

CHECKERED FLAG

RACING REVIEW

2025



California's Buddy Kofoid celebrates his \$250,000 pay day by winning the Huset's High Bank Nationals on Saturday, June 21.

The Checkered Flag
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Journal

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Johnson vs. Timms championship battle heating up

Tom A. Savage
Brandon Valley Journal

Welcome to the late summer edition of the Checkered Flag!

Things are heating up at Huset's in all three classes with just two points races remaining.

After winning the first three races of the season in the 410 sprint car class at Huset's, Sioux Falls native Kaleb Johnson looked to perhaps cruise to his second straight track championship.

But not so fast.

Oklahoma City's Ryan Timms has made things interesting with two races to go. Timms drives for Rapid City-based Liebig Motorsports, and that combination has been strong all season at various tracks

around the country. They won the coveted Knoxville Nationals earlier this year.

After Johnson built a sizable championship lead with his three victories to open the season, Timms won in Week 4 on June 1 to begin closing the gap. That was a much-needed win for Timms. After finishing second to Johnson in the first two weeks, the Oklahoma City driver finished 25th in Week 3 after he and the lapped car of Scott Broty got together in Turn 2. Timms' car was too damaged to continue, a costly blow to the championship battle.

But Timms responded with the win on June 1, and he got two more on June 8 and July 13, which cut the lead to 28 points. On July 27, he finished third after leading most of the race. A late-race incident with Koby Werkmeister sent him to the back of the lead

lapped cars. He still battled back to finish third, one spot behind Johnson. If Timms could have held on for the win, it would have made things even that much closer with three to go.

Then on Aug. 17, Timms picked up his fourth win of the season, making things that much more interesting. Now with two to go, Timms has cut the lead to 24 points.

continued on page 4



Ryan Timms



Photos courtesy of Jeff Bylsma

SEASON UPDATE

CURRENT HUSET'S SPEEDWAY POINT STANDINGS

Through Sunday, Aug. 17

410 SPRINT CARS

1. Kaleb Johnson,
Sioux Falls, SD: 450
2. Ryan Timms
Oklahoma City, OK: -24
3. Mark Dobmeier,
Grand Forks, ND: -88

RACESAVER SPRINT CARS

1. Dylan Waxdahl,
Hartford, SD: 303
2. Brady Donnohue,
Circle Pines, MN: -10
3. Brandon Halverson,
Jackson, MN: -32

LATE MODEL STREET STOCKS

1. Chris Ellingson,
Madison, SD: 338
2. Matt Steuerwald,
Madison, SD: -1
3. JJ Zebell,
Parker, SD: -3

401 CHAMPIONSHIP



Just like that, the once-seemingly massive lead to open the season has been cut down to striking distance.

"Obviously we want to get the championship, but anything can still happen," said Johnson, who won the title last year despite not having a victory. "Ryan and that Liebig team, they're going to be good every night. They're definitely going to keep us on our toes."

Johnson has clearly been the driver to beat at Huset's over the last two years. Since the start of the 2024 season, Johnson's average finish is 4.6 over a 19-race span. He's finished in the Top 10 in 17 of those 19 races.

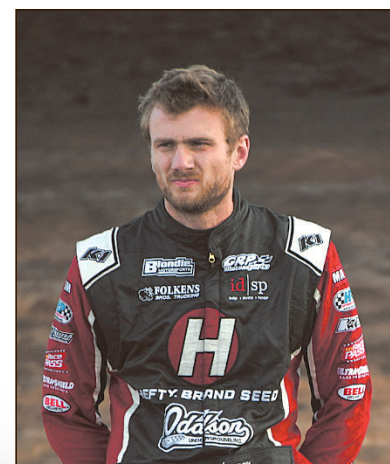
He won the title last year in his own car. This year he's in the Knoxville-based 6R car owned by Dennis Gainey.

For Timms and the Liebig team, they've been focused on the Huset's championship all season. Timms spent much of last year racing with the USAC midgets, but has had much success in Huset's over the years.

He won five times in 2022 as a 15-year-old. He's been back in Brandon sporadically over the past five years, but has clearly found something after teaming with Liebig Motorsports for the 2025 season.

"The original plan this year was to win the Huset's championship," Timms said. "If I don't win it, it's not going to ruin my day. But if I could do it, it would be nice to just get it knocked out and have one last thing to worry about."

If Johnson hangs on, he'll join a select group who've won back-to-back titles in the track's largest class. They include Arnie Nimmerfroeh (1959-60), Harry Torgerson (1972-73), Gerald Bruggeman (1977-78-79), Leland Van Emmerick (1981-82), John Stevenson (1983-84-85), Danny Lasoski (1989-90), Terry McCarl (1998-99-00-01), Gregg Bakker (2004-05), Mark Dobmeier (2007-08-09), Brooke Tatnell (2022-23).



Kaleb Johnson

Photos courtesy of Jeff Bylsma





Dustin Gulbrandson has clinched Rock Rapids Hobby Stocks title

Tom A. Savage
Brandon Valley Journal

Dustin Gulbrandson of Sioux Falls has clinched the track title in the USRA Hobby Stocks at Rapid Speedway with one to go.

The eight-time national champion in the division looks also to be in good position to

get his ninth as he's been racking up USRA points this summer. He was the national champion in the division from 2014-18, 2020-21, and again last year.

While he's chasing another national title, having the Rock Rapids track title was locked in weeks ago. He holds a 139-point

lead over Landon Krohn of Rowena. Gulbrandson was able to increase his comfortable lead on July 25 and Aug. 1. On July 25, he finished second while Krohn was 18th. On Aug. 1, Gulbrandson won and Krohn again struggled to a 15th place finish.

"As long as we show up and start every feature, we'd probably be OK now, unless something really crazy happens, which is possible," Gulbrandson said in early August.

