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# THE MIDWEST'S SHORT TRACK AUTO RACING AUTHORITY Short Track Spotlight



August 2025

Inside...



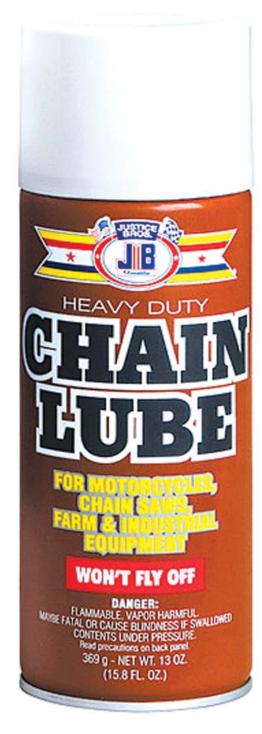
**Gopher Midget Update** 



**Photo Gallery** 

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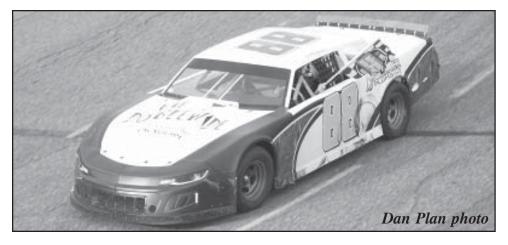
# Publisher's Note Racing According to Plan

Page 3



#### Dan Plan

I've been attending short track racing for most of my life. From the days of my parents bringing me in diapers in the late 1960's, to the present day and age, (and no I am not wearing diapers again) that's what I do on weekends. I go to short track races.



# Things That Will Always Bring Me Back

One of the things that I will never get tired of is seeing a first time winner. As someone who enjoys sitting in the stands these days more than working on a race car, I truly appreciate the effort these guys at the short track level go through to make it to race night. I know that short track racing is not easy and not the most affordable hobby.

Over the Fourth of July weekend, I witnessed a first time winner that I might have enjoyed more than others. I don't know exactly how long Jason Novak has been racing Thunder Cars at Elko Speedway, but he's been at it for quite some time. I honestly thought it had been a few years since he won a race but quickly realized that this particular night was his first ever Thunder Car win at Elko. I didn't make it to victory lane to see his excitement when he climbed out of the car but arrived shortly after when they were getting ready for Martin DeFries to take his victory lane photos.

In the short time I spoke with Jason in victory lane, he didn't have the expression of joy and excitement, but rather a look of relief. It reminded me of Dale

Earnhardt's interview with Ken Squier following his first Daytona 500 win in 1998. I was waiting for Jason to say, "We won it, we won it, we won it." Yes, indeed Jason, you won it.

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The Midwest

#### **RACING**

Connection

August 2025

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P.O. Box 101 Roberts, WI 54023 651-451-4036 www.theracingconnection.com

<u>Publisher</u> Dan Plan

Contributing Writers
Dale P. Danielski
DanMargetta
PJ''Jacklyn'' Nuttleman
Jason Searcy
Charlie Spry

**Contributing Photographers** 

Martin DeFries
Kim Kemperman
Doug Hornickel
Nuttleman Kids
Vince Peterson
Shawn Swanstrom
Mark Zeidler

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THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION



#### THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION

#### Publisher's Note continued from page 3

Another item I really enjoy is something I have been preaching about for a long time. If you are a fan of pavement Late Model racing where radios are allowed, I would highly recommend getting a scanner. The stuff you hear over the course of the night is highly entertaining. Some of it is not suitable for print,



but I also heard a good conversation on the Fourth of July weekend. After Billy Mohn won the first feature of the night and was taking his victory lap with the checkered flag, Mike Mohn keyed the radio and asked if they were going to skip victory lane photos and go straight to tech inspection. Billy immediately keyed the mic with checkered flag in hand and said, "We don't win enough to skip victory lane photos." Quotes like this remind me of when the late great Dan Ryan once told me, "You can't make this stuff up." Indeed, you can't make this stuff up.



And finally, this year Jacob Goede has won weekly Late Model features at Dells Raceway Park, Elko Speedway and LaCrosse Fairgrounds Speedway. After the initial wins at the Dells and LaCrosse, I started thinking, when was the last time a driver won weekly shows at the Dells and LaCrosse? After showing up at Elko following a LaCrosse rainout and winning, it really got me wondering when was the last

time someone won a weekly show at Dells, Elko and LaCrosse? There may have been years where a touring series had visited each facility during the same year, but I'm more curious about weekly shows. I'm guessing the last time somebody won a weekly show at Dells, Elko and LaCrosse might have been back in the Trickle/Reffner days in the 1970's. That is an impressive feat in my book.

# We have moved! The new headquarters for MRC is now located in Roberts. WI

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## **Gopher Midget Series August 2025 Update**

The 2025 Gopher Midget Racing Series is rolling through summer, and after four thrilling races, the Storm Series points battle is heating up. Fans at Thunder Hill Speedway have witnessed exciting sideby-side action and breakout performances as we pass the halfway mark of the season.

Since our July update, two more races have been completed, both delivering big moves in the champion-ship chase. Most notably, Jody Rosenboom captured a memorable victory at Thunder Hill Speedway, his first-ever Gopher Midget Series start. While Jody is best known for supplying competitive rental midgets through his race team, it was a special moment to see him behind the wheel and in Victory Lane. His win is a testament to both his talent and the quality of the cars he prepares. If you're interested in racing a midget, reach out to Jody at Rosie's Raceland—his rental program is a great way to get started or return to the sport.

At the top of the Storm Series standings, the battle is tight. Ryan Bowers currently leads the championship with 373 points, followed closely by Johnny Parsons III with 363 and Edison Aldrich with 359. With two races left in the Storm Series and five total events remaining this season, it's still anyone's title to win.. Carter Jensrud, who dominated early, took a hit in the standings after missing a key date to attend the famed BC39 race in Indianapolis, while Ryan Bowers has surged into the lead with consistently strong performances.

With just two races remaining in the Storm Series—and five total Gopher Midget events left in 2025—the chase is wide open and every position matters.

Looking ahead, we return to Thunder Hill Speedway for our next event on Tuesday, August 13, followed by another stop on Tuesday, August 27. Trevor Serbus has also confirmed he will be racing in both of these final Storm Series events, adding another strong competitor to the field. Fans can expect a



strong field and high-stakes racing as drivers battle for every point.

Exciting news on the roster front—Bill Johnson's midget—new to the series will be making its debut at the August 13 event. Bill and his son Matt will alternate driving duties for the rest of the year. It's always exciting to see new cars and families joining the Gopher Midget ranks.

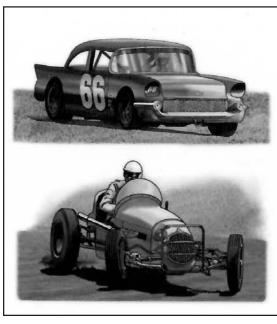
In other developments, we're thrilled to share that the Aitkin County Fairgrounds has reached out to us about potentially hosting a Gopher Midget race in 2025. The track layout looks promising, but the frontstretch fence will need upgrades before a race can be safely scheduled. Funding is currently under-

way. If you'd like to help make it happen, reach out directly to the fairgrounds and show your support.

