

LATE MODEL DIGEST

April 24, 2024



**Shotko's successful
DIY project**

Home-built debut for Michigan star

From staff and team reports and mlive.com

MARNE, Mich. (April 20) — Evan Shotko has well over a dozen victories in Late Model competition at Berlin Raceway since debuting in the top pavement division in the late 2010s. Included in that collection is the 2022 Battle at Berlin, plus two more summer specials: the 2022-23 editions of the Motor Mountain Masters at Jennerstown Speedway.

The hardware for this year's lidlifter at Berlin, the racetrack closest to his home in Coopersville, Mich., was the most prized trophy in the 20-year-old racer's career. That's because this victory came in the first race with a chassis entirely out of the Shotko Motorsports shop. Chassis #001 had never even seen competition, just two winter test sessions at Berlin.

"I've won a handful of pretty big ones, and to be honest, there's no feeling like it," Shotko said. "This is by far my favorite win. After hours and hours of research and development, building jigs

and fixtures and trying things that don't work, this is just a totally different level of satisfaction."

Shotko was out front for the final 41 of 75 laps in this Icebreaker presented by Lume Cannabis Company. Contact on lap 33 led to trouble for leader Brian Campbell and pursuer Austin Hull. Shotko drove away from Kyle Crump and Tyler Rycenga on the restart and had a two-second edge on Crump at the finish line.

"We were racing with Kyle quite a bit," he said. "We had a few late cautions, and he's extremely good on restarts. I was a little worried about him, but other than that it was pretty smooth sailing. We kinda inherited the lead, but our car was good enough to win either way."

Crump was driving the house entry from FLF Race Cars for his first of three scheduled starts in the #90. The team once operated by Evan's dad and longtime racer Billy Shotko was a longtime customer of VanDoorn Racing Devel-



Evan Shotko (22) fends off an inside challenge from Kyle Crump at the .4-mile oval just west of Grand Rapids, Mich.



Joe Bush (101) dives to the inside of Blake Rowe in the Icebreaker presented by Lume Cannabis.



Jim DenHamer

Berlin Raceway promoter Don DeWitt presents Evan Shotko with the trophy for the first 2024 date for the Late Model class sponsored by Tekton.

opment.

Evan, sponsored by Baker Auto Group, Janssen Service, Shotko Tile, Shotko Properties, Keyser Manufacturing, Lewandoski's Market, Weller Truck Parts, Michigan Kenworth and Reaction HC Hobbies, has enjoyed what he has picked up from various chassis builders,

but now he's on his own in that department. Five other cars have been assembled at Shotko Motorsports, although no other originals of his were in this field.

"We worked on Wes Griffith's car, but he had some issues," Shotko said. "This is just something I've always wanted to do. I've always been really involved in the technical side of things. You just find things you like on certain chassis and things you like on others. This is basically my dream car."

Icebreaker presented by Lume Cannabis

Co.: 1. Evan Shotko; 2. Kyle Crump; 3. Joe Bush; 4. Chase Burda; 5. Blake Rowe; 6. Chase Pinsonneault; 7. Andrew Scheid; 8. Chris Shannon; 9. Levie Jones; 10. Keith Herp; 11. Jeff Vrsek; 12. Nathan Koester; 13. Nate Walton; 14. Brian Tillema; 15. Trever McCoy; 16. Dylan Stovall; 17. Scott Thomas; 18. Tyler Rycenga; 19. Wes Griffith Jr.; 20. Austin Hull; 21. Brian Campbell; 22. Ken Wobma; 23. Todd Cowan; 24. Brian Bergakker.

Lap leaders: Campbell 1-34, Shotko 35-75 • **Cautions:** 4

Fast qualifier: Bergakker, 16.21 seconds

A Page turned with a familiar winner

From staff and team reports
and Racing America

ROUGEMONT, N.C. (April 20)—Less than a month earlier, Kaden Honeycutt pulled off a victory for the Tom Usry Racing team in a Late Model Stock Car special at Orange County Speedway. That was a breakthrough moment for the Usry group, now owned by the late short-track star's son-in-law Kenny Packer.

Honeycutt, who relocated from Aledo, Texas, to Mooresville, N.C., a few years ago, reprised that role in the latest race for the zMax CARS Pro Late Model Tour presented by SoundGear. He added to his Orange County successes, this time under the banner of Mavrick Page Motorsports.