Although the track and national titles are stacking up, Gulbrandson said that's not specifically the goal at the start of each season. Consistent finishes and frequent appearances have been the formula to securing titles.

"We just race a lot, and it kind of works out," he said. "We love racing, so we race as much as we can. If the points work out, they work out. I wouldn't say we go out and try to race for points. But if you're close at the end

"We love racing, so we race as much as we can. If the points work out, they work out."

– Dustin Gulbrandson

(national points), you look at it a little more, pay more attention. If you're within striking distance, you might as well go for it."

At the very least, winning a national championship has its perks in regards to payouts. A USRA Hobby Stock national champion pockets an additional \$8,000-9,000 for the title that includes contingency awards.

"That's a lot for a Hobby Stock team," Gulbrandson said. "We've had a good run."

And who knows? That run could continue. The 35-year-old said he'd like to keep driving until his 14-month-old son, Bentley, is old enough to race in another 13 years or so.

"I want to do it as long as I can be competitive," he said. "I don't want to do it just to be out there and making laps."

continued on page 6

Dustin Gulbrandson is close to earning his ninth national championship.

Photos courtesy of Jeff Bylsma



SEASON UPDATE

RAPID SPEEDWAY'S POINT STANDINGS

Through Friday, Aug. 17

SPORTSMANS

1. Dylan Vanden Top, George, IA: 1155
2. Brian Kroon, Rock Rapids, IA: -52
3. Wyatt Steenhoven, George, IA: -66

USRA HOBBY STOCKS

1. Dustin Gulbrandson, Sioux Falls, SD: 1285
2. Landon Krohn, Rowena, SD: -139
3. Blake Schneekloth, Brandon, SD: -257

USRA B-MODS

1. Oliver Sackett, Pierson, IA: 1112
2. Derek Van Veldhuizen, Rock Rapids: -72
3. Dave Kennedy, Tea, SD: -129

USRA STOCK CARS

1. Colton Arends, Luverne, MN: 1155
2. Colby Klaassen, Little Rock, IA: -25
3. Rich Gregoire, Little Rock, IA: -92

305 SPRINT CARS

1. Lee Goos, Jr., Hartford, SD: 636
2. Brandon Bosma, Rock Rapids, IA: -41
3. Dusty Ballenger, Harrisburg, SD: -90

CURRENT LEADERS



Championships already clinched in other classes

With one to go, it seems likely that all of the classes have clinched their champion at Rock Rapids.

The closest is the battle in the USRA Stock Cars where Colton Arends of Luverne, Minn., leads Colby Klaassen of Little Rock by 25 points. Rich Gregoier of Russell, Minn., is third at 92 points back.

In the 305 RaceSaver sprint cars, Hartford's Lee Goos, Jr. leads Brandon Bosma of Rock Rapids by 41 points. Dusty Ballenger of Harrisburg is 90 points behind in third.

In the Sportsman's class, Dylan Vanden Top of George, Iowa has things locked up with a 52-point lead over Brian Kroon of Rock Rapids. Wyatt Steenhoven of George, Iowa, is third at 66 back.

Colton Arends (top) has a 25 point lead in USRA Stock Cars.

Lee Goos, Jr. (middle) is leading the 305 RaceSaver sprint cars by 45 points. In the Sportsman class, Dylan Vanden Top (bottom) has locked things up by 52 points.

Photos courtesy of Jeff Bylsma



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LMSS CHAMPIONSHIP

'We'll see how it shakes out' Tight championship battle at Huset's with two to go

Tom A. Savage

Brandon Valley Journal

Madison's Chris Ellingson leads the Late Model Street Stock class with two races to go at Huset's, and he's got a group bunched up behind him with a shot at the title.

Matt Steuerwald of Madison is just one point back, and defending champion JJ Zebell from Parker is three back. Cory Yeigh of Sioux Falls is four points back, and Aaron Foote of Hartford is just seven. All of those drivers have a legitimate shot at the championship.

"It's hard," said Zebell when asked the difficulty of defending a title. "Everyone is after you. They want what you had last year. But we just have to keep digging."

Zebell and Ellingson are teammates, part of the four-car team owned by Ron Howe, who is 11th in points. The other car in the four-team stable is Mike Chaney, currently ninth.

"We got a good thing rolling," Zebell said. "But yea, I'd like to defend my title. But it's pretty stout this year. Everybody did their homework this winter. We

could still catch Chris, but something would have to happen. If you get one tire failure, a right rear, that pushes you back and there's your points there for the night."

Zebell and Ellingson are friends and Zebell said he'd still

"It's hard. Everyone is after you. They want what you had last year."

—JJ Zebell

be happy if the championship stays within the team.

"We've been friends for a long time, so it's all good," he said.

"But it is fun to be in contention. I'm proud to be back where we're at. We're running pretty good right now, we just need a little luck, and winning one of these things takes a lot of luck."

Zebell hasn't won a feature this year, nor has Ellingson, an example of consistency upfront this year.

"You've really got some heavy hitters with the way things are lined up," Zebell said.

"It's anybody's ball game, but that's how it rolls. You gotta have a little lady luck on your side. We'll see how it shakes out."

Madison's Chris Ellingson leads the LMSS championship with a three-way battle for second behind him.

Photo courtesy Jeff Bylsma



Waxdahl leads defending champ by 10 in RaceSaver sprint cars

Tom A. Savage
Brandon Valley Journal

Hartford's Dylan Waxdahl has been consistent all season at Huset's. He hasn't won, but he doesn't have a DNF either.

Add that up, and his consistency has him on top of the 305 RaceSaver sprint car points championship with two

to go. He holds a 10-point lead over defending champion Brady Donnohue of Circle Pines, Minn.

Waxdahl finished 13th in points last year during his fulltime rookie season in the RaceSaver class. That was a spot he said he wasn't satisfied with, so he zeroed in on a potential track title this year.

