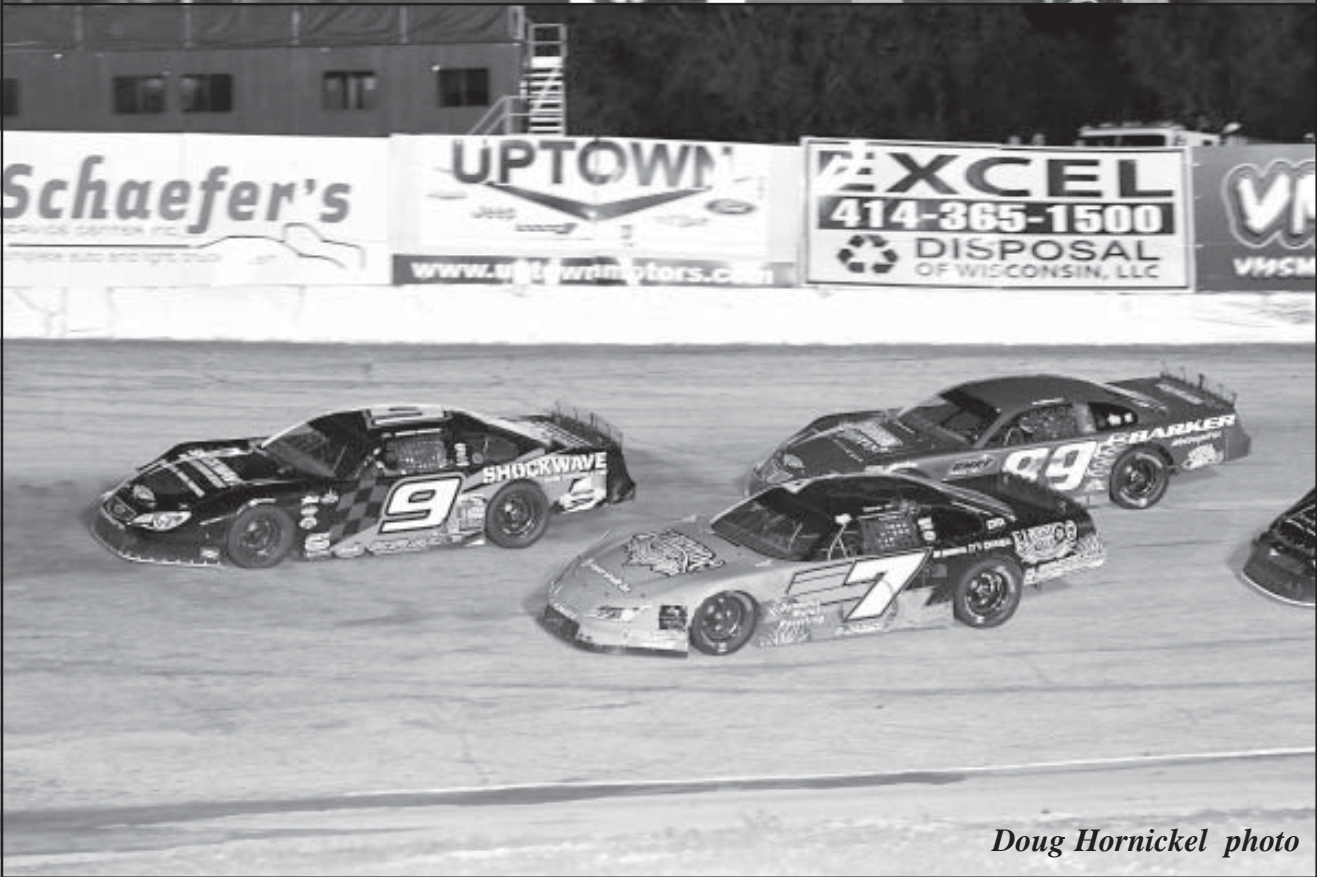
Dangerous Dan continued on page 8

Dangerous Dan continued from page 17

motor home rolled into the pits and we stopped by with the golf cart and talked to Mike from Soda Sense who told us he knew about the program and to come back once he got situated because he wanted to be involved. We went back a few minutes later and after Dan Casey and Mike spent some time together, I got a “Dude you’re not going to believe this” from Casey as I temporarily lost my seat on the cart while the two drove off. It turns out, Soda Sense put \$5,000, yes you read that right, \$5,000 on a single mystery lap. The lap was picked out by Soda Sense before the race and would be revealed when the race was over, so no one knew which of the 200 laps paid what was by far the biggest total to lead. The Soda Sense contribution meant the goal of \$25,000 in lap leader money was achieved which surpassed the \$20,000 the winner of the race would receive.

I really hope drivers from other regions take notice of this lap leader program that combined with the regular race purse makes the Slinger Nationals one of the richest asphalt races in the country. Derek Thorn ended up leading the big Soda Sense lap which was lap 113 and he ended up taking home over \$13,000 in lap money while Derek Kraus collected over \$7,000 for leading the early laps. I know the end of this year’s race with the winner decided in the tech shed wasn’t the outcome anyone wanted to see but I hope we don’t let that overshadow the incredible efforts of Dan Casey, Craig Zeller, Dave Ausloos, and the many