

## ● Kankakee County Speedway



The Daily Journal/Michelle Gannon

Lee J Hall prepares to race for Vallejo Racing at the Kankakee County Speedway Friday night.

# Speedway make sense? Not really

## Exciting races leave fans, drivers scratching heads

By Dennis Yohnka

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Stock car racing has been labeled as "gritty" and "thrilling" and maybe "low-brow."

But no one ever said it had to make sense.

And that's how Friday night's conclusion of the River City Shoot-Out played out at the Kankakee County Speedway.

Case in point: Jim Farris' win in the 35-lap Open-Wheel Modified feature. How can this Odell driver continue to blast through the turns, holding off challenge after challenge from some of the Midwest's best drivers ... and then see his engine fail in victory lane?

"I noticed after the races that it was running on seven cylinders," Farris said. "We had to repair a rocker arm before we could drive it over here (to the grandstand gate where winning drivers meet exiting fans)."

Another outcome that didn't make sense: Dave Porth, of Gardner, took home the trophy for the top finishes in the Thursday and Friday shoot-out races. It didn't make sense because he had to drop

out of his qualifying heat race with damages after a three-car wreck.

"So, I had to win the semi-feature to get into the field and I start at the back with a lot of good cars on the track," Porth recounted. "I figured: What the heck? It seems like this is the way I'm always running features."

But Porth has never gone from the last row to second place. And that finish, combined with a fourth on Thursday gave him the overall title.

Common sense was ignored in the Late Model Division, as well.

Anyone who saw Manhattan's Mike Spatola make history on Thursday would expect that he could find his way to the winner's circle against a less fearsome group of cars. At 20 years, 4 months, Spatola had become the youngest winner in the 27-year history of the United Midwest Promoters Summer National tour just 24 hours earlier. He dominated the biggest names in dirt track racing, including reigning national points champ Rusty Schlenk, of Jackson, Mich.

On this night, though, Schlenk grabbed the early lead, and decided he would own the high groove. Spatola pulled even with him on the low side, and even led for brief seconds coming out of the turns, but each time Schlenk's momentum would allow him to pull away.

"That was fun, but scary," Schlenk said of the side-by-side action. "Even with a real good driver like Spatola, you have to

remember that these cars can have a mind of their own. Bad things can happen, but I bet it's fun to watch."

The crowd did seem to enjoy the scene. Spatola was denied his fifth feature win in five appearances here this summer, and Schlenk earned a payday that covers fuel and repairs for the trip.

Other smile producers included:

- The eighth-place finish by Cullom's Torin Mettelle in the Late Model's main event. It was the first top 10 finish for the rookie driver.

- The third-place finish by Kankakee's Phil Line in the Modifieds' feature. He made late passes on some of the national point leaders to notch his best finish of the summer.

- And the survival of Independent Modified driver Mark Stevenson, of Kankakee. His car tangled with a heat race pack on the front stretch and wound up on its side, next to the wall. Stevenson, who teaches welding at Kankakee Community College, climbed safely from his car and bowed to the cheering crowd before visiting the track ambulance briefly.

In the United Midwest Promoters Stock Car class, Andrew Funk, of Bloomington, won his second feature in two nights, but runner-up Jay Hamilton, of Bonfield kept the night interesting with his best run of the season.

In the Independent Modifieds, defending point champ Adam Williams grabbed the feature with a wire-to-wire victory.

## Fast, fun times for Vallejo

By Kyle Garmes

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A busy lifestyle stopped St. Anne native Manny Vallejo from making a hobby out of racing cars.

But it didn't take him out of racing completely.

Instead, the 52-year-old is the man behind the scenes. The leader of Vallejo Racing, he owns five cars, three of which competed Friday at the Kankakee County Speedway.

Before his cars competed in their heats, Vallejo said he always loved racing, starting when he came out to KCS in the 1970s.

He started racing go-karts this century, then moved on to stock cars. But one small issue arose.

"And eventually what happened is, I started a little too late in life," said Vallejo, who works for ComEd. "I was working a lot of hours, and I really couldn't race. So I said, 'Well, I want to stay involved somehow,' so I started to get some new drivers."

Competing Friday were Don Hilleary, who finished sixth in the UMP stock-car division; Nick Montalta, who was seventh in the independent-modified group; and Lee Hall, who came in ninth in the stock-car division.

Hall, who gave Montalta's car a drive after all the racing was done to see why it was only able to finish seventh, joined Vallejo's entourage this year.

