

EXPERIENCING THUNDER ON ICE

By Dale P. Danielski
February 2008

It wasn't the Daytona 500 but nobody really cared! Actually it was automobile ice racing with the Thunder On Ice group at Lake Speed in Tilleda Wisconsin that we were witnessing on a typical for the Badger State February winters day.

With temperatures in the 20's and snow falling, you'd be hard pressed to get any fans out for an auto race at the many short tracks throughout the state, but for ice racing the conditions were nearly perfect. An ample field of 36 race cars in four divisions were on hand and ready to put on some great side by side action on the ¼ mile or so ice oval. Drivers in two separate studded tire and non studded divisions took to the ice track to do battle. They did not disappoint either as plenty of excitement was generated in each race contested.



Many of the race cars on hand are utilized during the regular season of racing on dirt or asphalt tracks, although a good many of the cars here are only used for racing on the ice. Watching the competitors pulling into the designated pit area is like taking a step back in time also as most are hauled in on open trailers rather than the enclosed units that are the norm for today. It's a lot like I remember racing as a kid when you knew who was who as their car

was being transported in plain view. Those days were a great time in racing and today's event brought back many of those pleasant memories.

Front wheel drive, and rear wheel drive studded and non studded tire equipped vehicles determine how the races are lined up. With non studded vehicles racing is a lot more treacherous but those guys really get it on nonetheless. The studded tire drivers have more grip to work with and definitely generate substantially more flying ice and speed. Speed however is not a huge factor here and it's a good thing as a snow barrier is about all that separates the track from those watching the action in the pit area!

Just what you ask possesses these men and women to go racing on the ice? The thrill of competition at an affordable price is the popular reply. Ice racing offers little or nothing in the way of pay-back, but it also is much less expensive than racing at a track during the summer months. The sport is also very fan friendly as the viewing area also serves as the pit area for the race teams!



All in all, ice racing is a great diversion from the cold winter season here and a great way to get rid of some of that cabin fever. If you need a racing fix and racing reruns on the television set just won't do it, get out and catch some ice racing. An event on ice, and this type of racing is held at numerous venues throughout the state, may just be what the doctor ordered to cure the winter blahs. And who knows, you may find yourself behind the wheel of a car racing yourself. Maybe Daytona isn't such a reach after all.

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