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DIAMOND JIM IS CELEBRATING 40 YEARS IN BUSINESS AND RACING

Freedom, WI - February 28, 2018 - On Friday, June 29 the stars of the DiscountShopTowels.com Dirt Kings Late Model Tour will return to 141 Speedway for a special race, The Diamond 40. The Diamond 40, presented by Greater Milwaukee Auto Auction will celebrate "Diamond" Jim Letizia's 40th year in racing and in the auto business. The crown jewel of the 2018 schedule will pay \$4000 to win and \$400 to start.



APRIL

Saturday, 21st - Londerville Steel Spring Thaw
Shawano Speedway, Shawano, WI
\$1500 to win - \$300 to start

MAY

Saturday, 19th - Gehm's Club 117 Kings Classic
Shawano Speedway, Shawano, WI
\$1500 to win - \$300 to start

Friday, 25th - Salute to Service
Spring Lake Speedway, Unity, WI

JUNE

Friday, 8th - Battle by the Bay
Luxemburg Speedway, Luxemburg, WI

Tuesday, 19th - Clash to be King
141 Speedway, Francis Creek, WI

Friday, 29th - The Diamond 40
141 Speedway, Francis Creek, WI
\$4000 to win - \$400 to start

JULY

Sunday, 1st - Independence Day Bash
Eagle Valley Speedway, Jim Falls, WI

Friday, 6th - Mid-Summer Showdown
Dodge County Fairgrounds, Beaver Dam, WI

AUGUST

Friday, 10th - Summer Sizzler
Outagamie Speedway, Seymour, WI

Friday, 17th - Dairyland Duel
(with American Ethanol Late Model Tour)
Wilmot Raceway, Wilmot, WI
\$4000 to win - \$500 to start

SEPTEMBER

Sunday, 2nd - Labor Day Shootout
TNT Speedway, Three Lakes, WI \$2500 to win

Saturday, 8th - DiscountShopTowels.com 30
Plymouth Dirt Track Racing, Plymouth, WI

Saturday, 15th - Jim "Wildman" Watson Classic
Wilmot Raceway, Wilmot, WI

Thursday, 27th - Crowning of the King
141 Speedway, Francis Creek, WI

Rechek to double dip on Saturday nights

By **BERT LEHMAN**
For Conley News Service

Once the 2018 race season starts, Beaver Dam's Matt Rechek will pull double duty each Saturday at Beaver Dam Raceway — racing a modified and a sport modified.

Already one of the top modified drivers in south-east Wisconsin, racing a sport mod will be something new.

“Running two divisions will be twice the challenge,” Rechek said. “Your time, knowledge and concentration is split in half so we really need to be on our game if we want to be successful in either one or both (divisions).”

Rechek has been around local racing all his life. His dad raced stock cars until Rechek was 4 years old. In 2003, when Rechek turned 14 years old, he started turning laps himself, racing a dirt devil 4-cylinder front-wheel drive car at Beaver Dam Raceway.

It didn't take long for him to show his competitors what he could do.

“My first ever win was actually my first night racing in a dirt devil,” Rechek said. “I started fourth row and ended up winning on a last-lap pass.”

After only two years racing a dirt devil, he made the jump to the powerful modified division.

“It was the fastest, coolest and most exciting division at Beaver Dam each week,” Rechek said about why he chose the modified division.

It took Rechek a little longer to achieve his first feature win in the modified division, but it's a win he will never forget.

“I believe it was 2011, I started fourth and took over the lead early in the race and we ended up having a few cautions which made me nervous, seeing I had never won before,” he said. “But I was able to hold off a few heavy hitters and collect the win. That changed racing forever for me.”

In 2015, Rechek achieved Beaver Dam Raceway's uli-

Beaver Dam Raceway

■ **Location:** N7086 Raceway Road, town of Beaver Dam
■ **Website:** www.wismotor sports.net
■ **Tickets:** \$25 per carload, occupants must be belted in; \$10 single person; \$25 pit pass (prices vary for World of Outlaw Sprint Car Series show)
■ **Race night:** Saturdays
■ **Contact:** 920-887-1600; bdraceway@wismotor sports.net

□ □ □

2017 Track champions

Grand national: Roger Lee
Legends: Cody Apfelbeck
Modifieds: Tim Lemirande
Sport modifieds: Elijah Koenig
Street stocks: Mike Winters

mate high, winning the modified track championship.

“Winning the championship wasn't easy. It was a lot of work making sure the car was in top shape each week,” Rechek said. “There were a lot of great cars there each week and consistency was key. It was all worth it when the year was over.”

Rechek finished second to Middletown's Tim Lemirande in the modified point standings in 2017 at Beaver Dam Raceway. But he came close to winning another championship if it weren't for one important event.

“We ended up getting into a pretty good points battle with Craig Priewe and Tim Lemirande early in the year and it was neck and neck all the way throughout the year,” Rechek said. “Running against those two for a championship was pretty cool for me personally, seeing those two guys were some of the big dogs already when I was little watching mods. I ended up skipping the last night of the year for my wedding but still ended up second in points.”

To be successful at racing, a lot of time needs to be devoted to it. And the plan to race in two divisions weekly requires more time. Because



Bob Cruse/For Conley News Service

Matt Rechek in Victory Lane at Beaver Dam Raceway after winning the Modified feature on July 6, 2013.

“My first ever win was actually my first night racing in a dirt devil.”

— Matt Rechek
Modified and sport modified driver at Beaver Dam

of that, Rechek hasn't set a track championship as a goal in 2018 — at least not yet.

