

GREEN FLAG SET TO FLY IN THE CAPITAL REGION: BRINGING YOU UP TO SPEED FOR 2004!

by **Andy Crane**



The winter thaw is starting to set in around the capital region. Soon the sound of racing engines and the smell of burning rubber will fill the air at all the area's speedways. An exciting schedule of fast pace wheel-to-wheel action is on tap for the 2004 season. This will bring you up to speed with all the local happenings around the area to get your need... for speed!

The racing season un-officially kicked off with the running of the Great American Race, The Daytona 500. This would be the first NASCAR race run under the new sponsorship name Nextel Cup seeing the end of a legacy with Winston no longer in the sport. Dale Earnhardt Jr. would win an emotional victory in the 500, after passing frequent Capital Region invader Tony Stewart with 18 laps to go. Dale Jr.'s win came 6 years to the day that his late father, the legendary Dale Earnhardt Sr., won his only Daytona 500 victory in his well documented 20th try.

Daytona wasn't the only place to see some racing in the Florida sunshine as Speed weeks, the annual week long spectacle of speed leading up to the Daytona 500. Some of our own local drivers headed south to kick off there 2004 season as the DIRT Florida tour made its stop at the Volusia Speedway in Baberville.

Defending 2003 Lebanon Valley Speedway Champion Brett "The Jet" Hearn got things started with a win on the opening night 30 lap feature event. Fellow Valley regular JR Heffner of Averill Park piloted his brightly colored #74 machine to victory lane at Volusia. Hearn and Heffner finished 2nd and 4th respectively in the final Florida tour point standings. Other locals to make there way to the warmer weather was Chris Moore and "Chic" Chandler, though both didn't fare as well.

Speaking of the Lebanon Valley speedway, what does Owner and Promoter Howie Commander have in store for the 1/2 mile high-banked dirt super speedway this season? Well, I think the question has to be what doesn't he?

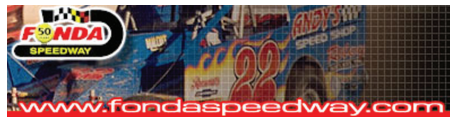
The 52nd grand season opener kicks off the 2004 season on April 17th with a full card of racing excitement, featuring some of the best local talent you can find anywhere. The schedule also has the World of

AUTO RACING IN THE CAPITAL REGION



- April 10:** WarmUps; Pit Open 1 pm;
Track 3 - 6pm
- April 17:** 52ND Grand Season Opener –
L & M Motors/Heavy
Hauler/Modified/Pro Stock-
Rookie Challenge & Pure
Stock/Plus 4-Cyl Feature
- April 24:** Waste Management
Night/Opening Night for
Sportsman/Plus 1 Cannonball
- May 1:** Madsen Overhead
Doors/Boomer's Performance
Night \$500 to Win Modified Pit
Crew Challenge
- May 8:** National Planning Associates/
Quandt's Food Service Night/
4-Cyl Demo Derby \$400 To
Win/Little League Night
- May 15:** XTRA Mart/Bilinski/Sunoco/
APLus 358 Mod Syr. Qualifier;
Adm. - \$10 Gen, \$11 Res.
- May 22:** County Concrete Night/
Lebanon Springs Self Storage/
4-cyl Feature
- May 29:** Twin Modified Mains Memorial
Weekend Special Pres. By
Callanan Industries;
Adm. \$11 Gen, \$12 Res.

- May 31:** CARQUEST Presents The WORLD
OF OUTLAWS 2004 Edition of
The Greatest Show On Dirt/Plus
Modifieds/Heats; 7pm
(Rain Date Tues June 01);
Adm. - \$22, All seats Reserved
- Jun 05:** Williams Lumber
Night/Wohrles/358 Mods; Adm.
- \$10 Gen, \$11 Res
- Jun 11:** IWS Wrestling presents SUDDEN
IMPACT; Autographs 6pm;
1st Match - 8pm;
Adm. - \$12 Gen, \$8 Kids,
\$20 Ringside
- Jun 12:** Key Bank /Heavy Hauler
Night/Sportsman Cash Dash/
4-cyl Feature



- April 10:** Season Opener with the ICE JAM
event - Big Block and Small
Block Modifieds
- May 1:** 360 Sprint Car Open
- May 8:** Eye Rock 500 - 3rd consecutive
year
- May 29:** URC Sprints



Season opens on June 23rd
vs the Brooklyn Cyclones
at Joe Bruno Stadium in Troy.
Catch our profile of the
Capital Region's popular
minor league baseball
franchise in the next
edition of *The Journal*.

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Outlaws Sprint Car series coming to town and it is highly recommended to check out. Wrestling, Monster Trucks, an Eve of Destruction, roll over contest & school bus races are some of the special events going on at the track in West Lebanon, New York.

So you've got the itch to go racing your self, but don't have the thousands of dollars or the time to run your own racing program? Well, you're in luck! The Lebanon Valley Nastrack, a mini go-kart track located on the grounds of the speedway, is where you can come and participate in using the tracks "Sprint-Karts" or "Nas-Karts". Drivers can tame the "Mini Valley" running warm ups, heats and mains. For more information on racing at the Mini Valley, check out their website at www.lvkarts.com.

Head down the Interstate to the "Track of Champions," the Fonda Speedway. Located in Fonda, New York, it is a great old speedway that has been around for over 50 years. Legendary drivers such as NASCAR's own Richard Petty have raced at the famed 1/2 mile in its vast history.

Fonda kicks off its 2004 season on April 10th with its annual ICE JAM event for the Big Block and Small Block Modifieds. This race brings out some of the best names in DIRT motorsports in a 50-lap contest of man and machine.

The Speedway also has its share of special events, like Big Block Modified events, Fireworks and a 410 sprint car race. And on Tuesday, July 27th, Kenny Schrader - a current Nextel Cup star - will be racing an IMCA car owned and prepared by Steve Hart. Plus,

of course, great weekly competition with drivers like "Jumpin" Jack Johnson and 2003 track champion Dave Lape as they all do battle on the Mohawk River!

Before you know it, we will be smack in the middle of the season. Come and check out some of the excitement the Capital Region's area race tracks has to offer. Don't be left in the dust! Racing is a sport that you must experience in person. So get off the couch, grab the family and friends and check out the stars in your own backyard this summer!

NASCAR NEXTEL CUP SCHEDULE

- 04/04/04: *Samsung/Radio Shack 500*;
Texas Motor Speedway
- 04/18/04: *Advance Auto Parts 500*;
Martinsville Speedway
- 04/25/04: *Aaron's 499*;
Talladega Superspeedway
- 05/02/04: *Auto Club 500*;
California Speedway
- 05/15/04: *Chevrolet American
Revolution 400*; Richmond
International Raceway
- 5/22/04: *NASCAR Nextel All-Star
Challenge*;
Lowe's Motor Speedway
- 05/30/04: *Coca-Cola 600*;
Lowe's Motor Speedway
- 06/06/04: *MBNA America 400*; Dover
International Speedway
- 06/13/04: *Pocono 500*;
Pocono Raceway