



By Randy Spencer / OntarioOval.com – This spring will mark the 20th anniversary of the final season of stock car racing in Canada's southernmost city of Windsor. It's been 20 years since the thunder of cars on the old Highway 2 oval have been heard, but several websites are helping to keep the memories alive.

Racing in Windsor first started back in 1948 and that original track closed in 1952. Dayus Speedway followed and ran from 1951-1958. Bluebird Raceway operated from 1959 until it closed in 1962. The final track opened to go karts in 1960 and was known as Pratt Raceway. The following year the go kart track was changed to a 1/4 mile flat dirt track and the name of the track was changed to Checker Flag Raceway. Vintage cars from the 30's and 40's raced under sanction of the Western Ontario Stock Car Racing Association. In the early days a few of the stars included, Stan "The Man" Earish, Joe Holden and "Speedy" Jack Monaghan. In 1966, the track expanded to 1/3 mile banked oval and 1,000 new seats were added. Three years later the track grew once again, this time to a 3/8 mile oval and even more seating was added.

1974 brought a big change to racing in Windsor. The name of the track was changed to the Checker Flag International Raceway to help attract more American drivers and to better reflect the fact that NASCAR was now the new sanctioning body over the track. Some of the biggest players in racing at the time in Canada became major sponsors at the track. Export 'A' and Molson Breweries came on

HISTORY OF CHECKER FLAG RACEWAY

by George Oldnall
submitted by
Mickey Moulder

For over four decades, Checker Flag Raceway, located on the east side of the Windsor city limits, proved to be one of the areas most popular summer attractions. Originally the facility started out as a go-kart race track, and was known as Pratt Raceway. The karts competed on a tiny road course that first season. In 1961 a group of drivers formed the Western Ontario Stock Car Racing Association. Many of the competitors competed at Tilbury Speedway, Dayus Raceway and the Bluebird Raceway. With the demise of these tracks, the club was formed and Checker Flag Raceway was then constructed.

The quarter-mile high-banked dirt facility featured new grandstands, lighting and a new public announcing (P.A.) system. The original owners of the speedway were Francis Pratt, Herman Modlinsky and Dennis Fauteux. Back in the early 1960's the racing featured the then-popular 1932 to 1934 coupes and coaches body styles. There was an abundance of race cars, so many race cars in fact, that a qualifying would split the cars into two classes. The "A" and "B" classes would feature the fastest qualifiers in the "A" feature and the slower cars going into the "B" main event.

The stars of the early 1960's showcased names such as Stan Earish, John Banks, Jim

Vandelinder, Don Dame, Harry Bolton and Jack Monaghan just to name a few. The 1967 season saw a major change at the track. The track itself was increased in size to a larger one-third mile layout and the new look Semi-Late Model Division was introduced to the fans. The cars like 1957 Chevys and 1957 Fords seemed to be the trend to go faster in that period and lap speeds increased with the big V8 powered late models. The ever popular coupes were retained however, and competed in the new Sportsman Coupe division.

The track was packed each weekend as the competitors entertained throngs of racing fans from both sides of the border. Racing continued on the dirt right up until the 1973 racing season. At the start of the 1974 racing season the track was paved to a three-eighths of a mile oval with 18 degree banking in the turns. Added seating, improved lighting and track facilities greeted the fans for the 1974 opening day. NASCAR - Canada was the new sanctioning body and the cars changed drastically with the popular Camaros, Firebirds, Mustangs and Chevelle body styles being raced.

The elusive Export "A" Trophy Series came to Checker Flag bringing names like Jerry Makara, Joe Ruttman, Earl Ross, Norm Lelliot and Harold Brown etc. Throughout the late 1970's and right up through the 1980's, many competitors from both the U.S. and Canada would compete at Checker Flag. Legendary racers such as Junior Hanley, "Daytona" Don Biederman, Joy Fair, Danny

Byrd, Ed Howe and Mark Malcuit all would appear over the years in long distance special events. Many of the competitors would also move on to the big-time series. Earl Ross became a regular in the NASCAR Winston Cup Series and became the first driver from Canada to win a Cup event. He did this by winning the 1974 Old Dominion 500 at the Martinsville (Virginia) Speedway. And Joe Ruttman, Jerry Churchill and John Banks would also go on to compete in the NASCAR, U.S.A.C., and A.R.C.A Series in the U.S.

During the late 1970's and early 1980's the low cost Factory Stock and then Street Stock division were introduced to the fans. These divisions allowed competitors a chance to compete without the high-costs of the Late Model division. These races turned out to be the action divisions at the track with plenty of thrills and spills. Many new drivers showed up in the Stocker division such as Russel Wood, Len Couvillion, Al Delisle, Mark Desjardins and Jim Lucier, just to name a few. In the Late Model Division drivers like Don Mallat, Jack Monaghan, Bob Merrifield and Rusty Banks etc., would thrill the fans right up until the end of the 1980's.

