

THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION

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THE MIDWEST'S SHORT TRACK AUTO RACING AUTHORITY



NSTC Continues On



Thunderstruck Thoughts

Vol. 28 Issue 6 October 2024

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Racing History



Going In Circles



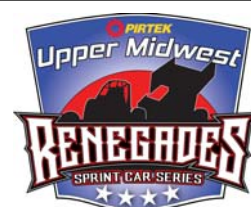
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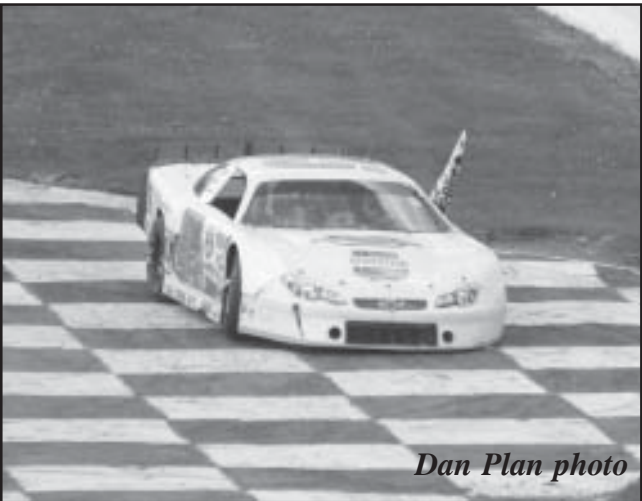
TEAM
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Publisher's Note
Racing According to Plan



Dan Plan

Last year, around this time the last National Short Track Championships was held at Rockford Speedway. Shortly thereafter the track was closed, and no racing has been held since. This did leave a void for many of the fans in the area, but several of



***National Short Track
Championships
Continue On***

the events have continued on. The Spring Classic and Bus Races have been moved to Grundy County Speedway, and much to my pleasure, the National Short Track Championships were moved to Dells Raceway Park. A huge thanks to Jerry Auby and the Deery family for keeping this event going.

While some fans may think it won't be the same with the event moving to another facility, I see their point, but I'm OK with the event being moved. It's not the first time a long standing event has moved from one facility to another. Close to my home, the historic Gopher 50 started at Chateau Speedway, moved to the Steele County Fairgrounds and continues to this day at Deer Creek Speedway. Probably the most notable event that changed locations is Super Dirt Week in New York. For many years Super Dirt Week was at the Syracuse mile and now continues on at Oswego. It's not the first time an event has changed facilities, and probably won't be the last time.

I truly enjoyed my visit to the Dells for this years NSTC. It had been a few years since I had made my way to Rockford, as this is a 5 hour drive for me. Having the event at the Dells cuts over 2 hours of drive time out for me.

The weekend was memorable for several reasons, outside of the racing on the track. I spent 4 straight days with my racing friend Bryan. He had been busy this year and had to wait until September to see his first race in person. We ended up camping for the weekend and met a great racing couple camped right next to us. Each night after the races, we had a fire and solved several of the world's problems. We went downtown Dells on Friday afternoon and stumbled on to Wo-Zah-Wa Days Festival. We later

Publisher's Note continued on page 4

The Midwest
RACING
Connection
October 2024

P.O. Box 22111
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www.theracingconnection.com

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The Midwest Racing Connection is published six times during the summer racing season by The Plan Company, Inc. All material is copyrighted 2024 and may not be reprinted without permission 651-451-4036.

Cover photos by: Dan Plan, Dale P. Danielski and PJ Nuttleman

THE MIDWEST
RACING CONNECTION



Publishers note from page 3

learned Wo-Zah-Wa means “Fun Times” in native Ho-Chunk language. Tons of entertainment going on. So many items to see, we made a return trip on Saturday afternoon.

When it comes to the racing action, there was no disappointment at all. Plenty of racing, unexpected wrecks, disagreements and all of the other stuff that comes with post season specials. The one item on the track that stood out the most for me was watching Rich Bickle work his way through the field in a heat race. Earlier in the day Rich’s primary car went up in flames in the pits. They scrambled to get a backup car ready and timed in 5th. Rich started 6th in his heat race and ran to the front to pick up the win. The crowd in my section went absolutely crazy when Rich picked up the win. It was pretty cool to see.

At the end of the last day, I watched David and Susan Deery put the Rockford Speedway wreath around Ryan Ferrel in victory lane. It still felt like One Great Racing Weekend.



Dan Plan photo



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Racing History



Dale P. Danielski

It is hard to believe we have had 15 Champions Reunions as part of the great Oktoberfest Racing weekend, and five others prior to that, but that is a fact, as we head into Champions Reunion XVI which may be the last.

There have been great times through the years as we have focused on select time frames and specific drivers. All of it has been as a result of wanting to recognize these racers for their efforts and the great entertainment value they provided. For many, this recognition is all they received with very little to show for their time spent in terms of financial gain or notoriety. It was the passion for the sport and the fun times generated that kept them going. This writer fits in there somewhere, as way back in the 1960s, the bug was planted, and we've been a part of it ever since. Read on and envision how things used to be and maybe, the way they still could be.

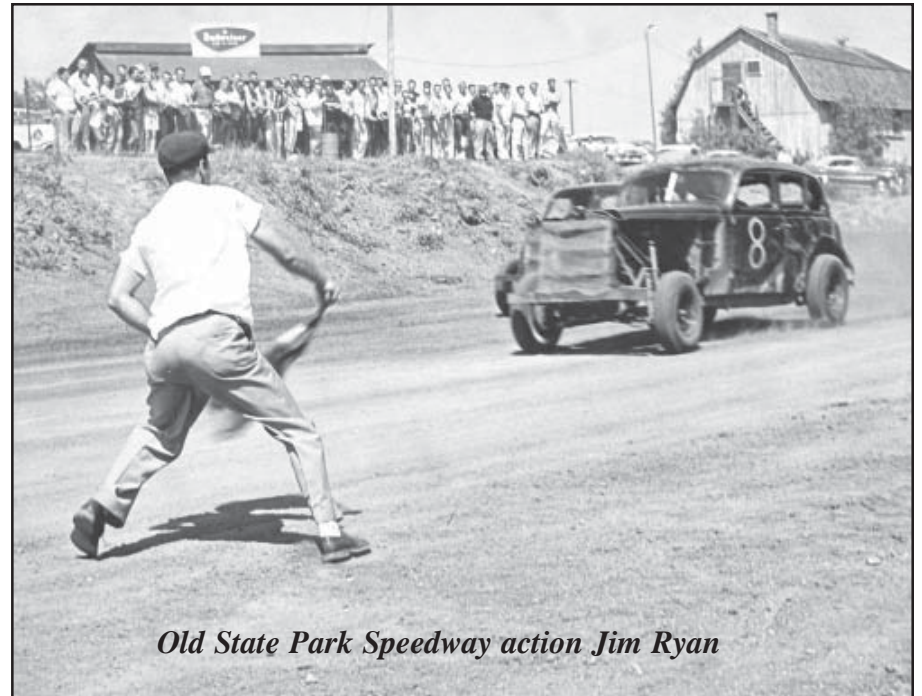
The very first Reunion, Yesteryears Reunion I

was held way back in June of 2004. The focus was on racers from the greater Wisconsin, Minnesota area who really pioneered the sport. We had Dewey Moore, who folklore has driving back from California with a Cougar in his car (As you might expect, it tore up the interior of the car very badly) to begin his career racing locally. Dewey was a prolific winner, but also had some of the most devastating crashes you'd ever want to see. He survived them all and did live well into his 80s. Dewey was one of the drivers to pilot the famous Chicken Coupe, which Mike Wall restored to original and owns to this day. The car in later years had its driver, Lyle Nabbefeldt racing with a live Rooster inside. ROJO went along for wild ride after ride and remained a popular figure with his many escapades to area bars. Unfortunately, one fateful wreck was his undoing as burns that led to pneumonia were the means to the end for the iconic bird. We had Roy "Happy" Franklin attend an early Reunion. Roy was instrumental in providing race cars in the 1950s for drivers to race so events in the area could be held. This dates back to when racers were testing their skills on tracks near La Crosse, WI., Goose Island and French Island, as well as tracks at Fairgrounds in Sparta, Galesville, Viroqua, Westby, Prairie Du Chien, and anywhere else there was a Fairgrounds track. He even provided cars for an event at Satan's Bowl of Death, a raceway on the Von Ruden farm near Cashton, WI.. Harold Bentzen in one of Roy's cars raced there and rolled over. It wasn't all bad for the Bentzen name though as his brother Clayton Bentzen won the race. This writer used to kid Roy, he was the Rick Hendrick, with all those cars, of area racing. His interest really kickstarted the sport back then.

