# Smith looks to travel after another title

This season marked the seventh Late Model championship for Josh Smith at Shadybowl Speedway. It also marked a rarity in Smith's career and a designation which sometimes warrants an asterisk in a record book, or at least in the mind of the champion; topping the points without the benefit of a feature win.

"I think we had five second-place finishes," said Smith, from Quincy, Ohio. "Last year we hooked up with a different chassis builder and we were trying some things. What they do and what we do didn't mesh very well, so we've decided to get back to what we know. Hopefully this year everything gets back to normal."

The normalcy means more than a number of victories. Smith had been a confidant of Butch and Johnny VanDoorn since the days when the brothers worked at Port City Racecars. Late in 2013 they opened VanDoorn Racing Development, and all but one of Smith's Late Models have the VRD markings.

"I have chassis #1, from when they left and were racing with Hunter Baize. When Baize sold out, I bought chassis #2," the 39-year-old Smith said. "I'm the only one running VanDoorn stuff at Shadybowl. There are Hamke cars and Fury cars and Oakley cars. They're good and reputable. Years ago I had a deal with Port City when they were winning everything there was to win back then; Butch was building my shocks.

"Halfway through the 2025 season we looked at this other car thought we weren't really learning anything. You can't run bump stops on these, and you can't get 'em down to the ground like a new chassis can. Plus it was heavy, which is not a bad thing at Shadybowl. But we've decided to go back to Butch and Johnny; they've been really good to us over the years."




Dayton Auto Race Fans

**Josh Smith,** shown with DARF board member Rich Williams, collected his seventh Late Model championship at Shadybowl Speedway in DeGraff, Ohio.

The Smith Motorsports entry, also sponsored by Crazy J Farms and Hot Shot Automotive, was usually stuck behind Josh Sage and Logan Runyon in 2025. Sage swept the four Ohio 300 races, sponsored by Wrens Towing & Recovery. Runyon actually had a better season in 2024; the only driver to win at the 'Bowl that year when Runyon was entered was Smith. But the longest time the Smith family spent in the spotlight on a race day in 2025 came when his father Jerry Smith was inducted into the Shadybowl Hall of Fame in August.




Clouser's Customs

**Josh Smith,** who has success in modifieds and street stocks, extended his reputation as a specialists in Late Model Sportsman-type cars, even though he didn't win a feature in the top class in 2025.

The Ohio 300 will be one of Smith's focal points this season, but he isn't likely to be a weekly warrior at the 'Bowl. Years ago when he was in an Outlaw Late Model – and during some of his time in modifieds and street stocks – he traveled to many racetracks in the Great Lakes states.

"It's time to go trophy hunting," he said. "We got exposed to a lot of different tracks over the years, but Shadybowl was paying such good money and it's five miles from home, so it was kinda dumb to travel. Now we've won everything there is to win at Shadybowl - we've gotten enjoyment out of each one - but it's time to travel again."

"Owosso is on my radar, and the CRA Late Model Sportsman races at Winchester and stuff like that. We'll look at the schedule, and when we're available to go race for some more money, we'll go."

# Mentor-protege tie means shared title




Tom Loos Photography

**Kody King** placed eighth in the TUNDRA Super Late Model Series race at Marshfield Motor Speedway in one of his two starts in the tour.




Brian Schmitt

**Jordan DeVoy** set fast time for the TUNDRA season finale at Dells Raceway Park. That honor plus the team title gave him some winter momentum.

The United Northern Drivers Racing Association has had a handful of rules in place since it began over a decade ago. The purse structure became more of a standard style in 2025 after years as a club-member system, but TUNDRA officials do what they can to ease the costs of tires and the like to its racers.

TUNDRA has also had a team points idea for years. Two drivers can combine their efforts for a championship pursuit, whether they work out of the same shop or not. In the first 14 seasons of the series, including 2011-12 when it was the original Alive for Five program based at Dells Raceway Park, there was one full-season champion 13 times; the exception was 2023 when car owner John Beale filled in in one event for his longtime teammate and champion Dalton Zehr.