“It's fun to do but takes up too much (time) and there's a lot of other things I enjoy doing on weekends also,” he said.

Whether it's for a championship or just to have fun, race fans can look forward to seeing Rechek on the track plenty of times this season.

“I love how many people come together and get involved in it from friends to family to sponsors,” he said. “They all make it so much easier and enjoyable.”

Editor's Note: Rechek's mother, Sue, is Conley Publishing's Chief Operating Officer.

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This time, a split yielded positive results

By **NICHOLAS DETTMANN**
Conley News Service

Already known for its high banks and tight corners, in 2017, Slinger Super Speedway, dubbed the world's fastest quarter-mile oval, made a significant that tightened the learning curve for aspiring race car drivers.

Track officials split the Slinger Bees division, or the novice division, into two — Super Beez and Slinger Bees. On the track, the cars look similar and they carry a lot of similarities as far as the technical aspect, such both are cars with 4-cylinder engines. The separation is experience level.

The Super Beez feature drivers with more experience, while the Slinger Bees is geared more toward the true amateur, someone with maybe one or two years experience, or less than that. Before the split, all

4-cylinder car drivers were in the same division — the Slinger Bees.

Todd Thelen, co-promoter for Slinger Super Speedway, said another reason is for the Slinger Bees to also be more affordable, thus keeping interest up.

"And making it so that true amateurs can get involved without having to learn the tricks of the trade," Thelen said. "We had kids last year, at least one rookie in the division, hadn't won anything before and he won. That's the idea."

"You're not getting beat by horsepower or a bigger checkbook. There's not much you can do to the car, so it puts more on the driver."

The separation between the Super Beez and the Slinger Bees is with lap time.

If a Slinger Bees driver at any point during a practice session, qualifying, heat race or feature turn a lap faster than 15.2 seconds, the driver is black-flagged and sent to the pits.

"I looked at where the times were a few years back before cars were really getting fast and also looked at where some were in 2016, the guys that more of a stock car and the times they were running," Thelen said. "We told the guys we might adjust it, but we were pretty sure it was close."

He added, "It was getting harder to recruit and a lot of the seasoned racers because they didn't have the car that could go a 14-

Slinger Super Speedway

■ **Location:** 280 Cedar Creek Road, Slinger
 ■ **Website:** www.slinger-superspeedway.com
 ■ **Tickets:** Adults (18-61), \$14; Students (12-17) and Seniors (62 and older) \$8; Children (6-11) \$2; prices vary for special events
 ■ **Race night:** Sundays
 ■ **Contact:** 262-644-5921; slingerspeedway1@aol.com
 □ □ □

2017 Track champions
Super late model: Gary LaMonte
Limited late model: Ryan Gutknecht
Midwest sportsman: Ryan Gutknecht
Area sportsman: Paul Wagner
Super Beez: Tom Berens
Slinger Bees: Matthew Urban
Figure 8: Willy Van Camp

second lap. So they chose to park them or go somewhere else and race."

In the inaugural season of the change, it appeared to go over well.

"Tom Elsinger, a West Bend kid, he was lucky to run in the top 10 in 2016 in the Slinger Bees division," Thelen said. "In 2017, he competed for a championship and won races. It was exciting racing. There were three, four or five cars every night you weren't sure who was going to win."

Milwaukee's Matthew Urban was another one of



Bob Schneider Jr./For Conley News Service

Matthew Urban (48) won the Slinger Bees track championship in 2017.

those drivers who benefited from the switch.

In previous seasons, he didn't run a full schedule, but did so in 2017.

"It was good to split them up," Urban said. "It gave more people a chance to win. It really gave the slower guys a chance to win."

Urban his first career feature in the second night of the season.

"It was the best feeling," said Urban, who enters his seventh season of racing in 2018. "I won a bunch of heat races and that's cool. It's definitely breath-taking. I didn't have much to say in my (post-race) interview."

Urban added one more feature victory en route to the track championship.

"I didn't think it was going to happen," Urban said. "I hoped to finish top-three in points."

He did, but it was at the top of those top three.

Urban and Elsinger weren't alone as far as those who benefited from the split.

"Ricky Gebhard, a rookie, they struggled in the beginning of the year," Thelen said. "By the end of the year, he won a race. He would've struggled to stay out of the year (in 2016), let alone keep up."

Urban said, "It gave a lot of rookies a chance to win. That's awesome and cool to see; to give rookies a chance to compete right off the bat and make it such a longer learning curve."

That will likely be a key for the preservation of the sport.

"It'll be good," Urban said. "The amateur class will help bring out more rookies and help them shine more."

That's exactly what Thelen and his co-promoter Rodney Erickson were looking for when the switch was instituted.

"There were rookies that were top five right out of the box," Thelen said. "They were all excited. For people to have an opportunity to do well out of the box is hard to do. To have that opportunity at the entry level made these guys excited and enthused and wanted to come back."

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Inside the Wisconsin Automotive Museum, 147 N. Rural St., Hartford, the Southeastern Hall of Fame features race cars spanning several decades, as well as

memorabilia and articles.

In 2017, the Hall of Fame inductees were Jim Cossman, Mike Frost, Brian Gilles, Richard Hed, Terry Jeffords, Joel Laufer, Gil Radtke, Dan Sorce, Dick Trickle and Bob Wondra.

For more information, visit www.sewishorttrackhof.com.

