

Watson opens state's newest track at Mud Lick in Lewis County

MUD LICK: The state's newest race track opened Saturday at the track at Mud Lick in Lewis County near the town of Watson.

Mud Lick Valley Raceway is the state's 20th track, according to Scott Smith, publisher of Kentucky Racing News.

The 3/8-mile, high-banked, clay track is located on the farm of Kenneth and Janet Watson.

In explaining his decision to build the track, Watson joked, "I'm going to leave my track for the next three or four years. On a more serious note, Watson said, "I had a bunch of race car drivers come to the area and ask me to build a track. He added, "They claim at some of the tracks there is favoritism."

The decision to build a track was not made quickly. After much thought "we started construction" about last July, Watson said.

The area was heavily wooded before construction began. "We changed hollows and creeks," Watson explained.

Watson used his own small bulldozer but had to hire most of the work done. "I hired Steve Allen of Goddard," Watson said. According to Watson, Allen spent 54 hours in preparing the track. He gave me a break on the cost," Watson added.

As the construction process moved into the current racing season, Watson began to push harder to get the track open. "We worked every night until we couldn't see," he remarked. All the opening needed, Watson admitted to being very nervous. "Everybody kept encouraging me to have a little faith," Watson said. "I was so nervous until three days ago," he added.

Watson links his only direct involvement with racing as being a car owner more than 20 years ago. He said he owned a kumbar, but did not drive it himself.

Shirley and Pat Taylor have been assisting the Watsons with the preparation of the track and are taking care of the scoring

and public affairs. "Pat and Shirley built the track at Goddard (Washington County Raceway)," Watson noted.

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Watson plans to run six classes of cars, late models, sprint, super street, Street Stock and A and B Bomber. For those bringing cars, Watson said, "We're trying not to turn anybody away. We'll try to find some place for them."

Mud Lick is beginning with races on Saturday. "We're going to run on Saturday nights until the weather cools off," Watson remarked. As cooler weather arrives, Watson expects to be on Sunday afternoon racing.

Watson noted he did not want to conflict with other tracks. "I like to go to church myself when I can,"

he said. Watson is already looking forward to next season. "I plan to make improvements before next year," he said. Among those improvements, Watson said, "I want to make a permanent rest room facility."

"I enjoy people," Watson explained. "That became obvious on the opening night when we were talking with fans and drivers or dropping candy from the press box for the children in attendance. Watson was busy enjoying himself and the people around him.

Looking at the track's long-range future, Watson once again joked, "You've heard of the guy that's in 10 foot of water and is five feet tall."

Watson stated Checker Flag Raceway one weekend and that started his racing career. "We knocked the windows out of a car and I drove a hauler the next weekend," Horton said. Horton soon moved up to late models and finally to modifieds last year.

"Late model racing got to be competitive," Horton explained. He found plenty of competition in modifieds. Approximately 50 drivers runner modifieds on a regular basis in the area. Nearly every race night there will be 20 or more in the pits. Portsmouth is averaging nearly double that number.

In preparation for the move to modifieds, Horton needed a car. "Tony Newman and Mark Pusley designed a modified," Horton said. That was not only the beginning of Horton's career as a modified driver, it was also the start of the Outlaw Chassis. "We built four or five (chassis) that winter (1991-92)," Horton explained.

While there are dozens of chassis drivers may select for their cars, the Outlaw has quickly become the chassis of choice in the local area. Nearly 30 cars with Outlaw

chassis are seen regularly on local tracks. The success of Horton and other Outlaw drivers has resulted in a spread of the chassis to other areas.

"We've got a complete car ordered for Florida," Horton noted. Less than two years on the market, there appears to be an almost unlimited future for the Outlaw.

"Car-31 is on the jig," Horton pointed out, "and we've five cars behind."

Since the racing season is winding down, that comes as a bit of a surprise to Horton. "You'd never think anybody would order a car now," Horton said. "We don't know what to expect this winter."

Gary DeWitt from Indiana recently joined Horton's chassis business on KY's, about 1.34 miles from the intersection with US 60. "He's built chassis in Indiana for years, that's all he's done," Horton said.

Jeremy Rucker rounds out Horton's racing and chassis team. "We do all the chassis work and build the (driver's) cage," Horton said. However, this is not the end of the car building offered by Outlaw.

"It takes about a week on the chassis. It depends on them (the buyers) from there on," Horton explained. According to Horton, he and the Outlaw crew take their time building the chassis and cars. "We want the quality to be there, and street stocks," Horton said.

"We want to be proud of the chassis wherever we see them," Horton and other Outlaw drivers have been having success this season. Horton is first in points at Portsmouth Raceway Park and second at Shobeton Speedway.

"We've got a car leading in UMP points and another leading in Street Stocks," Horton said. "With the lead at Portsmouth, Horton is closing in on one of his personal goals."

"Our main objective this year was to win the points at Portsmouth," he noted. "It's the most competitive track around."

While most of the attention at Outlaw has been on building modified cars, the crew has also built a street stock chassis. Mike Steele of Castletown raced the first chassis. Even though he got on the track almost two months late, Steele is already a three-time feature winner at Portsmouth and graded feature at Shobeton last month.

The chassis business has also opened off still another business, racing parts. "We carry any kind of parts for late model, modified, and street stocks," Horton said.

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Chassis business booms in shops of Ashland driver

ASHLAND: A visit to a local race track 12 years ago provided the spark which has turned out a racing career and a thriving business for Marty Horton.

Horton visited Checker Flag Raceway one weekend and that started his racing career. "We knocked the windows out of a car and I drove a hauler the next weekend," Horton said. Horton soon moved up to late models and finally to modifieds last year.

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A new bomber being given away taken for a drive at Mud Lick Valley Raceway. The new 3/8-mile track opened the first Saturday in August on KY 344 at Lewis County. The car is going to be given away before the end of the season and only needs a number before hitting the track.

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Mark Pusley, left, and Tony Newman work on an Outlaw Chassis at Marty Horton's Shop on KY 5 near Ashland. The chassis was developed for Horton's first modified car, but has also become the chassis of choice among local modified drivers.

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