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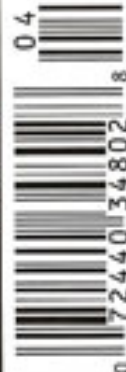
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Gene Coleman, owner of Coleman Racing Products, lets Mike "Lumpy" Lemke know his feelings about a decision that the ASA Tech Director made concerning Coleman's No. 119 entry.

## Inside the Mind of a Tech Director

CIRCLE TRACK  
VENTURES WHERE  
FEW DARE TO GO...

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY  
BY KEVIN RAMSELL

**Every racer has,** at one time or another, wanted to take matters into his own hands as you see our friend Gene Coleman doing in the lead photo. But no matter if it's the most well-known racing series in the world or it's a short track in your backyard, the job of a Tech Director is often overlooked among all the on-track action. Lost in a maze of lap times, pit stops and visits to

the concession stands, the work of these individuals typically goes unnoticed until a tough decision has to be made. At that point the lights focus squarely on the one holding that illustrious title.

Mike "Lumpy" Lemke has been involved in auto racing for more than 30 years. Like many other Tech Directors, he can say he has "been there... done that" by starting out working on a local race team and subsequently holding numerous jobs in

motorsports. Lumpy, as just about everybody calls him, eventually landed in his current role, National Tech Director for the American Speed Association which encompasses ASA Racing, the ASA Trans-continental Series, the ASA Midwest Tour, two ASA Member Tracks (Norway Speedway in Norway, Michigan; and State Park Speedway in Wausau, Wisconsin), and for the popular Oktoberfest Race Weekend at La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway in West Salem, Wisconsin. Running the tech side of all of those events and series fairly is quite a task.

Lumpy's philosophy when it comes to race car tech has earned him respect not only among other Tech Directors involved in Super Late Model racing, but also from manufacturers asking for his input. It's delineated by strict adherence to a set of goals. It's those goals that he feels will help short track racing now and for years to come. "The goal is to keep costs as low as I can for teams and drivers," says Lumpy. "Also, to be as fair as I can with

# ULTIMATE RACING

all teams keeping the rules as simple as possible, while making them easy to police and in line with other tracks and series in the surrounding areas."

One example of how to keep costs low, or at least reasonable, that Lumpy favors is to freeze rules for a specified period of time, say several years at a time. The natural evolution of racing

parts can create feeding frenzy like cost increases when you may not need it. It is the philosophy of the cheapest engine combination you have is the one you already own. Lumpy says the introduction of the ASA Midwest Tour's spec engine program (McGunegil, Wegner, and so on) is an example of this concept. The spec's existence brings balance to



Lumpy, as just about everybody (friends and enemies) calls him, is National Tech Director for the American Speed Association which encompasses ASA Racing, the ASA Transcontinental Series, the ASA Midwest Tour, two ASA Member Tracks (Norway Speedway in Norway, Michigan; and State Park Speedway in Wausau, Wisconsin), and for the popular Oktoberfest Race Weekend at La Crosse Fairgrounds Speedway in West Salem, Wisconsin.

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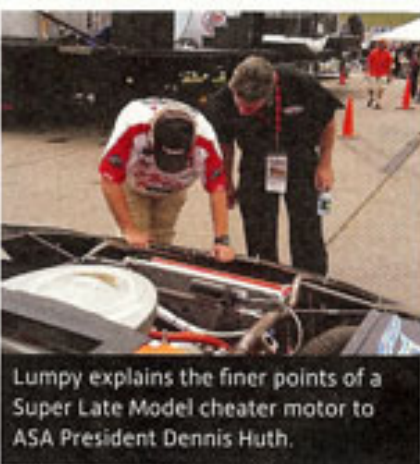
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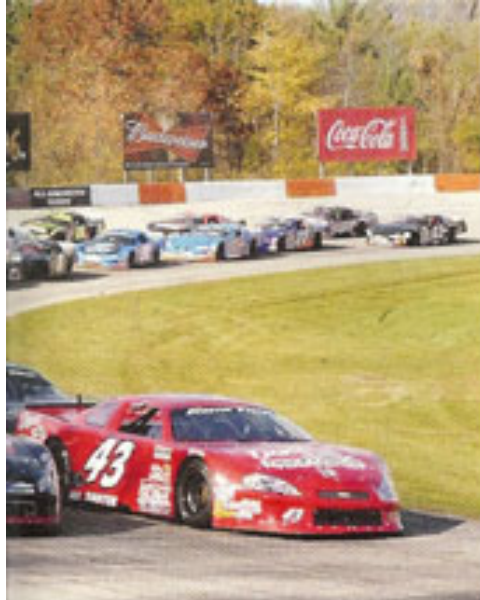


Lumpy explains the finer points of a Super Late Model cheater motor to ASA President Dennis Huth.

race motor options across the board.

