

# LATE MODEL DIGEST

July 18, 2025

**Big win for  
big-name  
teenager**





# closerlook: Lorz links: Veterans in two states turn out ... by Jim Carson

The last driver to win a Late Model race under the Lorz Motorsports banner was Austin Kunert, who took home the trophy in the then-ARCA/CRA Super Series in 2018 at Kil-Kare Speedway. Mike Lorz's operation has had a longer-lasting impact in short-track racing, ever since he stepped out of the seat for good around the turn of the century.

Among those who passed through the Lorz home base in Midlothian, Ill., on their way to greater fame in stock cars was Michael Annett. The Iowa native never won with Lorz, but he put together five podium finishes in the old ASA Late Model Series in 2006-07 - at racetracks in four states and one Canadian province. That success helped him attract deals to further his career which included five seasons with JR Motorsports and one NASCAR XFINITY Series victory in 2019.

One of Annett's first Lefthander chassis which he drove with Lorz was sold and bought several times through the years. Its second owner in North Carolina was Mitch Gales, who has since converted it to Limited Late Model specs legal for Bowman-Gray Stadium. Gales drove it to victory lane for the first time last Saturday in the division BGS calls Sportsman.

"It has run good, and it has run like dog crap too," said Gales, who has eight career wins in the class but only one since 2019. "What I was trying on it shouldn't work but did. I come from a lot of years driving truck-arm Late Model Stock Cars, so this was different."

Hearing about the victory brought back some memories for Lorz, who boosted the careers of drivers such as Landon Cassill, Ali Kern Dukeshire, Troy Hintzsche, Dave Gentile Jr., Jordan Sims, Michael Pickens and Zachary Tinkle before ending his development deal around the time of the pandemic. The 60-year-old team founder and former driver is still involved in the sport, although his customers now



Kim Kemperman

**Mike Dimand (71)** finished second in the latest Limited Late Model race at Grundy County Speedway in Morris, Ill.

own their own cars and just have service from Mike and his brother Danny Lorz and other associates.

Kevin Zielezinski won once with Lorz service last year in the Midwest Truck Series, but he's 35 years old. The Late Model driver which Lorz has under his wing is close to Lorz's age. Mike Dimand finished second in last week's Limited Late Model race at Grundy County Speedway.

Dimand (pronounced "diamond") started racing in 1983 at the old Raceway Park bullring in a mini stock, and Lorz was in another support class at the time. Dimand's path took him to road racing, first as a crewman for Midwest racing fixture Bruce Nesbitt. One of his first road-course cars was a Port City chas-

sis, and eventually he converted another PC oval machine into a road car with a Mustang body.

"I was having a great time, but I still talked to Mike Lorz every so often," Dimand said. "His uncle is Ray Jager who owns Powersource Racing Engines. Mike eventually stopped driving and turned his team into a driver development deal. The road-racing thing got too expensive for me to be competitive. I got to talking to Mike one day when they were in between development drivers, and he asked me to come out to Illiana and run their car to see if I liked it. I had a blast, and I drove their car for a couple of years."

Illiana Motor Speedway closed for good after 2015. Grundy only had a Super Late Model class, and Dimand struggled a bit against the higher-powered competitors. Last year the third-mile oval started a Limited Late Model division, with one major change being Hoosier D-800 treaded tires and last Saturday's race was one of its more well-received events. There are two more Limited dates on Grundy's 2025 calendar, and Dimand now realizes he's on equal ground.

"I feel like on those tires, you can drive the car instead of the car driving you," said Dimand, a 61-year-old Chicago-area attorney. "We couldn't convert the car all at once. We got rid of bump-stop shocks at the end of last year and switched to regular shocks and things like that. The car went from uncompetitive against Supers to second this time. It still lights the tires up off the corner every single time, so why do we need 600 horsepower? With 8-inch tires, every adjustment we make makes a difference."

The biggest decal on the #71, originally a Left-hander car with a newer clip from Senneker Performance and shocks from Strasburg Performance, is BrakeOMeter. That company, specializing in brake bias dials but with new products on the way, was started by Nesbitt, who is still active on road courses at age 84.