"My goal was just to finish every race," he said. "That seems to be a common denominator in winning the points. Just gotta finish every race and try to be as consistent as possible."

Waxdahl obviously hasn't crashed at Huset's this year. In fact, he's only been upside-down once in his career – a one-off race at I-90 Speedway in Hartford in 2022.

"I've only flipped once, and I'm trying to keep it that way," Waxdahl said. "Not wrecking, that's my biggest goal. I don't like wrecking race cars."

Hartford's Dylan Waxdahl hasn't had a DNF all season in the RaceSaver sprint cars. He has an 11-point lead in the points battle with three to go.

Photo courtesy Jeff Bylsma



305 CHAMPIONSHIP

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BRANDON BOSMA

*'It just kept going up,
and up, and up'*

Brandon Bosma rebounds after devastating Rock River floods

Tom A. Savage

Brandon Valley Journal

When the Rock River became overwhelmed in northwest Iowa last summer, the town of Rock Rapids took a direct hit.

The waters rushed through town, destroying both commercial and residential buildings, causing extensive property damage and hardship for many families in the county seat of Lyon County.

After the flood waters began to recede, Rapid Speedway on the Lyon County Fairgrounds announced on June 28, 2024

that the remainder of the racing season was canceled due to the damage at the race track.

But it wasn't just the track that took the brunt of the damage. Rock Rapids resident and 305 RaceSaver sprint car driver Brandon Bosma's race shop is located about 200 yards outside of Turn 3. The Rock River runs between his shop and the track, and like it did on the Fairgrounds, the river overtook the Bosma shop, causing severe damage.

Luckily for Bosma, he was able to get his two race cars and most of his equipment out of the shop

before the waters became too overwhelming. After several warnings from the National Weather Service about potential flooding, Bosma went to work.

But that nearly wasn't the case.

"I was going to leave everything in there and just put it up on stands," he said. "But I thought better of it and just got everything out."

You could forgive Bosma if he would have kept everything in his shop on stands. The last flood warning of such magnitude in 2014 didn't result in a total loss. Eight years ago, he could have gotten away with his first option.

But not last summer. Even after warnings, the river rose more than expected, wiping out most everything in its path.

Bosma said he put some equipment up on his work bench, thinking that even if his

shop did flood, that the height of the work bench would be safe.

It wasn't.

"I lost a couple thousand dollars' worth of stuff that was in there," Bosma said. "They warned us, but it just kept going up, and up, and up. It surpassed what they expected it to get to."

Bosma, his wife and infant child, all live just north of the race shop. Their home took water, but not the extent of the race shop or other buildings closer to the river. They lost power to the house, and Bosma and his wife bucketed out 1,500 gallons of water for two straight hours before the sump pump kicked in.

"It was not fun," he said.

Although the house was spared, Bosma said for certain he didn't think the race shop building would survive.

Brandon Bosma rebuilt his race shop in Rock Rapids after the flood with updated steel on the walls.

Photos courtesy of Jeff Bylsma





Brandon Bosma celebrates in victory lane on Sunday, July 14, 2024, just three weeks after his race shop in Rock Rapids suffered major flood damage.

At noon on the day the river crested, Bosma said water started to trickle into the shop. By 4 p.m., he had to wade out of the building as the water was now waist high. The next morning, he looked at what he thought was for certain his final glance at his shop.

"There was a strong current going right next to it," he said. "I didn't expect to see the building still standing. The water was so high and it was moving so fast right there, but luckily, it made it."

The race shop wasn't insured, and FEMA offered zero financial assistance. In all, Bosma said the flood damage cost him around \$15,000 to repair and replace everything, and that includes a new air conditioner that he had just put in as his final touch on the shop just before the flood.

Considering the damage that swept through the area, Bosma said things could have been worse for his shop. The financial blow was also softened last year when he won the feature at Huset's on July 14, just three weeks after the flood.

