Showtime Speedway proves to be huge success

OLIVE HILL - As opening night for Showtime Speedway neared last spring, owner Kirk Wilburn worried about the fan support his new 3/8-mile track received.

Those worries were quickly erased on opening night and filled with worries about where to put everybody.

The large parking area was filled before the first car took the track. As more fans poured in, a bulldozer and grader started out a ridge near the pit area making parking as the cars and trucks flowed in behind them.

"We had people lined up for two miles both ways on (US) 60 plus a mile up the hill, two lanes," Wilburn said. "Opening night had to be the most exciting.

Since that opening night, an average of 3,000 fans have made their way to Thunder Mountain.

"I never expected the crowds."

Not included in the average was a huge crowd on Aug. 7 when the STARS late models ran. Vehicles filled the parking lots and were parked all the way up the hill from within 100 yards of the entrance gate.

"It's been way more than I expected in fans and cars," Wilburn said.

He also acknowledge Showtime has some great fans. "The hospitality of the fans has been great.

Many of the fans are from the local area, but Wilburn noted, "our crowds are coming from all around." Fans come regularly from within a 100-mile radius of the track. "I've had many calls from Lexington and Danville," he said. "There was a guy with A bomber from Illinois called."

Showtime has a unique situation in the local racing scene. Showtime is the only track in the local area which runs its regular shows on Friday night.

While the current season stills has a month or so to run, Wilburn is already making plans for bigger and better things in 1994.

"I'm looking to run three big shows next year," Wilburn said. One of those shows will have a $25,000 purse.

"I hope to run it run a regular mini-sprint show once a month," Wilburn added. He is also looking at two sprint races

"We'll being having an American Motorcycle Association race here next year," Wilburn noted.

Among other things under consideration is a Baja off-road truck race.

The track has been a boost to the local economy. The track employees three full-time and 37 part-time employees, according to Wilburn.

In addition, local restaurants and gas stations have seen a major increase in business, as have most local parts stores and other businesses related to racing.

Like many people that become involved in racing, Wilburn became interested by going to the races. "I became interested in building a track by just going to all the different tracks," Wilburn said. "I'd been going to Goddard (Fleming County Speedway) for four years."

Wilburn explained some of his high school buddies were driving at Goddard. "I went down to support them." He added, "I had money (as a sponsor) in a couple of cars."

After watching the other operations, Wilburn saw a potential in Carter County. "I just saw there was an opportunity and the people in this area were starving for entertainment."

While the crowds have been great and the car support fairly solid, Wilburn noted there have been a few problems along the way. "I'm learning this year," he acknowledged.

Still he said he is "tickled" with the overall operation and "I'm tickled with the cars."

A firm closing date for the racing season has not been set. Wilburn estimated the closing date will be in mid-September "depending on the weather."

Before the end of the campaign, Wilburn plans to have a special night. "Before the end of the year, I plan to have a $20 per car load night."

Wilburn sees even brighter things in the tracks future as more people from Carter County become involved in racing. "There's probably 10 bombers being built within 15 miles (of the track)," Wilburn said. "There's a man in Morehead wanting to buy a modified."

While late models are the top draw now, Wilburn thinks that may be switching. "I think modifieds are the car of the future."

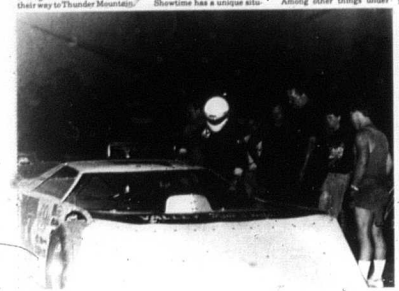
The difference in expense seems to be attracting more late model drivers to the modifieds.

A person can put a modified on the track for the cost of a competitive late model engine.

The modifieds, however, will not replace the bombers in number.

Wilburn expects a record field for a special $1,000 to win race in September. Don Hall Chevrolet in Ashland is sponsoring the event.