passionate Midwest race fans that collected \$25,134 in a few days to help out and appreciate the race drivers who provide us so much entertainment all summer long. Hopefully the word continues to get out to other drivers around the country that although the drive up here is long, the Midwest fans and sponsors make it very worthwhile with the Slinger Nationals Lap Money program. There’s already talk amongst the lap money crew about goals for next year as now that \$25,000 was met, the goal has been set higher. \$50,000 was brought up and while we all laughed at the bar with a “yeah right” reaction, \$25,000 seemed just as far away a year ago. I guess you never really know and with the passionate group of racers and fans up here I wouldn’t want to bet against them. I guess we’ll just have to stay tuned.

Doug Hornickel photo



Doug Hornickel photo

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Summer Nationals Title Goes To Terbo



Dan Plan photo



Tyler Carr photo

When Tyler Erb set out to do the first week of the 39th annual DIRTcar Summer Nationals Late Models tour, he had no intentions of competing for the overall championship. Erb picked up the Hell Tour championship with 11 wins during the month long tour (DirtCar press release)

The Story Behind The Number

By Dan Plan

As a race fan that grew up cheering on the late Dan Prziborowski as a kid, I was intrigued why young Reese Goede chose the number 85 for her 1/4-Midget at Little Elko Speedway. Turns out that it has nothing to do with my racing hero. She added up the numbers of her mom’s car and her dad’s car.