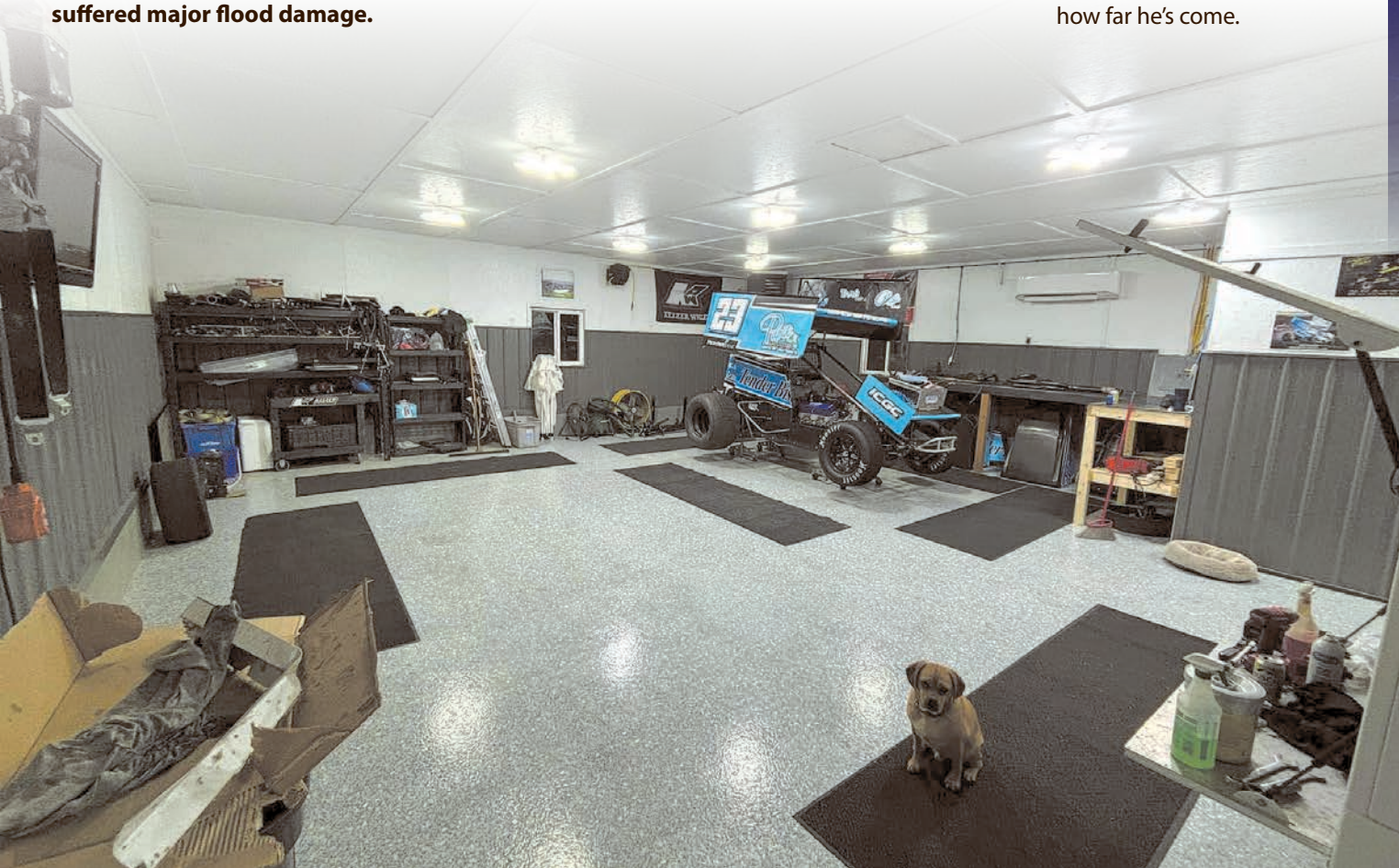
"That one meant a lot because of everything we'd gone through," he said. "We put racing on the back burner to take care of life things. So getting that first one last year at Huset's was definitely a great feeling."

He's won four times this year, once at Huset's, once at Jackson Motorplex, and twice at Rapid Speedway.

It's a nice recovery after such devastation last summer.

And there's forever a reminder at his now updated race shop: one of the windows survived with the watermark still apparent, a daily reminder of how far he's come.

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14-year-old clinches USRA B-Mod title at Rapid

Tom A. Savage

Brandon Valley Journal

Oliver Sackett will be going into the eighth grade later this month.

But his story is not the typical one of a wide-eyed 14-year-old anticipating the start of another school year, football games, and social interaction that can't be matched at that age.

Instead, Sackett will be celebrating a motorsports championship at Rapid Speedway in Rock Rapids.

The Pierson, Iowa native won the season-opener at Rapid on May 9, at that time just 13 years of age. He started seventh and worked his way to the front, a place he's sat all season in the championship points race.

With just one race remaining, Sackett holds a 72-point lead in the track title hunt over Derek Van Veldhuizen of Rock Rapids.

Dave Kennedy of Tea is third, 129 points behind Sackett.

"It's been a dream come true," said Oliver's dad, Justin. "It was kind of a shock to win the opener. We've been out front quite a few times since then. Now it's one of those things that after you do it once, now every night it's like, 'let's go win.'"

The father-son duo is joined each week by Justin's father, Rick. Justin raced a USRA A-Modified for 20 years and his father, and then young son, joined him each week.

Justin said his dad and young son watched him each week from the corner. Clearly, that

experience sunk in for Oliver.

"My dad's been a part of this the whole time, and he helps a lot," Justin said. "Oliver stood there with my dad and watched, and studied (when Justin was racing). I didn't realize how much he was paying attention."

Obviously, he was. Oliver first jumped into a go-kart when he was younger. The family made the jump to a B-Mod for a handful of races last year with the permission of the USRA. Justin said even though Oliver was in the go-kart, he kept all of his racing equipment because he knew Oliver would make the jump at some point.

"We put his seat in it last year and it went better than expected," Justin said. "We had



Photos courtesy of Jeff Bylsma

Oliver Sackett (with trophy) celebrates with his team and family in Victory Lane after winning at Rapid Speedway on May 9.

some Top 5s, but this year we kicked it off with a win."

Making the jump from a go-kart to a USRA B-Mod is an obvious jolt in horsepower. It's something Oliver said he's noticed, but that he's finding a comfort level.

"When I started last year, I was pretty nervous. Now it's just kind of normal," he said. "We had a lot of good practices last year. It went good and I got used to it pretty quick."

Used to it, indeed. There have been 39 other USRA B-Modified entries this year at Rapid, and they're all chasing a soon-to-be eighth grader in the championship battle.

"It's unbelievable," Justin said, "and a lot of fun."

Rapid Speedway crowns its track champions on Friday, Aug. 22.



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Crowds, riders pack SVCC for Pre-Sturgis Shootout

Tom A. Savage

Brandon Valley Journal

The popular Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in the Black Hills just wrapped up with hundreds of thousands of bikers from around the country converging for 10 days of fun and activities for the 85th annual event.

If rally revelers came from the east down Interstate 90, the Sioux Valley Cycle Club between Brandon and Sioux Falls did its best to grab their attention. The SVCC held a Pre-Sturgis Shootout for the short track bikes on Aug. 1-2.

"We had a great turnout and I was happy with that," said Nick Metrivics, who leads the flat track motorcycles at SVCC. "The racing was good. It was all really positive."

Not only was the racing good, but the attendance was strong,

too. There were 186 participants on Saturday night, and they raced in front of a solid crowd. Almost the entire hillside that runs along the south side of the facility was filled with spectators.