The Gopher Midget Series races five more times this season—make sure to check out the full schedule at www.gophermidgets.com.

We're incredibly proud of how the series is growing, and we thank our racers, fans, and sponsors for the continued support. If you're a business looking to get involved, we're always seeking new marketing partners. Reach out through our website or Facebook page to learn more.

Grassroots open-wheel racing is alive and well in the Upper Midwest. Come out to Thunder Hill and see what the excitement is all about!





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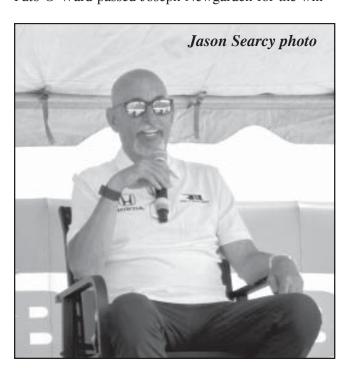


## Talkin' Racin' with Jason



#### Jason D. Searcy

Iowa Speedway hosted two full INDYCAR events July 12th and 13th. Recent race sponsor Hy-Vee rejuvenated the track the previous three years with full activation in its stores, fun contests, thousands of free tickets for employees and star studded concerts that brought in a large number of non-traditional fans to the track. Attendance was estimated at over 30,000 per day in 2023 and 2024. Hy-Vee did not renew its commitment, and the focus went back to traditional racing in 2025 with sponsorship from Sukup. The product on the track was much improved, the newly paved portion of the track had aged and that in addition to the downforce changes, a two lane groove was achieved and passing was not only possible it was plentiful by the end of the weekend. Scott McLaughlin started the Saturday race 27th and raced his way up to finish fourth while crowd favorite Pato O'Ward passed Joseph Newgarden for the win



## IndyCar in Iowa



on the last round of pit stops, five different drivers led laps during the race. The Sunday event only had three leaders but a lot of passing for position and side by side racing. Point leader Alex Palou won the race, it was exciting from start to finish. The only thing missing from this race was the crowd, an estimated 6,000 tickets were sold. With the late absence of Hy-Vee the local promotion was much less than previous years, the ticket renewal forms were not sent out until

April and the casual non-race fan simply did not attend. Iowa Speedway itself is not going away because NASCAR owns the track and has a sold out NASCAR Cup Series event on August 3rd but this INDYCAR race event might go away. INDYCAR just rents the Iowa Speedway facility for this event and is in charge of its promotion, it is obvious that it

Talkin' Racin' continued on page 8



Rebecca Searcy photo

## THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION

#### Talkin' Racin' continued from page 7

needs to be promoted differently for it to be financially successful going forward but one thing they got right is the product on the track and that is a good start for us non-casual race fans.

Before the Sunday event at Iowa Speedway a fan forum was held, with three legendary INDYCAR drivers. Ryan Hunter-Reay- 18 time INDYCAR winner, Indy 500 champion 2014 and INDYCAR Champion 2012 and current part-time driver. Bobby Rahal- 1986 Indy 500 winner, CART champion 1986, 1987, 1992 and also current team owner. Ayie Luyendyk- 1990 & 1997 Indy 500 winner and now current INDYCAR official.

Here are a few highlights of some of the most interesting responses given during this event.

> What is your favorite track? Rvan Hunter-Reay:

"I've always loved the short ovals, I've done very well on short ovals my entire career, I'm not sure why that is, it just fits my driving style. Iowa, Milwaukee, New Hampshire and Phoenix I just always had a great time and had success at them."

#### Bobby Rahal:

"My favorite race track even today, even though I don't drive on it anymore, just going there, is Road America in Wisconsin. It's the best road course in North America and I had a chance to race in Europe and all over the world and I don't know of any driver who doesn't love going to Road America. That would be my favorite. Like Ryan (Hunter Reay) I've always loved short ovals, especially if your car is good but if your car is not good they are horrible, they are awful. You are crying for your mommy most of the race. In 1992 I won three of the four short ovals and finished second in Milwaukee, got the pole there. If you look at my record you'd have to say where did I win most. Laguna Seca or Mid Ohio we had a lot of success."

How did you know it was time to retire?

#### Bobby Rahal:

"Early in my career I couldn't wait to go testing, I couldn't wait to get to the race, I was so focused on everything racing. As I got older, now you have kids and you have other business interests. I think the time it really hit me was probably around when I was 44, I retired when I was 45, which guys like Scott Dixon (44), Tony Kanaan (48), there was a bunch of guys in their early 40's, I think Takuma Sato is 48 and look at him, front row at Indy this year. Ryan Hunter-Reay is 44 and he is still a kid. It hit me when I was going to do a test and it became work and it had never been work before, that is when I knew that now was the time (to retire) because I wasn't going to go INDYCAR racing if I wasn't going to give it 100 percent. I felt that I was slightly less than that at that point and I felt it was time to not continue. I was thinking of

going sports car racing because you can still be doing that easily after the age of 45 but then I had a race team and you have to know where your priorities are and the race team was my priority, so that was that."

#### Ryan Hunter-Reay:

"It is confusing to some people as to why someone in their early or mid 40's would consider retiring from this sport or from full-time competition but unlike other racing forms open wheel single seaters like this in INDYCAR requires such an immense physical commitment and reaction times. It's unlike stock car racing or anything else, you have to be operating at



peak levels or otherwise you are going to get absolutely smoked but like Bobby (Rahal) said your head has to be there too, if it's more of a burden at times, it's not the same as being fully committed."

#### Arie Luyendyk:

"The only way to perform, when I coach guys at Indy for instance, I always drive home the message that you have to go out and do your laps and you have to enjoy it, you have to like it, if you don't like it anymore, it's pretty much over."

## 2025 SCHEDULE JU BIG Late Models

SAT Apr 26 48th Spring Classic

Grundy County Speedway, Morris, IL

FRI May 23 Big 8 Late Model Special

Madison International Speedway, Oregon, WI

FRI Jun 6 Clash at the Downs XI

Hawkeye Downs Speedway, Cedar Rapids, IA

SAT Jun 28 Chicagoland Showdown

PLUS Midnight Ride & Rockford Racers Reunion

Grundy County Speedway, Morris, IL

FRI Jul 18

Legends.Direct Classic

Hawkeye Downs Speedway, Cedar Rapids, IA

FRI Aug 1

Union 464 Night PLUS Rockford Racers Reunion

Madison International Speedway, Oregon, WI

FRI Aug 8 Ron Meister Memorial

Tomah-Sparta Speedway, Tomah, WI

SAT Sep 13 60th National Short Track Championships

**PLUS Rockford Racers Reunion** 

Dells Raceway Park, Wisconsin Dells, IL

SAT Oct 4 56th Annual Oktoberfest Race Weekend

LaCrosse Fairgrounds Speedway, West Salem, WI

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# THE MIDWEST CONNECTION

## Going in Circles



#### **Charlie Spry**

This past month brought us plenty of heat, with some rain showers in the middle of it all. A couple of rainouts and a couple of sweltering nights but racing continued.