Dan Plan photo

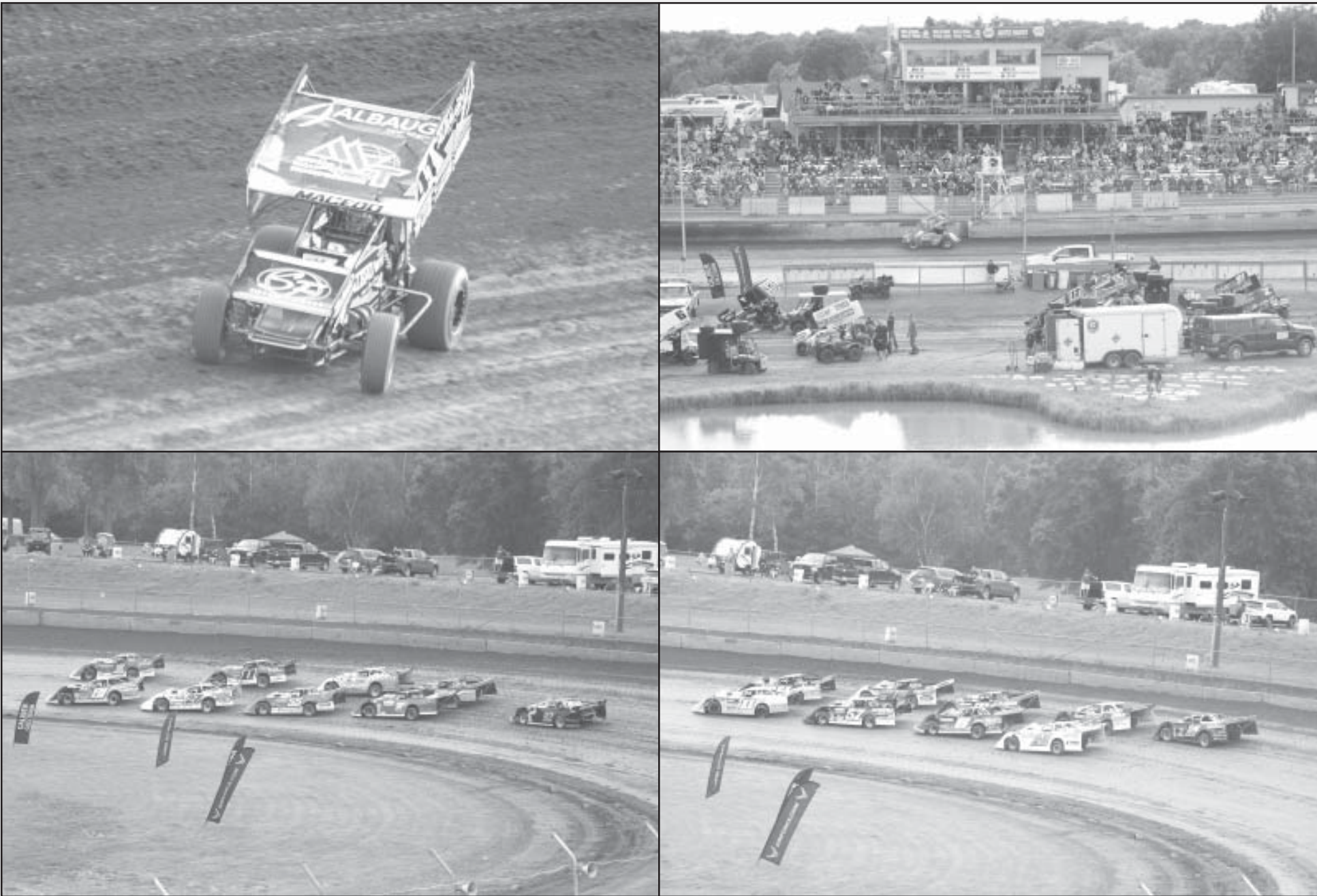


Martin DeFries photo



Dan Plan photo

World Of Outlaws and WISSOTA Challenge Series at The Lake



The World of Outlaws made their annual visit to Cedar Lake Speedway prior to the 4th of July Holiday. Carson Macedo set a new track record with a lap of 10.721 seconds around the 3/8th's mile oval. Logan Schuchart returned to the site of his first World of Outlaws Sprint Car win and picked up another big payday at Cedar Lake. Near the end of the month of July, the WISSOTA Late Model Challenge Series made a rare visit to Cedar Lake Speedway and brought a 43-car field to compete for the 24 starting positions. Sammy Mars made a late race pass to pick up the \$5,000.00 win.

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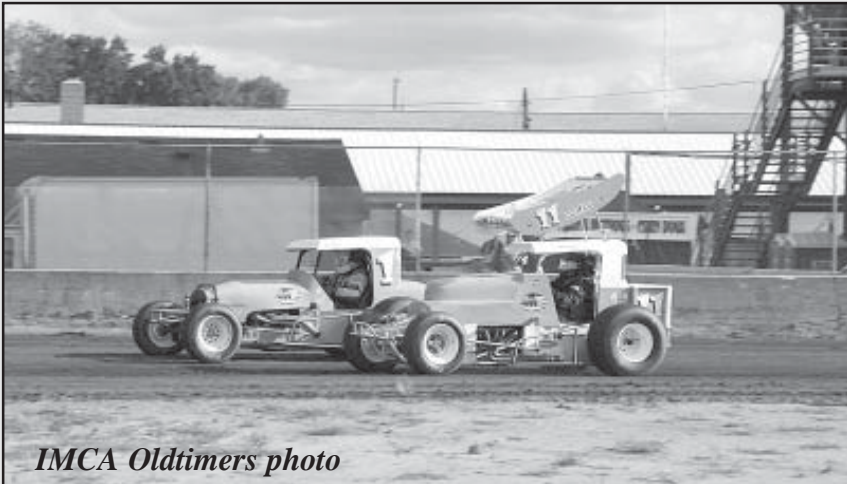
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County Fair Spotlight Part 2