As the season winds down, Paul Steagall of Olive Hill leads the point race for bomber drivers. Randy Madden of West Portsmouth,. Ohio, is on top among the modifieds and Randy Boggs of Grayson is first in late models.



There is no driver more busy than Randy Boggs of Grayson. He has been running both modified and late model cars at Showtime and Portsmouth. In addition, he has driven two late models, including the Morehead Auto Parts #11, and two modified cars. (Above) He climbs into his late model #17 after completing a race in the Guns, Gold & Cash #73 modified.

Area Roundtrack Racing

This special section is a presentation of The Grayson Journal Enquirer, The Olive Hill Times, The Greenup County News - Times, The Carlisle Mercury and The Morehead News.

Stories and Pictures for the special section were done by Mason Branham, Heather Mathes and Jason Hart.

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Track lures Tackett behind wheel of racer

ASHLAND - After a 10-year absence, Tim Tackett returned to the driver's seat this season.

"I raced out at Checker Flag, that was the only place in raced," Tackett noted.

The former Olive Hill resident, the son of Glenmore and Vivian Tackett of Ben's Run road, had been racing semi-late models for about three years when he was involved in an accident at Checker Flag in 1983. His car went off the track and he suffered a broken back in the crash.

"They didn't have guard rails," Tackett said. "A week or two later, they put up guard rails."

While the accident took him off the track, it did not take away his interest in racing.

Tackett continued to go to races. "I just love it (racing), I always have."

In explaining his return to the sport, Tackett said, "I sat up in the stands and bounced and gouged as long as I could."

So before the start of the current racing season, Tackett purchased Marty Horton's 1992 modified, the original War Wagon with Horton's Outlaw Chassis. "He made me a good deal on it and Marty and Tony (Newman) have helped me keep it going," Tackett said

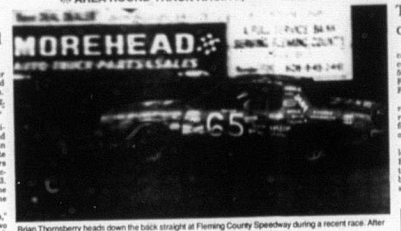
One might think his wife, Joy, would object to Tackett renewing his racing career.

"She likes racing awefully well," Tackett pointed out. "She supports me 110 percent. She comes to every show."

Tackett is alreay making plans for better things next season. "Hopefully, I'll have a new car, if everything turns out right," he said.

A maintenance superintendent for Pen Coal, Tackett is teased he works all week so he can race on the weekends.

His sponsors, L&E Electrical Exchange, Ganote Steel Sales, Harr's Garage and P&R Machine Service, do help with some of the expenses.



Brian Thornsberry heads down the back straight at Fleming County Speedway during a recent race. After watching races for years, Thornsberry became a driver less than a year ago.

Thornsberry unable to withstand challenge of driving race car

CARLISLE - The roar of the cars, the excitement of the crowd... No, it's not the Indy 500, it's a little closer to home in Fleming County, the home of Fleming County Raceway.

Brian Thornsburg, native and resident of Carlisle, watched the races at Goddard for years before deciding to build a stock car of his own.

"We used to go to the races a lot and I always wanted to do it. Building the car took a lot of time and approximately $1,200 but it was worth it," Thornsburg said.

In October of last year Thornsburg raced his car for the first time and in July he won his first race at Goddard.

"I race in what is called the Bomber Class. You first have to run in a qualifying race. My best time is 18.70," Thornsburg said.

Thornsburg is sponsored by Woody's Auto Repair, NAPA in Carlisle, Mitchell's Machine Shop and Avery's Body Shop.

"I really appreciate all their support, without sponsors you really can't afford to run or compete," Thornsburg said.

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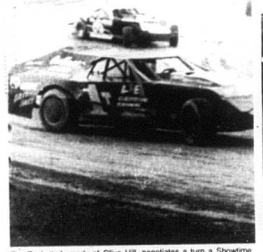

Tim Tackett, formerly of Olive Hill, negotiates a turn a Showtime Speedway during a recent race. Tackett returned to driving this season after a 10-year absence.

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