

BIG 8 Late Models



A Noble effort on a Friday night

LOVES PARK, ILL. (Sept. 24, 2005) —

One of the traditions in upper Midwest stock car racing is the National Short Track Championships, a multi-division, multi-day event that since 2024 has been held at Dells Raceway Park. The NSTC originated at Rockford Speedway 58 years earlier, and many still consider Rockford as its home even though the site is now an outlet shopping center.

Rockford was also one of several stops in the journey of Gregg McKarns, the son of Wisconsin's late and legendary racing promoter John McKarns. One of Gregg's childhood friends was Tim Noble, and they reunited several more times in the past few decades.

"Helping out Gregg is like helping out a family member," said Noble, from Janesville, Wis.

Noble had a stint as an official at Madison International Speedway after Gregg and his wife Angie McKarns purchased the half-mile in Oregon, Wis., in 2015. Later Noble was a tech inspector for the ASA Midwest Tour, which was under McKarns' direction at the time.

Before those times, Noble saw plenty of time behind the wheel, and he engulfed himself in Late Model racing in the early-2000s. His record included a few feature wins at Madison and also



T.J. Harron Photography

Tim Noble shares a laugh with his great-nephew Colton during his time as an official at Madison International Speedway.

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Jefferson Speedway, but his most treasured checkered flag came 21 years ago today, on the first night of the NSTC in a 58-lap race in the Big 8 Limited Late Model Series. A bonus came in the form of special shocks from a crewman on Midwest legend Steve Carlson's team.

The rest of the NSTC action, highlighted by the CRA Super Series and the old NASCAR Midwest Series, was rained out and rescheduled for five weeks later. The image of the 27-year-old Noble was the lasting one from Rockford in late September.

"That was my third time running 'Short Track.' I ran it my rookie year in 2001 and crashed, then in 2004 the car was too free and finished in the teens," Noble said. "This time in the second practice we broke a rocker arm. The engine builder came from Janesville to Rockford to fix the engine for us. It ran flawless after that.

"In the race I started in the fourth row and got to third. Jason Schuler and Matt Berger were running for the lead, and it turned into a full-contact event with about 30 to go. They both spun and ended up broadside in front of me, and I locked down and stopped. Now I've gotta fire the car up and get going, but I didn't have a clutch; the master cylinder had taken a crap. With Rockford's banking, I could put it in second gear, hit the starter until it started rolling and pumped the gas, and eventually it fired. They gave me the lead back. (Seven-time track champion) Ricky Bilderback ran me clean; he let me know he was there, but he never moved me."

The success was fleeting in a sense. Two weeks later he went to Oktoberfest at LaCrosse Fairgrounds Speedway, but Big 8 qualifying was rained out. The B-main grid was set by a draw, and Noble started last. He passed a few cars but then lost an engine.

He won only once more in a Late Model, in 2009 when he ran the track's full slate. McKarns was promoting Rockford at the time and Noble followed, placing fourth in points. Around that time he began racing midget cars on dirt, invited by noted car owner Jim Fiscus. Most of his open-wheel racing was



Marty Langenberg

Tim Noble scored his only Big 8 Limited Late Model Series victory 21 years ago today. With him are his parents Dick and Shirley Noble; Tim believed that this was the only time Shirley made it into a victory lane photo with her son.

at the local level, but he did race a bit under the USAC and POWRI banners.

By the early-2010s Noble was out of racing, at least as a driver. He served on crews and/or spotted for a few friends such as Steve Rubeck and Michael Bilderback, plus his cousin and ex-Rockford champion Tim Sargent. For much of that span he wore officials' shirts, assisting McKarns in several roles.

"I had intentions of building a new race car, but once you take a year off, you realize how much money you're spending," he said.

Just before the pandemic year, Noble lived in Las Vegas. An electrician and system designer by trade, he worked on what became Allegiant Stadium, now the home of the Raiders. And he also got married to his wife JoAnn there in 2018, a ceremony which was attended by McKarns.

Since returning to the Badger State, Noble has just been a short-track fan, sometimes in person and more often streaming at home. He occasionally crews for his longtime friend Kyle Shear,

who returned to Late Model racing this year at Grundy County Speedway.

"I like to go to Angell Park Speedway for the USAC dirt show," he said. "I can go to a stock car race and not really miss it. Going to a dirt race is harder."

Angell Park, in the Madison suburb of Sun Prairie, has been a special place for him. Most of his time in Late Models were in cars numbered #50, in tribute to Kevin Doty. Noble's first job in racing was working for the Iowa midget and sprint car star, who passed away from injuries sustained in an Angell Park crash in August of 2005.

NSTC 58: 1. Tim Noble; 2. Ricky Bilderback; 3. Jon Reynolds Jr.; 4. Jerry Gille; 5. Dennis Schmidt; 6. Brett McCoy; 7. Bob Kahler; 8. George Bohn; 9. Kyle Jarlsberg; 10. Mike Ehde; 11. Mike Beyer; 12. John Ovadal Jr.; 13. Kyle Melvin; 14. Nick Shutkas; 15. Noel Ramge; 16. Matt Berger; 17. Ryan Carlson; 18. Jason Schuler; 19. Tony Bagstad; 20. Chad Stevens; 21. Bobby Wilberg; 22. Steve Dobbratz; 23. Mike Lloyd; 24. Dexter Bean; 25. Rick Corso.

Lap leaders: Schuler 1-44, Berger 45, Noble 46-58 • Cautions: 5 • Fast qualifier (of 37 drivers): Reynolds, 13.816 seconds • Heat race winners: Ovadal, Lloyd • B-main: Jarlsberg