At 75, Eckhardt remains up for the challenge

By DAVE MAGNUS
For Conley News Service

When the Jefferson Speedway opens for its 66th season of racing on April 28, Johnson Creek's Jerry Eckhardt will of course be there in his familiar orange No. 61 Chevrolet.

A veteran of six decades of asphalt racing who started in hobby stocks in 1965, Eckhardt still competes weekly on Saturday nights at the speedway at age 75. Eckhardt is a three-time late model champion at the track, winning titles in 1970, 1973 and 1975. He finished in the top 20 in points last season at Jefferson and also competed weekly at Slinger on Sunday nights, fielding two cars in doing so.

Eckhardt ran his first race at the now-closed Columbus 151 Speedway. There, he and a friend alternated driving their car, with the friend driving at Jefferson. Jerry later became a track champion at Columbus in 1975. His car number comes from the year of his first late model, a 1961 Chevy. His traditional orange paint scheme comes from his affection for tractors which he collects and it so happens to be an Allis-Chalmers tractor color.

Eckhardt has raced at Jefferson for many years, a place that started as a dirt track in 1952 and has been owned by the Tucker family

Jefferson Speedway

■ **Location:** W8135 Highway 18, Cambridge
■ **Website:** www.jefferson-speedway.com
■ **Tickets:** \$14 for adults; \$10 for seniors (older than 65) and students (age 12-15); \$5 for children (age 8-11); children 8 and younger receive free admission
■ **Race night:** Saturdays
■ **Contact:** 920-648-2705; jeffersonspeedwaymarket ing@gmail.com

□ □ □

2017 Track champions

Late model: Dale Nottestad
Sportsman/Road Warrior: Robert Hansberry Jr.
International: Neil Higgins
Hobby Stock: AJ Lloyd
Bandit: Chad Olds
Road Warrior (6-cylinder): Chris Gottschalk
Legends: Aaron Moyer
Bandoleros: Kolton Guralski

since 1968. The track was reconfigured in 1990 and has become a showcase for short-track asphalt racing. Drivers like Rich Bickle Jr., Jason Schuler, Nathan Haseleu and the late Pat Schauer all started their careers at Jefferson. Today, the track features some of the finest limited late model racing in the country.

Besides its weekly racing of six divisions, the track

hosts the ARCA Midwest Tour and TUNDRA Series, touring series that feature super late models. The track annually hosts the Wisconsin State Championship at the end of the season drawing cars from tracks throughout the state and beyond.

Once again, as he has since the series began in 2015, Eckhardt will race at Jefferson in the Badgerland Challenge Series. The series is a limited late model championship series that races two dates at Jefferson and then two dates at nearby Madison.

Of course, Eckhardt is a veteran of all types of racing series throughout his career such as the Red, White and Blue series at Kaukauna, the Slinger Nationals, the Big 8 late model series, the ARTGO super series, Oktoberfest at La Crosse, the National Short Track Championships at Rockford and the TUNDRA series. He has raced against the best of the best during his 50-plus year career at every paved short track in the region.

Eckhardt was recently announced as a finalist for the class of 2018 Southeastern Wisconsin Short Track Hall of Fame in Hartford.

The 1965 Ford flatbed crew cab hauler and the cowboy hat will once again be part of what excites Eckhardt to do



Submitted photo

Jerry Eckhardt has been racing since 1965.

what he loves every summer. His many fans and the friends he has made in competition look forward to another season of No. 61

speeding down a short track. Although his cars don't challenge for feature wins or quick qualifying time as they did in the past, Eckhardt is

still a force in any type of car when those many years younger try to teach him a lesson in racing on a short track.

Cedarburg teen building off breakthrough 2017 season

Cedarburg's Rob Radmann was named the Rookie of the Year at the recent Midwestern Council of Sports Car Clubs annual banquet in Naperville, Illinois. He was also named Racer of the Year by the Great Lakes Sports Car Club.

"He was the perfect example of the type of young talent that can come out of karting and make an incredible impression on fellow racers that have two or three times the experience that he has," said David Wessel, president of MCSCC in a news release.

Radmann was the youngest driver to



Radmann

complete MCSCC's Drivers School and to receive his wheel-to-wheel racing competition license at 14 at Blackhawk Farms Raceway in Illinois.

Radmann's racing career started four years ago at age 12 when he joined the Road America Kart Club. In 2017, Radmann won the championship in two series (Tuesday and Weekend) and is also ranked first in the country in his class by Briggs Racing, and tied for second in Canada and the US combined. He will continue on with the Kart Club for 2018 in the Briggs 206 Heavy class as well as Super Stock.

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4 miles of a rolling treasure

By **NICHOLAS DETTMANN**
Conley News Service

Tucked into the rolling terrain of the Kettle Moraine Forest, Road America, at 4.048 miles and 14 turns, is one of the signature road courses in the world.

"It's always been one of my favorite tracks," IndyCar driver Tony Kanaan said in 2015. "If you guys follow every single interview and people ask me if I could choose three or four tracks I could come back to, (Road America) was always one of my list."

"The track is a lot of fun," Scott Dixon said in 2015.

"This was always one of my favorite road courses to run on," four-time Indianapolis 500 champion Rick Mears said in 2016. "It's long, it's got everything, elevation changes, blind corners, long straight-aways, tight corners, fast corners."

The praise continues from drivers.

"It's just a cool, old-school track," IndyCar driver Will Power said after winning the 2016 IndyCar Series race at Road America, ending a nine-year hiatus for the series at



Elaine Mueller/For Conley News Service

Since 2010, the NASCAR Xfinity Series has raced annually at Road America, providing a different winner each year. This year's race weekend is Aug. 23-25.

the track.