Marv Fenske was another popular driver to attend early Reunions. Marv was one of the more colorful racers which sometimes led to skirmishes on and off the track. His son Karl followed in his footsteps

GREAT GATHERINGS

HIGHLIGHTS OF PAST RACER REUNIONS



Old State Park Speedway action Jim Ryan

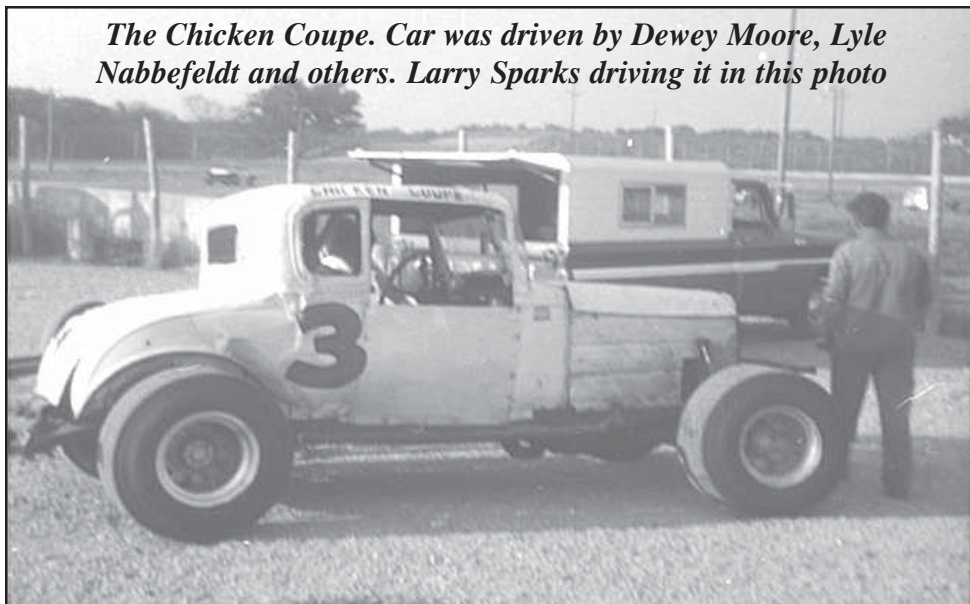
providing entertaining sidelights for years. Besides all the fun both won many races.

Ernie Tuff, from little Rushford, MN., was another Reunion attendee. He decided to try his luck racing down south, preparing a car for Daytona International Speedway. Ernie's fast Ford set records in qualifying with Fireball Roberts driving, but that didn't sit well with the big wigs in NASCAR. Ernie was told they had to add an astounding 300lbs of weight to his car to race. He did and the car was still competitive but other issues prevented it from winning. And who can forget Ernie driving that record breaking Ford around the La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway, pacing the field at one of the Champion's Reunions for an Oktoberfest main event. Ernie went on to field race cars in the area and as far away as Canada with such hotshoes, Marv Fenske, Jerry Reichert and Jerry "Scratch" Daniels. They all won many big races including some at the nearby Northside Speedbowl of La Crosse, WI. Ernie Tuff, a true Legend in racing lived into his late 90s. Not bad for, in Ernie's words, "A dumb old farm boy from Rushford, Minnesota with an 8th grade education."

In Central Wisconsin, William "Ace" Kasten laid a lot of groundwork for racing. He explained to me at a Reunion what got that going. "I went out to California and stopped in New Mexico to watch a stock car race. I thought, geez, we could do that in Wisconsin. Talked to Otto Holtz who had the land that the Wausau, WI., track was on. I asked him if we could use the track and he agreed. We formed an association and the rest is history. That was in 1957."

Racing History continued on page 6

The Chicken Coupe. Car was driven by Dewey Moore, Lyle Nabbefeldt and others. Larry Sparks driving it in this photo



Racing History from page 5

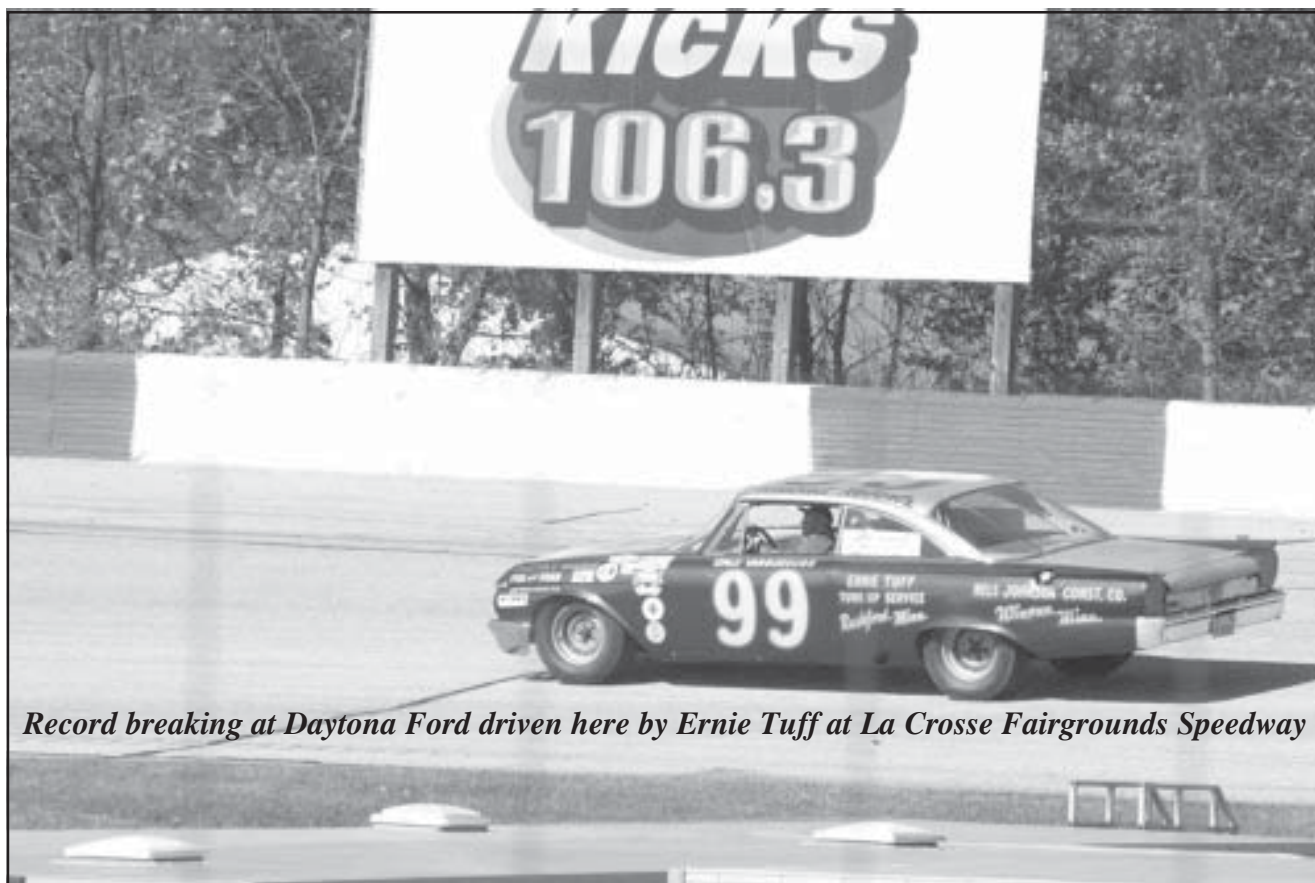
And what would a highlight reel be without mention of Sam Bartus. The colorful suited gentleman at an early reunion was, as usual, discussing all the ideas he had for racing and other things. Sam did have some very good ones too, as who knows what the sport would have been without his track building and promoting. Plus, he got into the rock concert business and had a cure for the common cold. Sam Bartus was truly one of a kind.