IMCA Oldtimers photo



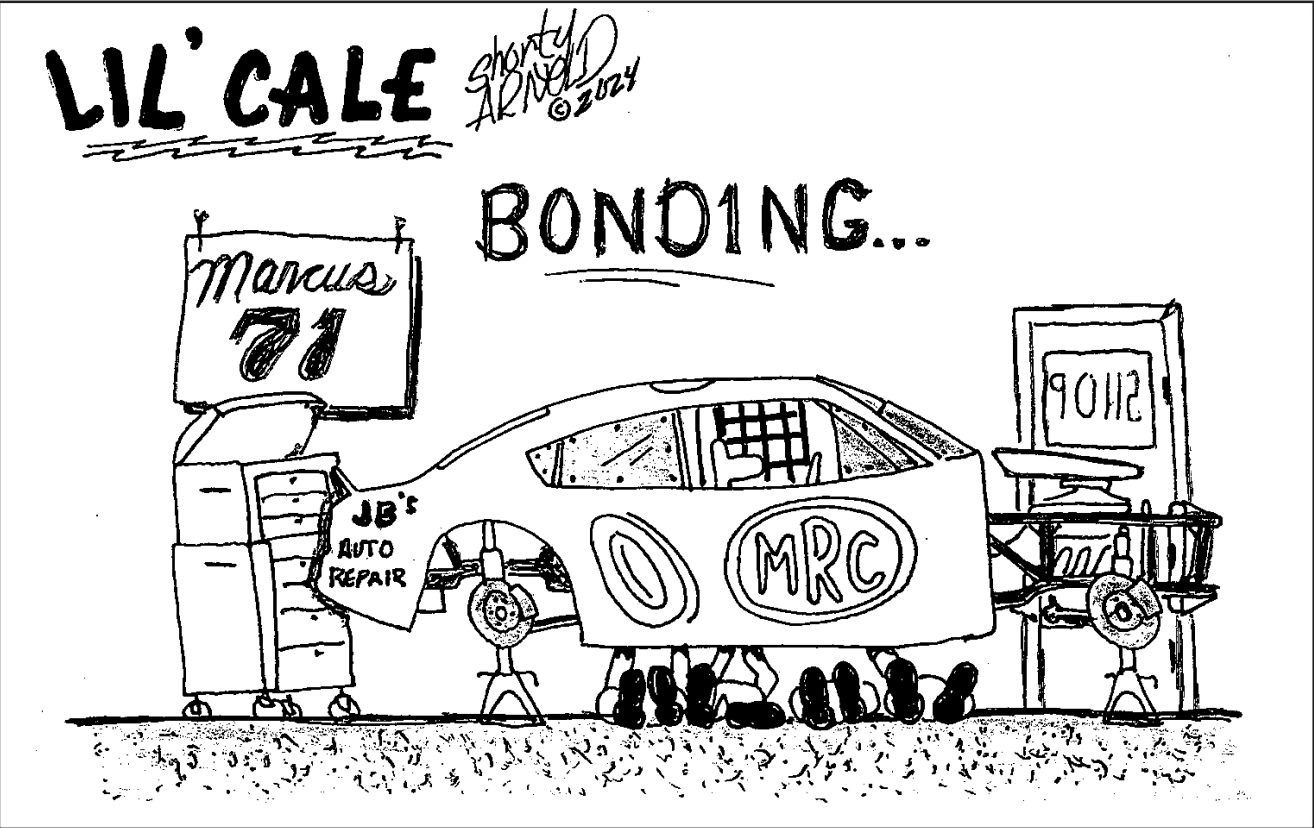
IMCA Oldtimers photo

IMCA Oldtimers vintage open wheel action during the Rice County Fair in Faribault, MN