"Basically, I've drove all my own stuff my whole life," Hall said before his heat. "One other year I drove for another guy, and it was alright, but this deal here, every guy is super nice on the team. We share information and share stuff, and it really makes a team effort out of everything, and it's a lot fun. Between the shop and here and racing, that what it's about — to have fun — anyway."

Vallejo echoed that thought.

"It's very important, to be in a good atmosphere, especially racing," Vallejo said. "We all make a point: first we're gonna have fun. And these boys work their butts off on these cars, but we always have fun. We've always stuck with that. If we can't have fun, then we really shouldn't be doing it. And we've got a real good atmosphere here. They're all real good guys."

The good vibes when it's time to meet up and race also drive Vallejo.

"It's the atmosphere here at the track, too," he said. "You meet a lot of good people; it's a great way to spend a Friday and a Saturday. Actually the racing people can come back and be up around, you know ... It's just fun."

"You race hard; whether you win or lose, you still have lot of friends here. It just makes it real pleasant."

Vallejo was busy all those years ago, and that's still the case. Though he's behind the scenes, and not behind the wheel, he's got a full slate.

"Thank god for the cell phone," said Vallejo, who has three adult children. "Because we do a lot of talking on the cell phone."

## ● Interleague Baseball: Cubs 3, NY Yankees 1

# Davis pitches Cubs past Yankees

Season-high crowd sees Cubs beat Bombers

By Jay Cohen

The Associated Press

CHICAGO — Mark Teixeira saw a couple changeups that went up and away. Curtis Granderson said it was inside, outside and down in the zone the entire game, never much to hit.

Doug Davis just baffled 'em, all day long.

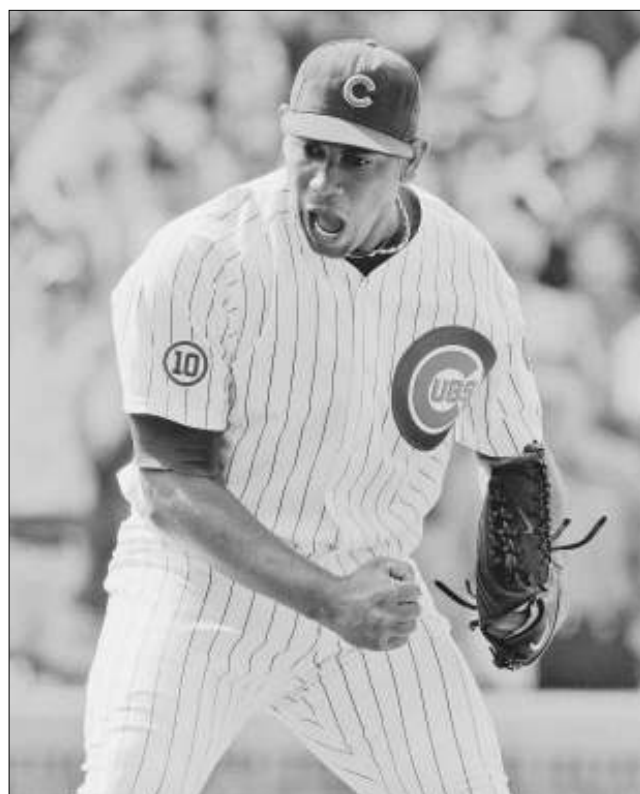
"There's no patterns," Teixeira said. "You don't really know where the ball is going to go."

Davis pitched into the eighth inning in easily his best start of the season and the Chicago Cubs began a rare series against the New York Yankees with a 3-1 victory on Friday.

"I was able to get ahead a lot," Davis said. "I was throwing strikes with all of my pitches, except for my curveball. For the most part, I was able to keep them off balance and execute pitches when I had to."

Aramis Ramirez hit a pair of RBI singles and made a couple nice plays in the field for Chicago, which has won four of five after dropping a season-high 14 games under .500. Starlin Castro doubled twice and is batting .458 (11 for 24) in the last six games.

A season-high crowd of 42,219 packed Wrigley Field for the Bronx Bombers' first trip to the neighborhood ballpark in eight years.



The Associated Press/Nam Y. Huh

**Cubs closer Carlos Marmol reacts after the Cubs defeated the Yankees 3-1 during an interleague game Friday in Chicago.**

There was a smattering of "Let's go Yankees!" chants but the mostly red-and-blue clad fans were firmly behind the Cubs on a sunny, breezy afternoon.

