

Rookie driver has quick learning curve for dirt track ovals

Story and Photos by Terry Spradley

Night has fallen, most are settled into an easy chair watching the day's events recounted by the nightly news anchors, many are headed off to bed. In a garage at the far end of Sapphire Lane, the high voltage hum of an electric welder is accompanied by a pop and a flash of light as an arc is struck.

Rookie racer Brian Fink, Lindsborg, is making some late night repairs and improvements in preparation for a Friday night race in Junction City.

With friends like veteran racers, Curtis Barnes, Lindsborg and Corey Lagroon, Salina, - IMCA Modified driver - Fink is no stranger to the ways of the oval, but this year he is seeing it with a different perspective.

"I helped one of my best friends, Corey Lagroon, build his car. We started together," Fink said. "In our first year, we won the Super Stock class. Last year, actually the past couple of years I told him, you know I want to buy me a car. He kept giving me a bad time. This car came up for sale, I bought it, he thought I was crazy. It has just been a barrel of fun."

Corey and his dad Bruce, both experienced circle burners, have been a lot of help to Fink in his new role as a hobby stock driver. "I've learned a lot from both of them. I wanted to start with somebody that was good."

Fink may be a rookie behind the wheel, but he does have a history with the local ovals. Besides spending time in Lagroon's pits, he is also familiar with the sport from the sponsor's perspective. Fink is a partner and General Sales Manager at Midway Motors in McPherson. The Buick, Pontiac, Cadillac, GMC dealer's logo resides on several in the field at Salina Speedway, including Lagroon and several Lindsborg cars.

Fink has another connection to the roundy rounds. His father, Leonard Fink, raced '56 Chevy back in the old days around Stockton and some of the western ovals. His father's philosophy was to make it fun, and "try to make enough money you could afford to go back the next week." His father died in a non-race related car accident in 1999. "Right after that, 99, is about when I started getting into racing," Fink said.

His mother, Wanda Fink, Kensington, is one of his current fans, and supporters along with his wife Christy, and daughters Michaela, 14, and Brianna, 8. Brianna is a third grader, sister Michaela will be an active freshman participating in softball, and cheerleader for the Smoky Valley Vikings. Christy works in the business offices of the Salina Journal.

Fink is originally from Kensington, KS. He graduated high school in Kensington and completed North Central Kansas Area Vocational Technical College courses for automotive technician. He moved to Salina in 1989, and built the family's new home at Emerald Lake in 2003.

Fink has an obvious zest for the sport, but still enjoys the camaraderie and adventures. He helps and gets help from many of his fellow racers.

Fink does not lay claim to an established 'pit crew'. "If a guy wants to come out and help that's great." Fink has many friends in the 'business'. "We all help each other out. Saturday night when I flatted, Jeff Hilt changed



Constant maintenance and engine tinkering is required to keep pace in the season points races at the Salina Speedway. Brian Fink is shown above in his garage preparing his car for the weekend races ahead.

my tire," Fink said. "BJ Dauer's crew always carries a tire for me. We're just out to have fun. That's what the sport is all about."

Fun and the fans - Fink said, "We wouldn't do it without them. People go out there, early as they can and start sitting their seats up every week. That's cool to look up and say, man, that guy's cheering for me!"

Fink admires the dedication and accomplishments of the top point contenders. Fink said, "I admire BJ (Dauer). I admire his family, everybody is devoted to that. I just feel honored and privileged I get to race with a national points champion contender. That is the stuff you will look back on."

Fink put his father's philosophy of 'making enough to keep going back' to good use. His yellow 1984 Oldsmobile is covered with sponsor logos, and intricate graphics.

Koehn's Body Shop, McPherson gives the car its bright yellow base paint, while Wildcat Motors Signs & Graphics, Junction City, and Solo Society car club president, Neil Dykes, spice it up with some nice graphics. A large ratfink with the initials 'BF', done by Dykes is centered on the trunk lid. Mid-Kansas Tool Repair, Salina, Somewhere Bar & Grill, Tescott, 99.9 KSKG, Mike Montey Trucking all of Salina, McPherson businesses FastLane Auto Recycling, and City Auto Upholstery are just a few of the many logos and sponsors covering the Cutlass. A blown engine on the first 'fun-day' practice session of the season also got A-1 Motorsports, McPherson and Performance Plus of Junction City on the list of sponsors, as they were instrumental in getting Fink back on the track for the start of the season.

While Fink admires the top runners in his class and others, he may also be admired for his quick start and relative success so far. Not quite halfway through his first season he is posting some admirable finishes at Salina and is currently fifteenth in the points standings.

Follow-up: The late night shop time paid off for Brian Fink in Friday night's race at Junction City. With a small field of hobby stock entrants, he was moved up to compete with the more powerful super stockers. Fink claimed his first victory from the unsuspecting field. Saturday night at Salina Speedway, he broke down during his heat race. Sometimes you're the windshield, sometimes you're the bug. With his relaxed style and quick learning curve, chances are Fink will more often than not be the windshield.