The story behind how Road America became a driver favorite is sadly one of tragedy.

According to Wikipedia, in the late 1940s, road racing was gaining popularity, with the help of the post World War II economy and the influx of sporting automobiles. The Sports Car Club of America was the main organizer of these races, and in 1950, the Chicago Region SCCA and the village of Elkhart Lake organized the first road

race at Elkhart Lake, a small town in Sheboygan County about an hour north of Milwaukee.

For three years, cars raced on the state highways and city streets as fans watched from sidewalks or shoulders.

The 1950 circuit start-finish line was on Highway P. Competitors went north to Highway J, then south into the village of Elkhart Lake and west on what is now Highway JP (then called Highway X), and reconnected with Highway P for a total distance of 3.3 miles. The next two races, a different course was used. It was 6.5 miles long, on Highways J, A and P. To date, you can still drive most of the original course.

In 1952 in New York, a child was killed while watching a race and governments across the country were quick to react – no more auto races on public streets.

According to the Wisconsin Historical Society, the success of the races demonstrated the viability

of road racing as a spectator sport. So, after racing on public streets was outlawed in 1952, local business leaders, led by Clif Tufte, according to Road America's website, constructed a multi-purpose track simulating country road conditions in 1954-55, the WHS' website said. This facility, named Road America, just south of Elkhart Lake, was one of the first specially constructed road courses in the country.

The first race at Road America was Sept. 10, 1955, for a SCCA event. The original course was registered on the National Register of Historic Places in 2006 and signs have been installed marking the key locations on the course.

Other notable series have included NASCAR's Grand National (now Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series) in 1956 and Xfinity Series since 2010, CART from 1982-2007,



Nicholas Dettmann/Conley News Service

The IMSA Continental Tire SportsCar Challenge competes in a double-header weekend with the IndyCar series in June.

IndyCar Series, Grand-Am Rolex Sports Car Racing Series, CanAm, Trans-Am, AMA and the SCCA National Championship Runoffs from 2009 to 2013. The Speed Energy Formula Off-Road – known as the Stadium Super Trucks series – will race at the track starting in 2018. For the event, the trucks will race on a shortened course that bypasses turns 6 to 12. Road America also holds a variety of vintage racing events, including the Brian

Redman International Challenge, now the HAWK with Brian Redman.

And despite the advancements in technology, the track's original configuration remains largely intact.

The track is also a highly respected driving school and not just for aspiring racers. Driving schools include teen driving and motorcycles as well as a go-kart program.

For more information, visit www.roadamerica.com.



Nicholas Dettmann/Conley News Service

James Hinchcliffe, along with the rest of the IndyCar Series, returns to Road America, June 22-24.

H-D plans 4 races in milestone year

Harley-Davidson's 115th anniversary celebration is this year and the motorcycle company plans to host several races as part of the milestone year.

■ Aug. 31-Sept. 1: Harley-Davidson Beach Racing, Bradford Beach, Milwaukee

■ Aug. 31: Flat Out Friday powered by

Harley-Davidson, Panther Arena, Milwaukee

■ Aug. 31: Run What You Brung powered by Harley-Davidson, Great Lakes Dragway, Union Grove

■ Sept. 1: Hillclimb powered by Harley-Davidson, Little Switzerland, Slinger

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Kulwicki program helps grassroots racers grow

By **NICHOLAS DETTMANN**
Conley News Service

Tom “TR” Roberts was supposed to be on the flight that took off from Knoxville, Tennessee, on April 1, 1993, and went down in eastern Tennessee, taking the life of Greenfield native and NASCAR champion Alan Kulwicki.

Kulwicki was riding on a plane owned by his sponsor, Hooters, in the then NASCAR Winston Cup Series — today known as the Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series. He was one of four people on the plane — all of whom died in the crash.

Roberts was supposed to be the fifth. But he changed his mind and took a commercial flight, anticipating meeting up with Kulwicki at Bristol Motor Speedway, the site of the next NASCAR race.

Kulwicki, who was the reigning series champion, never made it. Roberts, who was Kulwicki's public relations representative, did. For years, he pondered: why?

“It tore me apart when we lost him,” Roberts said. “It was like losing a brother. I didn't sleep at all that night.”

He carried that agony for more than 20 years. In 2014, Roberts was alerted as to why he was kept alive.

He got a call from Jan Beatty, the banker handling Kulwicki's estate, and Mark Horn, an attorney. In the estate was to appropriate money to help fund scholarships at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, where Kulwicki got his degree, and North Carolina State University. But that wasn't enough, Roberts said.

Thelma, Kulwicki's stepmother, wanted to do more.

“(Thelma) wanted to do something to give back to grassroots; how can we do something to keep Alan's memory and legend alive,” Roberts said.

The result? The Alan Kulwicki Driver Development Program.

“It was like it was part of God's plan,” Roberts said.



Kim Kemperman/For Conley News Service

Seymour's Ty Majeski won the Kulwicki Driver Development Program's inaugural Kulwicki Cup in 2015. He currently races part-time with the NASCAR Xfinity Series.

“It worked out so well for me. I felt like it was something Alan had to be proud of. In my mind, I was convinced Alan would've given his stamp of approval.”

Roberts handled all of Kulwicki's media responsibilities, starting before he broke into NASCAR in 1986 and won the Rookie of the Year title.