"We do this with two full-time people and a really old race car," Honeycutt said about the Hamke center section with Clattenburg clips. "That's what makes this so much sweeter ... especially David Page for the opportunity and the way he's helping me this year."

The owner of Page Construction in Mooresville has sponsored Honeycutt's LMSC efforts and even chipped in for his three NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series starts this spring. His son Mavrick is racing quarter-midgets, and David is likely setting up his first ride in a full-sized car in a year or two, after he



Jessica Reid

Kaden Honeycutt celebrates a win in the zMax CARS Pro Late Model Tour presented by SoundGear. This was Honeycutt's second win in this series; he also has three wins in the Late Model Stock Car tour under the Championship Auto Racing Series banner.

took over the E33 Motorsports organization this off-season.

Page brought in J.C. Umscheid to lead the #51 effort for this CARS event. Umscheid, whose day job is with the Tricon Garage Truck team, is also a

native Texan and had guided Honeycutt in three previous editions of the Snowball Derby and several other Late Model races. He was as proud of Honeycutt as anyone after this triumph at the 3 1/8-mile oval.

"He qualified second, then after a few cautions him and Conner Jones were side by side for a few laps," Umscheid said. "Once we got in the lead, at one point I was trying to slow him down after he was getting a straightaway lead. He said, 'I am slowing down. I'm going at 80 percent.'"

At the finish he had a two-second gap on runner-up Nick Loden, while Jones wound up fourth. Among those smiling with the success of Honeycutt, sponsored by Fayetteville Heating & Air, Wynn Site Development, Dreamworks Motorsports, Motorsports Management International and On Tire Tailgate System, was J.R. Courage, the former owner of the E33 operation.

"Honestly it's like giving away your daughter at a wedding," said Courage,

who is back full-time at Rick Ware Racing and heading up his son Carson Ware's efforts in the Carolina Pro Late Model Series. "I'm so happy to see the team be successful after the years of work I've put into it, but it's hard also because it's no longer your responsibility. You hoped that you built it right from the start so it will go on ... but it is so hard to let it go."

This isn't likely to be Honeycutt's only start in this crate-engine Late Model. Anytime there's a CARS double-header on an off-weekend for the Trucks, it's a possibility, and Umscheid will do his best to be at the track with Honeycutt.

Orange Blossom 100 presented by Folsom Fence Supply, GXS Wraps and Geocut Fabrication:

1. Kaden Honeycutt; 2. Nick Loden; 3. Spencer Davis; 4. Conner Jones; 5. Luke Baldwin; 6. T.J. DeCaire; 7. Max Reaves; 8. Jake Bollman; 9. Tristan McKee; 10. Caden Kvapil; 11. Katie Hettinger; 12. Ashton Higgins; 13. Brandon Lopez; 14. Justin Crider; 15. Jimmy Renfrew Jr.; 16. Kyle Campbell; 17. Tyler Tanner; 18. Dylan Garner; 19. Joshua Horniman; 20. Jessica Cann.

Lap leader: Jones 1-2, Honeycutt 3-60, Jones 61-63, Honeycutt 64-100 • Cautions: 4 • Red flag: 1 • Fast qualifier: Jones, 13.932 seconds



Jessica Reid

Kaden Honeycutt (51) was on the front row next to Conner Jones at Orange County Speedway in Rougemont, N.C. Honeycutt took the top spot for good on lap 64 in the Orange Blossom 100.



Andrew O'Connor

Nick Loden finished second at Orange County, a bullring where he won twice in CPLMS action. This was his best result with CARS since his win last October at South Boston.

Spears Pro • Kevin Harvick's Kern Raceway

Teenager strikes oil at his home track

From staff and series reports

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. (April 20)—Kabe McClenney scored his first victory against adults at his hometown track, Kern Raceway. This was the rescheduled season opener in the Spears Pro Late Model Series presented by Sigma Performance Services, and it couldn't have come at a better time.

This 60-lap feature during the half-mile's Oil Industry Night only drew 13 crate-engine entries, and it wasn't the richest event on the calendar for the fourth-year circuit. But it was a companion race to the ARCA Menards Series West, one of only two 2024 double-headers with the two tours.