"The biggest crowd of the year, but the best crowd," Cubs manager Mike Quade said. "These two cities are so well represented. It was better than the Boston series for me. I know I'm home and all the rest of it, but the electricity was something special."

It was a homecoming of sorts for Yankees manager Joe Girardi, who was born in Peoria, went to college at nearby Northwestern and rooted for the Cubs when he was a kid. He also played six seasons for the Cubs during two stints with the club that drafted him in 1986.

"Whenever I come back here, I see people that I know," Girardi said, "so I

mean that part was nice."

Girardi and the Yankees rolled into Chicago coming off a three-game sweep against AL champion Texas and winners of six of seven overall. But they were never able to solve Davis, who entered with an 0-5 record and a 5.90 ERA in six starts this season.

Robinson Cano and Eduardo Nunez had the Yankees' only hits off Davis before Nick Swisher doubled with one out in the eighth to chase the soft-tossing left-hander.

Davis (1-5) received a thunderous ovation as he left the mound following his longest start since he pitched eight innings in a 5-2 victory for Arizona at Wrigley Field on Oct. 4, 2009. It also was his first victory since May 5, 2010, for Milwaukee at the Los Angeles Dodgers.

## ● Interleague Baseball: Arizona 4, White Sox 1

# White Sox offense AWOL again in loss to D-backs

Bob Baum

The Associated Press

PHOENIX — The Chicago White Sox search for their missing offense goes on.

Paul Konerko's leadoff home run in the seventh ended a string of 18 scoreless innings for the White Sox, but that was all they could muster against Daniel Hudson in a 4-1 interleague loss to the Arizona Diamondbacks on Friday night.

"Today we did nothing, nothing exciting about it," Chicago manager Ozzie Guillen said. "We got the home run and the last inning was OK but we are struggling and we have to come out of it as quick as we can."

The White Sox have two runs — total — in their last three games, all of them losses.

Hudson, who came up through the White Sox minor league system, was traded to Arizona last July 30 for Edwin Jackson, the loser in Friday night's game.

"Going against the team that drafted me and gave me my first chance in the big leagues was a lot of fun," Hudson said. "To do what I did was cool."

Hudson threw a three-hitter in his first career complete game.

"Daniel threw the ball very well," Guillen said, "that and a combination of a struggling team at the plate. He has been throwing the ball good for them. He was throwing 3-2 change-ups to guys. That is confidence. That is maturity. We always liked him and when we traded him we knew he had a chance to be a good one. There was not any doubt in anyone's mind about that."

Hudson (8-5) earned his eighth win in nine decisions since starting the season 0-4. His RBI double with two outs in the seventh ended the night for Jackson (4-6), who gave up four runs on eight hits in 6 2-3 innings.

Arizona's Justin Upton singled three times, his fifth straight multihit game. Upton, whose first career game-ending home run gave Arizona a 3-2 victory over San Francisco in 10 innings the Thursday night, singled in a run in the first inning, then scored from first on Miguel Montero's two-out double.

Upton has hit .591 (13 of 22) during that five-game span. He reached base for the fourth time when he walked in the eighth, then stole second.



The Associated Press/Ross D. Franklin

**Alexei Ramirez flips the ball to White Sox teammate Gordon Beckham to force Arizona's Justin Upton out at second in an interleague game Friday in Phoenix.**

Hudson retired 16 in a row after walking Carlos Quentin in the first inning. The streak ended when shortstop Stephen Drew had trouble getting the ball out of his glove after fielding Alexei Ramirez's grounder and his throw pulled first baseman Juan Miranda just off the bag.

The error marred an otherwise outstanding defensive game for Drew, who fielded 10 grounders flawlessly, several of them tough plays, and threw the runners out. He also caught a pair of pop ups. He also was part of the game-ending double play on a grounder to Hudson.

Drew singled in the first, took second when Jackson was called for a balk, then scored when Upton's singled. Montero's RBI double to the right field gap made it 2-0.

After Konerko's 17th home run of the season cut the lead to 2-1, Arizona got two more in the seventh. Ryan Roberts singled with one out, then after Jackson fanned Gerardo Parra, Hudson doubled to deep right-center to bring in the run. Left-hander Chris Sale replaced Jackson and gave up an RBI double to Kelly Johnson to put the Diamondbacks ahead 4-1.