Watch Fink and all the area drivers mix it up for your enjoyment at Salina Speedway Saturday nights through September. Photos of recent races may be viewed on line at www.tslegends.com.

Have a favorite area driver you would like to see featured in 'From the driver's seat?'. E-mail your suggestions to tsprad@tslegends.com.



Brian Fink's #12 car duels Bobby Fiest in the #57 car at a recent race at the Salina Speedway. Fink is currently ranked 15th in the Hobby Stock standings and trails Fiest (12th) by only 19 points.

K-State/McPherson County Extension Service News and Notes for the week

By Dale Ladd
County Extension Agent,
Wildflower Tour Near Maxwell

If you have an interest in the natural beauty of flowers in a prairie setting, you'll want to come to our annual "Native Prairie Wildflower Tour" to be held Monday, June 27, on the south side of Maxwell Game Preserve starting at 7:00 p.m. Rain will postpone the tour to Tuesday evening. No reservations are necessary, and everyone is invited.

Susan Reimer will be hosting the tour in her scenic native prairie pasture 5 miles north of Canton and then ¾ mile west on Pioneer Road. Brad Guhr, from the Dyck Arboretum in Hesston, will be our identification guide.

Along with enjoying the beauty of the native prairie, we will also be briefly discussing some of the management practices which enhance the health and productivity of native grasslands.

For more information about the tour, call the Extension office at (620) 241-1523, or Susan at 245-9055.

Bad Year for Mosquitoes

This year's mosquito monitoring indicates the species that overwintered as eggs in Kansas are already having a very good year. The species that overwintered as adults - including the West Nile virus-carrying Culex mosquitoes - are rapidly expanding in numbers.

"This could be bad news by July unless people start eliminating mosquito breeding sites now," said Ludek Zurek, part of the state's official mosquito-watching team and the medical/veterinary entomologist for Kansas State Research and Extension.

Eliminating sites around home and office is in each person's best interest, Zurek added. Culex species rarely fly far from where they're born. And the adult females must bite and draw blood to be able to lay eggs - up to 300 eggs every few days for each one of the female's several-week life span.

The mosquito larvae don't like fresh or running water, he said. But they'll lay eggs almost anywhere water can stand long enough to become stagnant. This includes such natural collectors as ditches, low spots and decaying tree stumps. It includes clogged gutters, birdbaths, flower pot saucers, boat and pool covers, many toys, outdoor pet bowls, buckets and other containers, wheelbarrows, livestock tanks, and unused tires.

"You can't store an uncut, unpunctured tire outdoors without its collecting water," the entomologist said. "That's a particular problem on Kansas farms, where old tire disposal can be complicated and tire storage isn't regulated."

When Kansans can't fill in or eliminate a water holder, Zurek said,

other approaches may help.

- Drain or empty the water once a week. In dog bowls, wading pools and birdbaths, for example, a once-a-week cleaning will ensure egg-stage mosquitoes never have time to reach maturity.

- Irrigate lawns and gardens carefully. Where soils have high clay content, for example, irrigating slowly or irrigating several times lightly will allow the clay to absorb the water, rather than cause puddles and runoff.

- Stock livestock tanks, ornamental ponds and the like with mosquito larvae-eating fish, such as goldfish.

- Remove in-water plants from the edges of garden ponds to allow fish access to the larvae living and developing there.

- Using a retail product to control mosquito larvae will be more

effective and less costly than trying to control the flying adults, Zurek said.

"Before considering a larvicide, however, make sure mosquito larvae are actually present. Use a white container attached to a pole to scoop up a water sample. In that kind of container, the wigglers (larvae) and the older tumblers (pupae) are easy to spot," he said.

Zurek's publication on "Pests That Affect Human Health: Mosquitoes and West Nile Virus" includes complete listings of the available products and their best uses, as well as in-depth information about virus-carrying mosquitoes. It is available at K-State Research and Extension county offices and on the World Wide Web at <http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/ENTML2/MF2571.pdf>.

Lindsborg driver, Mark Abell wins IMCA Modifieds race

June 18, 2005 results
IMCA MODIFIEDS

A feature - 1. Mark Abell; 2. Josh Loveless; 3. Squirt Betzner. First Qualifying feature - 1. Roger Peck; 2. Gary Clements; 3. Scott Phillips. Second Qualifying feature - 1. A.J. Scott; 2. Dustin Huehl; 3. Corey Lagroon. Heat winners - Betzner, Jeff Olson, Brian Knoell, Loveless.

SUPER STOCK

A feature - 1. Troy Davis; 2. Warren Huffman; 3. Jeff Hilt. Heat

winners - Huffman, Hilt.
IMCA HOBBY STOCK

A feature - 1. Tony Slothower; 2. David Weber; 3. John Berry. Heat winners - Daren Dolton, Tim Schmidt, Jason Caldwell.