"We kept saying that it'd be nice if this was the \$10,000-to-win race, but I think I'd rather win on ARCA week," the 18-year-old McClenney said. "It was great with all the fans coming out. It was especially great with Jerry Pitts being there (as the team owner for West race winner Kole Raz and teammate Takuma Koga), since my dad helped him for a long time, and he was watching me win."

Pitts and others saw McClenney start third at the big half-mile, then get the best of the father-son tandem of Scott and Nash Youngren in the first 20 laps. Scott was the first one passed by the #05. On the next restart McClenney was side by side with the younger Nash, then pulled away, and they ran 1-2 for the rest of the race.

Youngren closed to within a few car lengths near the end. McClenney's gap wasn't the only thing that became uncomfortable in the closing moments.



Kevin Peters
Scott Youngren started third at Kevin Harvick's Kern Raceway in Bakersfield, Calif. Scott slid back a bit during the 60-lap feature, but his son Nash Youngren wound up second for his best result in a touring series.



Sal Sigala Jr.

Kabe McClenney shows off his first victory plaque in the Spears Pro Late Model Series presented by Sigma Performance Services.

"I lost brakes with 15 to go. I was trying to manage them and didn't have any for the last five," he said. "Mostly I was trying to manage then while still leading. That was way different than I'm used to. I think we figured out the track more though; I drove in a lot harder than we should be doing."

"Nash's spotter (Brian Brown, who spotted for one of Derek Thorn's early Snowball Derby starts) is usually the one that spots for me, and he's worked with my dad since the late '90s when they were on Mark Reed's car. Me and Brian were talking later that he kinda knew what I wanted to do. It was nervous knowing that."

This was the first time in which McClenney had finished better than sixth in a Pro show at Kern. That was his result in one of two Spears starts in 2023 and again in this year's zMax CARS Tour West opener. When the weekend began, he felt as if he might be back in the same half-decent rut.

"The car was pretty good Friday, but it felt inconsistent," said McClenney, whose older Victory Circle chassis was once Johnny White's Super Late Model in

the mid-2010s. "My dad was up at 6:30 rebuilding two old rear shocks that we had run at Madera. We tried them for race day's first practice and the car felt more consistent and stable, and we were like, 'I guess we'll run 'em the rest of the night.' For qualifying we put on new tires and qualified second, and it was good from there."

The only down side to father J.R. McClenney's weekend was the rough race endured by his younger son Kabe McClenney, also sponsored by Dobitz Construction, Approved Memory, Steve Teets Racing, Sierra Speed Technology, and steering wheel company NRG Innovations. Kabe wound up eighth, although that was his best result in the series.

Spears Manufacturing Oil Workers Night presented by Liuna: Your Workforce Solution: 1. Kabe McClenney; 2. Nash Youngren; 3. Cody Kiemele; 4. Seth Wise; 5. Christian Bazen; 6. Sean Woodside; 7. Scott Youngren; 8. Kabe McClenney; 9. Andrew Chapman; 10. Justin Philpott; 11. Henry Barton; 12. Ethan Myers; 13. Ryan Martin.

Lap leader: N. Youngren 1-16, Kabe McClenney 17-60 • Cautions: 2 • Fast qualifier: Barton, 19.592 seconds



Elevate Racing Media
Thomas Stanford emerges from his Pro Late Model as a winner in his first appearance at Hermiston, Ore.

From staff and track reports

HERMISTON, Ore. (April 20) —

Thomas Stanford's season started with a second-place finish in the Pro Late Model portion of the Apple Cup at Tri-City Raceway. At that larger facility his rear trailing arm mount broke, and the loose handling kept him from threatening winner Wyatt Gardner.

In Stanford's next start, there were no such mechanical gremlins on the #19. He had another obstacle to overcome, but the end result was a victory in the Power City Pro Late Model season opener at Hermiston Raceway.

His primary challengers in this 70-lap race were Trace Thompson and Nick Gibson, who have more than a dozen starts at the 3/8-mile oval; Gibson won the past two points titles here. For Stanford, Hermiston was a completely-new experience.