Donald Denny in this area, built the old North Side La Crosse Speedbowl, which became successful for both dirt and paved racing. When Don last attended a Reunion, he did a hula hoop demonstration. Always the innovator and marketer Don lived a long and fruitful life.

Larry Wehrs has been a mainstay at the Reunions, having been to all through the years. Larry of course had the West Salem track paved in 1970 which started an all new era of racing in the area. Larry also fielded and sponsored cars for many drivers in the state. Larry was instrumental in getting Dave Marcis started in NASCAR as well as sustaining the effort for many years.

Short track superstar, before Dick Trickle, racing both asphalt and dirt, Marlin Walbeck made a Reunion appearance way back when. Marlin was truly the best in the late 1950's and through the 1960s. According to Marlin, "One year sometime in the '60s I made \$35,000. That was good money then. We only had \$500 in the car, and I used one set of tires all year!" Marlin's son Kent, kept the Walbeck name in the forefront, attending the 2023 Reunion with a replica car of what his Dad raced.

Dave Watson was a featured guest for an early Reunion and he and his car owner, Dave Deppe were on hand to show off the Chevy Nova that he dominated action with at the Milwaukee mile. Before that, Dave Marcis debuted the car in Kaukauna, WI., in a USAC race winning that, which was the first for a pony car. Of course, both those drivers went on to



Record breaking at Daytona Ford driven here by Ernie Tuff at La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway

great careers in racing locally and at the National level.

Short track stars Jim Back, Marv Marzofka and Tom Reffner have all been regulars at the reunions. We could write a book about their careers and who knows, maybe we just might.

Too many to mention top stars have attended a reunion at some point and another reason this scribe has conducted them, as since the beginning, more than 80 of those drivers are no longer with us.

And to end on an interesting note, what about the time, just before a Champions, Reunion gathering, a radio interview was scheduled with special featured guests, Gary Back, Tom and Bryan Reffner and Dick Trickle. The interview got started and was almost done and no Trickle. Lo and behold, ready to wrap things up, who should show up? Dick Trickle, arriving late just like he always used to at the racetrack. Dick

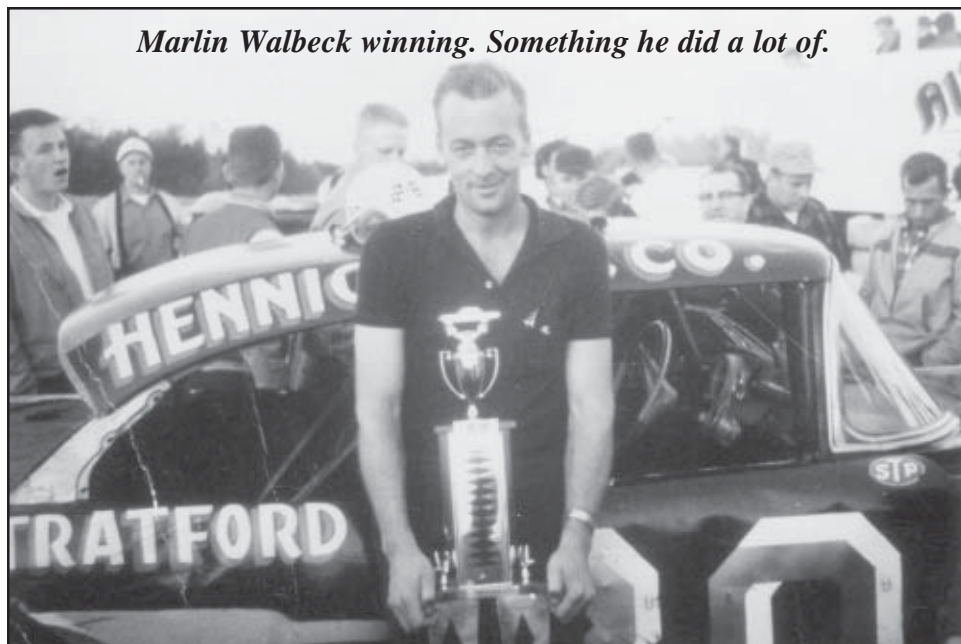
told me once, why get to the track early and try to set your car up in a dirty, uneven pit area, when you can have it all set up and ready to go in your shop. I guess that strategy applied to interviews, as he was ready to go and discussion proved to be thought provoking and educational.

Looking back on Sunday afternoon, October 4th, it was Tom Reffner winning the first ever Oktoberfest 200 race at La Crosse Interstate Speedway. Reffner earned \$1,000 for 1st place plus \$341.00 in lap money.

Following Reffner to the finish was Rich Somers, John Mcnamara, Bill Mueller, Denny Sobkowiak, Kato Thiesen, Buck Linhart, John Scott and Everett Fox. The 1st consolation race was won by Ron Backburg followed by Alan Ward and Don Dhein. The 2nd consy went to George Kopecky followed by Sonny Immerfall, and Ray Slaback. Attendance for the event was 4,000. A total purse of \$8,000 plus lap money was paid out and 65 cars timed in for the event.

Here and there...Champions Reunion XVI is set for La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway, West Salem, WI., Sunday, October 6th, from 11am-2pm. The event is held in the Hospitality Chalet in turn one of the speedway. This year will focus on Reffner Racing, as patriarch of the Reffner family, Tom Reffner passed away this past year. Reffner family members will be on hand including Bryan Reffner, a Central Wisconsin track champion, 1984 Oktoberfest main event winner, ASA series champion and NASCAR Truck Series race winner. The last race car Tom Reffner raced will also be on display at the show. Fans holding a Sunday ticket can attend the event free. Any racers wishing to attend should contact promoter, Dale P. Danielski via the Champions Reunion XVI FACEBOOK page, at dale@starmakermultimedia.com through messenger on FACEBOOK, or by calling 608-518-2478 or 608-816-2848. The event is open to any racing champion, at any track, in any division or series that has not raced in the last three years. Oktoberfest Feature race winners are also eligible. Racing promoters past and present are also welcome.

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

Marlin Walbeck winning. Something he did a lot of.

Going in Circles



Charlie Spry

Took in the season championship races at the Dells Raceway Park in early September. As usual on a night like this, there was plenty of excitement, and some happy champions.

Mike Litchfeld won the track championship again this year. No surprise, as he has been pretty dominant here for some time. He quietly moved through the pack tonight to finish third in the feature behind Weston Marthaler and Randy Sargent. Plenty good enough to get the championship in the late models.

Sportsman class also had no surprises, as Dave Trute took home the title tonight, his reported twenty-first career track championship at all tracks, many of them here at DRP. He had to come from the back of the pack late to chase down winner Andrew Bornltreger. Trute has always been very tough to beat in any car/division he has raced in and was no different tonight.

It was nice to see Jeremy Bredeson take home the title in the Bandit division. I have seen Jeremy race from the start of his career back at Columbus 151 and have raced with him in the past. Always a very clean driver who respects his and others equipment. He also probably had the most emotional speech in victory lane of any driver. Very well deserved! Jim Rhode took

home the feature win tonight.

Matt Pate was a surprised champion in the modifieds. He drove off to the feature win, not knowing that point leader at the start of the night Jerry Blystone had problems after he brushed the wall and finished last amongst the cars on track, giving just enough points up to Pate to grab the title. A real heartbreak for Mr. Blystone.

While Mike Peterson was driving off to the Sixer feature win, all eyes were on Scott Ehleiter and Matt Moore. Whoever finished ahead of the other would gain the title. Moore ran door to door on the outside for lap after lap besides Ehleiter but could not make the pass. It was a great side by side battle between the two, who traded little to no paint. Class racing by both. Ehleiter therefore edged out Moore for the title, and in his rookie year of racing!