Took in a weekly show at the LaCrosse Fair-grounds Speedway. I had not been to this track since 2020, and then that was as a crew guy for a Big 8 Late Model at Oktoberfest. Sure do not see much racing when in that capacity. My last weekly show had been even before that.

Lots of tradition here. Nice to see familiar names and some veterans that are still at it in the Late Models. Don "Thunder" Turner has raced in every Oktoberfest here, so that gives you an idea of his age and years of racing. Steve and Tom Carlson have raced for many, many years. Steve still races a late model, while Tom races a 602 outlaw car in the Sportsman class. Jimmy Summerfield has raced here for many years and is still at it with his Mopar. I always enjoy seeing him race. And then of course, is Al Bartels. Al has been around for a long time, usually racing in a "support" division. I remember meeting him many years ago when he came all the way down to Madison to race weekly with a purple Ford Torino. Very nice guy who just loves to race. The new generation of racers are also well represented, with names like Holzhausen, Carlson, Nuttleman, Horstman and more adding to the show.

Tonight, some visitors from the Dells track showed to race in the Late Models, as that track was racing Super Lates. Mike Lichtfeld, Scott Luck, and Thayran Rezin came out to race. Lichtfeld is very hard to beat at the Dells and looked strong here as well. He started near the back of each feature and worked his way up to finish sixth in the first feature and ninth in the second one. No easy task to start in the back and get to the front. Mike Carlson was the winner of the first feature and Adam Bendzick won the nightcap.

Mini-Vans, Hornets, Street Stocks (Sixers), Sportsman, and Super Cups were also racing. I liked the Mini-Van of John Huebner. His vehicle had flames painted on coming from the back and going forward. I did this on one of my cars one time and constantly got chastised, "Your flames are going the wrong way!" I wonder if he gets that as well. Great minds think alike! Robert Stanfield took the win. Hornet class was very interesting as well, with Carter Horstman taking the win. Street Stocks put on a good show with veteran Matt Moore getting the win by inches over his Son, while the Super Cups feature had plenty of excitement, culminating with a photofinish victory by Michael Rose.

The Sportsman class here is kind of like the MisFitz class at Madsion, in that it is a timed division with a breakout rule. Trucks, outlaw 602 Late Models, modifieds and regular sportsman cars compete. Tonight, Bob Fort was the dominant force, winning both the dash and feature.

Had a chance to talk with Bob and his crew before the races. I knew

that he had formerly raced on the dirt, so asked him why the change to asphalt. "This is cheaper. You can put one of these together and it is much more cost effective. Less maintenance, too," As his crew also added, saying, "And much cleaner. No more scraping mud!"

Bob noted that he started racing when he was sixteen years old, with his first car being a '65 Impala. "It was like a hobby stock division. I have always liked those cars, and I have four of them (street versions) right now."

He got his start racing at Fountain City on the dirt. He also did some racing at the old Fox Ridge Speedway in Arcadia. "I actually won the first race they had at that track." He noted.

Other tracks on the dirt side of things that he has raced include Deer Creek in Minnesota, where once again he said, "I also won the first race they ever had there when they opened." He has also raced at various other dirt tracks in Wisconsin and Minnesota, now calls Lacrosse Fairgrounds Speedway his home, where he has been a title contender every year, including track champion last year, when he won an amazing six of nine weekly features run. According to my stats, he has now scored twenty feature wins since he started racing in the sportsman division here about five years ago. He has also raced at Tomah and Madison on the asphalt side of things.

Bob keeps the cost in perspective, hauling his car on an open trailer with a pickup truck. "I have an enclosed trailer, but I don't like it. If I am here or somewhere by myself and have to load it, it's hard. I just prefer the open trailer." Bob has also raced other types of cars, everything from late model to Sixer. He has also been a winner in every kind of car. "I owned



Tony Leis' Late Model, and I took it out the first time, and won a heat with it." Clearly, Bob knows how to get the job done. His current car is the outlaw type late model with a 602 crate motor in it.

I also had a chance to visit with Greg Oliver, who has a new Hornet class car out this year. Greg had formerly promoted the Tomah-Sparta Speedway, and that got sold, so he is now able to have more fun racing himself. "I don't miss it," Greg said of the promoting. "I had a regular job to go to and then I had to spend every night at the track for hours. It just go to be too hard. I am enjoying this racing more now. I can't make every race, as I am helping Gregg (McKarns) with the Midwest tour, so there are nights that I will miss. I guess that takes the pressure off of chasing points."

Near the end of the month I finally had a chance to attend a weekly show at the Madison International Speedway. Car counts have been increasing nicely here this year, which is great to see. Twenty-four Late Models here on this night, with eighteen in the MisFitz division.

The MisFitz division may finally be taking off in car counts. More in line with what I kind of expected when the division was formed. Had a chance to talk to one of the mainstays of the division, Tim Wondrash.

Tim's first exposure to racing came about when his grandparents took him to Wausau's State Park Speedway as a youngster. "I remember the spectator drags that they had there, I don't remember all of the names, but one that I do is Marv Zuidema. It seemed like he won a lot of them and I can still remember his

Going In Circles continued on page 10

# THE MIDWLET CONNECTION

#### Going In Circles continued from page 9

car. They were really wild!"

The desire to race himself took hold, and his first foray occurred in the late 1980's, when he built a Chevelle Laguna to race in the "Road Warrior" street stock type class at Jefferson Speedway. He only had the opportunity to race for a couple of years before raising his children took center stage. He moved from southern Wisconsin down to the Sycamore, Illinois area for work. Since there is a track in Sycamore he had to give dirt racing a try, doing so in a hobby stock type class in the early 2000's.

Moving back to southern Wisconsin a few years ago, he found himself being drawn to race at Madison, which is only a few miles from his home. He raced a sportsman car and then continued on with that car in the newly formed MisFitz class, soon figuring that a new car was needed, which is when he got his current outlaw late model. Since the start of the division, he has been involved in it with his orange #84 vehicles.

His goal, "Just have fun. I have never won a feature but have won some heat races and so forth in my career. It's just a fun thing for me to do. I am pretty much a one-man band, so I don't race at any other tracks for the most part," Said Tim.

One of his highlights was on the night when he was an unexpected winner. "I had crossed the line in fourth in the dash. I was just pulling into the pits when they came over the radio, saying number 84, you won! The top three finishers had broken out on the last lap."

His car was originally built by Kevin Laatsch, and was raced for many years by Tim Ambrose.

Some very good racing on this night in this class. Mid-Am racer Phil Speciale came home the winner in the first feature, while Nick Schneider won the second main event.

In the Late Models, it was veteran Landry Potter winning the first one. Landry has been around racing for a long time in various classes and various tracks, with Lake Geneva Raceway being his home track for many years before closing in 2006. Shaun Scheel was the winner of the second event in a tight battle with Morgan Schissel. Very interesting field of cars from a wide area.

I always enjoy talking with Sixer racer Ken Morris and his group. Sometimes known as the "Jack Roush" of the Sixers, as he owns several cars, Ken enjoys getting other people involved in the sport. One of his drivers is Randy Grancorvitz. While Ken raced a street stock car at Columbus (still has it), Randy raced there in the Backup division, which was cars racing in reverse around the track. Randy noted that later on the cars were changed to include seats partially turned around, steering columns repositioned and so forth in order to help aid the driver looking over their shoulder for eight laps, but that when he started in the division they had none of that. He was out of racing personally for many years before Ken asked him to drive a Sixer for him, which he did...and still does. He won one of the features on this night, with Jason Van Hise winning the other.

