Inside...

The Debut of Chatty Madi

Going in Circles
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Dan Plan

For this column I was hoping to have attended 3 county fair racing events during the month of July. There’s just something special about attending a race during the county fair. The smells associated with the county fair (some good and some not so good) add to the environment. The crowd seems more vocal, and the food options are much more plentiful than a regular weekly show.

Mother Nature cut into my plans for 3 shows when the event at LaCrosse Fairgrounds Speedway was cancelled due to rain. The LaCrosse County Fair race was set to feature the CWRA Late Models on a Wednesday night. It’s a throwback to my younger days as my dad took me to LaCrosse on many Wednesday nights in the early 1980’s during the CWRA heyday. They did have the CWRA race last year, but the pandemic prevented the fair from taking place. Although the event last year was nice to see, it just wasn’t the same without the fair going on.

As the saying goes, 2 out 3 ain’t bad. The Thursday following the cancelled race at LaCrosse I was able to make my first trip in several years to Dodge County Speedway in Kasson, MN. The Dodge County Fair held a reincarnation of the Thunderbird race. Years ago, the Thunderbird was a big Late Model show, and later evolved into a Modified show. As was the case with most county fairs in 2020, the Dodge County Fair did not take place last year. The

Publisher's Note continued on page 4

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Lakeville, MN
2021 version of the Dodge County Fair (with racing taking place) was a treat to see. Based on the size of the crowd in the grandstands and the number of people walking around the fairgrounds, the event appeared to be a success. For a dirt track that had not been used in a few years, the surface held up surprisingly well. It wasn’t perfect, but it is dirt and dirt is never going to be perfect.

Next up was the Dunn County Fair in Menomonie, Wisc. The Red Cedar Speedway is located on the Dunn County Fairgrounds and hosts a couple of events during the fair. I’ve spent many Friday nights at Red Cedar with my dad and many nights by myself. There was a time (over 25 years ago) were I was a frequent visitor to Red Cedar. While my visits aren’t as frequent these days, I’ve made it out at least once a year, and always try to catch at least one night of the season ending Punky Manor Challenge of Champions. That all came to an end last year. I honestly can’t remember the last time I missed an entire season at Menomonie, but it wasn’t my fault. Everybody missed the entire season at Menomonie last year. We’ll just leave it at that. Regardless, the Thursday night fair show was an efficient program with just three classes (including Late Models) and wrapped up in plenty of time for me to get back home and get a good night’s rest before work the next day.

From County Fairs, we transition to Kyle Larson. What we have witnessed in the last year with Kyle Larson is history in the making. About 8 years ago, I was lucky enough to see Kyle pick up one of his first short track wins in a pavement Late Model. This was when the Battle at the Beach was held on the backstretch track at Daytona. You could see he was going places, but I had no idea he would be this good. Last year, he won 46 dirt races. This year, he’s back in NASCAR, winning races, but still finding time for short track racing. It’s amazing that Kyle has done this year between NASCAR and dirt track racing. When I grew up, Bobby Allison was the main NASCAR guy that frequented short tracks. As a kid, I was lucky enough to see Bobby run competitively at a couple of different short tracks in our area. Kyle Larson has taken this to a whole new level. Larson started the year off with another Chili Bowl win, has the most wins this season in NASCAR and just recently captured the Kings Royal at Eldora. Maybe when something is taken away, you try that much harder to never have it happen again. It sure seems like Kyle is on top of his game and showing no signs of slowing down.
Hey, what’s up guys Chatty Madi here and I’m brought to you by Professional Plating Inc out of Brillion, WI. I’m super excited for this to be my first ever article in a paper! I don’t have a lot of experience, nor do I necessarily fully know what I’m doing when it comes to writing… but I’m excited for this next step I’m about to take in my racing career and I cannot thank the people at The Midwest Racing Connection enough for giving me this opportunity.

Earlier in the month, Road America hosted the Jockey Made in America 250 presented by Kwik Trip. Prior to this, the last NASCAR series race held at Road America was back in 1956, so this race in 2021 was a historical event and it showed in both the car count and the stands.

In that race held on July 4th at Road America, there was another member from the Wisconsin world of racing who’s name is Josh Bilicki, who is also another member of the Professional Plating team. Josh is a Wisconsin-based racer out of Slinger, WI. I got the chance to sit down and chat live with him online for our weekly show, Chatty Madi Monday.