Metrivics also said before the event that they were hoping to pick up some national riders for the event. He said four did indeed show, including Bradon Pfanders, a pro rider from Bethlehem, Penn. The 17-year-old competes at the pro level in the American Flattrack Series.

This year was also Metrivics' first in leading the short track events at SVCC. The Pre-Sturgis Shootout is one of the facility's biggest, and Metrivics said he learned a lot over the weekend.

"I'm definitely looking forward to it again," he said. "I could see what some of the issues were. It was a good learning

experience and next year we'll fix some of those issues to make it even better moving forward."

This year's event was already a step in the right direction. In year's past, the SVCC held the Sturgis event after the rally in the Black Hills. Last year's Shootout was sanctioned by an outside group and was not a series points race at SVCC. This year, the event was brought in-house with series points on the line, all run by Metrivics.

The Pre-Sturgis Shootout was the second big event at SVCC in three weeks. The Quad TT Midwest Extreme Dirt Track Nationals were raced at the Club on July 12-13 with more than 400 entries in attendance.

The Nationals is a multi-round event with races at six different venues throughout the country.

"It was so much fun with so many competitors here," said Zach Jorgensen, who organizes the quad events at SVCC. "It's always a great event and always

"The racing was good. It was all really positive."

– Nick Metrivics

packed with a lot of riders. We look forward to doing it again next year."

There are still several flat track bike and Quad TT events scheduled for SVCC this year. The Quad TT 5th Annual Gary Meyer Memorial is scheduled for Oct. 5.

For the flat track motorcycles, their championship night is scheduled for Sept. 20.

"There should be a good turnout for that," Metrivics said. "It's a big race with all of our local people that compete at every race."

Flat track motorcycles compete at Sioux Valley Cycle Club near Renner at this year's Pre-Sturgis Shootout.

Michelle Brugger Kuik - Kuik Racing



SVCC VS
CYCLE CLUB

Five win coveted Wally trophy at Thunder Valley

Junior Dragsters cash in on big money races

Tom A. Savage

Brandon Valley Journal

It's arguably the most coveted piece of hardware in drag racing. The Wally trophy is given out each year at NHRA tracks across the country.

Named after NHRA founder Wally Parks in 1969, the 18-inch, 12-pound trophy is sought after by every drag racer from coast-to-coast.

"It's obviously an award all the drivers covet," said NHRA Top Fuel champion Tony Schumacher. "Not so much for what it is, as for what it represents. I'd like to grab a bunch of them before I'm done."

Thunder Valley gave out five of them at their annual Wally race on Aug. 2-3. Jack Beulter of Watertown won in Junior Dragster, Carter Slykhuis of Tea won in Pro, Tony Lemker of Lake

Park, Iowa won in Super Pro, George Brown of Rapid City won Pro Bike, and the Sportsman Wally award went to Aaron Sutera of Yankton.

In three of the five Wally events, participants could buy back in if they were eliminated in the first round. Track manager Cherrie Engbrecht said several competitors did just that as they were racing for the coveted award.

Parks formed the NHRA in 1951 and today stands as the largest motorsports sanctioning body in the world. He is credited for establishing drag racing as a legitimate amateur and professional motorsport.

Before forming the NHRA, he founded Hot Rod Magazine in 1948. He was also instrumental in the founding of Motor Trend Magazine in 1949 and organized

"Safety Safaris" in drag racing that began in 1954. The safaris taught drag racing organization and safety at tracks around the country. It was the first concerted effort in getting racers off the streets and onto controlled race tracks.

For as big as the Wally award was in early August at Thunder Valley, it wasn't the only big event on the schedule.

The Wally races coincided with a Junior Dragster Jackpot event, which paid \$1,000 to the winner in each class. Engbrecht said the Junior Dragsters normally race for \$100.

Because the two big events collided on the same weekend, big car counts and spectator numbers flooded Marion.

"It's the Super Bowl for them," Engbrecht said of the Junior Dragster event. "That's a big money race. They've been racing with us all summer, but this was the big one."

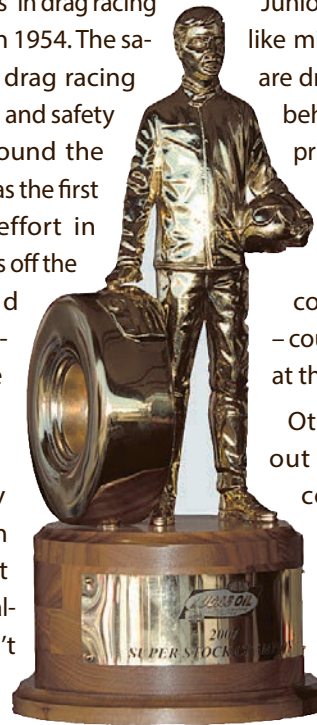
Junior Dragsters, which look like mini-Top Fuel machines, are driven by kids ages 8-18 behind the wheel. Several prizes were given out over the weekend, and anyone 18 and under in attendance – competitor or spectator – could enter for cash prizes at the end of each round.

Other prizes were given out to Junior Dragster competitors, such as worst reaction time and best reaction time.

A culmination of a season-long raffle was also drawn and soon-to-be high school senior Riley Case of Rapid City won a \$2,200 scholarship in memory of longtime local dragster supporter Bruce Dvoracek.

The Wally races and the Junior Dragster Jackpot in early August was just the start of a busy final two months of the season at Thunder Valley. Thirteen more events are scheduled before the 2025 Awards Banquet scheduled for Nov. 8.