Gracie Flanagan came into the night with a slim point lead in the High School Racing Association six cylinder feature, and after some difficulties came back through the pack to gain enough points to get the track title. The feature was won by Curtis Hellickson.

Had a nice chat with Sixer racer Joshua Zacharias. Joshua has been in the division for a while now and has become a multi-time champion at various tracks. Since starting at Madison in 2019, he has since won two track championships here at the Dells, two at Slinger, and one at Golden Sands.

He got his start in racing in a kind of unusual fashion, courtesy of a winning 50/50 ticket. "It was at the Joe Shear Classic at MIS'," Said Josh. "I bought a bunch of tickets, and it was worth \$1,700. I remember them saying that you could race in the Sixer division for \$500, so I got a car and gave it a try."

Getting his start at Madison, he soon had to take the show on the road. "That was the year that Covid shut down Madison, so we



Charlie Spry photo

started going to Tomah. Matt Moore and Dan Frye told me to come on up there and that they would help me out. That is a different kind of track, and I learned a lot there. One of my favorite memories is winning my first feature there and beating Matt Moore to do it."

Racing this long in an entry level division and having this much success of course brings out many people saying that he should move up. "I hear that all the time. I just love racing in this division, it is so much fun and is certainly affordable. You have to pay attention to things all the time. However, we do have a sportsman car, and I will be moving up to that next year."

Joshua and team have never been afraid to travel to race. He reports as having raced here at the Dells, Madison, LaCrosse, Marshfield, Rockford, Jefferson, Golden Sands, Slinger, and Tomah-Sparta.

On a personal side, Josh is thirty-six years of age, is employed by Madison Environmental Resources, and resides in Lone Rock, Wi., after being born and raised in Madison.

Joshua and team also own the car that Gracie Flanagan raced in the HSRA Sixers, and won the championship here. "I am friends with her Dad, Ryan Flanagan, so they were looking for a car and we had one available to help them out," Said Joshua

Sponsors on the fast race cars include Wiscoat, Culver's, Max Creek Outdoors, Minnow Bucket, Parkway Family Restaurant, and Pro Physical Therapy.

Joshua's Dad, Richard also told me that Joshua had thrown the winning 50/50 ticket in the trash after scanning the numbers and not noticing the called off number. Evidently, the track kept calling the winning



Dan Plan photo

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Going In Circles continued from page 7

number and nobody responded, so Richard told him to dig it out of the trash and look again. Lo and behold, it was the last ticket on the string. Thanks Dad!

Bandit racer Tyler Vincetich is putting on lots of miles on his street car these days. A resident of Beloit, he was given an opportunity to race the Bandit car for a team looking for a driver in the Wisconsin Dells area. So, he drives from Beloit to the Dells track to race the car, but also attends classes at UW Stevens Point during the week. He is one busy guy! He also still has his old Rockford Roadrunner class car which he is switching over to be more competitive as a Hobby Stock at the Wisconsin tracks. He won a

couple of features this year with the Bandit car on the Dells track, which he noted was very different from the Rockford track. He also finished the season as Rookie-Of-The-Year, finishing third in season points.

Max Larson was present as well, racing in the Bandit class. Max is the son of Aaron Larson, who has and does own late model cars for some pretty impressive drivers, and indeed, has one waiting for Max. For now, Max did very well at Jefferson, finishing second in points behind a well seasoned veteran. Aaron, noted, "This is his first year in a regular car. He raced a Bandolero a couple of times but that was all. We got him into this (Bandit) car, and he did very well. We have a late model that we are getting ready when he is ready for that."

The next weekend was the National Short Track Championships at the Dells. There are differing opinions on keeping the name of the event at another track since Rockford Speedway is no longer in operation. Some say that the name should be allowed to go away, and some say that it is a tradition that should be carried on, regardless of the track. I will go with the latter opinion and say that keeping the tradition alive at the Dells track is a good fit.

Anyway, the

three day event carried on, and I have to say, very well. Friday night we saw the Bandit, Sixer, Hobby Stock, and CWRA late models racing. The CWRA feature races went to Corey "Batman" Jankowski. The showman that he is, he still dons his cape when emerging from the car after a feature win. The second feature went to young Ty Fredrickson, who pulled off a neatly executed three wide pass to get to the front. This youngster is the real deal, for sure. The CWRA season title went to Mark Mackesy, no stranger to victory lane anywhere.

In talking to some of the teams that race in CWRA, the big thing that they like is the lower cost of tires. No bolting on instant speed. Travis Robinson is the crew chief for Trevor Robinson, who was racing with the CWRA cars for the first time. "We are thinking of following this circuit next year. The money saved on tires is a huge factor for us," Said Travis.

Jeremy Bredeson capped off his championship season here with a NSTC victory, when the leader of the race was flagged for breaking out. There was a very good field of cars present in the Bandit division. Jeremy got his start racing back in 2009 at the old Columbus 151 Speedway.

The Sixer feature was arguably the most fun race of the night to watch. Huge field of cars and they ran non-stop with no cautions. Very well done by this group. Steven Mueller led much of the race, but Adam Moore and Bobby Frisch came to challenge. Moore finished ahead of Frisch and Mueller to get the eagle trophy. The driving and competitiveness in this division was second to none.

The Hobby Stock feature was interesting as

Going In Circles continued on page 9





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Going In Circles continued from page 8

well. Veteran Chico Riedner controlled the race for some time, with Shane Strothman and Chase Wangsness getting by. Fun race to watch, with an interesting mix of veterans and youngsters racing amongst one another.

Of note was one particular driver getting to fulfill a lifetime dream. David Emery Jr. was racing a Rockford Roadrunner class car in the Hobby Stocks. The Rockford cars are much more restrictive than the Wisconsin Hobby Stocks, and he had never driven this race car, so he was against the eight ball from the start. He got to turn some laps and fulfill a dream. Well Done! David has raced stock four cylinder cars and Sixers in the past, but never this type of car. Thanks to Curt Nighswonger and David's boss at Royal Basket Trucks, the deal was made and David crossed an item off his list.

Saturday nights show saw the Big 8 Late Models, Modifieds, Sportsman cars, and American Short Trackers take to the track.

Mike Lichtfeld has been pretty dominant here in this class the last few years and was again tonight. He simply went where the others weren't, passing cars on the outside and getting the lead from Michael Bilderback. He then simply checked out.

Interesting mix of cars for the AST race. Davey Pennel rocketed to the front of a very tough field, loaded with many of the top drivers you would expect at an event like this. Karter Stark and Tyler Deschaine followed.

Justin Okruhlica topped Dave Edwards to win the modified feature. I was surprised that there were not more of these cars on hand.

The Sportsman feature was another interesting affair, with lots of slicing and dicing. Andrew Borntreger looked great in getting the win over Chris Weber and Dave Trute. If you beat this pair in a race you are really doing something!