Josh kicked off his racing career in go-karts in the Badger Kart Club in Dousman, he then moved up to superkarts that carried a little more speed then his original kart. In 2015, he went pro racing at Road America with the help of sponsors, and in 2016 he had the opportunity to go NASCAR racing.

“If I had the opportunity to go dirt track racing, I would.” Josh Bilicki said to me on our show. I asked the question, “If you had the opportunity to race tomorrow at a local dirt track, what car would you choose?” Bilicki responded with excitement about jumping into a sprint car.

What tracks would Josh Bilicki put on your bucket list? On our live Bilicki advised fans to add Daytona because of the rich history and the size, Watkins Glen International, and Bristol.

Looking back on his life, I asked Bilicki if he was standing next to his five-year-old self starting to race, what advice would you give yourself? He responded with, “I think it would be just to keep having fun. I mean I’ve seen so many kids get pushed by their parents so much that it gets to the point where it’s not fun anymore.” Bilicki then said that luckily, he had supportive parents; and when looking back at some of the most enjoyable moments he had at the track was spending time with his Dad.

During the next portion of our show, we had our Professional Plating Inc. fan question segment. This is where fans could ask some questions I didn’t think about or if they were in my shoes what questions they’d ask. One of the questions was, “Where do you see yourself and your career in 5 years? And what is keeping you motivated to get there?” Bilick responded with, “In five years I really want to be in a winning organization, or a team that is fighting for wins and top tens in the NASCAR cup series.” He then continued on to saying what’s keeping him motivated to achieve that goal is looking back 5 years ago from then was his first NASCAR race back in 2016 and him just wishing to be full time in the cup series. He is so proud of what his team is accomplishing right now, and is looking forward to the future.

I had a blast being able to interview Josh Bilicki and learn about history and passion in the sport of racing. It’s great to see someone from Wisconsin like Bilicki compete well and represent the talents Wisconsin provides to the world of racing. You can dig even deeper into the action and behind the scene information with Josh Bilicki online at www.joshbilickiracing.com, on Facebook, and on Twitter.

In other news in Wisconsin Sprint Car racing, The Bumper to Bumper IRA Sprint Cars will battle sixteen more times this season, and the AutoMeter Wisconsin WINGLESS series will battle 15 more times before they crown a champion as well. In both divisions, the points race is getting tight. You can catch some of the action at Outagamie Speedway, Plymouth Dirt Track, Wilmot Raceway, Beaver Dam Raceway, and 141 Speedway just to name a few of the tracks that you’ll see Hoosiers on in the upcoming months. Make sure you head over to www.irasprints.com and www.wisconsinwingless.com to get the detailed schedule, points standings, and more!
Going in Circles

Charlie Spry

In the past month we have seen just about every kind of weather you could imagine, as one weekend featured rain pretty much the entire time, and another featured a heatwave. Throughout all of it, we did have some interesting things happen.

It is always fun to see first time feature winners, and we got to see a couple of them in one night at the Rockford Speedway.

First off, in the HSRA (High School Racing Association) feature at Rockford, Douglas Nighswonger got his first ever feature win. I have known Douglas for a few years now, and he is a man of few words most of the time, even to the point of being shy. He started off racing three years ago in the basic Sixer class, as they had no separate high school class at the time. His Dad is current sportsman racer Curt Nighswonger, and Dad insisted that Douglas start at the back of the pack in every race for a WHOLE YEAR to learn the ropes. Some thought that this was a little too long to do so, but I think it taught him well. He learned patience on the track, which served him well on this night, as he waited for others to make mistakes and then took advantage when he needed to. Douglas and his Dad both got quite emotional over this, which Douglas stated, “I’ve been waiting my whole life for this, it is a dream come true.” Doesn’t get any better than that!

Also, the Powder Puff Sixers ran their initial feature event, with Gloria Warne getting not only a heat win but a feature as well. She has also raced with the regular Sixer division for a couple of years, and I don’t believe she had ever won a heat race, let alone a feature, so it was nice to see her breakthrough.

On the same night, Todd Snow got the win in the feature for the Bandit division. He has been so close so many times to winning one of these features, but something always happened to take that away. I believe he last won a couple in 2018. He also races in the American Short Tracker class, so he is busy on race night.

On another week, another driver collecting his first feature win was Roadrunner division racer Greg Batelli. Greg did a great job at holding Austin Fowler off for the big win.