Roberts met Kulwicki in 1981 while a promoter of the All-American 400 late model stock car race in Nashville, Tennessee. He was told he had to meet Kulwicki, a young hot-shot racer from Wisconsin. By then, Kulwicki had built up a reputation in the late model community. He was a Slinger Nationals champion (1981) and a two-time Slinger super late model champion (1977 and 1978).

“He was a big name,” Roberts recalled.

After doing some research on Kulwicki, he learned something that was uncommon at that time: a

race car driver with a college degree.

“He was too smart to be a race car driver,” Roberts said.

But Kulwicki was a stickler for detail. When he tried to meet him several weeks earlier at Winchester Speedway in Indiana, Kulwicki was too busy working on his race car. Roberts had to wait. And when he finally met the 20-something driver, Roberts was impressed.

“We just hit it off so well,” Roberts said. “From the get-go we had mutual respect.”

“His intellect was so impressive. By then, I could grasp he was a stickler for detail. He put so many demands on himself. But I also saw a charismatic side of him that drew me closer to me. I could sense something was special there. You knew he was going to be successful.”



Kulwicki

Roberts was Kulwicki's right-hand man until his death in 1993. But, with the advent of the KDDP, Roberts believes he is still working for Kulwicki.

“We wanted a program that will fill the needs, perpetuate the memory of Alan and be something he'd be proud of and Thelma will be proud of,” Roberts said.

The 2018 season is the program's fourth.

“Timing was so right for me,” Roberts said. “I look back now and what a blessing. God had a plan.”

The program aims at grassroots drivers. In 1992, Kulwicki, driving for his small-funded team, won NASCAR's top prize.

To be eligible, according to the KDDP website, drivers will have experience in late model racing. There is no age limit, but preference



Kim Kemperman/For Conley News Service

Steve Apel (51) and Ty Majeski finished 1-2 in the inaugural Kulwicki Cup standings.

will be given to candidates between age 18-25. A group of 15 semifinalists are selected for interviews with the KDDP board. From those interviews, seven drivers are selected as finalists and are awarded \$7,777, which the driver can use on his or her race program. The “7” was picked because that was Kulwicki's car number when he won the 1992 Winston Cup championship. During the course of a season, the seven finalists accumulate points based on their on-track and off-track performance. At the end of the season, the winner receives a trophy and a check for more than \$54,000.

Seymour's Ty Majeski was the inaugural winner.

“Going into the Kulwicki program, I knew of Alan, what he did and what he accomplished,” Majeski said. “As the season progressed, I got to learn more about him and how he did things and handled things.”

“That's something to look up to, the way he was so hands on with the car. It really inspired me.”

It changed Majeski's outlook and approach on racing.

“As a race car driver, you're always better when you know what's under you,” Majeski said. “There's not too many that work on the cars themselves. ... It's paid dividends for me.”

Today, Majeski is running a part-time schedule with NASCAR's second-tier series, the Xfinity Series, driving for Roush Fenway

Racing. While he wouldn't pinpoint the KDDP as a direct reason for his opportunity into NASCAR, it didn't hurt.

“The way the Kulwicki program is structured is it pushes you,” Majeski said. “It more motivated me to be better, to push myself harder.”

The other winners were Alex Prunty (2016) and Cody Haskins (2017).

Roberts said the growth has been beyond his wildest dreams, especially now that the program is drawing international applicants.

“I think it is beyond my imagination that we've been able to go so far so fast and it considered the premier driver development program in the country,” Roberts said. “To expand like we have is beyond belief, the impact we've made on so many people.”

This year's class is Cole Butcher (21 years old, Porter's Lake, Nova Scotia, Canada), Justin Carroll (21, Concord, North Carolina), Derek Griffith (21, Hudson, New Hampshire), Molly Helmuth (22, Seattle), Justin Mondeik (21, Gleason), Brett Yackey (18, Greeley, Colorado) and Brittney Zamora (18, Kennewick, Washington).

“It's going to be an incredible 2018 to see the impact they have on youngsters,” Roberts said.

He added, “In some ways, I've been spared for a purpose, for still being his spokesman. I think all that worked together. It's not just carrying his name on his behalf. It's something I've been blessed with.”

Go-karts are for all ages, skill levels and dreams

By **DAVE RADCLIFFE**
Conley News Service

When well-known Wisconsin racing venues like Road America and Slinger Super Speedway are brought up, go-karting isn't exactly the first thing that comes to mind.

Racing fans tend to frequent Elkhart Lake to watch IndyCar or the NASCAR Xfinity Series make their annual stops at the famed road course. Slinger is billed as "The World's Fastest Quarter-mile Oval," home to weekly races on Sunday nights throughout the summer and the occasional big-named driver making an appearance, like at Slinger Nationals.

Where many of those drivers get their start, however, is in go-karting, a type of open-wheel car that comes in all shapes and sizes, which also varies in speed and how it is powered.

It's a popular option in Wisconsin, with locations ranging from Plymouth, to Beaver Dam, to Slinger and to Dousman, among several other locations in the greater Milwaukee area.

"Karting has been going on at Road America since just past the mid-90s," said John Ewert, the communications director at Road America. "We have a CTECH Manufacturing Motorplex. The course can be configured in a multitude of various lengths and difficulties."

"A lot of up and coming racers have cut their teeth here. Josh Bilicki (from Richfield), he's been racing in the NASCAR Xfinity Series. He's one of the guys that kind of came up through our motorplex."

And even though Bilicki hit it big and is just one step away from racing in the Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series, he could conceivably still drive go-karts if his heart so desired.

