

# **“CHECKERED Randy Taylor Leo Trucke FLAG”**

## ***The History of Hayden Speedway***



***By Darren Dodd***

When I enrolled in this class, I wanted to write an exciting story, so since I have been around racing for a couple of years, I decided to write about the Hayden Speedway Races. A few years after I moved to Steamboat, I started going to Hayden races on Saturday nights, just for something to do. After that season, a cousin of mine from Denver brought his race car to Hayden. We raced it the entire season. Actually, he raced it, but I was his “pit crew.” I had to check all the pressures and fill the fuel tank after every race. It was a lot of fun, but unfortunately he sold his car, and I was back to watching the races instead of participating in them. Thus, my story on racing began for **Three Wire Winter**.

Towards the middle of the season last summer, 1983, I decided I would build a race car of my own. To build my race car, I had to remove the windows and all plastic lenses, including the headlights. I had to weld a complete cross rollcage inside the car. Next, I put in a bucket seat and a harness along with an extra sheet of metal between the trunk and the interior for fire protection. I had to relocate the gas tank to the trunk and put in a ten gallon tank for collision safety reasons. I also shortened the exhaust system for a little more power. I then welded the doors shut, put in a fire extinguisher and welded a torque chain from the engine to the frame. Next, I had to make the rear differential into

posi-trac. A posi-trac is a type of rear end that makes both rear tires spin equally. To make it, I had to pull off the differential plate and weld the spider gears. The next step was to make a 3/8" plate racing wheel for strength. The last step was to paint the numbers on the car, number 01. I called my car "General Smurf", since it was light blue and I was the youngest kid who owned his own race car in our association. The car looked and sounded "MEAN."

The very first race my cousin drove the car, and another car ran into the side, and both cars were locked side by side for nearly two laps. When the cars came undone, my car was hurled into another car, ruining both sides. A tire went flat, and we didn't finish the race. Before our next race, we changed the flat tire and refueled. Two laps into the race, the car went sideways and was hit again on the right front tire, bending the rim and the suspension so that the tire leaned inward and rubbed the frame. This ended the evening for us.

We never did win a race, but we completed all races after that bad evening. Since the races were every other weekend, on off weekends I took the car to the track and hot-lapped (running the car around the track) it. Once after 30 laps, I was feeling over-confident and started going faster and faster to get used to the feel. Finally, I was doing about 65 to 70 mph when I hit the corner. My car spun one way, so I over-corrected the steering and spun the car in the other direction. The overwhelming force hurled the car into the air, and the car went from the left tires to the right front fender and back onto the tires again. It happened so fast, I didn't even know what to think. Believe it or not, after that, the car started right up and I drove it into the pit. Two tires were going flat, so we found some big rocks and pounded the rims until they quit leaking and drove it some more.

We finished all the races thereafter, until the benefit race. At the benefit race, all drivers donated their entry fees and time to raise money for the next year's season. It was the last race of the year. It is a very exciting race because it is far from normal. There are a lot of different types of races such as the reverse direction, the mechanics, water balloon, barefoot and a relay race. In the reverse direction race, the cars go around the track with the wrong rotation. Race cars are set up to lean left for turns; that makes the car difficult to handle. The next race is a ten lap race for mechanics.

Since I was the main mechanic I ran this race, and it was unfortunately bad for me. I started in second position and got the jump and went to first place. I was going for all it was worth. The car seemed to be running better than ever with the rebuilt carburetor. There was four laps left in the race, and I was leading by quite a ways when

the engine started knocking and began losing power. I was passed and took second place position. The engine was still hammering, but I was gaining speed and was ready to pass again on a corner when the right front tire fell off.

The car guided itself into the infield and died. I knew then that the car had seen its best day and completely thrashed. So I started the engine and held the throttle to the floor; it blew up, threw a rod in seconds. So over the past few months, I had built a race car, rolled a race car, lost a tire and wheel at fifty miles per hour, and blew an engine! All I could say was "Oh well, it was fun!" Now I was a spectator.

The next race was a barefoot race. The drivers had to run ten feet, put their shoes on, then get in their cars and race five laps. The next race was the relay race. In this one, there were three drivers to one car. One person raced five laps, then got out and ran to the center of the field and tagged the next driver. He got in the car and had to be fastened in before he was allowed to continue the race.

I interviewed Randy Taylor and Leo Trucke, for more information on the history of the Hayden Speedway. Interviewing Randy Taylor was very helpful in getting some facts for the story. Randy began telling me some interesting facts. "The Yampa Valley Auto Racing Association was formed by Steamboat and Craig in 1962. There was some young guys from 22 to 35 years old who wanted to start a track for auto racing. "Gonk" Jacobs was one of the originators as well as Paul Nelson, who has since moved, Eddie Dietrich who ran the Waffle Shack, Jay Eubank who was the Ski Doo dealer, and Delbert Coyner who still lives here in Steamboat. There was the senior group from Craig who got together to build a track in each town where each could alternate. One week the group raced in Steamboat and the next in Craig.