Also in the Roadrunner division, “Beerman” Sean Worman is getting much faster as he gains seat time in this type of car. After racing six-cylinder cars for a couple of years, this is a whole different type of car, and he is starting to adapt and get the car where he wants it. “We made a bunch of changes and found a bent shock. I have had other people drive the car and help tell me what it needs, as well,” said Sean. A very popular driver, he always has a big grin on his face and is really good with meeting with fans. Never a dull moment! He also noted that he is so well known as “Beerman” that some people don’t even know his real, given name!

Had a chance to talk with Bandit class racer Dave Parker. Dave started racing here last season, saying, “I felt that I needed to change things up, needed a new venue to race at, and this place seemed like fun.”

Dave told of his experiences in racing, saying, “I have only been racing myself for about five years, but I have been involved helping others for many years before that. I finally decided to try it myself.”

He noted that he has been around the track helping others since he was 12 years old. Some of the drivers he has been associated with include Ryan Finley, Stevie Campbell, and Boris Jurkovic amongst others. “Their knowledge transferred to me, and now I am trying to figure things out for my own racing. I enjoy the challenge of that,” said Dave.

He says that one of the proudest moments that he has had on his own is winning a heat race two years in a row at the Bettenhausen classic. He has raced four-cylinder cars his entire career, and has settled into happily racing an Acura Integra. “Honda is the way to go,” said Dave.

Dave currently resides in Big Rock, Illinois. He said that he is proud to look after those who sponsor him and help with their objectives. Sponsors on Dave’s Acura Integra include Aurora wiring and fixture out of Aurora, Mike & Denise’s Bristol tap, and Hayes Auto body out of West Chicago. He also wishes to thank his fiance’ Megan Finley for her understanding and support.

On the dirt side of things at the Lafayette County Speedway, on a recent regular night show, we had two IMCA national points leaders on hand. Jeff “Bone” Larson races here pretty much weekly with his modified, and again took home the feature win here on this night, likely adding to his point gap. Also making an appearance was IMCA hobby stock racer Daniel Wauters, who came over from the Hawkeye state to take on the regulars here at LCS. Daniel drove a smooth race and worked his way patiently to the front of the hotly contested feature on this night to also take the win.

While Larson won the mod feature, all eyes were on Jamie Pfieffer, who made a run at the end to finish second. Moving from the late models to the modifieds earlier this year, Pfieffer looks to be a very strong contender in the future.

The four-cylinder racers here amaze me every time I am here. They really get it on! There are many different drivers capable of winning here on a given night. Josh Chambers has been the man to beat the past few weeks here, but it really could go to any of several others on a given night as well.

One of those drivers that is in the hunt for race wins every time he is here is veteran racer Eric Beau. Eric got his start in racing in 2006 here in the four cylinders, after having no other experience and no other family members having raced previously. “My first race car was an old ’86 Celica, I did like most people do when they start out, nothing very spectacular, I limped around as a field filler,” said Eric.

He would soon figure things out and go to racing the more popular Dodge Neon cars, finding more success. However, he hit a low point around 2012, saying, “I had a terrible year, I almost quit. I blew
Going In Circles continued from page 6

something like nine motors in one year, every time I went out, I had trouble. The next year I decided to stick with it though and won on opening night.” Obviously things went much better after that.

That would be the first of a string of several championships. When asked how many feature wins he has in his career, he said, I am not really sure, I would have to go home and count the trophies.” So, I looked back on my records, and according to my stats, Eric has won fourteen features here between 2013 and now. He has also raced at the Dubuque and Lancaster tracks.

Eric noted that the four-cylinder division is fun to race in, as he said, “We all get along pretty good, help each other out, and have fun. Guys like Jonathan Walton, Dylan Kuhl and others are fun to race with.” He said that he might move onto the hobby stock division at some point, but that for now he is happy with what he is doing. Sponsors on Eric’s #23 racer include Ubersox auto group, Benton State Bank, Home key real estate, Humphrey transport & towing, Thimbles & Threads, and Booby’s Bar.

Took a trip to the Dells Raceway Park recently, where the featured division of the night was the late models, or what used to be called “limited late models.” Present tonight were a “who’s who” of the division, as Jesse Bernhagen, Mike Lichtfeld, Michael Bilderback, and about twenty-seven other strong cars were here. Lichtfeld showed why he wins so often at area tracks, as he looked tough to beat. However, Bernhagen passed his way to second. He has now found a home here at the Dells. “There is no drama here, everything goes pretty smooth, and it is nice to help Jerry out here as well,” Said Don. (Jerry Auby also raced with Don at Columbus).

