**Weather Clears, Allowing for Great Night of Racing**

After several weeks off from racing, the Upper Peninsula International Raceway got its season back under way Saturday night with the 5th Annual Blast from the Past and 3rd Annual Art Richer Memorial Race. As always for the Blast from the Past the Milwaukee Vintage Modfieds made the trek to the Escanaba short track. The weather, looking threatening up until the day of the racing, miraculously cleared up, allowing the sun to shine bright over the racetrack. The night began with a special tribute to Dale Peterson, who passed away just a short few weeks ago. Workers, volunteers, and racers alike came to the edge of the track to salute Dale’s blue number 17 modified as son Kody drove it in the Parade of flag. The parade of flags was followed by a silent lap, and then a few hot laps from the blFue 17. But as Dale would have wanted it, racing got underway.

The night’s action began with the Riverside Auto Junior Micro Sprints. The five lap heat went lean, mean, and green the whole way. Haden Frazer got out to the early lead, but Avry Corrigan muscled his way passed to take the lead, and the win. Frazer followed Corrigan in second, with Joey Stankowicz in third.

Next out onto the track were the Sportsmen Micro Sprints for two heats at ten laps each. Heat number one went to Gabriel Zellner, who continues his dominance in the 2015 UPIR Season. Second place was Dale Hosking, with Jesse Liss coming in third. Heat number two rolled out onto the track, with Kyle Getchell leading flag to flag to take the win. Logan Getzloff passed 2014 Track Champion Kristy Peterson in the closing stages of the race to take second. Peterson would hold on to third.

After the Sportsmen finished up their heats, it was time for the 600 Micro Sprints to run two heats. Coming from the back of the pack to the lead, Jeff Ives won the first 600 Micro Sprint Heat. Second place would go to Scott Ruleau, with Bart Kostreva third. Heat number two went to 2014 UPIR Track Champion Josh Bartel, who led all ten laps. Second place was claimed by Christian Groleau, with Matt Peterson rounding out the podium in third.

Two exhibition races were run by the Vintage Modifieds next, much to the pleasure of the crowd. Just like the good old days, the drivers wheeled the Mods around the dirt oval, making the dust fly, like it was 1975! After each race, the crowd roared with applause for the cars and drivers.

From the past, to the present, the UPIR Modifieds came out next for two heats. After ten laps, Matt Valiquette won the first heat. Second place went to Pat Richer, and third went to Chuck Carmin. The second heat would be led to the green flag by Cody Peterson in his dad’s blue 17. However, going into the first turn, the rear end of Peterson’s car was dynamited by the number 8 of Darrell Gagnon. Peterson exited the track, but as soon as he stopped in his pit stall, a crowd of fellow racers gathered round, and began work on the blue number 17. Once the race was restarted it would be Fran Berube who would lead all the laps and take the win. Second went to Darrell Gagnon, and third to Chris Lassila.

Following the Modifieds onto the track were the Street Stocks, who also would run two heat races. After an early race smash-up with Matt Adams, Ron Jenshak would take the checkered flag in heat on, bent nose and all. Second was taken by Ron Borchert, and third by Rob Willis, who avoided a spinning Rick Gagnon in turn four on the final lap. The second heat race was won by Glenn Nance, with Paul Wagner and Jon Pepin second and third respectively. Heat two saw some of the best racing in recent memory in the Street Stock division, with two and three wide battling lap after lap, and passing in almost every corner of every lap.

Rounding up the heat racing for the night were the Bink’s Coca Cola Sport Fours. Justin Lauscher, 2014 UPIR Track Champion, returned to racing at UPIR with the same form he left with last year, winning the opening heat. Randy DeGrave tried and tried, but was unable to pass, and settled for the second position. Third went to Tyler Corwin, who is back to racing after a horrendous airborne crash three weeks ago at UPIR. Heat two was won by Hattie Bourdeau. Leaving the rest of the field in the dust, she led all the laps start to finish. Second place went to Dylan Lanaville, with third place going to Matt Maki. The final heat of the night was taken by Bryon Stemick, yet another driver to lead every lap. Second went to Robert Bridges, with Dan Mathieson third.

Intermission included the usual drawings for the boys and girls bikes. Along with that, however, a special segment of the intermission was given to the legends drivers that came out for the night. All of the legends were introduced in front of the grandstand, allowing fans to show them their appreciation with loud applause and cheering with every name mentioned.

The first feature out onto the track after intermission was the Riverside Auto Junior Micro Sprint Feature. A battle between Haden Frazer and Avry Corrigan lasted several laps before Frazer spun out. Corrigan went on to win. Second place was a dead heat between Brent Labre and Joey Stankowicz. Coming out of turn four the two slammed into each other, launching both cars sideways. Both drivers showed their talent, saving the racecars, and not crashing. Stankowicz was able to edge out Labre at the line, taking the second place. Labre finished in third, missing second by mere inches.

Up next were the Sportsmen Micro Sprints for their feature race. Gabriel Zellner stepped out and checked out from the rest of the field, and looked to have the race in his hands, then the car suddenly stopped on track. Zellner was out with Mechanical issues. Another Zellner moved into the lead in the form of Jacob Zellner. On the restart, Jacob blasted out to a huge lead, then like brother Gabriel, his car broke! Kyle Getchell then inherited the lead, and didn’t look back, winning the feature. Second went to Jesse Liss, and third to Logan Getzloff.

The feature racing rolled on with the 600 Micro Sprints. After 20 laps of slinging dirt and heavy battling, Matt Peterson was able to take the win over the rest of the hard charging field. Second place went to Jeff Ives, with Josh Bartle in third.

Once again, the Milwaukee Vintage Modifieds took us for a trip into the past, running two more exhibition races. The fans, like earlier in the night, were delighted to see the old cars back on the track, roaring with cheers and applause.

The UPIR Modifieds from the present day came out to run there feature next. Miraculously, Cody Peterson was able to come back out to run his dad’s blue 17 after the big hit in the heat race. Even with all the work put into getting the car back out on the track, the car’s handling went away throughout the race, most likely from mechanical issues. Cody took the car off the track, but just seeing the car on the track at all was a very special moment. Matt Valiquette held off a hard charging Chuck Carmin to win the feature. Carmin would come home in second place. Third position went to Ben Godlewski.

It wouldn’t be difficult to pick what division put on the best feature of the night, as the Street Stocks came out and put on one heck of a show for the fans. Side by side and three wide battles littered the racetrack for the whole 20 lap feature. There were battles for position around the whole track, along with some paint trading and bumping! Ron Jenshak was able to pull away in the final stages of the race to win. Second place went to Paul Wagner, who battled with Jon Pepin for the majority of the race. Pepin followed Wagner closely in third,

As always, the Bink’s Coca Cola Sport Fours closed out the night’s racing action. The opening lap saw cars going every which way, spinning and slamming into one another all over the place, bringing out an early O’Reilley Auto Parts Caution Flag. Right away it looked like it would be another race plagued by cautions. A completely different story was written, however, as not a single caution flew the rest of the race. Justin Lauscher continued his return of dominance by winning the feature. Bryon Stemick trailed Lauscher in second place. Tyler Corwin round out the podium in third.

The 2015 UPIR Blast from the Past truly was a blast for both drivers and fans alike. The lovely weather allowed for great racing, and also for a huge crowd to come and pack the grandstands. UPIR is back in action on a different night next week, as racing heads to Friday night! The action begins at 7 PM EST, with gates opening up at 6 PM EST.