

Appeared in Dirt Late Model magazine-Call it a rant, but facts are facts.

There Are No Dirt Tracks In New York City

Writing for Dirt Late Model magazine, I often feel like a Baptist minister on Sunday mornings. Looking over the congregation from my pulpit, 'er make that readers and my keyboard, I know I am preaching the dirt late model gospel to true believers. Recently though, I have been washed with a missionary zeal. Zeal, born of fervor, hatched from frustration. Years of frustration. I have this overwhelming desire to reach out to the unlearned masses and show them just what our favorite form of entertainment is all about.

I am neither a driver nor a promoter, but being a writer I would love my words to show others all they are missing. I have had some great story ideas-OK, I thought they were great ideas, most worthy of space in a national publication. For the Wall Street Journal, or maybe Business Week, I have an article titled "The Billion Dollar Industry You Never Heard Of." Yes, late model racing is a billion dollar industry. I mentioned my idea to a money guru and he told me the Journal wouldn't be interested in the story. Why I asked? Because "a billion dollars just isn't what it used to be," he said. Wow!! I did not know that. I had heard a million dollars wasn't what it used to be, but this was the first time I had heard that a billion dollars wasn't really big money. Maybe if Warren Buffett would buy a dirt track the Journal would be interested. Hey Warren, you bought the Omaha Royals AAA baseball team, how about a Midwest race track?

What about an article in a travel magazine? There are a thousand dirt tracks scattered around North America, some near famous tourist destinations, and newsstands racks are full of travel rags. No luck. Travel magazines are interested in sandy beaches or golf course sand traps, not dirt. Wine and a gourmet meal their editors find tempting, beer and a hot dog not so appealing. Sweating at a spa is cool, sweating while sitting on wooden grandstands and breathing dust, not so cool. Shopping along Rodeo Drive is fashionable; buying a t-shirt from the back of a hauler is not. In-flight magazines? Apparently we do not fit the demographics. Excuse me. Maybe the decals on our favorite race car say Bill's Trailer and Radiator Repair, not Home Depot, or the world famous Dew Drop Inn, not Pepsi, but we still consume, and are quite loyal consumers I might add. Darn, we don't even fit the demographics of Southwest Airlines? Not interested even though there are dirt tracks within 50 miles of 75% of your destinations?

My son Matt thinks Chris Wall would be great for National Geographic, giving the publication alligators and dirt late model racing, or animals and a primitive culture all in one story. Their editors should love an article like that. Yeah right.

But who reads magazines anyway? Oops, sorry Tim. It's actually 'who reads books anymore.' Anyway, how about TV? Ya gotta love NASCAR. Their ads promoting weekly racing touch my heart. Of course most NASCAR sanctioned weekly tracks race on Saturday night, and it seems like there are quite a few Nextel Cup races on Saturday

nights anymore. What I don't get about the Cuppies-race "fans" who don't even realize that most tracks have a dirt surface, sort of the NASCAR version of yuppies-is they don't mind missing half the action as Fox and NBC show commercial after commercial. Or that it really is true when announcers state "races are won in the pits." That frustrates me.

And now, more frustration. Thousands of people tuned into an HBO pay per view program from Eldora Speedway on Wednesday June 6th. Not to watch Moyer and Bloomquist battle in The Dream, but to watch to watch Stewart, Montoya, Gordon, Kahne, Harvick, Kenseth, Martin, Hamlin, and Labonte in the Prelude To The Dream. Yes, Stewart and Gordon et al are superstars-on asphalt. On dirt? Well, Stewart is good, and several of the others still remember their way around a dirt oval. BUT, the event was entertainment, a racing reality show, not true competition. Where were the HBO announcers, crew, cameras, and trailers the night of The Dream? Not in Eldora. And once again an opportunity to take dirt late model racing mainstream was lost. Why is the best racing ignored by newspapers, magazines, and TV?

I recently spent three days at a writer's conference in New York City. Not only did I learn a lot about writing, I also discovered the source of our dilemma. New York is truly the center of world media. Much of what we read and watch is determined in offices in those very tall Manhattan buildings. BUT, nowhere in New York City is there a dirt track. The media moguls are simply unaware that something as exciting as dirt late model racing exists. My solution: Well, I understand that Yankee Stadium is going to be torn down. As a long time Yankee despiser, I say don't rebuild it. Instead, build a dirt track and save a few hundred million dollars in the process. I know, not gonna happen. OK, if NASCAR is really serious about those down home weekly race tracks ads, they should build a dirt track there instead of one more 1 ½ mile cookie cutter track. Build it close to La Guardia Airport. Who would complain about a little stock car noise when there are hundreds of jets flying over day and night?

Put a dirt track in New York City, and then the media might notice us. I'm pretty sure that stranger things have happened.

P.S. Yes, I was one of the thousands who plunked down \$25 to watch the Prelude To The Dream on HBO PPV.