"A lot of people think karting is only for kids," Ewert said. "That's not so. It goes from as low as 5 years old to ... we have guys in classes 40 and over, even 50



Dave Rinker/Rinker Photography

Go-kart racing by the Badger Kart Club at Wolf Paving Raceway in Dousman has been going on since 1960.

"A lot of people think karting is only for kids. That's not so."

— John Ewert

Communications director at Road America

and over who will race shifter karts to other levels of karts."

The asphalt was recently re-paved at the go-kart track which is between turns 7 and 8 at Road America, which will only enhance the racing experience.

"We had a complete repave in 2017 and we're looking forward to the 2018 season," Ewert said. "It's a chance for everybody to get out and experience the repaved surface."

The Road America Karting Club offers weeknight go-karting as well as a summer series that features dozens of participants from throughout the state — and country.

"People come from all over the country to race at our motorplex," Ewert said. "People from Chicago, Indianapolis, Michigan, Iowa will come in during some of the actual karting events."

There are several different options for those interested in karting, whether it's competitive or non-competitive.

Road America offers a weeknight series, a weekend series day race and a weekend series night race. The weekend series, which has

2- and 4-cycle sprints, runs from April through September, while the weeknight series is 4-cycle sprints and runs between June and August.

"We have 12 Tuesday night races during the summer, nine races for the week-end series, and then we have two championships series events, so it's very, very busy," Ewert said. "Children who want to move up in the sport or just from a casual hobby standpoint, we have a karting club where people can learn all about karting."

"We also have open karting, so people can come up here during major events or on a weekday or off days with family and friends. We have groups come up here as low five people all the way up to 50 to go karting on the motorplex."

How go-kart racing began at Slinger Speedway is a somber tale, but one that has inspired many and brought out the best in the surrounding communities.

In 2007, a 13-year-old boy named Parker Klumb was struck and killed by a hit-and-run driver while riding his bike.

"He had a dream to build a go-kart and race it," said Kathy Fies, the president of



Jon De Master/For Conley News Service

The go-kart track at Elkhart Lake's Road America was repaved ahead of the 2018 season.

Memorial Go Karts in Slinger. "His friends brought that dream to my attention and I brought it to the community. That is the inspiration for what we created."

"Go-kart racing and what we do over there is inspired by this young boy. We support families with young children and support teens with events that are educationally based."

Racing is held at Slinger and has caught on with the community over the last decade.

"Each of the karts are sponsored by a business in the community," Fies said. "There are a couple of scenarios where the business owner is also a racing mentor. Each race is sponsored by a business in the community."

Teams are formed and they must weld and fabricate the karts from a kit. From there, it's keeping up with repairs every spring and fall.

"When kids get on a team, they become the pit crew," Fies said. "They do all the fixing themselves. They do the weight measurements, tire measurements, and they do it under the supervision of a race

car mentor. Race car mentors are people from the community that volunteer their time."

Slinger Speedway has been supportive since day 1, said Fies, allowing Memorial Go Karts to rent the time and space they need on a yearly basis.

"They understand and see the benefit in keeping racing alive by supporting something like this, so it's a really good thing," Fies said.

Not only is go-kart racing thriving at Slinger, but there's a waiting list for adolescents looking to be a part of a team and race. Fies said there are between 75-90 kids participating and a total of 21 teams that continue coming back year after year.

"There are a lot of kids that started out racing in 2008 and now volunteer, so they graduated from the racing but still volunteer," Fies said.

Kids race in five divisions from age 7-18, but competitors can move up and down regardless of age based on their level of experience and at the mentor's discretion. Memorial Go Karts then holds its annual

tribute event in August after the conclusion of the five-race season.

"That's our fundraising event where we support families who lost children," Fies said. "We'll hold silent auctions, 50/50 raffles, that kind of thing. Seventy-five percent of the proceeds go to scholarships. This year we're giving away \$8,700, and up to this point we've given away \$45,000 in scholarships. They focus on the trades, auto body, auto mechanics and welding."

Road America and Slinger Speedway are as well known as any racing venue in the state. Another that has perhaps flown under the radar is Badger Kart Club at Wolf Paving Raceway in Dousman.

"It's so weird because some people don't even know it exists, which is unfortunate because it's in a beautiful location," said Lisa Brux, a volunteer at Badger Kart Club who is also in charge of event credits.

The idea of karting in Dousman was planted more than 50 years ago. Badger Kart Club has existed since 1960. For several years, races

Please see **GO-KARTS/10**

Richgels steps up his program in pursuit of 1st feature win

By **DAVE MAGNUS**
For Conley News Service

Watertown's Pat Richgels became interested in racing when a friend of his father Dan bought him a go-kart to keep him occupied, while his father wired pool motors for that friend's business.

Pat attended kart races with his dad at Sugar River Raceway in Brodhead and by age 12 he found himself racing there. He caught the proverbial racing bug.

He raced go-karts for five years at tracks throughout the Midwest. He competed and won in the Midwest Sprint series, the Great Lakes Sprint series, the Route 66 Sprint series and the WKA Gold Cup series. He won Rookie of the Year honors in each series he raced with.

With a successful go-kart career in his background, Pat made racing a top priority. He attended college at Ohio Technical College in

Cleveland, completing an educational services program sponsored by the American Speed Association. Besides his racing interest, this background knowledge helped Pat in his career working in the engine development lab for Briggs & Stratton.