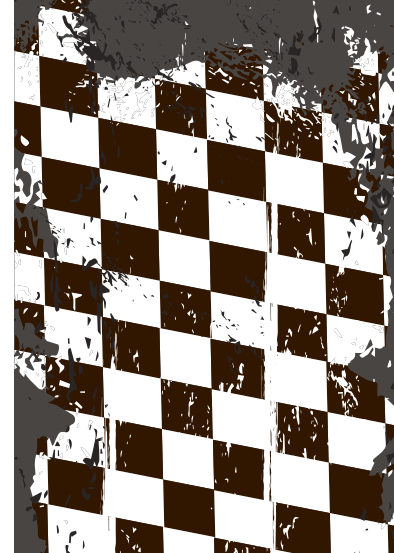
"We've had a great year so far," Engbrecht said. "The weather has been holding and we haven't had any rainouts."



Wally award Submitted photo



THUNDER VALLEY



JACOB PETERSON

Tight friendship fuels Jacob Peterson's team

Tom A. Savage

Brandon Valley Journal

The yellow No. 80 sprint car at Huset's is a familiar sight to fans who've been around the sport for a while.

Hartford's Vance Peterson drove that livery for years at area tracks, including Huset's. Now his 18-year-old grandson, Jacob, is wheeling a 410 sprint car with the same look.

Jacob spent the last two years in a 305 RaceSaver sprint car, but made the jump to the 410s this year. He's currently 14th in points at Huset's, and had a season-best fifth place finish at Rock Rapids on July 22.

None of it would be possible if not for the friendship that Vance and Jeff Davis made in 1991. Davis was a 38-year-old rookie in a sprint car that year. Vance lent him some help.

Over the years, the two have become best of friends. Davis is a longtime business owner in the area, and he assisted Vance in his business endeavors. Davis now funds the Jacob Peterson team with two new cars and engines.

"He helped me live my dream of winning races," Davis said of Vance. "This is my chance to give him a little something back. Vance will tell you that I'm the car owner, I would tell you that we've been friends and partners for life."

Davis said this is his "last hurrah" in funding and owning a team, but it's nothing new. The owner of Jeff Davis Enterprises, Davis started the career of several area drivers including Clint Garner, Gerod Olivier, and his son, Alex Schreiber, the 2016 Huset's Speedway Rookie of the Year in the 410 class.

The friendship between Davis and Vance is evident. Vance, too, was quick to point out the connection.

"He is indeed the car owner," Vance said. "We have some

equipment, but the cars and motors are his. But we've been close, close friends for more than 30 years. He's been good for me, and vice versa."

Jacob is the son of Vance's oldest son, Joe. Joe serves as the current crew chief on the No. 80 car.

"He's a great fabricator. He's an engineer. The chassis is his deal," Vance said of Joe. "I take care of engine maintenance, tuning, gears, fuel. And I'm the gopher. Joe is the man. He and Jacob get along great and have been racing together for a long time."

And how have things been going during Jacob's rookie season in the 410s? By all accounts, everyone in the camp is quite happy.

"He's exceeded my expectations," Davis said. "We've done it in steps. We were running C features and missing the A features. Now we're making the A

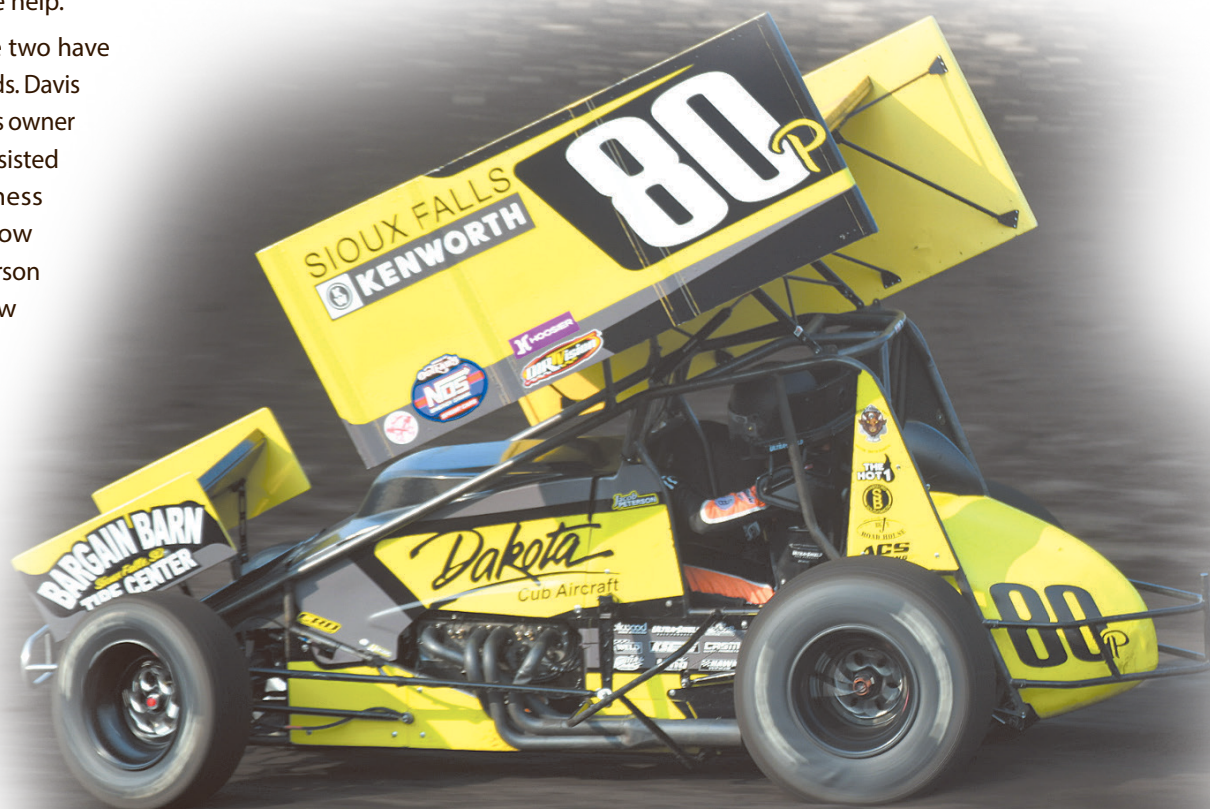
features. He's got his elbows up the whole race and he's racing with the boys. I'm proud of him."