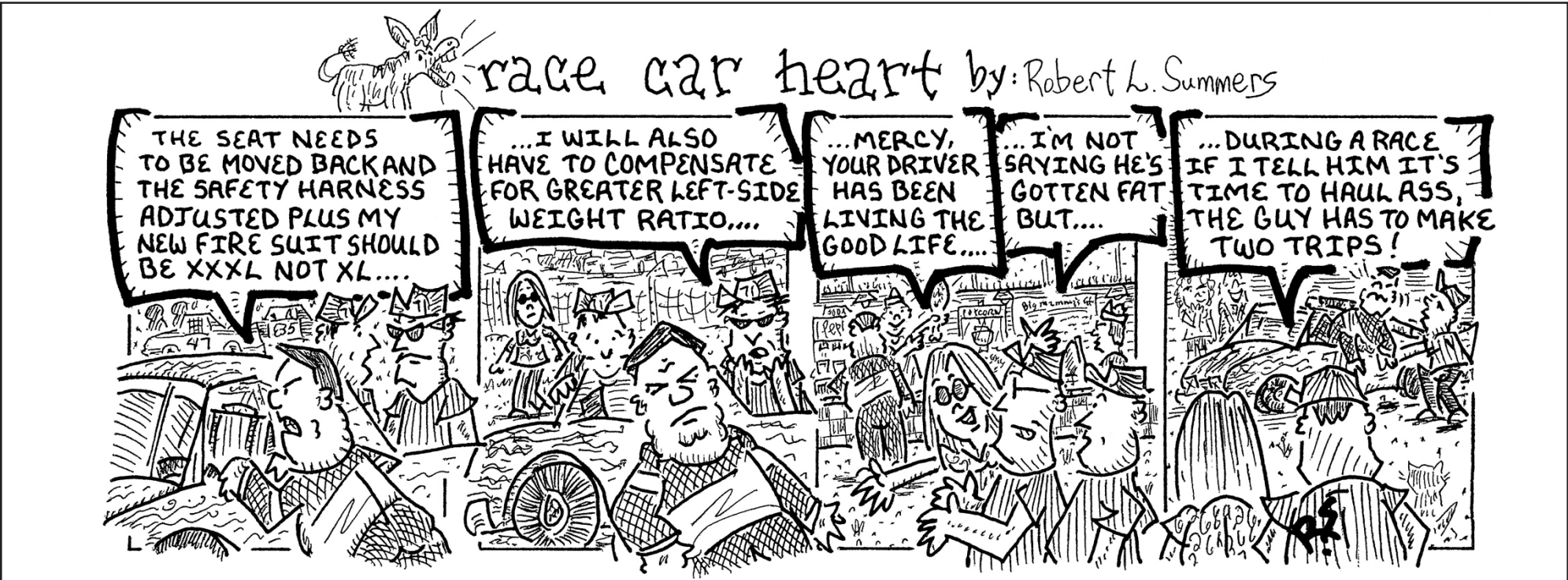
Of a special note, Mid-Am racer Scott Gardner Jr. raced Saturday night with the sportsman class, but developed engine problems. The team loaded back up and headed home to Dyer, Indiana to change out engines, then came back to race Sunday with the Mid-Am's. Now that is special dedication. I imagine not much sleep was involved here!

At an event such as this, you would expect to see cars from a wide area and tracks, and it did not disappoint. I figured out that there were cars from DRP, Tomah-Sparta, LaCrosse, Rockford, Wausau,

Golden Sands, Jefferson, Slinger, Madison, from Minnesota tracks, and also from the U.P. of Michigan. Sunday brought out many more from points south and more.

I did not attend on Sunday, as two days of making the long trip between here and home was enough. That is another thing that I really miss about Rockford, the short, approx. 35 minutes to the track.

Anyhow, I think I may have found my new Saturday night track for next season. Will probably try to get here much more frequently.



Fall Out at Rock Falls Raceway

For the past 9 years, Rock Falls Raceway has held the Fall Out event. This is a vintage/nostalgic event that features drag racing with vehicles from 1966 and older. This event has grown significantly since my last visit eight years ago, and the facility itself has seen massive improvements in recent years including a new scoring tower, VIP seating, concessions, restrooms, souvenir shop and much more.



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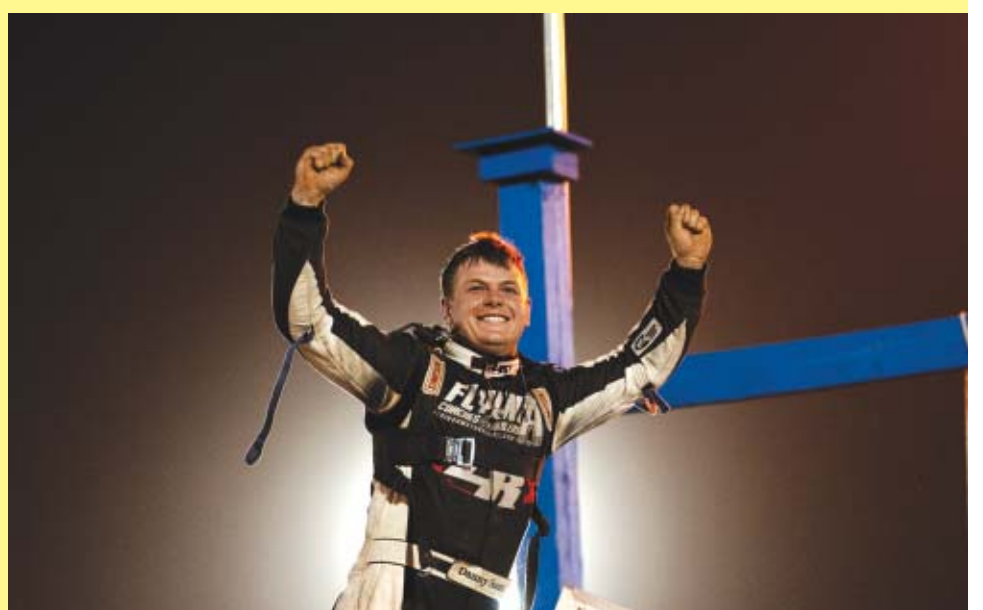
*The Dave Deppe owned Buick driven by Dave Watson
(Dale P. Danielski photo)*



*Bryan Reffner and Bob Iversion at Madison in 1984
(Dale P. Danielski photo)*



*Ashley Anderson on his way to the Legendary 100 win
(Ethan McCarty photo)*



*Danny Sams III following his IRA Sprint Richert Memorial win
(Ethan McCarty photo)*

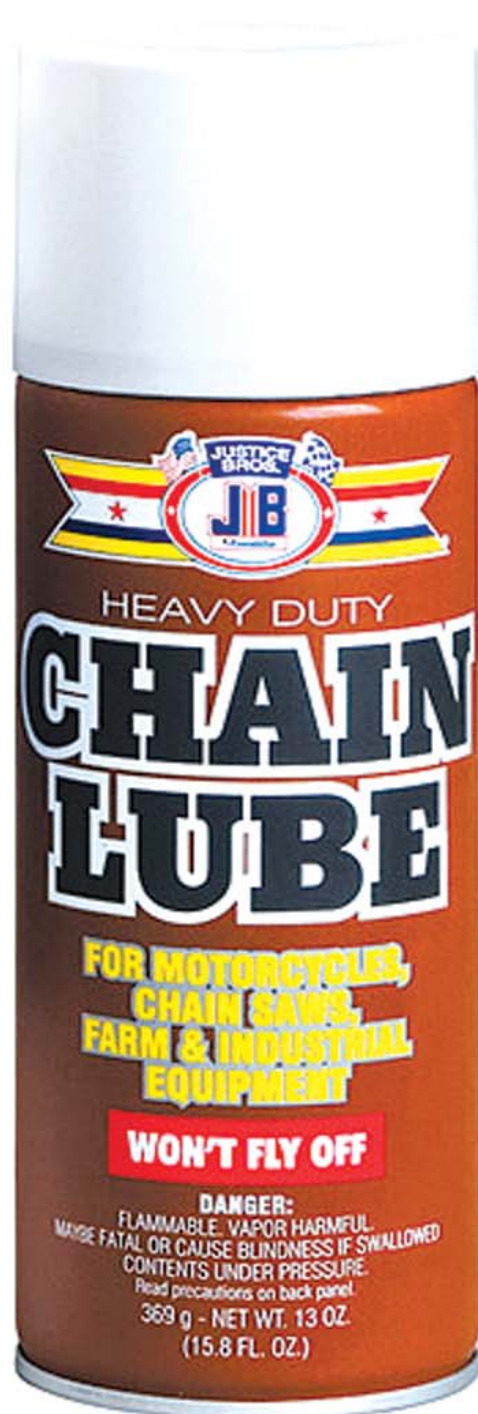


*Bettenhausen Classic action at Grundy County Speedway
(Kim Kemperman photo)*



*Stan Zolodz and Blake Brown battle for the lead at Grundy
(Kim Kemperman photo)*

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Racing Nuggets



PJ "Jacklyn" Nuttleman

One of my favorite superlate model events is the Thunderstruck 93 at Elko Speedway, mostly because there are so many great families and friends in Minnesota that I don't always get to see at events. It doesn't hurt that the facility is a stellar venue either!