The High School Racing Association was also present, with only five cars showing. I do not know why this has not taken off with area high schoolers here. Anyway, Kennedy Krueger took home a pair of feature wins back to Sparta, Wisconsin.

It was nice to see veteran Late Model racer Gary Krueger present. Gary has been fighting serious health issues for quite some time, and seems to be holding his own. This team arrived just as the drivers' meeting was happening. Gary did not really feel up to driving, so his Son, Jody, took the wheel. No practice laps, qualifying,

anything. Jody reported that clutch issues pretty much halted their progress. It was awesome to see this team here.

Another veteran here was Joel Clossey, racing with his modified in the MisFitz. Joel was one of the first drivers to race a modified when that class started back in 1992, racing an old Keith Selvog Late Model that had been converted to a mod. It was announced that this very well could be Joel's last race as he wants to retire from competition.

Talked with Late Model racer Franc Beldowski. Franc was fresh off his first career Late Model feature win the previous week at Grundy County Speedway and wanted to try some things here. Brake issues arose early in the first feature, so he pulled off, but came back strong in the second feature, starting last in the field, he made his way up to finish ninth.

Thanks to all at MIS for their hospitality. Hope to



return at least once more plus a couple of street drag events.

Onto the month of August, which will be the final month of racing for some tracks. Hoping for drier weather than July was, at least from a racing standpoint.





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# THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION



The end of July featured several big events in the upper Midwest. Jefferson Speedway hosted the Barnyard to Brickyard Super Late event for Rich Bickle JR (top photo.) After being held for 8 years at Red Cedar Speedway in Menomonie, WI, the Mahder Memorial Race was moved to Cedar Lake Speedway for the 2025 event (middle photo) and the IMCA Oldtimers hosted their second event at the classic fairgrounds track during the Rice County Fair. It is a great time to be a race fan.



# THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION



# THE MIDNEST CONFIGURE

## Photo Gallery



David Gravel won the Friday night WoO show at Cedar Lake (Brewster Baker photo)



Penn & Johnny Sauter at The Slinger Nationals (Doug Hornickel photo)



Chris Marek won the Behrens Memorial race at Elko Speedway (Junior Jackson photo)



Carson Macedo won the Saturday night WoO show at Cedar Lake (Kyle Kingman photo)



Nick Hoffman at Deer Creek Speedway for the Gopher 50 (Emily Schwanke photo)



Ty Majeski and team at the Slinger Nationals (Ron Erstad Jr photo)

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## RACING CONNECTION

## Racing Nuggets



### PJ "Jacklyn" Nuttleman

One of the most unique and challenging race-tracks in the Midwest is Wisconsin International Raceway. I don't think too many people would argue that. It's also one of the most fun tracks to run for many drivers—because of its challenging nature. Like finally learning to enjoy a rollercoaster rather than letting fear hold you back from the thrill of the ride.

We are poised for another Dixieland 250 at WIR in a mere few days at the time of this publishing—on Tuesday, August 5th. The title of the race is now the "Ganrud Auto Group 250," but I think the "Dixieland" moniker will always continue to be a part of the event. Regardless of the actual name of the event, it's the names of the winners since it's inception in 1981 that are a "who's who" list of Midwestern racing history.

Mark Martin was that inaugural winner in 1981 and picked up a second title in 1984. Side note: Martin is planning to come back to the track in 2026 to promote his forthcoming book. I can't think of a better



## **Building History One Race at a Time**

way to celebrate his career than 45 years after he etched his name into history at WIR. I'm looking forward to reading the book that Bones Bourcier is helping him write.

No conversation about ANY racetrack in Wisconsin is complete without mention of Dick Trickle, who won the event four times (1983, 1987, 1990, & 1991).

Thirty-five years ago, I moved back to the Midwest. The year was 1990 and looking back at the Dixieland top 10 that year makes me realize just how fast time has flown by. Scott Hansen finished second to Trickle. Joe Shear, Rich Bickle, and Jim Sauter rounded out the top five in 1990. The rest of the top 10 finishers were heavy hitters in their own right: Terry Baldry, Steve Carlson, Bryan Reffner, and Robbie Reiser.

Are you feeling as old as I am in this moment?

And while Trickle won that event in 1990, do
you think that Shear, Bickle, Sauter, Baldry, Carlson,
Reffner, Reiser, or any of the rest of the drivers in the
field entered that day thinking, "We're just racing for
second. Trickle is here."

Hell no! And there were legions of fans for every one of those drivers rooting for "their guy" to pull off the win.

There's a term called "Rosy Retrospection" where we tend to remember events as being better than they were. I'm not saying that the hey day of racing back in the 90s or even further back WASN'T better or more awesome. It's just super easy to wax poetic about how great it was because these days, it is far too easy to find fault in the "now."

Is racing different today than it was back then? Absolutely. But the competition is still stiff.

My husband, Toby Nuttleman, was working with Steve Holzhausen back in 1992 with Baker Motorsports when they won the Dixieland. He worked with Scott Hansen out of the Motorsports of Rice Lake enterprise of Rick Scalzo when Hansen won it in 1993. (That story is worthy of a column all its own, for another time.) Toby's also been with Steve Carlson for some of his record-setting seven Dixieland wins over the years. And yes, as many know, he continues to work with Ty Majeski, who has been a dominate force in the event in recent years.

Toby likes WIR and has a lot of experience there with incredible drivers. But there are PLENTY of talented and hungry drivers and teams that he hasn't worked with who are ready to claim the title this year. It's short-sighted to write it off as everyone else is running for second because any one driver is in the field. A defeatist attitude like that is a cancer that eats away at the soul of racing.

Casey Johnson has been a phoenix rising from the ashes of an injury that left him sidelined over the past year or so. He's leading the Midwest Tour points and has picked up several wins, with his most recent (as of this writing) at Madison for the Howie Lettow Classic. The guy is always a threat to win. Justin



Mondeik has shown solid speed this season as well and finished solidly behind Johnson at Madison. Andrew Morrissey is the stealth-mode competitor; quiet and capable. You should never write him off. Even when it might look like he's down for the count, the guy bounces back with a vengeance. John DeAngelis Jr has had THE worst luck out of any driver in recent history at the Dixieland. The guy has had the checkers in sight several times, only to have misfortune bite him in the backside. If anyone is loaded for bear at this event—it would be DeAngelis. All three have expressed intent to run the Dixieland.

At the time of this writing, there has not been an official entry list released. However, I did connect with Midwest Tour promoter, Gregg McKarns and he has also shared that in addition to tour regulars like Gabe Sommers, Dalton Zehr, and Levon VanderGeest, Luke Fenhaus will be joining the contingent of competitive forces, tossing their helmets into the ring.

McKarns also shared that NASCAR Cup driver, Eric Jones is confirmed to run the event. There are two more Cup drivers who have not been finalized at the time of this writing, but are in the works and likely will be announced soon—if not already by publication. If you've had your finger on the pulse of racing, you can probably guess who those two are.