360 MODIFIED

A feature - 1. Craig Colgin; 2. Gary Rohloff, Jr.; 3. Jeff Welsh. Heat winners - Rod Klinkner, Ken Berry.

MINI STOCK

A feature - 1. Marty Miller; 2. Doug Baccus; 3. Jeanie Rodie. Heat winners - Miller, Stacey Fuller.

Salina Speedway Points Standings continue to narrow

2005 Point Standings
after 6-18-05

IMCA Modifieds

1. Gary Clements, Minneapolis 282; 2. A.J. Scott, Roxbury 278; 3. Corey Lagroon, Salina 277; 4. Brian Knoell, Falun 271; 5. Steven Burch, Junction City 263; 6. Danny Morrison Jr., Minneapolis 262; 7. Ron Dauer, Lindsborg 258; 8. Rick Dauer, Lindsborg 245; 9. Scott Phillips, Salina 244; 10. Josh Loveless, Salina 239; 11. Loren Dauer, Lindsborg 233; 12. Terry Malm, Lindsborg 157.

Super Stock

1. Jeff Hilt, Salina 331; 2. Bobby Arnold, Salina 322; 3. Tom Hilt, Lindsborg 320; 4. Ryan Riarden, Salina 315; 5. Warren Huffman, Salina 314; 6. (tie) Brent Fielder, Chapman and John McCarrrell, Chapman 293; 8. Kelly Dunn, Salina 292; 9. Shannon Johnson, Salina 289; 10. Troy Davis, Salina 288; 13. Curtis Barnes, Lindsborg 159; 20 Travis Hoppes, McPherson 106.

360 Modifieds

1. Gary Rohloff, Jr., Salina 295; 2. Craig Colgin, Canton 294; 3. G.W. Fuller, Tescott 283; 4. (tie) Jeff Welsh, Wisley and Jason Lucas, Manhattan

265; 6. Ken Berry, Hutchinson 202; 7. Thelma Woerz, Wichita 195; 8. Rod Klinkner, Manhattan 172; 9. John Martin, Minneapolis 136; 10. Dace Pearce, Sterling 130.

IMCA Hobby Stock

1. Rick Slothower, Gypsum 340; 2. Tony Slothower, Salina 323; 3. John Berry, Salina 299; 4. Jason Caldwell, Salina 287; 5. Bill Clanton, Salina 284; 6. (tie) Tim Schmidt, McPherson and David Weber, Delphos 283; 8. B.J. Dauer, Marquette 268; 9. (tie) Russ Cossell, Tescott and Tim McBurney, Salina 248; 15. Brian Fink, Lindsborg 205.

Mini Stock

1. (tie) Stacey Fuller, Tescott and Jeanie Rodie, Hoisington 289; 3. Anthony Engling, Salina 287; 4. Marty Miller, Bennington 284; 5. Daryl Brunsell, Lindsborg 275; 6. (tie) Jeff Dame, Salina and Andrew Engling, Natoma 260; 8. Marion Woody, Tescott 257; 9. Doug Baccus, Ada 256; 10. Shawn James, Solomon 254; 13. Sean Hedberg, Lindsborg 154; 15. Mitch Rupert, Lindsborg 139; 17. Jerry Hedberg, Lindsborg 113; 18. Jeremy Hedberg, Lindsborg 93.

Lindsborg Chamber receives letter of thanks from Biking Across Kansas Director

Dear Chamber of Commerce,

Wow!!! On behalf of the Biking Across Kansas 2005 Planning Committee, I want to thank you for making our overnight stop in Lindsborg this year a most enjoyable and memorable experience. We were set back by the camaraderie and organization of the Lindsborg community. We felt most welcome and we were pleased with the positive comments we overheard from this year's BAK participants during our overnight stay.

All of the food was just absolutely wonderful and the entertainment provided by the Lindsborg Swedish Dancers was also a highlight!

Please extend our warmest thanks and utmost gratitude to those involved with the preparation for our visit to Lindsborg.

We will not hesitate to ask Lindsborg to be a Host City for Biking Across Kansas in the future.

Additionally, it is our hope your experience with the Biking Across Kansas group was a positive one as well.

In the meantime, keep in touch, be safe, and know that our paths will cross again. I truly enjoyed working with you.

Very sincerely yours,

Sherry McKee
Biking Across Kansas

Missing a cat?

A small adult female black shorthair cat, wearing a pink flea collar, has been found near Seasons of the Fox. Her owner is being sought. Would the owner or anyone who has information about such a cat call Eric or Kathi at (785) 227-3399?

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FACT:
The Salina Speedway track is a 3/8-mile, high-banked dirt track.

**IMCA Modified,
IMCA Super Stocks
IMCA Hobby Stocks,
Mini Stocks & 360 Modified**

JUNE 23rd

Gates open at 5:30 p.m. • Races start at 7:30 p.m.

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