My husband Toby was there to help Justin Mondeik and his team—but he also provided some support for other TOBYCar drivers, Levon Van Der Geest and Jonathan Eilen. He and I don't talk a lot during practice, as he's WAY too focused, but it gives me time to noodle around and check things out.

With the race being run in memory of Dan Ryan, who was a powerhouse racer from Minnesota that succumbed to ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease), it's a big deal particularly for the Fredrickson family. They were so close to Dan and still to his family. Only this

year, Dan Fredrickson was not wheeling a car—instead, he was guiding his son, Ty in his first Thunderstruck 93.

That team was pretty devastated when the engine let go during practice and they had to quickly switch to a backup car. I must say, it was pretty amazing to see how that whole team (and family) pulled together to get that back-up car ready. Ty's aunt, Nikki Fredrickson is in perpetual motion, especially at the race track, but that is amplified 100-fold when it's the Thunderstruck event.

Not only was she promoting the living daylights out of the event leading up to race day, but she was helping with the fundraising and when Ty's engine blew up, she was part of the all-hands-on-deck to get the backup car ready. Nikki was basically a blur the entire day and evening. Like I said, she is forever in perpetual motion.

In all my years of attending races at this track, I never ventured away from the facility during race day. That changed this year when my friend, and proprietor of this publication, Dan Plan, invited me to grab something to eat in "downtown Elko."

We bellied up to the bar at Captain Black's. Food was good and conversation was even better. We

Thunderstruck Thoughts



PJ Nuttleman photo

heard stories of how "back in the day," Dick Trickle and all of the racers would come over to the establishment and they would all park their haulers on the road—essentially blocking the entire road into the wee hours of the morning.

No trip to a race track is complete without a few Dick Trickle stories, right?! It felt like a nice warm-up for Fest in just a couple of weeks!

When we returned to the track, things were getting exciting for a great night of racing. Qualifying was a big flex for the Minnesota boys, with Jacob Goede leading the way and nabbing fast time. Fellow Minnesotans, Billy Mohn, Bryan Syer-Keselowski, and Tristan Swanson were the top four in qualifying.

Dan and I opted to sit down in turn four with his good friend, Bryan Turtle and others. I have to say, that is an AMAZING spot to watch the action at Elko. Normally, I would sit up near the top of the massive grandstand. I rather enjoyed the view from turn four and we certainly saw a lot of action down there too!

Selfishly, I was thrilled to see Toby's drivers running well during the race. Levon Van Der Geest led much of the race early on, and Justin Mondeik deftly worked his way to the

Racing Nuggets
continued on page 16



PJ Nuttleman photo



PJ Nuttleman photo

Racing Nuggets from page 16

front, taking the lead on lap 77 after a pass on the outside of Van Der Geest. Mondeik led the rest of the race, even after the break at lap 93 and ensuing restart. It was a dominating run in his superlate coming off his first ever NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series start at Bristol two days earlier.

For anyone curious, Toby did have the “Lucky French Fry” in his pocket at Elko, but I hesitate to say it was the fry. Mondeik just really had a great run with a solid car.

The points battle is a tight one going into the ASA Midwest Tour finale at Oktoberfest. While Mondeik closed the gap for himself—now sitting third in the standings, he is still 48 points off the pace of leader, Gabe Sommers. Levon Van Der Geest, after posting a second place finish at Elko, is now just 16 points behind Sommers.



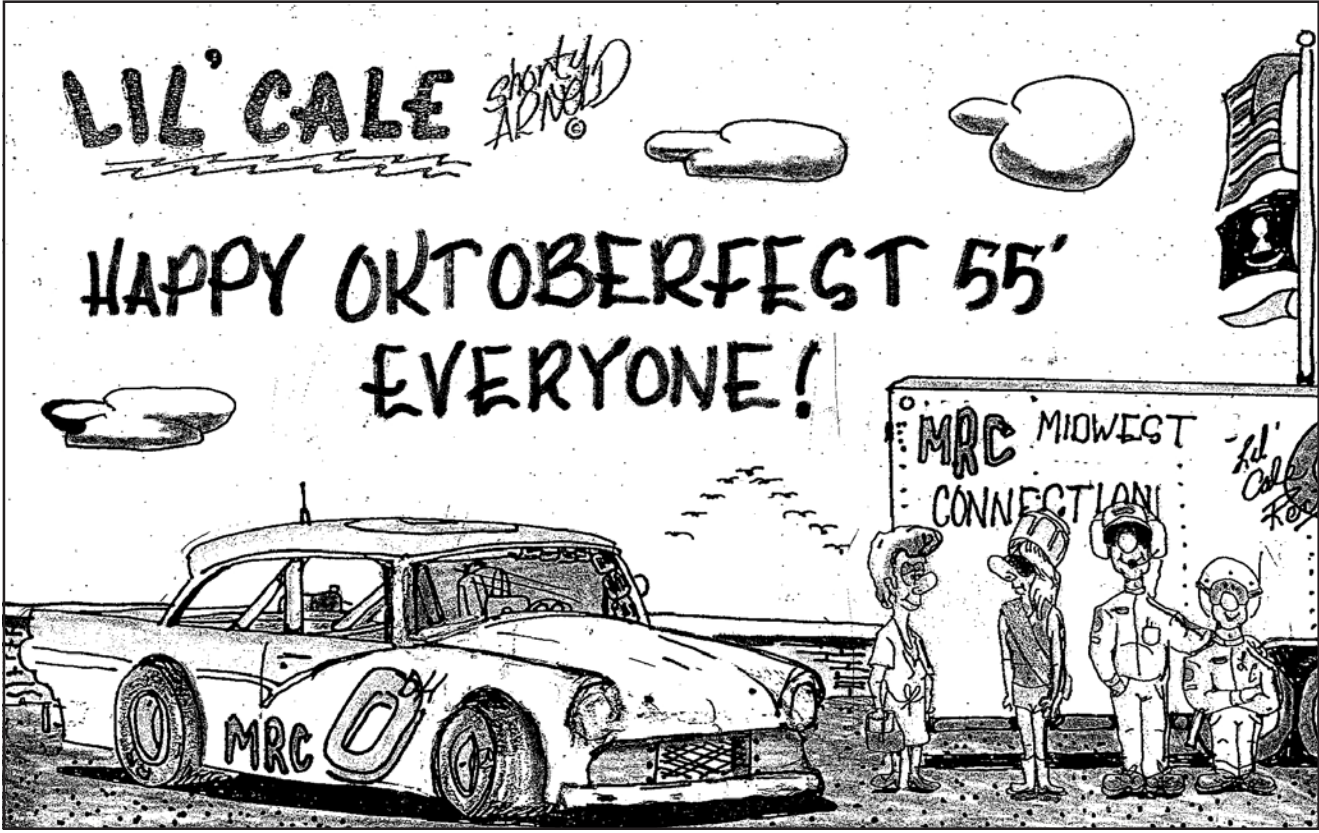
PJ Nuttleman photo

I’m hoping for some beautiful, blue skies with temperatures in the 60s or 70s for Oktoberfest Race Weekend. I think we’re due for some great weather this year, don’t you? Good luck to everyone at Fest!

**RACING
NUGGETS**

A cartoon illustration of a happy dog, possibly a Weimaraner, holding a large burger in its mouth. The dog is standing in front of a checkered racing flag.

**THE MIDWEST
RACING CONNECTION**



A logo for Quality Freight Rate. It features a stylized 'Q' with an American flag design (stars and stripes) inside it. To the right of the 'Q' is a vertical line, and to the right of that is the text 'QUALITY FREIGHTRATE.COM' in a bold, sans-serif font.

