



Short Tracks Get Their Wakeup Call

Will North American short tracks go the way of the Drive-In Theater?

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Daytona Beach, FL (PRWEB) April 5, 2005 -- Will North American short tracks go the way of the Drive-In Theater?

With increased operational costs, often-featureless shows, and falling attendance, Short Track owners are facing an uphill battle in this modern digital entertainment age. Many have already closed up shop for good - of all the short tracks operating in the Carolinas in the 1960s, only about 30% of them are still in existence today.

The days of just opening your gates and watching fans and competitors flood your facility every week, are long gone. Today there is intense competition for the consumers' entertainment dollar, with Multiplex movie theatres, shopping malls, alternative sports, hi-tech video games and the Internet all competing for the same market.

With this barrage of new alternative entertainment, only the most savvy of short tracks will survive the new electronic age. Don't believe it? Then consider what happened to your local drive-in movie theatres, if you can even remember them. They failed to adapt, and they died, while wondering what the heck happened.

At the recent Short Track Racing Summits (www.ShortTrackRacingSummit.com) in Las Vegas and Daytona Beach, hundreds of short track and weekly track owners and promoters from across North America convened for a series of meetings and seminars to share promotional ideas, discuss better business practices, and work towards a stronger industry for all involved.

Most attendees agreed that the adage "build it and they will come", has come and gone. To get racing fans and communities involved, and keep them involved, short track promoters today must provide better entertainment value for their customers, period.

"It's great that weekly and short tracks are working closer together. We're like family. We all do the same thing, and generally have the same problems and issues," said J.D. Green, Competition Director of Kansas Lakeside Speedway. "Helping each other is good for our business, and everybody working together in the same direction - regardless of what kind of racing or what sanctioning body is involved - is good for weekly racing all over the country."

The Short Track Grass Roots Heritage

Former Daytona 500 champions Richard Petty, Dale Earnhardt Jr., Mario Andretti, Darrell Waltrip, Bobby Allison, Junior Johnson, Buddy Baker, Pete Hamilton, Marvin Panch and Michael Waltrip all appeared at the Short Track Racing Summit as part of a "Gathering of Champions" event.

They reminisced about their victories in "The Great American Race", and their careers in short track racing.

Richard Petty, winner of a record 200 races in the highest level of stock car racing, told the group, "If it hadn't been for the short dirt tracks when I started racing, there wouldn't be the Cup racing we have



today. "Petty also noted, "You still have to have the grass roots ideas of getting people involved, getting the fans involved, get car owners and drivers involved."

"Truly, everybody's background, including myself, goes back to the short tracks," said Buddy Baker. Bobby Allison concurred when he said, "The short tracks really were the base of so many careers. By going to different tracks, I could get a range of experience because each track was a little bit different."

"Half of the wins I have, have been on the short tracks," said Darrell Waltrip. "You had to start on the short tracks. That's where you built your reputation. That's where you got your experience. Nobody ever thought about going to Daytona to start their career."

The industry debate continues as to whether or not the NASCAR Nextel Cup racing series is growing so popular that it's eroding attendance at the nation's short tracks. Many short track promoters believe so.

And tracks must also continue to control costs, not just for the fans but for competitors as well. If the drivers can't afford to compete, what's there for fans to watch?

The Short Track Racing Summits provided a slew of possible solutions on how to tackle these and many other marketing, promotional and operational problems facing the industry today.

But how do these individual Short Track owners create the advanced marketing and administration tools that they need, in order to implement all these great ideas?

About synergy, and about time.

An independent company in Daytona Beach, Florida, believes that it has a solution.

The founders of ShortTrackSynergy.com propose that by operating as a cohesive industry, short tracks can become stronger as individual tracks, more powerful as a group, and more appealing to sponsors, instead of each track operating on their own as they are doing today.

"There's no doubt about it," says Gary Bugnacki of ShortTrackSynergy.com, "Short tracks basically all have to do the same things, and it's simply doesn't make sense for them not to be pooling resources and working together on a national basis. By connecting themselves under a common nationwide marketing platform that brings together all short tracks, whether sanctioned or not, each track could achieve lower costs, increased driver participation, better sponsorship support, a growing fan base and greater community involvement."

Others in the industry also support the idea, including Tom Deery, ex NASCAR Short Track VP, who thinks that this is exactly what the industry needs. Deery was one of the first to volunteer to be on the Advisory Board of the new association, joined soon after by Randy Claypoole (President/CEO of ISCARS, International Sport Compact Auto Racing Series) and Jerry Weaver (Modified, DASH and late model Divisions, and Winston & NEXTEL Cup car owner).

Bugnacki and his team are convinced that they are on the right track, and are already well down the road towards completing the advanced e-commerce marketing and admin platform that is designed specifically to the short track racing industry. The web-based system includes built-in promotional tools including dynamic website templates, powerful sponsor branding opportunities, e-mail marketing, online ticket sales, automatic



newsletters, Hero Card distribution, online fan surveys and routine collection of demographic data.

It also continually provides track owners with new ideas on marketing, new promotional opportunities, and an ever increasing library of relevant operational, regulatory and legal information for them to draw upon. And it has the ability to be tailored for each and every track. Sponsorship opportunities within the platform are also being made available.

The platform aims to provide the marketing, operational and front-end financial management tools for the more than 1,420 Short Track owners across North America, on an extremely cost efficient basis.

With anticipated widespread adaptation by the industry, it could help revolutionize the way short tracks function, and just might stop many of them from going the way of the local drive-in theatre.

The only question now is, will the American Short Track Industry heed the wakeup call?

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