"There were sixteen races in a season which would always end in Steamboat on the 4th of July with a two day race event. There often were over



*The track about half-way complete*

two thousand spectators on the fourth of July weekend for the auto races. In a night, there were as many as fifty cars combined from the two towns. The biggest race was always on the 4th of July with local people, and there usually wasn't anybody from Denver who came to race.

"The Steamboat and Craig tracks were built by volunteers. Delbert Coyner was in charge of building the bleachers. He begged, borrowed and fetched lumber for the materials. The track didn't cost the city or county anything. That was the beautiful part of the race track, according to the racers; it was all donated. Then Craig lost their track north of town. It was rebuilt where the National Guard is now, east of town. The third track was where the power plant is now. Craig lost their last track at the same time Steamboat lost theirs. The city of Steamboat wanted their land back to build a city shop. At that time, in 1974, the two track associations got together and decided to build a track in Hayden.

"We built the Hayden Speedway, halfway between Steamboat and Craig for convenience. We hired some work done by Duckels Construction, and a lot of mines donated equipment and labor. The big worn out scraper tires surround the track and were donated by Craig Power Equipment, Empire Energy, Seneca, and Oak Creek's P & M Coal Mine. We also saved everything we could from the two tracks in Craig and Steamboat. We found guard rails, light poles and bleachers. We begged for all kinds of stuff to build a good pit shack, announcer's and concession stands. We used mostly donations, but we had to buy a few things.



*"I started in 1970,  
and my last race was in 1980."*

"There were problems in building the track; neither club had money. Combined both clubs had twelve hundred dollars, and the dirt alone cost six thousand dollars, so we arranged garage sales, bake sales, raffles and anything we could think of to pay off the debt. It took three years to pay it off and that was in 1978. There was still



plenty of trouble after that; things still kept wearing out, like the light poles, the podium in the concession stand, the bleachers, which we recently had to repaint. It cost \$1,500 just to get electric power to the Speedway, and that took up all our original money. In 1975, we ran electricity from a generator which was mounted on a two-ton truck. We have come a long way since we started.

"I started racing in 1970 and my last race was in 1980. I have owned six cars, three modifieds and three full-bodied cars. I built three of them and bought three. When I went into the late model cars, the cars were like the sportsman model now. The late model has a fiberglass body, custom frames, and there is no engine size limit. The sportsman class now has a steel body, stock frames and a limited size engine.

"The thrill started me racing, I always wanted to try it. I used to go to races when I was a kid, and I never had the opportunity until I was much older. I lived in a small town with a small track and finally as an adult, had a chance to try racing. I then began racing with my own car. When a person tries racing, he either likes it or he doesn't. If he likes it, then he'll get the fever and continue to be involved."

I then asked about accidents. "I have never been hurt in an accident. I rolled over four times once, but never got so much as a bruise. That's the beauty of safety precautions. The cars have to have a four point roll cage and a three way harness to hold the race in, and each must have a fire extinguisher. For a long time we were required to wear a fire resistant suit. It is not

required any more because there isn't as much of a threat of fire. Most racers who live here locally say they cannot afford to buy one; I personally think that is dumb. I think that is like racing without a helmet, and a person really can't do that. I would like to see the fire-suit reinstated as a safety rule.

"I have seen a few accidents where people have been hurt but nothing too serious that they were permanently disabled. Once I saw an accident that involved a lady in a powder puff race. The roll cage was barely tacked together and the welds broke loose when the car rolled over. When it rolled over, one side of the roll cage collapsed and broke her leg. Then there was another time when a modified car rolled end-over-end three times. The constant jumping and jolting of the car dislocated the driver's back. The harness held him in like it was supposed to or it would have been a lot worse if he'd been thrown out. That's the worst accident I've ever seen. I have seen a couple of fires where drivers were fortunate to get out. When a person is involved in a rollover, he might get knocked cuckoo. A painful blow to the shoulder may cause a black-out and then the driver may not be able to get out of the car if a fire starts. That is why I believe in fire-suits.

"A lot of people equate racing with low-life people, and that isn't necessarily true. There are many professional people involved in racing. There are small town and local people involved, in fact, Tony Polich, #106, is now the mayor of Craig. He's not a crazy 'knucklehead,' he is an intelligent person. There used to be a whole bunch of business people involved, but I think it goes through cycles. Right now there aren't many business people, but in time I think they will be back into racing. The ages go in cycles, too. Racers used to be in their mid-twenties to early forties; now the younger generation is getting into racing, ages sixteen to thirty. There are still several old diehards, ones such as Leo Trucke who won't give up until he turns 60.