Exceeding expectations were the exact words Vance used of his grandson's rookie year.

"He's doing fantastic, and I figured he would," Vance said. "It's been fun. Ever since the High Banks (Huset's High Bank Nationals), he's really started picking it up. He's smooth."

For Jacob, a 2025 West Central grad, he too said things are coming together. Like with everyone else who's made the jump from a 305 to a 410 sprint car, he said it's taken some getting used to. But he also knows none of it happens without the financial help from Davis.

"We couldn't have done it without him," he said. "Jeff and my dad are best friends and they talk every day. He's like another grandpa to me."



Photos courtesy of Jeff Bylsma

Werkmeister out-qualifies some of the sport's best

Teenager starts in front of Kahne, Abreu and Larson

Tom A. Savage
Brandon Valley Journal

Armour's Koby Werkmeister is in his first year of piloting a 410 sprint car. He spent the previous three years in the RaceSaver 305 sprint car class and finished third in championship points at Huset's last year.

Making the jump from a 305 sprint car to 410 is a jolt in horsepower, one Werkmeister said he's definitely felt in his rookie season in the top class.

"They're a lot different, so you can get yourself out of trouble quicker, but you can get into trouble faster. There's a lot more gas pedal there," the 19-year-old said. "Everything happens so much faster. I'm still trying to get used to that. I'm starting to get more comfortable, and I'm still learning every night."

For as big as the learning curve is, he got an eye-opener earlier this year when he traveled to Eagle Raceway in Nebraska to compete with the ultra-competitive High Limit Series. Some of the top drivers in the world like Brad Sweet, Kyle Larson, Rico Abreu and Aaron

Reutzel are regulars on the series.

But on June 10, Werkmeister impressed when he went toe-to-toe with some of the sport's heaviest hitters.

He qualified 12th and finished fifth in his heat race, qualifying him for the feature. He started 19th in that race, which is impressive enough. But stacked up behind him at the start included Kasey Kahne in 24th, a starter of 529 NASCAR events and winner of the 2017 Brickyard 400 at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

Abreu started 25th, and Larson, a former NASCAR champion and two-time Indianapolis 500 starter, was 26th when the green flag flew in Eagle on June 10.

"I thought it would be pretty

cool to race against them just to see how we compared with them," Werkmeister said. "Eagle is one of my favorite tracks and we watched the High Limit guys race there in the past. It's been on my bucket list to race a 410 at Eagle."

That box is now checked. Werkmeister finished 22nd, but qualifying for a high-profile event as a teenage rookie is monumental.

"My goal was just to make the feature, so I thought that was pretty cool," he said. "Being out on the race track and seeing all these big-name guys, I thought that was really cool. It is a little intimidating, but they're just another race car driver. They're just really good at it."

The visit to Eagle was his only High Limit appearance of the



year. However, he's also raced with the touring World of Outlaws on multiple occasions this season.

Ultimately, it's been an opportunity to learn at the highest level.

"I've been learning quite a bit," he said. "Running behind them and watching them, we can see what they're doing and learn."

Werkmeister is currently ninth in championship points at Huset's with a best finish of 10th on June 8.

Koby Werkmeister pulls a wheelie down the back stretch earlier this year at Huset's.

Photo courtesy of Jeff Bylsma



KOBY WERKMEISTER



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Where have you been?

Two in last year's championship hunt have been absent in 2025

Tom A. Savage

Brandon Valley Journal

The Late Model Street Stock and RaceSaver 305 sprint car class track championships came down to the wire last year at Huset's.

But in 2025, two of the major players in last season's late championship battle have been almost absent this year in Brandon.

Shayle Bade and Zach Olivier ... where have you been?

It's been a combination of family time and rough luck on the track that has kept the two drivers from Huset's. Olivier finished third in championship points last year in the LMSS. Bade finished second in the 305 sprint car class. Both had a mathematical chance of winning the title heading into championship night last August.

But for Bade, she said she's been hesitant to make the four-hour trek from her home in Lincoln, Neb., to Huset's this year simply because of the luck they've suffered in 2025.

Bade races at Eagle Raceway in Nebraska each week. It's her home track, just 25 minutes from home.

But it's been a tough go of it so far in 2025 for last year's Huset's runner-up in the 305



Shayle Bade

Shayle Bade on Huset's track last year.

Photos courtesy of Jeff Bylsma



“Honestly if I would have gone upside down, it probably would have been better.”

– Shayle Bade

sprint cars. Bade has suffered multiple DNF's this year in Nebraska, some of those as a result of a crash.

“We’ve just been getting hit with bad luck, after bad luck, after bad luck, and we don’t want to drive four hours just to suck,”

she said. “We’ve been working, and fixing, and are so burnt out right now.”

Bade said they’ve been fighting the car all year at Eagle. Earlier in the year, she lost a wheel and the front end dug in, which resulted in a bent frame and a damaged motor. She didn’t get upside down, but the car came to an immediate stop after traveling at a high rate of speed.

“Honestly if I would have gone upside down, it probably would have been better,” she said of the jolt. “When that wheel came off, I was full throttle and my

nose just dug a hole into that track, which hurt a hell of a lot more than rolling a car. I came in and told my guys that I’d much rather roll a car than do that again any day. I hurt everywhere after that. Flipping was way better. I’d recommend flipping over doing that again.”