Pat was the 2012 Rookie of the Year and he has competed in the NASCAR Whelen All-American Late Model division at Madison International Speedway for the past six years. He gets his determination from the late Alan Kulwicki, who carried the word "Underbird" on his cars because he was running an underfunded team against the best, just as Pat and his dad run their modest operation. He also lives by the motto he picked up from his hockey coach while playing for the Southwest Eagles in Verona, "You get out of it, what you put into it."

Pat will tell you he always tries to make the

Madison International Speedway

- **Location:** 1122 Sunrise Road, Oregon
- **Website:** www.madisoninternationalspeedway.com
- **Tickets:** \$14 for adults; \$12 for seniors 62 and older; \$8 for students (age 12-17); \$6 for child (age 6-11); prices vary for specials
- **Race night:** Fridays
- **Contact:** 608-835-9700

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2017 Track champions
Super late models: Dan Frederickson
Late models: Bobby Wilberg
Sportsman: Robert Hansberry Jr.
Bandits: Dave Schmidt

best out of what he has to work with.

Now 27 and searching for that first feature win, he has upgraded his equipment for 2018 and will



Submitted photo

Watertown's Pat Richgels is shown with his father, Dan, in this undated photo.

race a Pathfinder chassis powered by a Race Engine Dynamics Inc. 355 Chevy concept motor.

The team will field a second car to race as often as they can at Jefferson Speedway. Pat will also run the entire Badgerland Challenge Series, consisting of two races at Jefferson and two at Madison, with his primary car.

Pat carries the number 15 on his cars, which is the

number he wore on his hockey sweater. The colors of his car are those of his corporate sponsor, Barcoding Inc., a company based in Baltimore, Maryland. Pat's uncle helped him procure that deal and the CEO is scheduled to come to Wisconsin and watch Pat race this summer. He also receives sponsorship help from REDI engines of Brooklyn. Pat finished 10th in the Madison point standings last year and is looking

to move up on that list this year.

Pat will dedicate this season to his grandmother who passed away in March. She was a race fan and supporter of Pat's career.

She also took Pat to his first NASCAR races at Indianapolis and Michigan. This year will be different without her cheering him on.

A trip to victory lane in her honor is likely to be special.

Go-kart: 'Fun for everybody'

were run all around the state before land purchased by Bob Howard started being put to good use.

Behind the vision of Howard, the facility was improved, membership increased and racing was promoted with the idea of go-karting as a family sport. Howard passed away in 1984, but his widow, Shirley, is still active in keeping these goals alive.

"It's kind of an honorary thing for her husband to keep it up and running," Brux said.

"The track itself adds so much to a young kid or an adult like myself. It's such a family environment. There's nowhere else like it. There are so many different tracks across the country let alone in Wisconsin or the Midwest, but it's so family oriented."

Kids can begin at the age of 5, learning about the basics of go-kart racing.

"They learn about rules, about hard work, about

sportsmanship," Brux said. "They learn they have to put effort in to get results. When things don't go well, they have to go to a driver's meeting, so there are many life lessons that kids learn out there."

"They always say you live how you race and you race how you live, and if you think about it there's a lot of truth in that. You can race, but if you want to do well, you have to be willing to listen, you have to be willing to learn, you have to be willing to put practice in."

Badger Kart Club has more to offer than just racing.

"It's just such an open, care-free environment," Brux said. "Kids get to race, ride around on their bikes or scooters, they're playing catch on the field. It never gets old."

"I've been doing it for eight years and it's still an overwhelming gift. I'm so thankful for what we have."

There's something for everyone at the Dousman go-kart track, with summer racing leagues for different skill levels and age groups, or just open track times for anyone to partake.

"I can't stress enough the value that this track has for anybody and everybody," Brux said, who races once a week at the course. "It's open to the public. Anybody can come and race."

How serious one wants to take racing naturally correlates with how much money goes into it. But to start, it's an affordable option, and most importantly, it's an opportunity for families to bond, kids to learn and people of all ages to simply have a good time.

"It's fun for everybody, especially watching the kids grow up," Brux said. "It's free to come out and watch. It's probably the best thing I've ever done. Whether I coordinate or volunteer, it's just a lot of fun."

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MAY 15 TUESDAY NIGHT STREET DRAGS

MAY 17 PDX THURSDAY NIGHT THUNDER

MAY 30 MILWAUKEE MILE CYCLING NIGHTS

JUNE 2-3 RUSTY WALLACE RACING EXPERIENCE

JUNE 6 MILWAUKEE MILE CYCLING NIGHTS

JUNE 13 MILWAUKEE MILE CYCLING NIGHTS

JUNE 19 TUESDAY NIGHT STREET DRAGS

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Dirt Kings Late Model Tour brings stiff competition together

By NICHOLAS DETTMANN
Conley News Service

Jason Shultz saw an opportunity and took advantage of it.

Shultz, along with his wife, Sandy, bought the Wisconsin Dirt Late Model Association in December 2016 and renamed it the Dirt Kings Late Model Tour.

The 2017 season, the series' inaugural season, was a hit.

"It went really good," Jason said. "I would say better-than-expected response. We had an average 27-car counts, which exceeded our expectations; we built a strong following online for the tour."

The racing helped.

One race in particular Jason pointed to was a 50-lap feature with no cautions at the Plymouth Dirt Track, a one-third mile dirt oval on the Sheboygan County Fairgrounds.

"We've got the best drivers coming from the Milwaukee metro area and the northern half of Wisconsin," Jason said. "We are really seeing guys invest more in their equipment."