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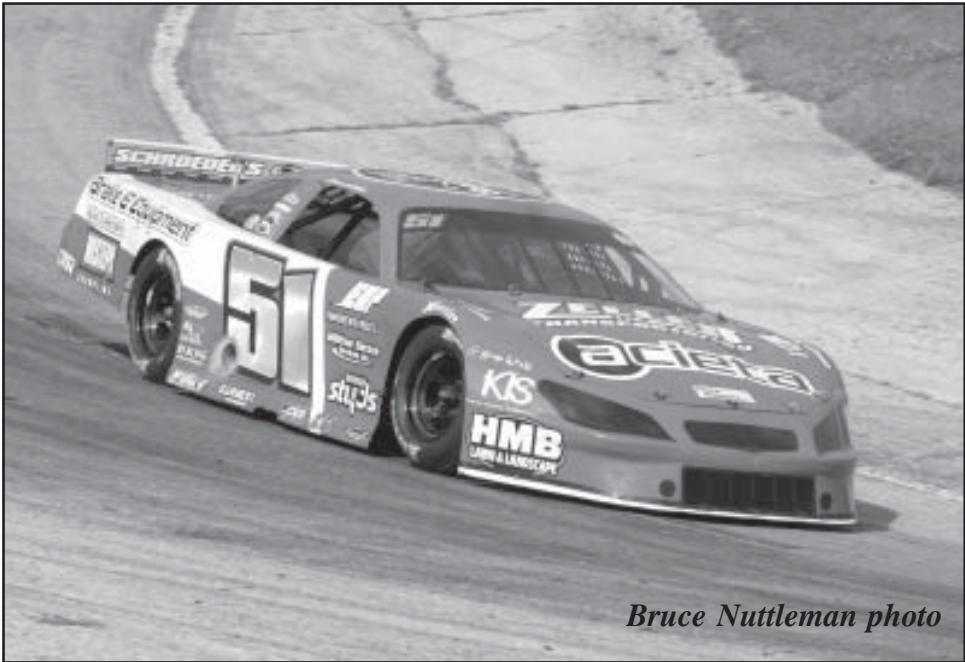
Dan Margetta

The transition from Summer to Fall is complete here in the Upper Midwest and with weekly track championships wrapped up its full steam ahead to the Fall Specials for us race chasers. The Specials continue through October and in my case, late August and September was yet another busy month watching cars go in circles.

Everything kicked off August 30th-September 1st with the return of the NTT IndyCar Series to the historic Milwaukee Mile after nearly a decade away. The need to replace the Texas race this year meant that Milwaukee got a double-header weekend for the return with two separate 250 lap races on Saturday and Sunday of Labor Day Weekend. Wisconsin State Fair Park and Penske Entertainment co-promoted the races and after initial skepticism, the weekend turned out to be a success. I took in the whole weekend as both a media member and a fan as while we did a live remote of our LTN radio show, I also bought tickets in the grandstand for the races. It was an enjoyable weekend as the State Fair Midway was open which featured food vendors and live music entertainment and that seemed to be a big hit with the fans. I hung out with friends after the race on Saturday and the whole deal felt a lot like the old days when I was a kid

and they used to run races during the State Fair. Back then you would watch a race during the afternoon, usually a USAC Stock Car event, and then enjoy the State Fair at night. Most importantly, the on-track action was exciting as 27 Indy cars around the tight oval provided some breathtaking three wide moments and no one was able to pull away from the pack. Pato O’Ward won Saturday’s race while Scott McLaughlin drove to victory on Sunday and both events had crowds that beat expectations. Overall, it was a successful return for the IndyCar Series and it set a good foundation to build on for next year’s event set for late August.

I had to leave the Sunday Milwaukee IndyCar race early as I had to be at Slinger Speedway to run the livestream camera for the Labor Day Weekend Elite Eight Super Late Model Series season championship. With most everyone off work the next day the super lates and a big fireworks display brought out a large crowd. Steve Apel scored his first feature win of the season while Alex Prunty was crowned the 2024 Slinger Speedway Super Late Model Track Champion. The fact it took Steve Apel all the way to September to get his first victory showcased just how competitive the super late model season was at Slinger this year. With one of the eight scheduled dates lost to rain, the remaining seven races saw seven different winners with Ty Majeski, Gabe Sommers, Dennis Prunty, Alex Prunty, Jesse Bernhagen, Brad Mueller, and Steve Apel all finding victory lane this year. The Late Model division that highlighted the nights the super lates were off was pretty competitive as well as Ryan Gutknecht led the way with three feature wins. Tyler Hromadka, Evan Hassler, and Zach Prunty were all first-time winners in the division and Hromadka and Hassler got their second victories before the season ended. Jeff



Bruce Nuttleman photo

Holtz capped off the list of 2024 feature winners while Jon Reynolds Jr. returned to full-time status at Slinger and won the track championship by virtue of consistent finishes and multiple fast time honors. Other Slinger champions for 2024 included Dennis Prunty in the new 602 Crater division, Jake Schraufnagel in the Sportsman division, Nick Schmidt in the Super Beez, Ricky Gebhard in the Slinger Bees, Ayrton Brockhouse in the Legends, and Bentley Thompson in the Bandoleros. Gracie Flanagan became the first female Slinger track champion in the High School Racing Association class and Scott Goetzke was the Figure 8 champion as he ended the year with his 100th Figure 8 feature victory.

After Slinger’s regular season ended, it was time to head to Dells Raceway Park for the updated version of the National Short Track Championships. Traditionally held at the now closed Rockford Speedway, the NSTC event moved to the Dells for 2024 and like the Rockford version, featured racing Friday and Saturday night as well as Sunday afternoon. I was asked to work a roof camera for the Pitrow TV and

Dangerous Dan continued on page 19



Dan Plan photo

Dangerous Dan continued from page 18

Track TV live streams which made for a fun weekend. I've worked together with that crew enough now where we all know each other and have become pretty good friends which helps with the flow of the broadcast. For instance, with the roof cameras we've become good at figuring out what the other guy is focusing on so we're not both on the same cars. It helps with being able to catch all the action and provide decent replays for the track and everyone watching at home. The CWRA Super Late Models headlined the Friday Dells NSTC action with twin features and Corey Jankowski and Ty Fredrickson each captured main event wins. Other division winners from Friday included Shane Strothman in the Hobby Stocks, Jeremy Bredeson in the Bandits, and Adam Moore in the Sixers. Saturday's action was topped by the Big 8 Series Late Models and a stout field of over 30 cars signed in. However, they were no match for Dells standout Mike Lichtfeld as he drove to a dominating victory in the 68-lap feature. Andrew Borntreger scored a very popular win in the Sportsman class while Davey Pennel and Justin Okruhlica were the main even winners in the American Short Trackers and Modifieds respectively. After the races on Saturday, I was able to venture to the makeshift campground set up at the track and hang out with the Midwest Racing Connection's Dan Plan and Bryan Turtle, a Minnesota friend I finally got to see somewhere besides La Crosse. They had a nice setup with a big TV so we could watch the World of Outlaws features from California and we were joined by other campers for a fun nightcap to the Saturday action. After a live broadcast of the LTN radio show from the track on Sunday, it was time for the main event of the weekend as the Super Late Models checked in for the 150-lap Hugh Deery Classic. Ryan Farrell scored one for the good guys and took home a popular victory in the feature event and I think everyone was happy to see a team that really grinds it out just to get to every race get a big time win. Another compelling story emerged in the Mid-American Stock Car Series as Scott Gardner Jr. experienced mechanical problems during the Sportsman competition on Saturday and then trekked six hours home for a new engine before making the six hour return trip to the Dells on Sunday. Gardner was leading the feature event until the final corner on the final lap when in a cruel twist of fate, his car quit coming to the checkered flag and Josh Nelms


Dan Plan photo

dashed by to get the win. Brian Johnson Sr. was the winner of the 602 Outlaw feature event as gorgeous weather greeted all who came out to the track.

I ended the month back on the dirt track as the Plymouth Dirt Track hosted the 7th Annual Jim Wildman Watson Classic for the Dirt Kings Tour. Extra bonuses were added for drivers to run their dirt late models "topless" without the roofs and just about every car in attendance chose to do so. Kevin Nielson and Chad Hohner are two friends I see at a lot of races, mostly at Slinger, who have always said we need to attend a race together and we finally made it happen as the three of us took in the Wildman Classic. I thought I went to a lot of races but those guys are true diehards and it was fun hearing their stories and getting the perspective from true race fans. We met Dan Casey from Slinger at the track and by the time the races began we had our own Slinger contingent in our section of the stands as Zach and Dan Prunty along with Chris Ratajczyk all sat near us. Heartbreak finishes seemed to be the theme of the month and the Wildman race was no exception. Brad Mueller led from the drop of the green and looked to have his first Wildman victory in hand until the final lap. Entering into turn three in lapped traffic, a small

window opened up to Mueller's inside and second running Brett Swedberg filled the gap to challenge for the win. As the two raced side by side out of turn four to the checkered, Mueller's car swung wide and pounded the retaining wall as Swedberg charged by for the win.