So while I'm literally in bed with the crew chief for the guy who has won this event five of the last six years, I'm not of the mindset that it's a done deal for Majeski to win it again. Would I like that to happen? Of course! What kind of a wife doesn't want to support her husband's racing efforts? However, if the start of this season has taught us anything it's that we need to expect the unexpected.

It took Majeski until the Slinger Nationals to finally win his first race of this season. And while he's picked up more wins since then, in racing, nothing is guaranteed. Especially with such a group of talented drivers and teams ready to vie for the \$15,000 and grab the checkered flag in this prestigious event.

We couldn't ask for a better support class than the Midwest Truck Series, which is peppered with seasoned veterans and hot-shoe youngsters that will

Racing Nuggets continued on page 17

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## THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION

## Dangerous Dan



#### **Dan Margetta**

For the first time since Daytona in February, I was back at a NASCAR race weekend as Brian Schmitt and I represented our LTN Radio show at the Chicago Street Race over the Fourth of July Weekend. This was our third time attending NASCAR's annual street race and while the event didn't quite have the hype and excitement of the inaugural race, I have to admit the concept still is pretty cool. There's just something about NASCAR stock cars ripping through the downtown area of a major city that's a constant reminder of just how unbelievable it is the sanctioning body actually pulled the whole deal off. But being cool and being sustainable are vastly different things and after three years, both Chicago and NASCAR agreed to take a pause at least for 2026 as NASCAR takes its street race concept to San Diego next season and there's strong speculation a return to the Chicagoland Speedway in Joliet may be in the works. However, this year's Chicago Street Race did hold kind of a milestone honor for me.

I've kept a log of every NASCAR Cup race I have attended and this year's Chicago event marked the 130<sup>th</sup> Cup race I have seen in person. Now I know to those who follow the circuit weekly for a living, that number probably doesn't sound too impressive, but to someone who as a kid only dreamed about attending

just one big-time NASCAR race, to now have gone to 130 of them made me smile. The list began way back in July of 1984 at the Talladega 500 and I still remember riding to my little league baseball game while my parents were discussing a family vacation road trip to Alabama. "Isn't the Talladega track there?" I asked and when my Dad said "yes" and the plan was to get tickets to the race I about burst with excitement. I didn't get too many hits in my Little League career but I'm pretty sure I got two that day because I was so jacked up over the news. I'll never forget reaching the top of the hill as we walked up to the Talladega track and getting that first glimpse of the speedway to actually see what I had only known through a TV screen before. It was a pretty good first race to attend as the race featured a record number of lead changes and Dale Earnhardt Sr. held off a pack of ten cars across the finish line. Photo Finish Cameras had to be used to sort out finishing positions in the top ten and I left there knowing I just had to find a way to somehow be a part of the sport. Race number two was back at the Talladega 500 two years later in 1986. That one was on a scorching hot day and ended with the leaders crashing on the final lap as Bobby Hillin Jr. drove by for his first and only Cup win.

During those 130 races, I've witnessed a total of nine first time wins and following Bobby Hillin's victory, the next one didn't come until Race 23 at the 2000 Coca-Cola 600. That was one of my all-time favorites as "our" Wisconsin guy Matt Kenseth got his first of 39 Cup victories. Other first-time winners I have witnessed include Casey Mears in Race 48 (2007 Coca-Cola 600), David Reutimann in Race 57 (2009 Coca-Cola 600), Paul Menard in Race 69 (2011 Brickyard 400), and Austin Dillon in Race 100 (2017 Coca-Cola 600). I saw back-to-back first-time winners in Race 119 and Race 120 with Austin Cindric (2022 Daytona 500) and Tyler Reddick (2022 Kwik Trip 250 at Road America). Shane Van Gisbergen was the last first-time winner I saw in Race 123 (2023 Chicago Street Race).

Overall, I've seen the most races at Las Vegas Motor Speedway with 22 races attended followed closely by Charlotte Motor Speedway and Homestead-Miami Speedway was 21 races. The old Chicagoland Speedway is fourth on the list with 15 races attended and the Indianapolis Motor Speedway is fifth with 11 races. I have attended eight races at Daytona International Speedway (7 Daytona 500's (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2022 2023, 2025), and one Firecracker 400 (1992)) and six races at Phoenix International Raceway. Michigan International Speedway and North Wilkesboro Speedway are next with five races attended followed by Martinsville Speedway, Talladega Speedway, and the Chicago Street Course with three. I've seen two races at Bristol Motor Speedway, Darlington Raceway, and Road America and a single event at Atlanta Motor Speedway.

The driver I have witnessed win the most is Jimmie Johnson with 11 victories while Kevin Harvick is second with eight victories witnessed and Martin Truex Jr. is third with seven. I have seen Matt Kenseth, Tony Stewart, Denny Hamlin, Kyle Busch, and Joey Logano win six times while Mark Martin, Brad Keselowski, and Carl Edwards have taken the checkered flag five times when I was in attendance. I've witnessed Jeff Gordon and Kasey Kahne win four times while Dale Earnhardt Sr., Dale Earnhardt Jr., Kurt Busch, Greg Biffle, Geoff Bodine, and Kyle Larson all won three times when I was in attendance. Drivers I have seen win two races include Rusty Wallace, Ernie Irvan, Dale Jarrett, Jeff Burton, Ryan Newman, David Reutimann, Ricky Rudd, Austin Dillon, Alex Bowman, and Shane Van Gisbergen. The single race winners I have witnessed are Bill Elliott, Terry Labonte, Bobby Labonte, Bobby Hillin Jr., Casey Mears, Paul Menard, Jamie McMurray, Chase Elliott, Austin Cindric, Tyler Reddick, Ricky Stenhouse Jr., Ross Chastain and William Byron.

The car number I've seen win the most is #48 with 13 victories while car #5 and car #2 follow with eight victories each. Car #18 is next on the list with seven victories and car numbers #4. #11, #20, #22, #99 all have six.

I've seen some pretty good races in the 130 NASCAR races attended to date and plan to continue to add to that number with races planned for Las Vegas and Phoenix in the Fall and Daytona next Winter. In the meantime, there's still plenty of time to supplement the NASCAR Cup races with all kinds of NASCAR Craftsmen Truck Series, NASCAR Xfinity Series, and short track events this summer.

#### Racing Nuggets from page 15

be mixing it up. The Trucks always put on an incredibly competitive show. Dixieland tickets are just \$25 in advance for adults at MidwestTour.racing or \$30 at the gate, which opens at 4pm. Qualifying is at 5pm and racing gets underway at 6:30pm.

The McKarns family will be bringing their JumboTron to WIR for the race as well, providing another feature to make the in-person experience more enjoyable. Gregg learned from his late father, John, that a successful event means approaching it from the fan perspective. Secure a competitive field of talent, keep the show moving, give a nod to those of the past who built this sport, and

most of all—provide a show that keeps the fans excited and on their feet. The Dixieland checks all those boxes.

The tradition continues. I firmly believe the kids of today will be having "Rosy Retrospection" as adults about these days of racing. You cannot deny we have it pretty damn good here in the Midwest with racing. Just look around and appreci-

ate the competition and characters involved with what we have now. You are what you make of it.