Brad Mueller, a four-time dirt late model champion at Plymouth, called the series "The greatest thing to happen to dirt late-model racing in the state of Wisconsin in many, many years."

"Hats off to Jason and Sandy Shultz for taking their series to the next level," Mueller said. "Last year's inaugural year was great. I think the lowest car count we had was 22 and the biggest was in the low 40s. I think it will be even more stronger with more races."

When asked why he boasted about the series, Mueller said, "Because all we have is a couple local tracks; we have Plymouth and Shawano that run weekly. They are two hours apart and they are also three hours from any other dirt late-model track so it gives us another option other than the weekly grind."

There were 12 scheduled



Eamon Bauman/For Conley News Service

Luxemburg's Jared Siefert (25), Clintonville's Justin Hirt (27) and Glenbeulah's Tim Buhler battle for position in a Dirt Kings Late Model Tour race last season. **BELOW:** Random Lake's Brad Mueller (89) and Billy Moyer Sr. of Batesville, Ark., battle for position in a race at Plymouth Dirt Track on the Sheboygan County Fairgrounds.

"The greatest thing to happen to dirt late-model racing in the state of Wisconsin in many, many years."

— Brad Mueller
Plymouth track champion in late models

races in the inaugural season. Nine were competed with the others canceled because of weather. The champion was Nick Anvelink, who won four features en route to the title.

In year two, the schedule calls for 14 races, including one Sept. 8 at Plymouth. The opener was scheduled for April 21 — the Londerville Steel Spring Thaw — at Shawano Speedway.

The other tracks are Spring Lake Speedway (Unity), Luxemburg Speedway, 141 Speedway



(Francis Creek), Eagle Valley Speedway (Jim Falls), Dodge County Fairgrounds (Beaver Dam), Outagamie Speedway (Seymour), Wilmot Raceway and TNT Speedway (Three Lakes).

The Plymouth date is one of the three marquee events on the calendar, Jason said, because most of

the series' regulars call Plymouth their home track. It's also the third-to-last race of the regular season, making it a key race in the push for the championship.

"It's a very important race for us," Jason said.

The other two marquee races are The Diamond 40 on June 29 at 141 Speedway

in Francis Creek, which \$4,000 to the feature winner, The Dairyland Duel on Aug. 17 at Wilmot Raceway, which also pays \$4,000 to the feature winner. The Dairyland Duel pits the Dirt Kings series against the American Ethanol Late Model Tour, which is based in southern Michigan.

"We'll build a grudge

Plymouth Dirt Track

■ **Location:** 229 Fairview Drive, Plymouth

■ **Website:** www.plymouthdtr.com

■ **Tickets:** \$12 for adults; students (age 12-15) \$5; children 11 and younger (with paying adult) free; children 11 and younger (with no paying adult) \$5; prices vary for specials

■ **Race night:** Saturdays

■ **Contact:** 920-893-5751; mail@shebcofair.com

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2017 Track champions

Grand nationals: Mark Fieber

360 sprint car: Brandon McMullen

Late model: Brad Mueller

Micro sprints: Preston Ruh

B modified: Justin Green

match with them," Jason said. "It's going to be a fun event."

Jason said the focus of the series, which he believes is why he it has been widely received so quickly, is its marketing efforts, which includes the heavy presence on social media.

"We're trying to make our drivers household names," Jason said. "Create a buzz around the guys racing in the series."

What also helped, Jason said, is the points fund program, which can add another couple thousand dollars into a driver's bank account.

"I think we're just looking to continue to grow, responsible growth, not grow too fast," Jason said.

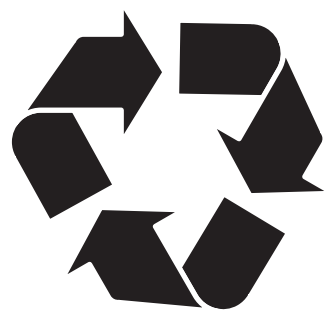
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Racing program at Plymouth

Racing at the Plymouth Dirt Track, 229 Fairview Drive, Plymouth, is to start April 28 with its traditional five-division weekly program. The divisions are 360 sprint cars, late models, grand nationals, "B" modifieds and 600 micro sprints.

The Pits open 3 p.m. each week, except for 2:30 p.m. opening night. The spectator gates open at 4:30 p.m., followed by opening ceremonies at 6 p.m.

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- 5. Beaver Dam Raceway**
Beaver Dam
1/3 Mile Dirt Oval
- 6. Great Lakes Dragway**
Union Grove
1/4 Mile Asphalt Drag Strip
- 7. Dodge County Fairgrounds Speedway**
Beaver Dam
1/2 Mile Clay Oval
- 8. Luxemburg Speedway**
Luxemburg
1/3 Mile Dirt Oval
- 9. Milwaukee Mile**
West Allis
1 Mile Asphalt Oval
- 10. Wilmot Raceway**
Wilmot
3/8 Mile Clay Oval
- 11. Plymouth Dirt Track**
Plymouth
1/3 Mile Clay Oval
- 12. WI International Raceway**
Kaukauna
1/4 Mile Asphalt Drag Strip,
1/2 & 1/4 Mile Asphalt Ovals
- 13. Badger Kart Club**
Dousman
6/10 Mile Asphalt Road Kart Course
- 14. Road America**
Elkhart Lake
4.048 Mile Asphalt Road Course
- 15. 141 Speedway**
Maribel
1/3 Mile Clay Oval
- 16. Outagamie Speedway**
Seymour
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