The 2025 standings marked the first time that the top line consisted of two names separated by a slash. Jordan DeVoy and Kody King raced twice each in a season where TUNDRA was plagued by rain. Their total was higher than any of the other one- or two-driver arrangements, despite neither driver finishing better than fourth under the TUNDRA banner in 2025.




Victory Imagery Media Group

**Jordan DeVoy** sported a #14 on his right door panel in TUNDRA races to indicate his alliance with Kody King. The number was also a tribute to Randy Rodgers, whom DeVoy's dad helped for years at the old Lake Geneva Raceway; Rodgers lost his battle with cancer last spring.

DeVoy lives in Lake Geneva, Wis., and King travels from Clear Lake, Iowa. The towns are 300 miles apart, but they are more than just a random pairing or one of convenience. Their connection began at Pathfinder Chassis, and frequently DeVoy was in the pits when King was in any Super Late Model event.

"I help out Joe Wood a lot," DeVoy said about Pathfinder's co-owner. "Kody was kinda running his own program, but I was at all of the ASA Midwest Tour races. I don't know how far he'll take this racing thing, but he works hard at it and he doesn't wreck much stuff."

King was at every Midwest event, peaked with a fifth-place finish in the Jim Sauter Classic at the Dells, and wound up a respectable fifth in points. The 16-year-old, sponsored by Coltman Farms, MPM Marketing, Farmers State Bank, Cornelier Fireworks & Stuff, Fertilizer Equipment Specialists, Helps Drain & Septic, Scrap Processors, Clear Lake Boats, Emerson Crane Rental, Capital Sign, and the Matt Dodge Agency of American Family Insurance, is about half of DeVoy's age, and he definitely benefitted from DeVoy's advice.

"It was an all-right year on the Tour," King said. "We started off OK; good and bad results were kinda spread throughout the year. We qualified second at Jefferson, but got wrecked in the heat race. In the Dixieland race we had some car problems, and it caught on fire at (Oktoberfest). I feel like it was a pretty good year, but we'd like a little more race-to-race execution."

King ran the TUNDRA shows at Marshfield Motor Speedway and Wisconsin International Raceway. The WIR season opener allowed the Hawkeye State youngster to get some laps in advance of the Dixieland in August, because he had never previously competed on the D-shaped facility in Kaukauna, Wis.

DeVoy, a Pathfinder customer since his first full season of Super Late Models in 2019, also had his ups and downs with his own program in 2025. His highlight was probably in October during Falloween at the Dells, an Alive for Five cornerstone race which was converted into the TUNDRA finale after weather woes.

He was only 11th at the end, but his name was on top of the 33-car qualifying list, and King was on the #38 crew for that race plus the Labor Day TUNDRA show at Golden Sands Speedway.

"That pole propelled us with some optimism going into the off-season. Otherwise it was a very average year," said DeVoy, whose sponsors include Wisconsin Automation, the Hill Tavern, NAI Huffman, Performance Engineering, Performance Parts Supply, Pecaro Motorsports and Wegner Automotive. "We also did some Midwest Truck stuff with Jon and Jerry Wood … I really wanted to try to win one of those races."




Doug Hornickel/fastlapphoto.com

**Kody King** also followed the ASA Midwest Tour and received its rookie of the year award from series director Gregg McKarns (left).

# closerlook: New faces up front at start and finish of Red Eye ... by Jim Carson

The Pro Late Model field at the Red Eye 60/60 featured a number of Florida racers taking advantage of the fact that they live in a state with year-round racing weather. There were also a pair of New England visitors with several years' worth of January and February experience at New Smyrna Speedway: Jimmy Renfrew Jr., who inherited the victory after the disqualification of flagged winner Max Reaves, and Brody Monahan, who was the runner-up in last year's Red Eye show.

The lineup also included three names unfamiliar to New Smyrna or the crate-engine division, but who have made marks in various locations. The two Sunshine Staters in this group were happy with their finishes: Palmer Haag in fourth and Joey Coulter IV in fifth.

Haag spent most of 2025 in the UARA Sportsman Series and came close to winning. Over the winter he had a chance to practice one of Tommy Sytsma's Fury Race Cars, one which Rodney Dowless drove last October in the zMax CARS Tour show at North Wilkesboro Speedway.