Corey Latham

**Mitch Gales** won the first twin last week at Bowman-Gray Stadium in Winston-Salem, N.C., driving a machine which Michael Annett raced in the ASA Late Model Series almost 20 years ago.



# closerlook: Teenager's Top Choice: Podium for young Van Alst ... by Jim Carson

In 2023 Anderson Speedway and the Vore's Welding CRA Late Model Sportsman Series staged a bit of an experimental event. The Madison County 200 was twice as long as any CRA LMS race at the quarter-mile - or anywhere else - in nine years.

The winner was Greg Van Alst, someone who certainly has plenty of experience in long races, having run five Redbud 400s at Anderson. The ultimate endurance test for Late Models in the Hoosier State, the Winchester 400, was also on Van Alst's schedule three times, and he finished that event in 2019-20.

In 2024 Greg was established in the ARCA Menards Series, having won the heavy-car season opener at Daytona International Speedway, and had seven NASCAR national-series starts under his belt. His then-12-year-old son Ryder Van Alst tested an LMS car for the first time and competed in some weekly shows at Anderson later in the year, peaking with a second-place finish.

The longest race Ryder entered last season was 75 laps, the regular distance of CRA LMS shows at the bullring eight miles from the family's home in Daleville, Ind. This Madison County special, sponsored this year by Ascension St.



**Ryder Van Alst led 86 laps** and finished in third place in last Saturday's Vore's Welding CRA Late Model Sportsman Series event at Anderson, Ind. Darrell Harper/Harpo Photos

Vincent Hospital, offered him a chance to test his endurance skills. It's safe to say he passed, finishing third in the #35 VanDoorn Racing Development chassis sponsored by family business Top Choice Fence & Deck. He also led a total of 86 laps, most of anyone on the rain-delayed evening, then let out a sign of relief when it was over.

"It was fun, probably the most fun I've had racing. I wasn't really tired ...

more just kinda ready to get home and in bed, 'cause it was like 12:45 when I got out of the car back in the pits," Ryder said. "I felt kinda like we had somewhat of a chance. Our goal was to be on the frontstretch at the end, and we were."

The next goal for the youngster is a Late Model victory, at any level but most likely in a regular Anderson show. There are only three more on the 2025

schedule, including a Sept. 13 event under the CRA banner, and he may only have one or two more chances at other facilities.

"We'll probably venture to Winchester, but there's no set schedule. Something I learned years ago is not to push him too hard and let him be a kid," Greg Van Alst said. "When he was racing quarter midgets, there were people trying to race every single weekend, sometimes twice a week, and it'd just burn their kids out. I feel like we need to let him stay hungry to go racing and not make it a job for him. My expectations with him are totally different than what I feel a lot of parents push for. I don't care where he finishes; our main focus is going to the track and having fun, and learning every time he gets to the race-track."

None of the remaining Anderson dates conflict with the NASCAR Xfinity Series races on Greg's 2025 slate. Ryder won't race unless his dad can be there to cheer him on and advise him; usually he's also his son's spotter, although they brought in Brandon Grant for this 200. Greg Van Alst had no criticism here of Ryder, who started second after the six-car qualifying inversion in his VanDoorn chassis acquired from Kent Baledge.

"I expected him to be quick in the beginning," Greg said. "Since he was 4 1/2, something we've focused on was restarts, even in quarter midgets. He led his first laps in a feature ... then he started third on a later restart and worked his way back to the lead."



**Greg Van Alst listens to the national anthem** with his wife Christi and sons Ryder and Easton (right) before the NASCAR Xfinity Series event at Darlington Raceway in April. Ryder enjoyed his best outing in a Late Model Sportsman car last Saturday in the Madison County 200 presented by Ascension St. Vincent.

Overbey Photography



# closerlook: Busy Canadian joins last year's podium finisher ... by Jim Carson

Having two female drivers in the field for the annual Montana 200 is nothing new. It happened in 2023 when Danica Dart and Kaidyn Moran were both on the grid for the Northwest corner-stone event, which relocated to Mission Valley Super Oval two years earlier after the closure of Montana Raceway Park.