Veteran late model racer Don Gaserude is racing here. Don is a former track champion at the old Columbus 151 Speedway, and always a top runner there. He has now found a home here at the Dells. “There is no drama here, everything goes pretty smooth, and it is nice to help Jerry out here as well,” Said Don. (Jerry Auby also raced with Don at Columbus).

The Six cylinders put on a good show here, with Matt Moore getting the win after the apparent winner was DQ’d. However, the top two put on quite a battle that was fun to watch.

Likewise, the UMA asphalt mods were also on hand, raced well, with Steven Schulz winning out over Dave Edwards and ageless Bill Prietzel.

Sportsman division winner was Brandon Birdsill, who looked especially strong.

Bandit feature winner was Ronnie Osborne. “I put thirteen hours of work in on the car this week, found some speed. It is going to be fun the rest of the season,” Said Ronnie.

At Madison International Speedway, veteran racer Rick Coppernoll is racing in the Misfitz division, a catchall group based more on time rather than rules. Rick is wheeling a 602 late model and has won two features here this season as of this writing. He has been racing for a long time and has won countless races over the years. “I started racing back, mid-way in the 1978 season, then full years starting in 1979. My first car was a ’65 Ford Custom 500, then I had a Fairlane after that,” said Rick. He would go on to race

Going In Circles continued on page 8
among others, a Buick Skylark and an early Monte Carlo, as well as a '67 Chevelle, before settling into a series of various sportsman cars, and a stint in the late models as well. Name a division, and he has probably raced and won in it. “I have won a race every year that I have competed,” said Rick.

Rick is fielding another car for Colton Morgan to race, with Colton winning a couple of features as well here. Colton also races a late model at the Dells on Saturday nights.

Late model racer Paul Dygon has been racing for quite some time, and admits he has a few things to get off his bucket list before hanging up the helmet. “It is in the back of my mind that I would like to go down to race during Speedweeks in Florida yet. Basically, I just want to say that I did it before I am done racing. I think I would take two cars with me. It would be a long ways to go if something happened right away and you didn’t get to race after going that far.” I hope he does this!

If you wonder the meaning behind his car numbers, the #32 comes from the years that both his Mom and Dad were born, and he runs the number to their tribute, also with “Mom ‘N’ Pop” on the rear quarter panels. When he started, he raced with the number 95, which were the ages of his children at that time. When he turned 50 years of age, he raced with the number 50.

MIS has had a hard time drawing many cars for the four-cylinder Bandit division, so Gregg came up with the idea to run a ‘B’ class for cars meeting Jefferson type rules. The first night of this was not what one would hope, as only four true Jefferson cars came to race. Nick Newton, Brandon Johnson, Tyler Deporter and Bart Brockmann. Brandon Johnson said of the venture, “Gregg has always been good to us, and we really want to help support what he does. They asked me at work to come in on Saturday, and I told them, “no” I have to go racing on Friday night!” The Johnson team also fielded the car that Deporter was racing.

Also, ISS enduro racer James Bell showed up, and first time driver Alan Dickert was behind the wheel of the second car owned by Jeremy Bredeson. Newton took the win over Bell.

Am hoping this idea pans out and others support this. If not from Jefferson, then from other venues with similar four-cylinder rules, such as the ISS enduro series.
A whirlwind month of July has come to an end and with it concludes perhaps the most important few weeks of racing the state of Wisconsin has ever seen. Never before had the national spotlight been shined so brightly on the Wisconsin racing scene and all it has to offer than this past month which began with the NASCAR Cup Series first visit to Road America in 56 years.

I really never thought I would see the day NASCAR’s elite series would make a stop in the Badger state and it was both humbling and exciting to be a part of the July 4th Weekend festivities. After chasing NASCAR’s elite series all across the country since 1984 the big dogs were finally in our backyard and as the first cars hit the track for practice, I’ll admit I paused for a moment to take it all in. I thought about the times it seemed inevitable the Cup series would race in Wisconsin at the Milwaukee Mile in the late eighties, early nineties, and into the 2000’s. Each time something seemed to come out of nowhere to derail the whole deal and to be quite honest, I had given up on ever seeing it happen. Then, this July 4th, Road America landed a NASCAR Cup date and with it came the opportunity to show the NASCAR decision makers just what they had been missing. The event was a complete success and everyone from the track staff to the fans came together to make the weekend a memorable one. I was proud to say I was a Wisconsin race fan and from interacting with everyone that weekend, you could see how those who had never been here before were impressed with how knowledgeable Wisconsin race fans are and how seriously they take their racing. The national media members on hand and the Cup drivers themselves all gave glowing reviews of the weekend and now something that seemed so impossible before now looks like will become a tradition on the Cup schedule going forward.