October means it's time for Oktoberfest Race Weekend at La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway on October 3rd-6th, Jefferson Speedway's rescheduled Wisconsin State Championships October 10th-12th, and the Falloween 150 at Dells Raceway Park on October 19th. "Fest" at La Crosse is always a good time as it's where I get to see friends from La Crosse, Slinger, WIR, Madison, State Park, Golden Sands, and the Dells at the same place for one final time before the off season begins. It's four days of racing action followed by music and entertainment and storytelling amongst friends in the campgrounds afterwards. That's followed by Jefferson's rescheduled Wisconsin State Championship event and then the Falloween Dells race brings down the curtain on the 2024 Midwest Season. "Next week" won't be until 2025 for these events so race fans should make every effort to attend these events. I know I'll be there and I'll be looking for all of you as well.

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On Fire Turns Into Fast Time



Dan Plan photo

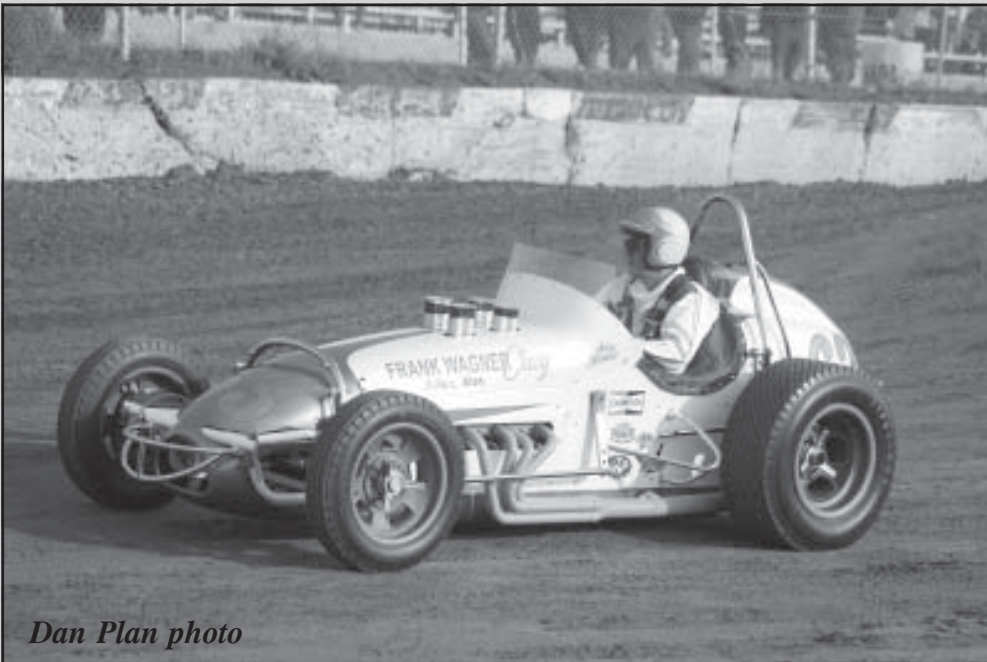


Kim Kemperman photo

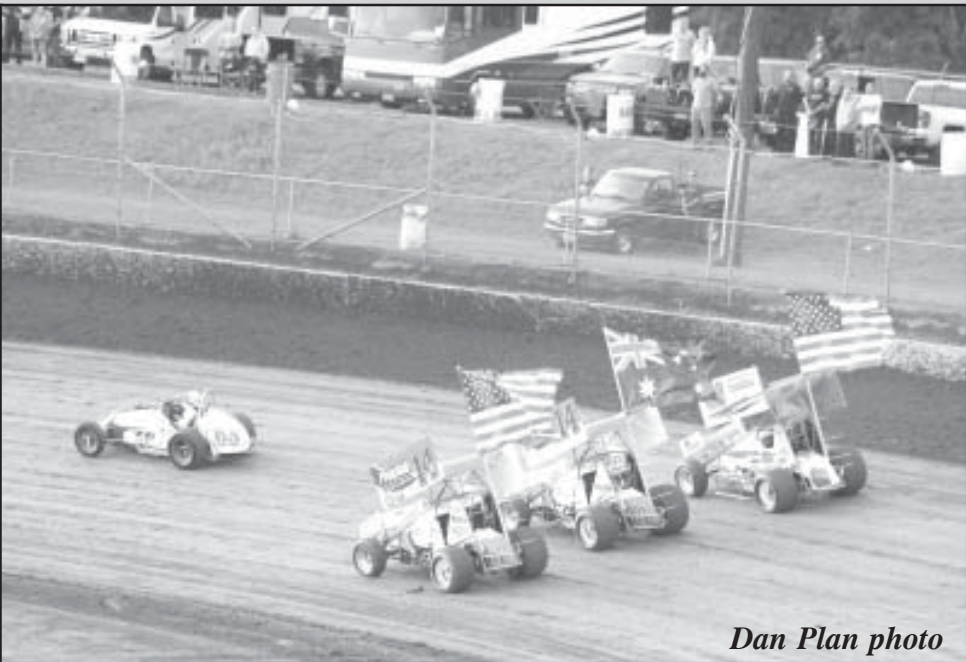
During a practice session for The National Short Track Championships at Dells Raceway Park, Rick Bickle's car burst into flames upon returning to his pit spot. The following weekend at The Bettenhausen Classic at Grundy County Speedway, Bickle set fast time with the very same car.

Richert Memorial Race

The Jerry Richert Sr. Memorial Race takes place each year on the Saturday following Labor Day weekend. This year the fans had a special bonus as Jerry Richert Jr. paced the field in a restored vintage Sprint Car prior to the event began.



Dan Plan photo



Dan Plan photo

Using Every Inch



Dan Plan photo

If you listen to a scanner to monitor race teams at short track racing, you'll often hear crew chief's and/or spotters telling the driver to go all of the way to the wall. I don't think Austin Nason could have gotten any closer to the wall during practice for the National Short Track Championships at Dells Raceway Park.

Race Car Heart with Robert Sommers



Robert Sommers is one of the regular contributors to The Midwest Racing Connection with his fantastic Race Car Heart Cartoons. What many readers may not know is Robert is a racer at short tracks in the stat of Indiana. Robert sent this photo of his season coming to an end. Robert is in the 47 car. I'm sure they are working to get things ready to go for the 2025 season.

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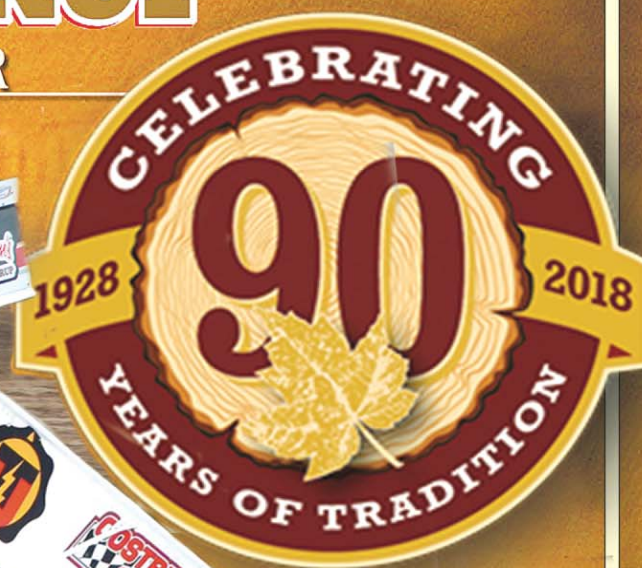
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