There were two ladies out there again this year, but one broke some new ground. Shantel Kalika couldn't put together the type of run which Dart scored last year, as she came home third in the headline race of the Big 5 Super Late Model schedule. But Kalika and her team hauled from more than twice as far as any of the previous female competitors: Amanda MacDonald, Nicole Behar Tarr, Hannah Newhouse and Brittney Zamora.

She lives in Prince Albert, Sask., and competes primarily at Sutherland Automotive Speedway in Saskatoon. This month has been a whirlwind for Kalika, as one week before the 200, she claimed her first victory in a regular Late Model race at her home track.



team photo  
**Danica Dart signs an autograph** before her third start in the Montana 200.

Racing on a big stage was nothing new for the 35-year-old Kalika, as she has made 17 starts in the NAS-CAR Canada Series, but this was her first time donning the helmet in the States. She finished four laps down in 10th, but the important word was "finished."

"It was a big deal for us to come down," she said. "We went with a crate motor and those guys have a lot of big motors, but they can also eat their tires up, and we could stay consistent while they'd fall off. We were mindful of where we fit in the show, with realistic expectations. My son got to come, and my parents, and we took our camper with our race trailer."

Her 5-year-old son Carter and her husband Casey helped their other two traveling crewman push the #49 around the pits. The tensest moments were the four incidents which she narrowly avoided, but for another reason other than moving up in the final run-down.

Over the winter Kalika saw this fixture congestion and acquired a second Lefthander car. Saskatoon held a Late Model race on that Tuesday, one night before its annual midweek NASCAR Canada show. Kalika placed sixth in that one and remained in the track points mix; she tied area legend Jim Gaunt atop the 2024 standings.

A caveat on her sponsorship deal with employer Ag Growth International was that she had to have a show car displayed for the Ag in Motion event, and that's also this week. Her Montana car was also the one she targeted to show off in nearby Langham, so it was important to keep it in one piece.

"A lot of people commented on that too ... my race craft," she said. "It was one thing to make that race and another to survive it."

Kalika, also backed by Lake Country Co-op, McMath Controls & Automation, the Sign Shack, Ripley Ford, Tec Energy Solutions, Lobstick Travel, 6th Avenue Car Wash & Auto Glass, Epic Racewear, North Shield Services, Kemmer Racing Photography, Oz Creative, Bumper to Bumper and a local Super 8, came home three spots behind Dart in this event. The bright

spot for Dart was that she ran all 200 laps.

"We weren't quite as good as we were hoping to be to run with the top few cars ... We fired off good on restarts where I was able to make most of my passes, but we just didn't have the long-run car we were looking for," said the teenager, sponsored by H&S Unlimited, Guardian Fence, Evers Farms, Pioneer Performance and Eco Construction.



team photo  
**Shantel Kalika** and her son Carter are pictured with NASCAR Canada Series star D.J. Kennington at her home track in Saskatchewan. The Kalikas were fans for this Wednesday race, one night after a home Pro Late Model race and four days after she ran with Super Late Models in Big Sky Country.



Sandi Allen/Bent Wheel Backyard Racing  
**Danica Dart came home seventh** in the 34th edition of the Montana 200 presented by Missoula Chevrolet.



Sandi Allen/Bent Wheel Backyard Racing  
**Shantel Kalika finished 10th** in her first appearance in the signature race at Mission Valley Super Oval in Polson, Mont.



# One Last Look

## Around North Carolina



CARS Tour photos

**Keelan Harvick (62) scored his first victory** in the zMax CARS Pro Late Model Tour presented by SoundGear. The son of NASCAR Cup Series veteran Kevin Harvick beat Caden Kvapil (35) by about four seconds in the Road to the Throwback Classic at Hickory Motor Speedway.



Matt Leicht Racing

**Junior Franks cheers on his son Zack** on the final lap of the Limited Late Model race at Tri-County Speedway.



Lori Holder/My Track Photos

**Dillon Harville won** the first Late Model Stock Car twin feature at Ace Speedway.



Quinn Campbell

**Former Tri-County Speedway LMSC champion Thomas Beane** is interviewed after his first win of the season at the facility near Hudson, N.C.



Messer Media

**Tommy Neal's crew comes out to greet the veteran driver** after he won the second Limited Late Model/Sportsman race at Bowman-Gray Stadium.