On the heels of the NASCAR weekend at Road America, the big-time racing month continued right into the Slinger Speedway and the prestigious Slinger Nationals. A strong field of super late models that included many of the top traveling drivers, was on hand for the 200-lap main event along with a large crowd including many who hung around after Road America to take in some of Wisconsin’s best short track racing action. The race paid $10,000 to the winner and the large crowd really got into the race by adding over $12,000 to the lap leader money that went to the driver that led each sponsored lap. Luke Fenhaus survived battles with Ty Majeski and Derek Kraus to become the youngest Slinger Nationals winner and along with the cash, the 17-year-old claimed the final seat in the Slinger SRX Series race just four days later.

The week of major racing events continued as the Superstar Racing Experience (SRX) brought its series to Slinger along with a large national television audience on CBS. It was cool to be a part of this event including seeing "Dangerous Dan continued on page 10"
some of the behind-the-scenes activities that went along with a national television broadcast. I had to stop for minute and ask if I was really watching practice at Slinger and talking with Marco Andretti about how to get around the place. The CBS television crew did a great job of portraying the Slinger experience to the viewers and the race had a big-time feel to it. The track sold tickets to fans from 27 states, and it was one of the biggest crowds I have ever seen there. The race was the most entertaining of the six events that made up the SRX schedule and Andretti picked up the win after an incident between Paul Tracy and Hailie Deegan on the final lap denied Luke Fenhaus the victory. It was fun watching Fenhaus take it all in as he pretty much became a star overnight and picked up many fans nationwide. I think it’s important to note the SRX series emphasized fun and made changes on the fly to keep the fun factor alive. Most of us got into the racing scene because it was fun and lately it seems the higher up the ladder you go nationally, the more the fun gets sacrificed. Racing feels a lot like work once the fun is removed and if anything, the SRX series showed us how important that fun factor is to racing’s success. Part of the allure of being a part of a traveling series in racing is the opportunity to see and experience many different towns, events, and tracks. I realize the goal of all racing series is to make money but if everything is all business and no one is allowed time to go have fun, people get burned out in a hurry. Same with the drivers as if all anyone is worried about is microscopic rules and gaining every little advantage without getting to know the people you are racing with, respect is diminished, and the racing suffers. The Slinger race featured side by side racing almost every lap of the 150-lap main event and some naysayers proclaimed the racing as fake. I beg to differ however, as entertainment is a big part of racing’s success in the big picture. Racing that is fake comes with a pre-determined winner and I’m pretty sure no one had Andretti winning Slinger beforehand. There’s a big difference between racing that is fake and “putting on a show.” At Slinger Fenhaus and Tony Stewart put on a show by racing side by side without running into each other when either one of them could have easily run the other into the fence from the inside or pinched down from the outer groove. In all, it made for a fun race to watch both from the stands and on TV and Slinger stands to gain big time from the national exposure.

The busy week at Slinger concluded on the Sunday following the SRX race as the Small Car Nationals took to the track and the main highlight of that night was young Penn Sauter getting the Bandolero feature win. The race was a crazy one and a multi-car accident coming to the checkered flag among the front runners including Sauter who was the leader, meant the race ended under the yellow and checkered flags. It had been a long time since a Sauter won at Slinger and who knows, maybe Penn can now give his father Johnny some pointers on getting around the high banks. The super late models returned to Slinger for a regular night the following week and Rich Bickle won the 75-lap feature. Bickle now has two feature wins on the season and currently leads the championship point standings. He last won the Slinger track championship back in 1989. Another cool aspect of racing is watching ordinary people do extraordinary things and should Bickle pull off the championship this year, 32 years between titles would be quite the extraordinary achievement, especially in his final year of racing. There’s still a little over a month of racing left at Slinger this year and Steve Apel, Luke Fenhaus, and Alex or Dennis Prunty might have something to say about the championship, but Bickle’s title run will be an intriguing story to watch as the season plays out.