## THE MIDWLET CONNECTION

## **Racing History**

## HISTORIC VALUES

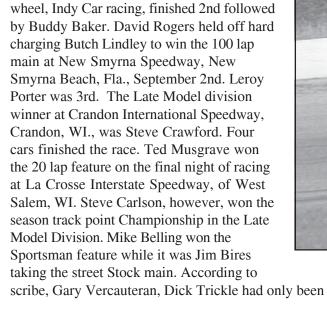
HISTORY THAT NO LONGER REPEATS ITSELF



#### Dale P. Danielski

The month of September is a month racers can make big bucks. The 1984 and 1985 seasons were no exception as short track, super speedway, dirt, pavement, the money was there.

Let's study September 1984,'85 a bit closer. Everyone loves the Fair, especially the Minnesota Fair. Bob Senneker, after a crash the day before won the Redwood Snuff 300, ASA Silver Creek Racing Series main attraction at the Fair, of Falcon Heights, MN., September 3rd. Senneker started 34th in the field of 38 and "Sneaked" his way to the front, to win over Mark Martin and Dick Trickle. Over 15,000 fans watched, (Hear that Minnesota Fair board.) as Senneker cruised to the \$8,575.00 win. Of course, back in the day, multiple events were held at the Minnesota State Fair, and Butch Miller and Jim Sauter took wins in the ASA ARTGO races on September 1st. Mark Martin finished 2nd in both mains and was the overall winner. The ageless wonder, Harry Gant, conquered the Lady in Black, Southern 500 at Darlington Raceway, Darlington, SC., NASCAR CUP race on September 2nd. Tim Rich-

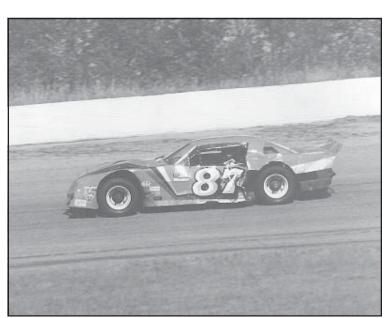


mond who moved into NASCAR stock car racing, which was a good thing, as he probably would have ended up dead in open

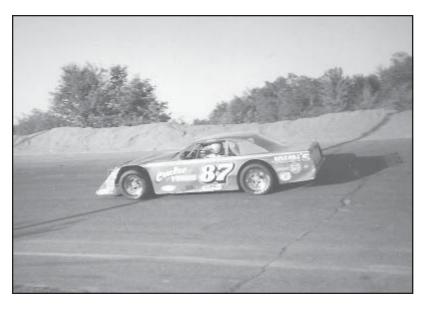


beaten twice in the last two years at Wisconsin International Raceway, Kaukauna, WI. Jim Back was one driver that did it. Bob Menor out sprinted Gene Coleman to win the Late Model feature finale at

> Dickinson County Raceway, Norway, MI., September 3rd. Coleman placed 2nd followed by Lee Anderson. Hobby Stock main went to Harley Hendrickson. John Engelkens won the Super Late Model Labor Day Classic at Sycamore Speedway, Sycamore, IL. Larry Mosher leading the dogs, was 2nd. Terry Baldry's Late Model feature win netted him another title at Wisconsin International Raceway. It was his 3rd straight track Championship. Don Marcis and Tom Reffner won Late Model features in the season finale at State Park Speedway, Rib Mountain, WI. Steve Holzhausen with his feature, won the season points track championship. Allen



Check won the Hobby Stock feature, but it was Keith Witt taking the division championship. Gene Norenburg started 39th in a field of 160, to win the Kayser Enduro 300 at Capital Super Speedway, Oregon, WI., September 2nd. Norenburg finished 9 laps ahead of 2nd place finisher John Olson. Jim O'Connor won the 50 lap Late Model headliner at the Santa Fe Speedway, Willow Springs, IL, September 1st. Gibby Steinhaus won the Sportsman main event. Before a crowd of 7,500, Crazy Jim's Demo Derby was held at the Hales Corners Speedway, Franklin, WI., September 3rd. Don Frederiks won the 40 car final of the event. Bob Gherardi won the Late Model feature at the Hibbing Raceway, Hibbing, MN., September 2nd. Gherardi also was the track champion for the year. Jim Fetzik was the Hobby Stock main winner Craig Peterson won the Sportsman feature at La Crosse Interstate Speedway September 7th. Steve Carlson was the Late Model feature winner holding off Rick Wateski and Don Turner. C.J. Rayburn say's, he's no race car driver, but he had everyone fooled by winning the 100 lap Miller High Life feature at the Queen City Speedway, West Chester, OH., here September 5th. Butch Miller, the only other driver on the lead lap, finished a distant 2nd. A little moisture didn't dampen the spirit of Figure 8 drivers in the Pepsi Challenge Series at Raceway Park, Shakopee, MN., September 9th, as Dennis Barta led from start to finish to win the race. The overall Twin City auto racing champions were crowned September 8th for the Elko and Shakopee, MN., tracks. The big victor was Lynn Peterson, who won the Late Model crown. Tony Izzo romped to his 10th Late Model main event win at the Sante Fe Speedway, September 8th. Larry Stotts and Arnie Gardner followed. Gene Erdman was the 40 lap Modified feature winner at the Sheboygan County Fairgrounds, Plymouth, WI., September 8th. Wayne



Racing History continued on page 19

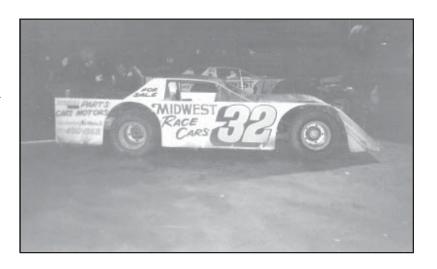
#### Racing History from page 18

Goetsch was next followed by Fred Clatt. Ed Hoffman edged Rex Steffes by a car length to win the Late Model feature at the Grundy County Speedway, Morris, IL., September 2nd. Jim Olson won the Budget Bumper main event. Paul Shafer won the Late Model main at Kankakee Fairgrounds Speedway, Kankakee, IL., September 3rd. Bill Davis was the Sportsman feature winner. Twenty year old Rookie Howard Rose went on to win the ARCA Silver Dollar 150 race at the Toledo Speedway, Toledo, OH., September 15th. Rose outdistanced Jeff "The Happy" Hooker for the victory. Whitey Harris cruised to his 2nd consecutive win in the RC Communications Late Model feature at Hales Corners Speedway, September 15th. A record crowd of 4,250 viewed the action with the largest field of Late Models of the season on hand. M.J. McBride placed 2nd and was followed by Mike Melius, Chick Stolarik and Brian Jaeger. Mark Martin captured both 50 lap ASA ARTGO Challenge Series features at Dells Motor Speedway, Wis. Dells, WI., September 16th. Rich Vogler was the victor in the 500 lap USAC Midget main event at Speedrome Speedway, Indianapolis, IN., September 15th. Mel Kenyon placed 2nd, and it is reported numerous drivers are still trying to finish the race. Jeff Purvis won his 2nd consecutive World 100 at Eldora Speedway, Rossburg, OH., September 9th. Kenny Brightbill, "Long, Cool, Smooth" Bob Pierce, Jerry Inmon and Pat Patrick followed. Danny Milburn outran Jack Hewitt to win the 40 lap USAC Sprint Car feature at Lawrenceburg Speedway, Lawrenceburg, IN., September 16th. Bob Brownell led all but the opening lap in winning the 50 lap, Late Model, All-Star Invitational at Columbus 151 Speedway, Columbus, WI., September 16th. Dewey Gustafson, all the way from Lakeville, MN., was 2nd, followed by Tod Kropf and Mike Sigmund. Gene Norenburg, who found he races just as good backwards as forward, won the 15 lap pack style back up race. Shawna Robinson scored the victory in the Bobtail 100 at Wisconsin State Park Speedway, West Allis, WI., September 16th. If you don't know what a Bobtail is, do your research. Jimmie Pierson won the America Short Tracker feature to open action for the National Short Track Championship at Rockford Speedway, Rockford, IL., September 21st. Denny Hagedorn took the Roadrunner feature while Dick Hautzinger was Mini-Champ victor and Jay Gough the Go-Kart winner. Mike Eddy won the ASA 150 lap race at Michigan International Speedway, Cambridge Junction, MI., September 24th.