When he talks about keeping the rules in line with other tracks and series, Lumpy focuses on communication and building a good rapport with other Tech Officials and manufacturers. "It is very important to get help from tech people and to stay on top of what is new and coming," Lumpy says. "Many of the manufacturers call and talk to us about what is coming out and what is new. When I travel around, I always pick up something new watching what other tech teams do."

Lumpy gets plenty of opportunity



pieces that most people in that series or track have now. You don't want to change what is already there. But you have to move in a direction to where the track/series is going to be in five years. We have to think ahead and look at new areas and products that keep coming into our sport. The big thing is to keep the costs low and stable!"

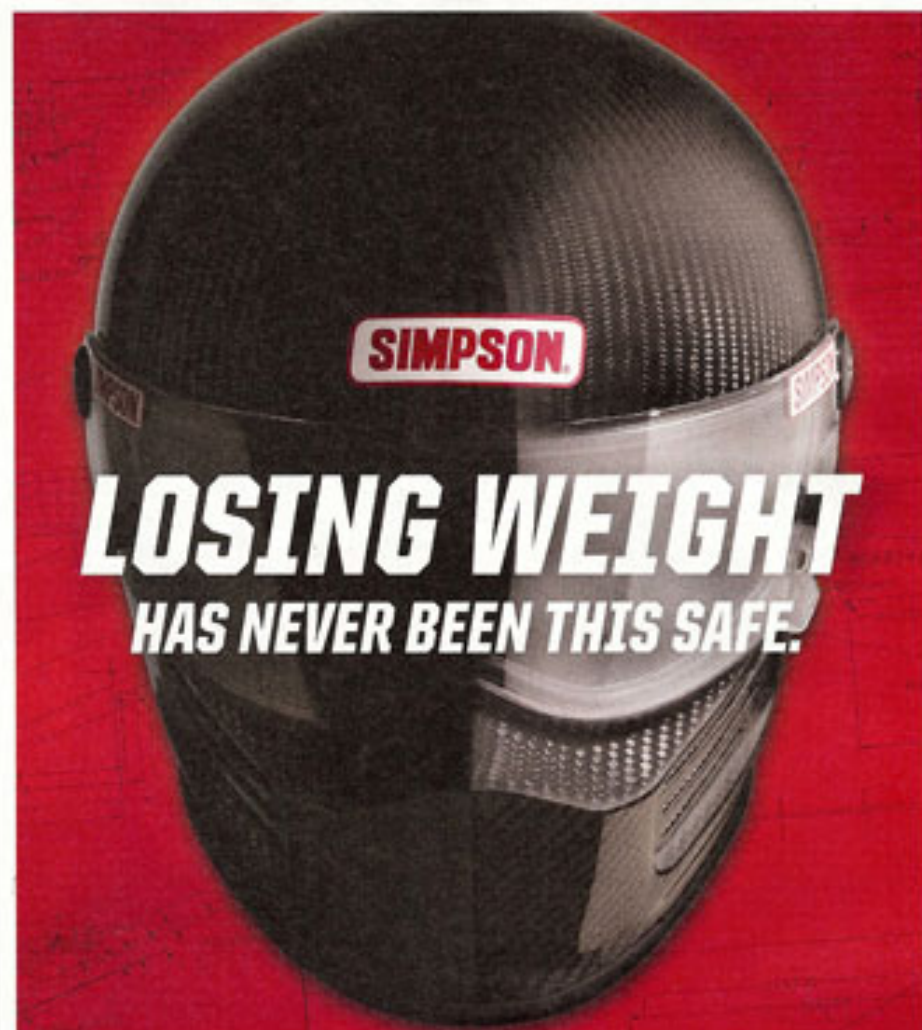
"One thing I do quite a bit when I work with tracks from around the country, is to go through their rules and review them for practicality and consistency." Lumpy says that he finds contradictions more often than you would think. As local officials add and change rules over the course of time, some never go back and change the old rules

to learn from others in his various roles with ASA. "Being the ASA National Tech Director, I get calls from the tracks all year long. Questions will arise from working on their rules, to helping them with a problem they had in tech the night or two before," he recalls. "To me, one of the great things about being under a sanctioning body is that all Tech Directors, like the Promoters, can bounce things off of each other. Usually, when a unique situation arises, another Tech Director has experienced the same thing and can share what they learned."