Following Slinger, I made my first trip to State Park Speedway in Wausau since 1996 for the ARCA Midwest Tour Larry Detjens Memorial. A last-minute emergency need for a camera operator meant I would be working the camera for the live internet broadcast. The last time I was at State Park Speedway was 25 years ago when I was invited to the track to race a legend car with other media members against country star Irlene Mandrell. There was even a photo from that night hanging in the concession stand. I never got to race that night as the car I was supposed to drive got wrecked in the feature leaving just one car available between myself and local morning show guy “Smokin” Joe Boxer. “Smokin” Joe was pretty excited to be there, and his station carried our LTN show, plus I had driven in events before, so I let him take the remaining car and I watched from the pits. The track had changed some since I was last there, and it was fun to be at a place I hadn’t been in so long. Ty Majeski won the Detjens Memorial over Justin Mondeik and took home the really cool trophy made by Wehrs Machine complete with a Larry Detjens diecast. Wehrs made a similar trophy for the Joe Shear Classic and has another won for the Jim Sauter Dells race on September 4th.

Deadlines mean I won’t get to write about it this month, but I will conclude July at the Prairie Dirt Classic at the Fairbury American Legion Speedway. Everyone needs to get to FALS at least once to experience everything that is the Prairie Dirt Classic. The town of Fairbury loves the racetrack, and the residents are very hospitable towards race fans. Plus, the winner of the race runs the race car through town to the Bank of Pontiac to “deposit” the $50,000 check. Any town that’s OK with rippin a dirt late model through town after midnight where the people come out to watch and cheer instead of complain about the noise is a place that I like to visit. Fairbury is like Slinger on dirt and Kyle Larson is set to race against the 70 plus dirt late models already entered. I’ll tell you all about it next month but for now I’m “OMW 2 FALS 4 PDC.”
USAC National Midget point leader Buddy Kofoid recently spent some time behind the wheel on pavement at a few historical Midwestern facilities. Bobby Allison was once quoted saying if you want to learn how to race, go to Wisconsin. Kofoid teamed up with Dan Fredrickson and visited State Park Speedway, Wisconsin International Raceway, LaCrosse Fairgrounds Speedway, Madison International Speedway and wrapped things up in Minnesota at Elko Speedway.
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A Sweet Sweep at the Lake

Defending World of Outlaws Sprint Champion Brad Sweet swept the 2-day WoO stop at Cedar Lake Speedway for the Independence Day Spectacular. The opening night saw Sweet take the lead from race-long leader Carson Macedo in a green-white-checkered shootout. The following night, Sweet battled back and forth with Macedo again to sweep the weekend.
With the big Ganrude Auto Group Dixieland 250 right around the corner, I thought we could catch up with the ARCA Midwest Tour promoter and “Ringmaster,” Gregg McKarns. His parents, John and Sue McKarns were a significant force in growing the grassroots of auto racing around the Midwest.

PJ Nuttleman: I don’t think I’ve ever asked you this, but did you ever race? Did your Dad? I think he did at some point, didn’t he? I swear I saw a photo once of him behind the wheel.

Gregg McKarns: Dad grew up on a farm in Northwest Ohio, and if he and my uncle got the jobs done on the farm, my Grandpa (‘Stubby’ hence the Stubby at Fest) would take them to the races. He soon began to write the race reports at age 14 and then worked at Waukegan Speedway when attending college at Northwestern.

Dad did compete in a media race at Waukegan where he was the announcer amongst various other jobs. As for me, I test drove a Legends car at Rockford when I was around 15 years of age, but that was about it. My brother Geoff and I were both told that we were not allowed to race at any track/series our family was involved in, so that limited our options. Geoff became a Demo Derby competitor and would later race Enduro events and eventually built a Street Stock to run at Sycamore Speedway. I decided that the business side of racing would be my path.

PJN: What is it about racing that drew your Dad to the sport and what is it for you that keeps your passion alive for it?

GM: Short track racing is made up of some of the best people on earth, I really believe that and it is proven time and time again. Putting these races together can be a challenge, but seeing people having fun and others reaching their goals is all part of the intrigue.

PJN: Your parents were so instrumental in the growth of grassroots racing for so many decades. ARTGO was the most prestigious series and drew the big guns for competition. So many Hall of Fame racers have competed in the Midwest in at least one ARTGO event. What is it like to have that kind of history as such a significant part of your family tree and talk about what it’s like to be tasked to keep this sport thriving in this day and age?

GM: The good news is that most of that history is being stored in my shop; the big question is what to do with it all! Geoff and I were fortunate to have the upbringing and parents we had. My mom wanted me to pick another profession but I think she knew after logging thousands of miles alongside my Dad and countless hours at Vercauteren Publishing designing ads for upcoming ARTGO Specials, that I was hooked.