The event saw the violent crashing of Ken Christenson, Jr., who had something lock up in the driveline of his Camaro, sending it sliding several hundred feet across the grassy Tri-Oval before impacting the extreme end of the concrete pit wall. Christenson survived the wreck, thanks to his Dad on the scene, to race another day. Stew Reamer writing in his Racing Promotion monthly newsletter speaks of the EPA threatening racing in the form of taking all regular gasoline off the market by January 1, 1986. It didn't happen as you probably noticed, and racing was saved for another day.

Nowadays it's "Going Green" which ain't going to succeed either. Tom Nesbitt took both feature wins in the Canadian Dirt Track Championships at the Riverview Raceway, Thunder Bay, Ontario, CAN., September 15th. Larry Phillips and Odie Robertson won their respective 50 lap features in Late Model and Sportsman action at Colorado National Speedway, Erie, CO., September 15th. It was the 10th Annual Colorado Challenge Cup boasting of over \$30,000 in purse pay-out as reported by Pete Vercauteran. Leon Plank won another big race. This time he bested 54 late Models to win the Punky Manor Memorial race at Red Cedar Speedway, Menomonie, WI., September 23rd. Al Schill led every single, dang lap, 200 in all, to win the 19th Annual National Short Track Championship, at Rockford Speedway, September 23rd. Meanwhile, Chevrolet was developing a new engine for use in Indy car competition. The engine, a 2.6 liter, double overhead cam, turbocharged V-8 was expected to debut in late 1985 and be ready to race in the 1986 Indy 500. Bob Pierce earned top honors in the Clay Classic 200 at Sante Fe Speedway. Lil John Provenzano, Tony Izzo, Larry Jackson and Ken Pohlman completed the top five finishers. Sammy Swindell dominated the World Of Outlaws 63 lap feature at the Syracuse Mile, Syracuse, NY. It was his 12th WOO win of the year. Jeff Martin drove to victory in the 20 lap Sportsman feature September 28th, at La Crosse Interstate Speedway. Bob Lee, Tim Nelson, Andy Wendt and Rick Johnson were next. Jim Bires won the Street stock feature, which was somewhere around his 100th consecutive victory. So, when is Oktoberfest racing weekend not in October? September 28th, 1984, as Bryan Reffner drove to his biggest win ever in capturing the 100 lap Late Model feature. Reffner bolted on some faster Jim Back tires and roared to the memorable win. The

official order of finish was Reffner, Ted Musgrave, Tom Reffner, Steve Burgess, Rick Wateski, Bob Gunn, Jim Weber, Steve Holzhausen, Tim Cox and Bob Iverson. Of note, Dick Trickle did not win. Of course, he wasn't at the show either! The article read, "We can fabricate anything." Words spoken by Denny Paasch describing what can be done at his Paasch Automo-



tive and Racing Chassis shop in Marshfield, WI. Denny, a racer himself, has seen his chassis's win with his brother DuWayne, the Texas Late Model Outlaw Champion, at Lone Star Speedway, Kilgore, TX., and with Kerry Hansen, Yellow River Speedway, Marshfield, WI., Late Model titlist. Dennis Dietzen fought off challenges from John Born to win the Fall Invitational 40 lap feature at 141 Speedway, Francis Creek, WI., September 29th.

If 1984 was any indication, 1985 was going to be a rip-roaring, slobberknocking, thunder in the valley, lightning about to strike year.

Rain washed out the ASA Racing Series, Coca-Cola 200, Monday, September 2nd at the Minnesota State Fair Speedway. The event will not be rescheduled. Has that ever happened before? Rick Hood outran Chuck Gurney to win the 100 lap USAC Silver Crown Championship event at DuQuoin State Fairgrounds, Duquoin, IL., September 2nd. "Slammin" Sammy Swindell, he hated that nickname, won the 30 lap World of Outlaws feature at I-70 Speedway, Odessa, MO., September 1st. Steve Kinser and Brad Doty followed. Bill Elliot took the million dollars being offered to win the Southern 500 September 1st at Darlington South Carolina Raceway. He won the million, courtesy of R.J. Reynolds by being victorious in three of the big four NASCAR Cup races. A million went a long way back in 1985. Nowadays for most of us, that's front pocket change. Jerry Redetzke won the Late Model headliner at the Shawano Speedway, Shawano, WI., in their season finale. It was an NDRA qualifying race which set Redetzke up for competing in a national event later on. Larry Moore became a three time winner of the World 100 at Rossburg, OH., Eldora Speedway. The win was worth \$18,000 to Moore. Frank Gawlinski won two Late Model features at the Illiana, Motor Speedway, Schererville, IN., September 7th. One was the IRA sanctioned stock car race, the other a regularly scheduled event at the speedway. Jerry Redetzke won the Late Model track championship at Yellow River Speedway, September 7th. He did it by winning the 25 lap feature in front of Kerry Hansen and Ron Schreiner. John Rogge won the 20 lap semi-feature, while Jeff Hoogland took the Street Stock main. Mark Miller, on a rain plagued weekend won the season points championship in the