"It was fun to try and learn a new racetrack," said Stanford, from East Wenatchee, Wash. "I did a fair bit of research, talking to some other drivers and watching some in-car videos to try

to get an idea of how it's gonna be. I had heard it was super-unique. We didn't go Friday, so all we had were two 10-minute practices today. It's a lot like the 3/8 at Monroe (the smaller layout at Evergreen Speedway, where totaled three wins in 2022-23), with the shape of the track and a super-flat entry into turn one, but it's abrasive – similar to the 5/8 at Monroe."

Stanford started on the pole after a five-car qualifying inversion and led the first half of the race. Then Thompson came knocking, and the eventual winner didn't put up much of a fight. Stanford regained the point moments after the final restart, clearing Thompson with three laps remaining.

"I was in save mode," he said. "Trace stuck his nose in there, and I was thinking it was too early to battle for this. We had a caution with nine to go and I started turning it up trying to catch back up. I was feeling pretty good because it had a lot left in it. He ran a smart race. When I was able to get my nose in there getting into one, he crowded me good. It was a good old-

school short-track battle – nothing extreme. We both talked after the race and we left on good terms.

"He's run there a lot, and he has a ton of laps in legends and Late Models. And Nick set a new track record, so he's obviously fast. I knew it wasn't gonna be easy."

Two years ago Stanford placed second in points at Evergreen in his Hamke Race Car, now sponsored by Ackerman Construction, the D.A. Davidson Companies, Protim Sports, Frost Livestock, Liberty Arms and EZ Street Asphalt. He didn't run there full-time in 2023 and won't this season, but he has his eye on two championships. There are only two other Pro races scheduled this year at Hermiston, and just four at his closest bullring, Wenatchee Valley Super Oval.

Power City 70: 1. Thomas Stanford; 2. Trace Thompson; 3. Nick Gibson; 4. Andrew Riehl; 5. Ken Bonney; 6. Mike Zamora; 7. Dave Garber; 8. Zachary Riehl; 9. Ray Clever; 10. Rowdy Rupinski; 11. Chase Gardner; 12. Roger Richardson; 13. Todd Connell; 14. Rick Gerard.

Lap leaders: Stanford 1-44, Thompson 45-67, Stanford 68-70 • Cautions: 3 • Fast qualifier: Gibson, 15.306

South Sound Speedway

A Super start to new season for Doyle

From staff and track reports

TENINO, Wash. (April 20) — Most short-track racers spend plenty of hours repairing and remodeling their cars during the winter, especially if their final starts of the previous season didn't go well. That wasn't really the case for Matt Doyle, who liked where he stood late in 2023 and was even happier after this year's Super Late Model opener at South Sound Speedway.

Doyle, from Orting, Wash., finished second to Kole Raz in last August's 200-lap feature. He kept the vast majority of the parts and setup on that #13 through the cold months, and it worked out well as he started the new year off with a victory, his second ever in the top division at the 3/8-mile oval.

"We usually put a new body on in the off-season," Doyle said. "This time we left 'er the same and didn't touch 'er. Jason (Jefferson, a Northwest standout driver and setup man) and I were clicking from the start."

Doyle was second in time trials behind veteran

Tom Sweatman, who was coming off a win in the previous week's Pro Late Model race here. The inversion was six, and Doyle, driving a Port City chassis he acquired from Raz last summer, kept Sweatman behind him for the duration. His winning pass came against multi-time track champion Bob Presley near the halfway point of the 100-lap race.

This marked the ideal way to start the season for Doyle, who went winless last year. South Sound has six more Super races set for 2024, with a big boost in the Super 7 points fund. The champion will receive at least \$7,500, and now higher on the list of favorites is Doyle, sponsored by Frontline Enterprises, the McCurley Dealerships, Jam Imports, Mackenzie Auto Ltd., DM Northwest, Drive-a-Car of Yakima, Sherwin-Wiliams and his employer McConkey Auction Group.

"It's gonna be beneficial for racing up here," Doyle said. "It needs to bring some guys out of the wood-work ... and it's a little incentive to have your head screwed on straight and be there at the end."

One heavy hitter in the class finished April at a disadvantage. Sweatman crossed the stripe second, but he was disqualified, handing the runner-up spot to Matt Barrett. Some lead from his #11 came loose during the pace laps, and one damaged another car's radiator. The track did not make the results official until after publication time due to the investigation surrounding Sweatman.



Kenny Burns/Just KB Media
Matt Doyle took the season-opening Super Late Model race at South Sound Speedway near Rochester, Wash.