PJN: Of all those Hall of Famers you’ve been able to meet through your life growing up around racing, what is your most memorable story?

GM: Dixieland 1987. It was the biggest ARTGO crowd ever for the Dixieland and Bobby and Davey Allison were racing and as was usually the case, they stayed at the same hotel as us. Art Frigo (ART-GO) had brought his Ferrari up to Kaukauna and was at breakfast, both Bobby and Davey drove it and Davey was beyond excited, I even got a ride in it as well. Later that day, we went to Shopko and my dad told my brother and I that we could pick out any bike we wanted, that’s when I knew it had been a big night. Up to that point we were in hand me down clothes and rode banana seat bikes from the garage sales. I will also add that getting to know some of the drivers that I grew up watching and waiting in line for autographs as a youngster has also been a lot of fun over the last 20 years.

PJN: COVID has wreaked havoc on so many businesses and there have been many shortages ofIGINNA Initials continued on page 16
things, due to production lines being disrupted for so
long. The tire situation has been challenging for
many tracks and promoters. What has the Midwest
Tour been facing with regard to tire supply?

**GM:** It was an unexpected curve ball but the
teams have been understanding and I know most
have actually liked the limit on tires. It is something
that should help our industry in the long run.

**PJN:** The Dixieland 250 has been a signature
event for decades. In your opinion, other than the
$10,000 payday for the win—which is OBVIOUSLY a big deal—what is it that makes this race
so prestigious for racers to lay claim to having won?

**GM:** Like any big event, the history plays a
big part in it. Many of the drivers entered for this
year’s edition grew up watching their heroes chase
the checkered flag on the first Tuesday of August.
Anytime you can add your name to a winners list
such as this, it’s a big deal.

**PJN:** And it doesn’t hurt that you have two
NASCAR Cup drivers in the field this year either!
Both William Byron and Aric Almirola have won
this year in Cup and are hoping to do it at Kaukauna
too.

Cup drivers are no strangers to this event. I
saw the Dixieland poster that you tweeted to Darrell
Waltrip the other day in reply to his tweet about
racing in Wisconsin years ago. That poster was
from the second annual Dixieland! What a classic
piece of history!

**GM:** Darrell and my dad went from Radio
Station to Radio Station doing in-studio interviews
leading up to that event. It is always special when
the top drivers from NASCAR come support an
event like this at any short track.

**PJN:** Do you ever find yourself asking, “What
would mom and dad think?” when you're planning
an event? I think they would be incredibly proud of
you and Angie.

**GM:** I feel that my parents did a great job of
raising me. I think more ‘what would they think’
when we are dealing with modern technology,
weather apps on phones and the like.

**PJN:** That’s true! They never had those tools
back then to predict or plan on race night for
Mother Nature’s wrath! Let’s hope we don’t need
those tools for the Ganrud Auto Group Dixieland
250!
Ryan Rose recently returned to competition at Elko Speedway. Ryan last competed during the 2008 season and has since taken time off to raise his family. After getting his son Leighton started in Quarter Midgets a few years ago, Ryan purchased a Legend car for himself this season. Ryan’s time behind the wheel will be limited, as the goal is to race the car this year and then turn the wheel over to Leighton in a few years when he’s old enough to compete with the Great North Legends.
The ARCA Menards Series made its annual visit to the states of Iowa and Minnesota on consecutive weekends during the month of July. The series stopped at Iowa Speedway in Newton, IA and Elko Speedway in Elko, MN. Ty Gibbs picked up the Iowa win in front of his grandpa (Joe Gibbs) and Corey Heim picked up the Elko win with a late race bump-and-run on Gibbs.

The ARCA field rolls through turn 3 in Newton (left photo), Ty and Joe Gibbs in victory lane (right photo)

Jesse Love overseeing things while "Big Bill" drives by (left photo), Elko ARCA winner Corey Heim (right photo)
A small, dirt, oval track just outside of Stevens Point, WI., in a field off of business highway 51, was barely known and even less remembered, as we continue with our history of lost race tracks.

Bourn’s Speedway was located in what is actually Whiting, WI., next to the outdoor theatre that was also operating at the time. In what little documentation that could be found, the track was set for its Grand Opening event, on Sunday afternoon, May 18th, 1952. Sunday afternoons and holidays were the designated days for stock car races.

