



WWS Grudge Match

Time for Flamboro racers to head west

Through previous columns, it has been my intent to shine a spotlight on improvement opportunities, allowing me to contribute to the growth and continued success of our sport. As we pass the mid-point of the 2007 season, it is now appropriate to commend track owners, promoters and my fellow competitors for the great entertainment that they have provided to fans throughout the region.

Entering the 2007 season, many racers were skeptical about the influence that the new-look Weekend Warrior Series would have. With its reach limited to Flamboro and Delaware Speedways, and an incentive-based points fund from a relatively unknown sponsor, racers' concerns appeared to be justified. Through the opening weeks of the season very little was heard from the WWS camp and many had dismissed its impact on participating speedways.

However, there have been signs of life from the WWS in recent weeks and, without its efforts diluted across the province, race fans attending Flamboro and Delaware Speedways have benefited from its renewed focus.

Each year local speedways are faced with the challenge of maintaining the high car counts enjoyed at the beginning of the season. Typically, on-track accidents, vacations and other commitments prevent many race teams from competing at their local track each week. However, this has not been experienced at Flamboro this season, as a high number of visitors from Delaware have supported the regular contingent in the Late Model division.

Invading drivers are a welcome addition to the sport, allowing teams to enjoy the pursuit of competition without the pressure of racing at their local track every week. Visiting drivers add excitement to the weekly program by encouraging grudge matches with the local drivers. Promoting the heroes and villains that compete weekly at area speedways is essential to generating excitement where it matters most; in the grandstands.

Historically, many speedways have done a poor job promoting the individual competitors that participate at the track, instead choosing to focus their efforts on developing their own identity and position in the entertainment industry. Under the guidance of the WWS, however, Flamboro and Delaware have improved

their support of these individuals and feature drivers in radio spots and trackside interviews. Providing the fans with greater access to the personalities will allow them to get to know the drivers, develop favourites and become motivated to return to cheer for them each week.

Unfortunately, Delaware has not benefited from the WWS relationship to the same extent. Fewer Flamboro teams are heading west to the London-area speedway. In their defense it's difficult for Flamboro regulars to travel to Delaware for a Friday night race, battling heavy rush-hour traffic after a long day in the office. With a regular racing card at their home track the following evening, the stakes are high for competitors that are chasing Flamboro's championship.



Scott Gibson is urging Flamboro's Late Model racers to make the trek to Delaware Speedway now and then.

PHOTO BY DAVE FRANKS

Keeping race fans entertained, which includes a full field of race cars, is essential to the continued growth of our sport.

In an effort to encourage competitors to participate at each other's track, the tire rules have been relaxed for visiting drivers. In the past, racing beyond each team's home track required a large investment to purchase new tires, with each speedway using a different size and brand. For the remainder of 2007 both Flamboro and Delaware will allow visiting drivers to compete with used tires from their home track while racing at their tracks.

The WWS, Flamboro and Delaware Speedway should all be praised for their efforts to improve racing in Ontario. While the compromises to the rule book should encourage more Flamboro teams to head west, it will not offset the challenge that the Friday night schedule presents.

Beyond the renewed partnerships and rules that are beginning to move closer

together, the current point structure needs to be altered. To become a champion at any speedway throughout Ontario requires the dedication and commitment to compete in every event. With all races contributing to the season point standings, the risk of wrecking in a non-points race the night before a regular event is simply too great.

The formula for success is already laid out by the WWS, where only a limited number of events count toward the championship. Modifying this framework to allow each team to drop one or two poor finishes will provide the competitors with the freedom to explore other speedways without fear of being penalized in their own point standings.

Considerable momentum has been developed during the first half of 2007 and, as racers, it's our responsibility to ensure that this trend continues, both on and off the track. Keeping race fans entertained, which includes a full field of race cars, is essential to the continued growth of our sport. For this reason, all race teams should be encouraged to participate in at least one event beyond the familiarity of their home track.

Two events remain on the 2007 schedule that are circled on every team's calendar. Cayuga Speedway Park will host a Late Model invitational on Aug. 25 and Sept. 8, based on the Delaware rule book. With Late Model competitors from both tracks enjoying the weekend off, and no rush hour traffic to battle, expect a large number of competitors to continue the WWS grudge match between Flamboro and Delaware, as well as other speedways throughout Ontario. ♦