In the early 1990's the end of racing, as we knew it, here in the Windsor area was beginning to be felt. The Late Models and the New Modified Divisions would be combined into one division. Unfortunately, the 1992 season would mark the end of racing at Checker Flag Raceway. The property

would be sold and what was once a mecca for motorsports in the Windsor area would become a real estate housing development. Throughout the years Checker Flag Raceway featured all sorts of motorsports events. The popular figure 8 racing, demolition derbies, roll-a-thons, and the crowd pleasing Hi-Ho Hot Dog Derby all became fan favourites at the speedway. Special events such as the open-wheel midgets, tractor-pulls and the Canadian Hell Drivers thrill show would never fail to electrify the crowd. Everyone loved the variety.

The track is now history, but the sights and sounds of the roaring engines, burning rubber, the large grandstand crowds and the aroma of the concession stands will live on in our hearts and minds forever.

A special thanks to all the track owners that promoted and brought stock car racing to us each week. Francis Pratt, Herman Modlinsky, Dennis and Gary Fauteux, John Fahringer, Mark Kable, Ed Soullierre, Jack Monaghan, Norm Hallowick and track promoter Bob Robinson. A special thank you also to all the race fans, competitors, track officials and crew members who supported the many styles of racing at Checker Flag site for over 40 years. As a special recognition of the thrills and spills that enlivened race fans in Canada South, the Canadian Transportation Museum in Essex Ontario will commemorate a new Checker Flag Raceway display for the 2008 season. See www.ctmnhv.com.



1974 brought a big change to racing in Windsor. The name of the track was changed to the Checker Flag International Raceway to help attract more American drivers and to better reflect the fact that NASCAR was now the new sanctioning body over the track. Some of the biggest players in racing at the time in Canada became major sponsors at the track. Export 'A' and Molson Breweries came on board and the track was completely revamped. The track was paved, new cement walls were added with new lighting and fencing also installed. John Fahringer headed a group of new owners that included Jack Monaghan. Fahringer started as a spectator, but quickly moved to car owner, driver and President of the the Western Ontario Stock Car Racing Association. Big name drivers regularly appeared like Jack Monaghan, Jerry Makara, Joy Fair, Jr. Hanley, Earl Ross, Norm Lelliott and Joe Ruttman, who later raced in NASCAR, won a 100 lap invitational in '74.

As racing continued through the 70's and 80's fans were entertained by some of the finest racing around. Don Mallat, Len Couvillon, Bob Merrifield, Jr. Hanley and Jack Monaghan were among the fans. Big invitational events brought the fans out as well as big sponsors and big paydays for the racers. In 1986 the Coca Cola 100 for Super Late Models had a top prize of \$1,200 to the winner. That would be well over \$2,400 today. Amazing how the purses have been shrinking ever since. Entering the 90's, attendance at the track was starting to dwindle and the land was worth more money not being run as a race track. Issues on the track as well as with surrounding home owners concerned by the noise seemed to put the final nail in the coffin of racing in Windsor. As I mentioned there are some very interesting, informative and great historical websites with thousands of pictures devoted to the history of racing in Windsor. Please visit them:

Checker Flag Speedway

Windsor, ON

Years in Operation: 1961-1992

Name History:

Checker Flag Raceway (1961-1973)

Checker Flag International Speedway (1974-1983)

Checker Flag Motor Speedway (1984-?)

Windsor Speedway (1992)

Track Configurations:

1/4 mile dirt oval (1961-1966)

1/3 mile dirt oval (1966-68)

3/8 mile dirt oval (1969-1973)

3/8 mile paved oval (1974-1992)

Status

Closed

Photos:

Photos will appear in a new window

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Notes:

- Originally started out as a go-kart track, known as Pratt Raceway
- The land and go-kart track was owned by Francis Pratt who wanted to open a stock car track instead
- He found two partners - Herman Modlinsky and Dennis Fauteaux
- 1961 - a group of drivers formed the Western Ontario Stock Car Racing Association
- most of the drivers had competed at Tilbury, Dayus, Bluebird
- In the early years the cars were æ30s coupes and coaches
- The track shut down for a week in late May of 1966 to be reconfigured as a 1/3 mile
- Herman Modlinsky died in 1966 and Francis Pratt sold his share to Dennis Fateaux's sons Gary and Ron
- 1967 ù Semi-Late Models were introduced: Æ57 Chevs and Fords
- 1967- Coupes became the Sportsman class
- Bought by Jack Monahan, John Fahringer and Mark Cable in February of 1974
- 1974 ù NASCAR Canada was the sanction, Camaros and Firebirds were common
- Tom Hannan was the promoter in 1977-79
- Super Late Models were the top division until 1984
- Sold to Bob Robinson (who had been promoter) in 1983
- 1984 Street Stocks became Late Model Sportsman and Thunder and Thumpers were added
- 1985 added the Canadian National Stock Car class ù Monte Carlos, Regals, Thunderbirds
- By 1987 City of Windsor had grown and was getting close to the track. Large homes were right next door
- Track closed at the end of the 1992 season to become a subdivision