The track was initially listed as being located 3 miles South of Stevens Point, WI., on highway 10. As indicated, it is Business Highway 51 these days and track location was listed that way later on. Time trials were set for 1pm with races at 2pm. Admission was $1.00/person, with children under 12 free. And of course, there was free parking! Unfortunately, as is so often the case, no results were listed for that first ever race. I do know that my Mother remembers going to a race at some point at the track and conditions being deplorable. According to Mom, “It was so dusty, you could hardly see the cars on the track. Plus the bleachers they had set up had such large spaces between, I was afraid I was going to fall right through. The bleachers were too close to the track as well and one time a tire came flying up and fortunately it didn’t hit anyone. I don’t think we went back there after that!”

Stevens Point racer, Rich Somers also attended racing there and remembers it planting the racing seed in him. “It was dusty, it was dirty, but cars were racing. I decided right then I was going to be a race driver.” Somers also recalled the Highway 51 Outdoor Theater being next door and mentioned how track and theatre worked together on ticket promotions.

There was no such cooperation between two tracks in close proximity to each other. As we see so often, tracks competing with each other, scheduling races for the same day and dividing cars and crowds. Bourn’s and Crowns Speedways did this, as more often than not they were both racing on Sunday. One newspaper showed the two advertising racing on the same day as each other with ads placed right next to one another in the paper! The two tracks were only a half dozen miles apart! And as stated by Herb Kurth, in our previous effort, whom did manage to race at both, the two tracks would rather have killed each other than try to get along. Crown’s did manage to get an earlier start as well as outlast Bourn’s racing into 1955. Bourn’s from what we were able to uncover raced from 1952-1954. A meeting announcing that racing would take place at Ralph’s Speedway in 1954, was found in an article in the Stevens Point Journal. The track, mentioned as the former Bourn’s Speedway, would hold races that summer starting in June. The meeting was held at Ralph’s Rendezvous, on Academy Street in Stevens Point. Other than some ads run after the meeting for racing at the track, no results were found. So it appears, racing in Stevens Point lasted about 3 years. It was all building however for the next big thing, pavement racing at a 1/4 mile oval just outside Wis. Rapids, WI. It would take 5 years for that to happen, but it totally changed everyone’s perspective on racing.

Some results for Bourn’s Speedway, thanks to Gary Hall and his research. On July 6th, 1952, it was Jere ‘ODay, Wisconsin Rapids, WI., winning the Feature race over 12 other competitors. Following O’Day at the finish were Bruce Nystrum and Lee Helm. Heat race winners were O’Day, over Bubby Cartright, Dave Froggatt over George Nugent and Ray

continued on page 21
Hoffman. Bonus race honors went to Jerry Glodowski over Virg Pierce. Interesting to note that Pierce had a hometown listing of Cooper’s Corners. The only Coopers Corners we know of was the Bar, which in looking at the terrain would have been just a stones throw from the track to the North. I know of the bar, even have tipped a few there, but it is long gone now. Maybe Virg Pierce listed it as such because it was like his second home! The other event on the card was called the Special race and Lee Helm won that. Partial results were found in a Wausau newspaper, for Bourn’s Speedway, July 27th, 1952. Ronnie La Porte scored the fast time, while Ken Baitinger finished 3rd in the Feature. August 10th, 1952 found Jere O’Day winning the Feature race. He was followed by Ray Hoffman and Lee Helm. Heat winners were O’Day, Louis Nicholson and Helm. The Pre-Consolation race winner was Chuck Spencer over Ralph Bloechl. The Bonus race victor was Bloechl over Ed Sheski. August 17th, 1952 found Stevens Point driver, Barney Pliska winning the Feature race. Second went to Henry Gladowski followed by Ron Marzofka. Heat winners were Dave Frogatt, Marzofka and John Moen. Another Stevens Point racer, Ron Beyer remembers the Bourn’s Speedway along with Cooper’s Corners bar as well. Beyer was actually sponsored by Cooper’s Corners for much of his racing career. Clarence Wanta was behind the bulk of it at that time, and Beyer went on to a lengthy career racing.

Questions, comments, opinions and other information welcome at dale@starmakermultimedia.com
Traditional Sprint Ultimate Challenge

The Upper Midwest Sprintcar Series offered their teams a special challenge in the month of July. Rachel and Terry Galle of GT Transport offered $1,000.00 to top 4 drivers in passing points to start in the rear. Cam Shafer took the challenge and started at the rear of the 21-car field. Shafer proceded to drive his way to the front and pick up the extra cash.
$5,000 to win!

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