"We thought the Red Eye would be a good time to try it out," said Haag, from Gotha, Fla. "We've known Tommy for a little bit. My buddy Blake Clouser drove one of their Pro cars a while ago, and we raced against him in trucks."

After some race-weekend practice - before rain postponed the race one day - Haag (rhymes with vague) became more comfortable in the #55. He qualified third, inside the inversion, and started on the outside of the front row and led a few laps. Reaves, Renfrew and New Smyrna veterans Tim Sozio and Brad May went past him during the afternoon, but the University of Central Florida student enjoyed his outing.

"I was a little excited," said Haag, sponsored primarily by Greenbrier Landscaping. Life for Kids and Southern Tree Growers. "I had never really shifted in a restart format. I had Blake and Eugene (Tumminello) telling me how to shift. I knew I was out there with some really good guys, like Max and Renfrew. I was definitely excited to be in it, and really didn't want to mess nothing up so I could be confident in our abilities."




Dennis Burgeson/Sunshine State Racing

**Palmer Haag (55) and Jayden Johnson (8)** hold the inside line against flagged-then-disqualified winner Max Reaves in the Pro Late Model portion of the Red Eye 60/60. Haag and Johnson started on the front row, although only Haag was around at the end.

He's hoping to show those abilities again with Sytsma in some other Pro races and in a family-owned car during some dates in the new IHRA Stock Car Series. About a second behind Haag at the end was another Floridian with a lot more on his resume.

Coulter ran four full seasons in the NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series, winning once in 2012. Since that deal ended he had only raced on dirt tracks until reappearing in various pavement modified races after Covid, and moving back to Florida after a few years in Texas.

"The entire time I was doing my driver coaching, called DriveRefine," the Miami native said. "Landen Lewis still works with me, and Carson Brown. I've worked a lot with Team Hornaday Development drivers, like Hudson Bulger, Sylas Ripley and Isaac Kitzmiller. And 80 percent of the coaching I do is all remote, so they're not relying on me to figure it out for them while I'm there. We run a bunch of laps in iRacing to get the procedures down."




Dennis Burgeson/ Sunshine State Racing

**Joey Coulter placed fifth** in Scott Clements' Pro Late Model at New Smyrna Speedway in Samsula, Fla.

He was experiencing a new procedure at New Smyrna, where he ran the 2022-24 World Series editions in a modified, peaking in third place in one race, but had not piloted a Late Model since 2013. Coulter teamed up with Scott Clements for this event, running another car out of the shop which powered Cody Brinson to the 2025 Super Late Model points title at Auburndale Speedway. But Coulter wasn't the one scheduled to be behind the wheel of the colorful #1.

"Last year my wife was racing a Pro off and on for another guy," Coulter said about the former Jessica Green. "She was supposed to run this Red Eye (but couldn't due to a simple medical issue). It took me until I got to the racetrack to get settled, because this was my first time driving a Pro like this. This gave me a good opportunity to know exactly what my wife is gonna be driving. She was able to climb in and out of the car.

"I started seventh and there was a couple of eventful moments right in front of us that we had to dodge," the 35-year-old Coulter said. "Other than that, it was a pretty smooth race. About halfway we fought some power steering issues; we started off tight, kinda just got hung out and it got a little bit worse. But our two daughters, age 9 and 5, got to hang out, and my parents were in town for the holidays."

Coulter will likely be back at New Smyrna this year, but in street clothes to work with his wife. They balance the mentor-student role nicely.

"I was working with her back in the pro truck stuff, and that was probably one of the things that helped hone the coaching process," Coulter said. "A lot of times she never got to race things super-consistently - always one-offs - and that made her very adaptable in different situations. Over time it kinda developed … there was a point where I was like, 'I could teach this to somebody.' A lot of people look at us like we're crazy, but when we're at the track working together, it's very much driver-spotter or driver-crew chief. Then we go back to the husband-wife thing when the race car's loaded."