Other Information

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[Program Covers](#)



Jack "Speedy" Monaghan



23 Larry LaMay

78 Don Mallat

40 Jim Aldrich

03 Jack Monaghan





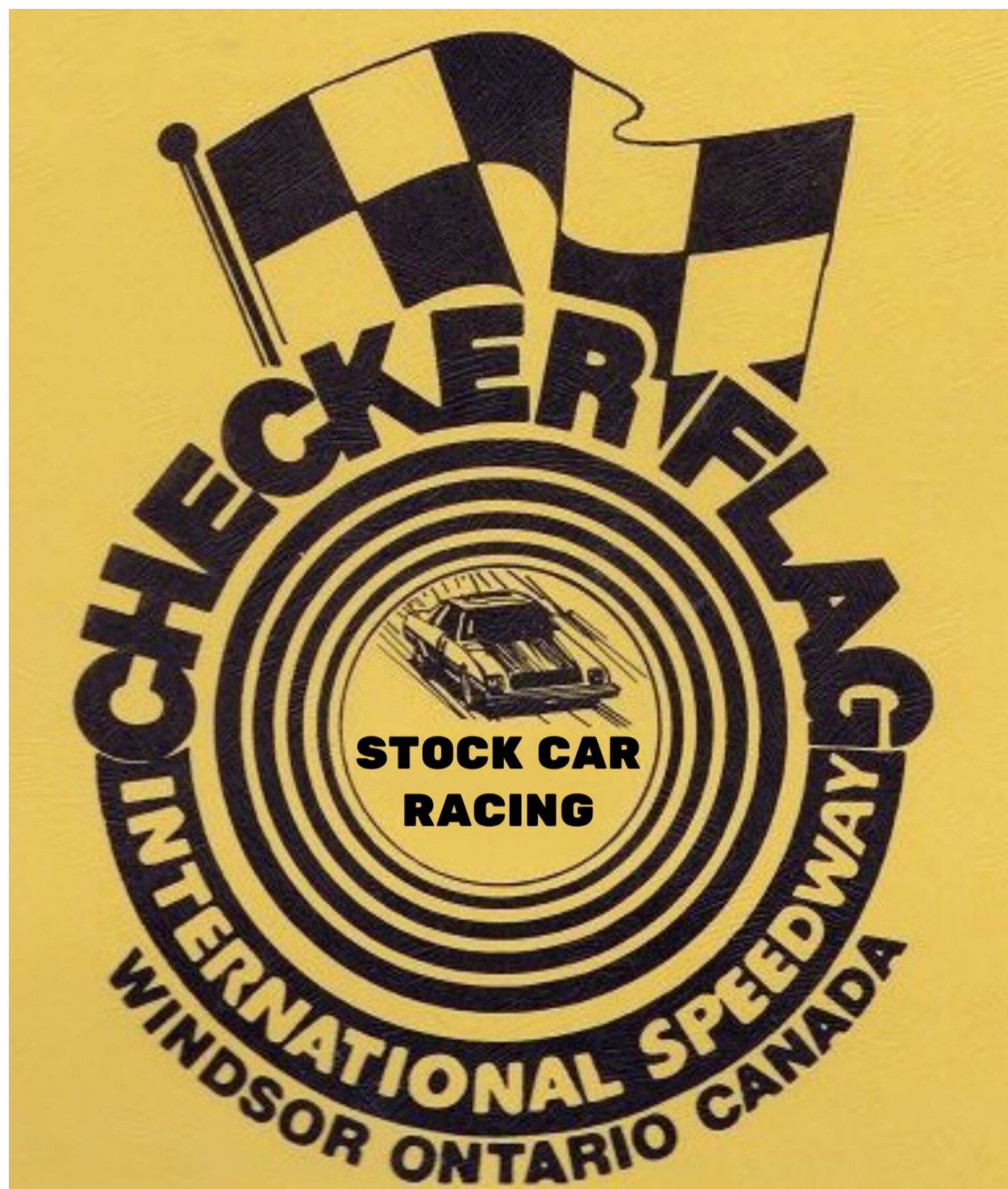


Previous photo

78 Don Mallat

40 Jim Aldrich

03 Jack Monaghan |





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