

Looking Back At Huset's Champions

Eighteen years ago this summer Husets Speedway, under the direction of the Sioux Falls Stock Car Association, began operating. In that eighteen-year span eleven different drivers have won the coveted honor of 'CHAMPION'. Four of these men have retired from driving, one has left us forever and the remainder are still active drivers.

In 1958 'Bombing Bob' Lukes, who was one of four race driving brothers, won the title driving a '38 Chevrolet coupe No. 88. It was the

days of the 24-car features and the little No. 88 would usually start 24th...and finish first. The '58 championship was Bob's only one although he continued to run several years. In his last year of competition, 1972, he drove Bill Leach's No. 1 super modified to two features wins late in the season. Now retired from driving Bob lives in the state of Oregon.

The flathead Ford era was ushered in at Husets when Arnie Nimmerfroh won the title in both 1959 & 1962.

Arnie, who suffered a fatal heart attack a few years ago, wheeled a '33 Ford three window coupe to the championship in 1959. In 1962 he ran a '32 Ford two-door sedan, both cars would finish last in a beauty contest, both were painted orange and white and both had the number 11 on its flanks.

One of the most successful racing teams to emerge from the early years of racing was the combination of the Haugan brothers. The red and white '38 Plymouth coupe No. 4 with Gil at the

wheel and Vern on the working end of the wrenches captured the titles in both '60 & '61. Gil became the first two-time, back to back, champion at the track. The team later purchased a Petty Plymouth and went racing on the IMCA late model circuit. Two years later they retired from racing and now are both business owners in Sioux Falls. In 1963 the Huset racing fans heard a new noise from the track. Familiar with the drone of the flatheads and whine of the stovebolt sixes this new exhaust sound was peculiar. By the end of the season it was no longer a strange sound, but the sound of a 292 cu. in. GMC with a fellow named Harold Petree putting it through its paces. The purple No. 39 was a frequent winner with its burping roar and belching flames from its exhaust and Harold copped the championship that year. For good measure he repeated again in '65 to become the third two-time champion. He later retired from driving and served as the flagman for several years, before turning the job to John Pattison. Harold lives in Sioux Falls and attends the races occasionally.

Marlo and Jay Egge built a 'super' car for the '64 season. It was a '32 Ford two-door sedan equipped with a 289 Ford OHV engine and an automatic transmission. They then selected a driver they thought could get the job done for them. He did. Dave Engebretson was unbeatable in the blue-green colored No. 15 and was the

newest name to the list of champions. Davey then retired from driving to concentrate on business interests. Just two years ago, however, Dave re-entered the racing wars and now runs a super modified and a sprint car.

Roger Swenson and Earl Thomas battled 'hair, tooth and tonail' all season long during the '66 campaign. After racing each other all summer Thomas, in Bob Schriever's No. 97 and Swenson in his own yellow No. 60, had to run the final event of the year to decide the championship. Swenson won the feature and the title. Roger, who lives in Watertown, now runs a Camaro in the late model ranks at Huron and Madison.

But Thomas was not to be denied. He returned the following year and won the championship. Then in '69, with a new ride, he repeated the performance. Driving Don Handers No. 27 'The Earl' became another two-time Huset Champion. Now semi-retired Earl lives in St. Louis, Missouri.

For the Egge brothers it was '64 all over again. For the '68 season they once again came up with a winner. They built a little bomb of a racing car. Under the hood they stuffed another of those 289 Fords and in the driver's seat a big fellow named Jim 'Heavy' Matthews. By mid July everyone was wondering who would finish in second place. Matthews and the No. 15 was an unbeatable combination. Jim, a Mitchell native, is still a weekly competitor at



Husets.

In '70 Jack Mader had a better idea. It was called a Roger Larson. The Mader built and Larson driven little No. 99 was a winner from the first race of the year. Following his title year at Husets Roger joined the sprint car ranks and is still a regular competitor, this year running the Hanisch car No. 21 from Humboldt, Iowa.

Bill Mellenberndt, another very active driver today in the sprinters, established a record in winning the '71 championship that will stand for some time. Bill, who never had the lead in the points until the fairs that year, won all five fair events. In winning the three dates at the Sioux Empire Fair in Sioux Falls and the two at the State Fair in Huron it gave home the bulge in points for the win. In '74 he again won the title gaining enough points on the last turn of the last lap of the last race of the year nudging out Dick Morris.

Then in '72 along came this 'old man' in his No. 38 car. Harry Torgerson has won the Huset championship in '72, '73 and '75. He is the only three-time winner in the track's history. And he is still at it. Currently leading the points it appears as though he will be the only four-time winner. And believe it or not he was one of those 24 cars back in '58 when Lukes was the Champ.

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Short Track (Night)

Sept. 12

Moto Cross

Oct. 10

Moto Cross