Although she’s not been to Huset’s this year, she said the plan is to get back to Brandon before the 2025 season comes to a close. She was close last year to winning a feature. The last female to win at Huset’s was Trisha Underberg on Sept. 13,

2008 in a 360 sprint car.

“It is definitely our plan,” Bade said of making a trek to Huset’s this summer. “I want to get up there. We love Huset’s. When we drive up there, we want to drive to win.”

For Olivier, his absence from Huset’s is a direct result of a growing family. The two-time champ welcomed a new baby in August of last year, and his commitments at home have taken priority.

Although he’s not racing for points this year, he’s popped in-and-out of area tracks this

summer. He won the LMSS feature at the Silver Dollar Nationals on July 19 at Huset’s. It was his second race in Brandon this summer.

“On opening night, everybody was there and I was at home watching it on TV. That was a little weird,” Oliver said. “But it’s the right decision for our family.”

Olivier said the plan is to return to Huset’s on Aug. 29 for the Bull Haulers Brawl.

Zach Olivier celebrating a victory last year at Huset’s.

Jeff Bylsma



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About the Writer



You might notice the same byline in the *Brandon Valley Journal's* *Checkered Flag* motorsports section over the past two years.

Tom A. Savage is a longtime sportswriter. He's been writing for the *Brandon Valley Journal* since July of 2021, covering multiple sports storylines.

But his background in motorsports began long before his return to South Dakota. Savage spent several years in the NBA working in Public Relations before landing the Senior Director of Media Relations position with IndyCar and the Indianapolis 500.

Savage spent four seasons with IndyCar before returning to the NBA, and eventually the NFL in the same capacity.

He returned to his home in Sioux Falls in 2011 and has been a freelance motorsports writer since then.

With the *Journal*, Savage has covered every race at Huset's over the past four seasons, along with the Knoxville Nationals.

His award-winning '*Savage Words*' column can be found weekly in the *Journal*. The column has focused many times on his extensive motorsports background and the stories that come with it.

Just like many in the area, Savage's interest in motorsports began as a child, spending time running around at Huset's, Rock Rapids, Hartford and Jackson.

And why the 'A' in his byline? Savage's father, Tom Savage, is also a longtime motorsports writer in the area, now residing in Brandon and still very sharp when it comes to motorsports history – at the age of 87!

Got an idea for a story? Drop Savage a note at staffwriter@bvjournal.info.

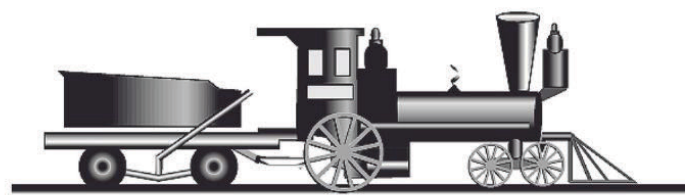


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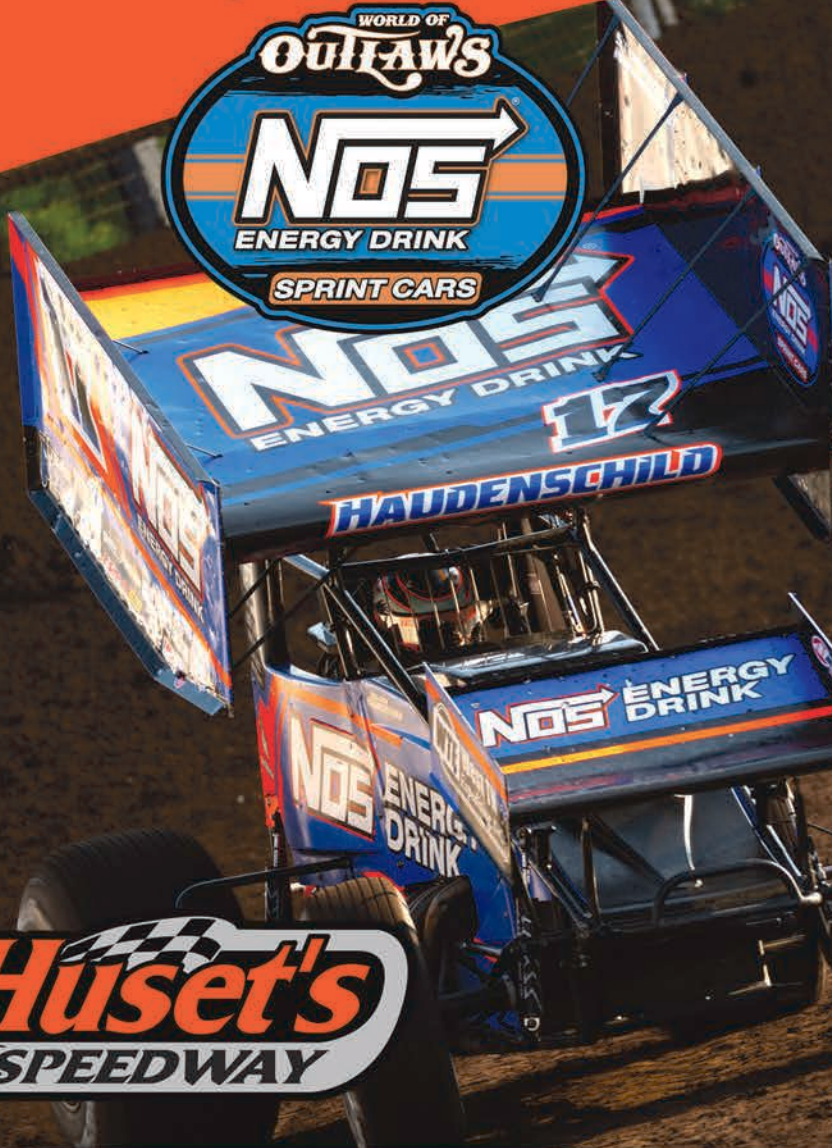
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