One pair which was new to the NSS scene has the driver-mentor pattern down pat. A year ago Wisconsin teenager Jayden Johnson began learning from Badger State standout and multi-time World Series competitor Casey Johnson (no relation). Jayden is coming off a Limited Late Model championship at Slinger Super Speedway, and this was the next step in his climb. The younger Johnson started on the pole, but an ignition problem hampered him in the early moments.

"This was Jeremy Miller's Pro car that he raced a few times, even once here," he said about the #8 Fury; Miller had Casey on his crew during that Speedweeks visit. "Casey was gonna buy a bandolero motor from us, and I asked then if he could help out with my Late Model stuff. Now we'll be doing more Pro stuff."

After the World Series, Johnson plans on racing with the CARS Tour February 28 at Southern National Motorsports Park. Other Southern visits will hinge on his February success and what will happen in the upper Midwest.

# closerlook: Bucy's boost comes from familiar source at Havasu ... by Jim Carson

The top two positions in each Pro Late Model feature last Saturday at Havasu 95 Speedway were swept by customers of White Racing Services. Victory collector Jeff Peterson obviously had the biggest smile on his face at the end of the night and brought the most pride to longtime Late Model standout driver and setup man Linny White.

There were plenty of smiles to go around, several spots beyond the #51 pit area. Gavin Bucy came home second in the second 50-lap feature, albeit a distant five seconds behind former track champion and frequent dominator Peterson.

Busy splits his time between Huntington Beach, Calif., and Lake Havasu City, Ariz. For several years the bullring in one of his hometowns has held three Late Model dates each winter, and that meant three visits from the stars of the White camp.

"I drove street stocks for eight years at Havasu and won a couple of championships," he said. "I wrecked my car once and realized that fixing it would be almost the same amount that it would to buy a Late Model. I decided that I'd rather travel a little bit more, so I said, 'Let's see what I can do in a Late Model.'

"Linny had always been out at Havasu. I've watched him for years, winning races and all that. When we bought our car, we were trying to figure it out, since I've got a bit of experience at Havasu. We were kinda struggling the first year; I don't think I stayed on the lead lap in a race. I'd always seen Linny's cars finishing up front. I talked to my family who's my pit crew and said, 'I don't know if this is gonna work, but I'm gonna see if we can get involved with them.' He's helped me out a ton, with advice and whatnot."

This is the third season under White's watch for the #4, a VanDoorn Racing Development car which Bucy bought from Wyatt King in Idaho. It used to be piloted by Austin Herzog around California, so the car has seen more racetracks than Bucy has. Other than races at Havasu, his only other destination with it has been Orange Show Speedway, another place where White cars have frequently dominated.

"I need to get a different exhaust on the car," he said. "Now we're running an open motor, but we want to get a 602 back into it for CARS Tour West races. We struggled with a 602 at Orange Show."




Howard Twaddell/Pacific Freelance Motorsports Photography

**Gavin Bucy** matched his best-ever Pro Late Model result by finishing second in the second NAPA Twin 50 presented by Sam Nichols Electrical.

Whatever power he had in this race was respectable. Bucy placed fourth in the first race, started on the front row of the nightcap and led a few laps before giving way to lead dog Peterson. Bucy was fine with that result, especially because he has picked up so much from Peterson, White, and former WRS client Parker Malone.

"Peterson's the one that's probably told me the most about how to drive the track. Parker's been in my ear some," said Bucy, an oil fields equipment operator. "We got off the track and got where tech usually is, then I put the car in gear so I could get out. The shifter snapped in half. Now I've got this little stubby sticking out; I was able to drive it back to the pits 'cause it was in gear already, but I had to jiggle it around to get in the trailer."

There's only one Late Model date left during this Havasu season, and the bullring isn't on the CARS schedule. Bucy is looking forward to a few road trips in his #4, sponsored by local Big O Tires and NAPA stores, Get It in Gear Transmission, Bill's Engines, Lawler Racing Engines, Mojave Mortgage and Todd's Performance.




Howard Twaddell/Pacific Freelance Motorsports Photography

**Jeff Peterson,** shown in earlier action at Havasu 95 Speedway and will seek a winter-season sweep at the bullring February 7.