"I don't race any more because I was so involved in getting the debt paid that I just ran out of time to hassle with maintaining a car. Racing is a time-consuming proposition which takes ten to forty hours a week just to look after the car. I ran out of time, and I guess I got a little burned out. To manage a track and a car was too much, so I backed out and gave up. Now Stoney, my oldest son, is coming along with racing, and he's a pretty good driver. It's enough for me to watch and help him."

For another perspective, I talked to Leo Trucke, the racing die-hard of whom Randy spoke. "When I first started racing in Hayden, I raced a super modified. I raced this car for a while, and I decided to quit racing and sold it.



### *Leo and Peggy*

Halfway through the next season I bought a late model race car, a '72 Camero. After a couple of years, I sold that car and purchased a '77 Camero, the car I race now. Racing was something I always wanted to do and this is my fifteenth year in racing.

Racing is better now than it was when I started, however we need more racers. There were more racers in each class back then. There used to be only two classes; late model and modified. Now there are four classes: hobby stock, sportsman, modified and late model. It would be nice to see a lot more cars fill up these classes.

"I feel that this hobby is a good experience for people because of the overhauling of engines and the constant upkeep of the cars. The racing and going at high speeds are all good experience. I think if the younger generation, say, from ages sixteen to twenty-five were to take up racing, they wouldn't drive as crazy on the streets. Racing lets a person take out a lot of anxieties and frustrations. A driver can't get a speeding ticket on the track. However, he can't get anxious and bump someone out of his way to win a race. I have lost many races because I refuse to tap the car in front of me. I still have several trophies, all of them were won fair and square. In fact, 98% of them were won from starting in the back and working my way to first place.

"The number one rule is not to lose your temper on the track, if you do you better pull into the pit stop and park it. Most drivers these days are fair but a few have 'win-all' attitudes and jeopardize their comrades. Luckily these people are a minority in the race circuit. Sportsmanship is what it is all about. If a person can't win fair and square and have a good attitude about it, he



*Leo, carrying flag in National Anthem.*

shouldn't be out there racing in the first place. It is a game to have fun and do the best one can; it is fun to race, win or lose. I really enjoy racing, but I think it has to be in a person's blood. The challenge makes it worthwhile over and above the time spent. There is car down time, hard work and long hours. It's a thrill to start in the back of a line up and work the way forward to the front position and the famed 'checkered flag!'

"Without handling and control, it doesn't matter how powerful the engine is. With good control and power the driver still has to be able to handle the conditions: car, track, other drivers, etc. A safe courteous driver comes with experience.

"A person has to have sponsors. Sponsors pay for most parts and repairs. If it was not for sponsors, even a good racer might not race, because he or she could not afford to put that much money into a car. The rebuilding of engines is constant. If it weren't for Energy fuels and Duckels Construction, I would not be able to keep racing.

"We get racers from all over Northwest Colorado and Wyoming and sometimes Utah. We usually get the long distance racers at invitational. We normally have one invitational a year. We have had as many as a 50 lap race during an invitational. I came in second place the last time we had a 50 lap race. A driver's meeting is held just before the races begin. Decisions are made on the order of classes racing, the number of laps in each race and any other upcoming events. The factors decided upon are laps and track conditions, weather, and number of cars and drivers."

Interviewing the old and young timers was fun and interesting. They made me feel welcome and offered me any copies of photos which they had. Many people were, overall, helpful in explaining their interesting hobby of racing and race car driving. Interviewing Randy Taylor and Leo Trucke helped me, and I appreciate their cooperation with this story.

I think all this story about racing has perked my interest enough to dig out my race car and rebuild the things I have broken. I think I will rebuild the front end and go through my engine, if it is worth going through. I think I will make it all race-ready again this year. I hope to see more people come to the Hayden Speedway and watch me race because one of these days I'll be carrying that 'checkered flag!'



*Leo, chalking up another checkered flag.*

## Stock Car Racing

### Hayden Speedway

### July 26 Sat. Night

Cars From  
**CRAIG - STEAMBOAT SPG. - ELK SPRINGS - MEEKER**

Consession on Grounds      Spectator Car Parking

| LATE MODELS    | NO. | SUPER MODIFIED         | NO. |
|----------------|-----|------------------------|-----|
| Randy Taylor   | 66  | Frank Machado          | 99  |
| Frank Machado  | 44  | Jim Kowach             | 6   |
| Hoppy Gross    | 166 | Max Ciani              | 20  |
| Gary Petrie    | 76  | Don Randolph           | 60  |
| Howard Herbert | 70  | Harry Weber            | 21  |
| Ron West       | 32  | Al Chamberlain         | 86  |
|                |     | Leo Truckie            | 91  |
|                |     | Randy Rains            | 96  |
|                |     | Dennis Sitter          | 46  |
|                |     | Mike Webster           | 4   |
|                |     | Jim Patterson          | 37  |
|                |     | Don Gattelson          | 74  |
|                |     | Earl Ezell             | 28  |
|                |     | Gorden & Terry Whisner | 17  |

More Being Built

**Hayden Speedway**

2mi. South Hayden