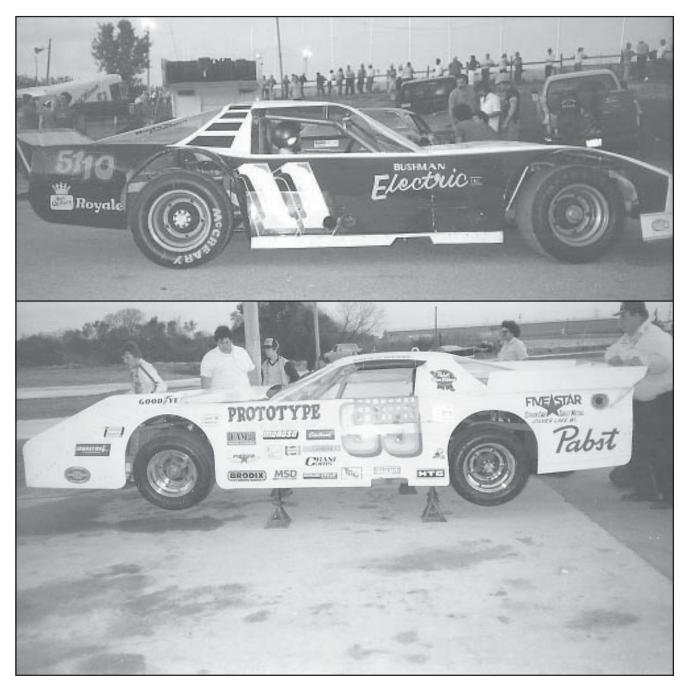
Racing History continued on page 20

## THE MIDWEST RACING CONNECTION

#### Racing History from page 19

Late Model division at Dickinson County Raceway, Norway, MI., September 7th. Greg Holzhausen won one of the 30 lap Late Model features at State Park Speedway, Rib Mountain, WI., September 5th, while Tom Reffner won the other and took overall event honors. Randy Nitzsche won the blindfold race. Wait, what? Dave Watson clinched the Coors Triple Crown Championships Winston Racing Series Late Model title at Rockford Speedway, Rockford, IL., September 7th. He won it as a result of first across the line winner, Ricky Bilderback being disqualified for a rules infraction. Bobby Davis placed 2nd with Mark "Read by" Number 3rd. Larry Zent dominated the Super Late Model field winning the 30 lap feature at Baer Field Raceways, Ft. Wayne, IN., September 15th. Bob Blount, Steve "Flipper" Christman and Jasper Case followed. Joe" Row your boat" Roe took top honors in the Sprint Car feature at Wilmot Speedway, Wilmot, WI., September 14th. Dennis 'Watermelon seed spitter" Spitz was second. Al Schill, one of the most underrated drivers ever, won the Late Model feature and the track championship at Slinger Super Speedway, Slinger, WI., September 1st. Dave Fitzgerald captured the 35 lap USAC, Utah, Regional Super Modified feature at Bonneville Raceway Park, Salt Lake City UT., September 2nd. Mike Eddy won his third ASA Carquest, Grand Marque, (What a terrible division of racing that was) at South Bend Motor Speedway, South Bend, IN. It was his third win in five attempts. Dave Morgan dominated the 21 car WISSOTA Modified feature at Rice Lake Speedway, Rice Lake, WI., September 1st. Charlie Glotzbach notched his 11th victory of the year at Jeffersonville Sportsdrome, Jeffersonville, IN. Greg, "This ain't no fish story" Pike was 2nd. Bobby Rahal won the CART/PPG Indy Car World Series race 200 mile event at Michigan International Speedway, Cambridge Junction, MI., September 22nd. Tony Izzo won his 23rd Late Model feature of the year at the Santa Fe Speedway, Hinsdale, IL., September 21st. Izzo had already clinched the track championship holding a 621-297 margin over 2nd place Bill Knippenberg.

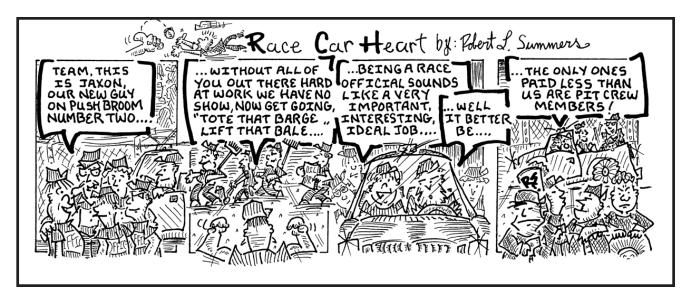
Here and there. Sorry to see the passing of Perry Redeker. Perry raced for a number of years, and I got to know him through a common employer of ours. Cancer just doesn't seem to lose. Got to a few shows here recently, La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway being the destination. Mike Carlson picked up his first NASCAR Late Model win of the year holding off Jacob Goede and Skylar Holzhausen. Adam Bendzyk, who is in the thick of the points battle picked up a win at the track as well. Paul Paine and Jeff Weinfurter picked up CWRA Super Late Model wins at the track during the Fair. Skylar Holzhausen waved goodbye to the field in the 50 lap Fair race July 19th. His lead was over a straightaway when a late caution waved bunching the field. He still managed to win by 3/4 of a straightaway. Fun to watch the vintage cars race on the day, with Jerimy Wagner piloting the Roger Burrows Ford Fairmont look alike of a past Steve



Holzhausen racer to the win. Burrows dedicated the win to Barry Wehrs who passed away here recently. Barry was the son of former track promoter, Larry Wehrs.

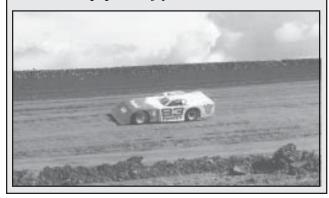
Questions, comments, opinions and other information should now be directed to Starmaker Multimedia 314 3rd Avenue South, Onalaska, WI. 54650. 608-518-2478 or to dale@starmakermultimedia.com

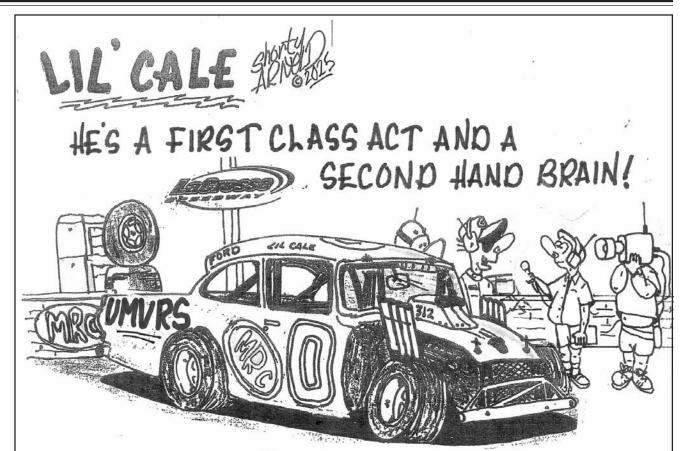
Photos by Dale: # Tom Nesbitt. #32 Bob Pierce. #87 Greg Holzhausen at State Park Speedway. #87 Bryan Reffner on way to 1984 Oktoberfest win. #99 Dick Trickle. This car legal to race under all sanctioning body rules. # 11 Perry Redeker. #20 Bon Menor. #83 Mystery driver.



## **Mystery Driver**

The winner of the mystery photo in last month's column was this scribe. I was the only one to guess it was Ron Hornaday, Jr., and the racetrack was the Saugus Speedway, Santa Clarita, CA. I was here on this day watching Jim Thirkettle run away with the win. The track was utilized often for Hollywood movie making back in the day. The mystery photo of this issue is the #83. Tell me who the driver is and where this was taken and receive a show me sucker or popsicle of your choice.







## The Midwest Racing Connection Directory Page



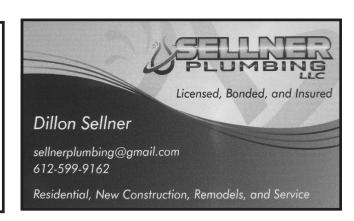






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