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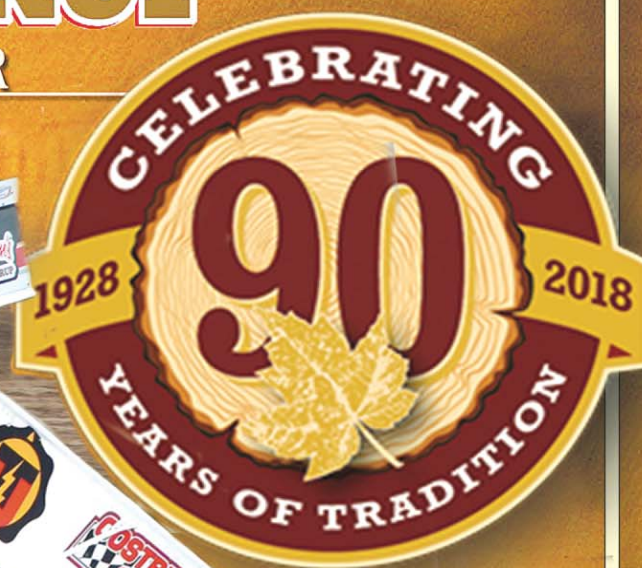
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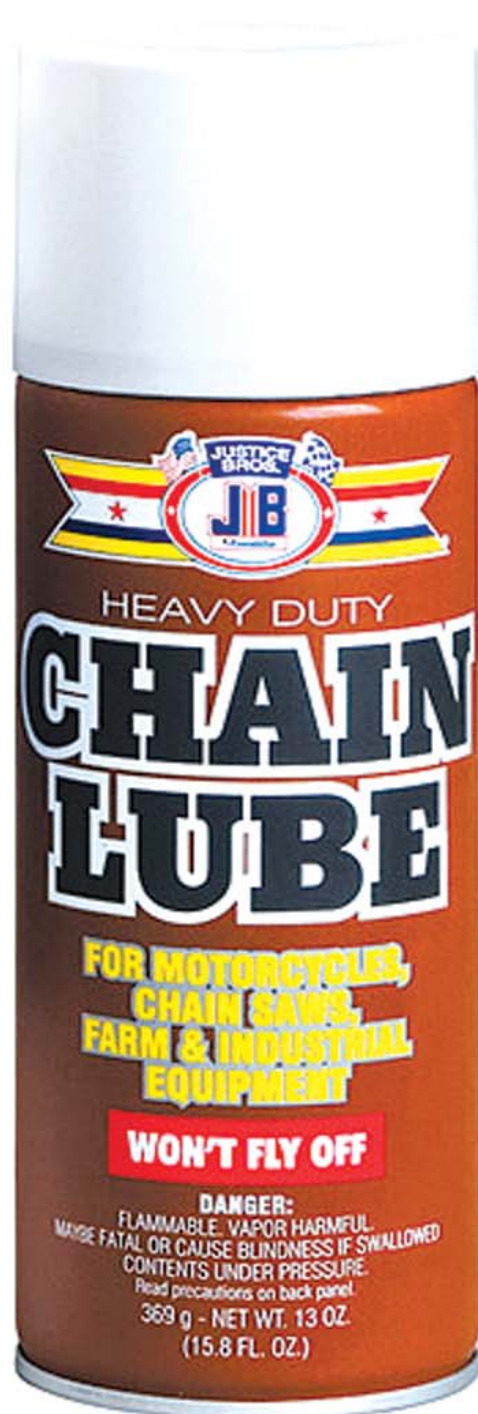
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