It's usually around this time of the year that Tech Directors are busy working on updating their rules for the upcoming season. For Lumpy, when he sits down to look at his rules, he has his own set of guidelines. "The most important—what are the major parts or



In 2011, Lumpy won the Larry Wehrs Dedication to Racing Award.



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Lumpy recently conducted a technical seminar on Super Late Model Racing for college students during the Wisconsin College Skills USA Fall Conference at the KI Convention Center in Green Bay, Wisconsin.



At the track, it's usually pretty easy to find Lumpy, just look for the guy on the scooter.

that were superseded by the new ones, which causes confusion. Confusion is what Lumpy tries to eliminate.

### The Gray Area

As every racer knows, there is that little magic spot in any rule book, that famous gray area. It's a place where legends like Smokey Yunick were born. "I try to write the rules as black and white as best as I can. It is

somewhat hard to cover everything as things change rapidly in motorsports today. When you have a gray area, the most important thing to ask yourself is, was this (the gray area) the reason why the car won? Did it help the driver finish where he did? Or was it a non-advantage? Are there rules for this part? But most importantly, do we need to address this in the future?"

### EFI

One area that Lumpy and other Tech Officials are discussing is the future of EFI (electronic fuel injection) engines coming to short track racing. Lumpy already has had some experience with EFI engines during ASA's Free State 500 event back on January 31, 2010 at the Phakisa Freeway Circuit in Welkom, Free State, South Africa (Aug. '11 issue). There were three EFI motors in that race with one of them coming home in Fifth place.

When asked for his thoughts about EFI engines coming into short track racing, Lumpy is pretty optimistic about the impact they will have. "We will see. I have been working with Tim Schwanke for some time on fuel-injected engines. In many cases right now, it is easier to tech than what we currently run," Lumpy explained. "The big reason is the use of the LS series engines and the lack of lightweight exotic components for these engines. The day is coming that we will see this in short track racing. As the engine packages get used in more types of race cars, the parts will also evolve. At this point, it is not a bad deal, just need to have a laptop in hand and go. In the long run, I think it will be a great deal and may even save people money."

"We put Lumpy in a challenging position with our event in South Africa. That was to create a whole new rules package without any chance of testing in advance," said Dennis Huth, ASA President. "His focus was to make a level playing field and he was given the flexibility to make updates when we were at the track. On race day, we had a very competitive race with many lead changes featuring different engine packages with a great battle to the finish. You could not have asked for more, from your Tech Director."

### Key To Success

In order for Lumpy and other Tech Officials to do their job and have that level playing field, they need to have a great relationship with the track/series owners along with a good tech staff. "The big thing is to make sure that promoters have your back on a call. Most



Good officiating might start with the Tech Director, but you'll never get anywhere without a team of officials.



Lumpy, ready for action.

tracks and series that I work for, it is my job to explain what the problem is and to suggest a decision as to the severity of the infraction to the promoter.

"The promoter or track owner must work with you and stand behind your findings and rulings. When everyone leaves that night, they are on the same page. They all have the same answers, even if someone does not agree, they must all stay with the same decision

that was made on the infraction."

### Q&A Time

We had to have a little fun with Lumpy so we asked him to pick the best and worst rules he has ever heard. Now, these could be rules that we adopted or ones that were tossed aside. The winner for best rule was the standardization of Late Model bodies through the ABC body program. "It minimizes

the aero advantage from one team to another." We all know that tweaking aerodynamics in a rented wind tunnel isn't exactly a cheap endeavor.

Now, for the worst rule, evidently there was a group that proposed a fuel octane rule. It was designed as a pump-gas-only rule to outlaw race gas, which can be excessively expensive. "The only problem with it was how would you ever police a fuel octane rule? I've got the best at-track fuel testing equipment available—NASCAR-level stuff—and it doesn't show octane."

Finally, we asked what his biggest challenge today is. He quickly answered by saying, "the hardest thing to do is police the crate motor! The cost of the tools, the time to get the knowledge, it's not straightforward at all. Let me put it this way, I have enough expense in tools to tech a crate motor that I could buy a new 604 crate motor!"

Lumpy, like many other Tech Officials, is proud of what he does. He and other Tech Officials can be called the unsung heroes of this sport. He can easily sum up what he and other Tech Officials feel is the important part of their job. "Working with promoters like the Wimmers at State Park Speedway and the Dickinson County Racing Association board at Norway Speedway, tracks, series owners like Tim Olson and Steve Einhuas, and race teams to have a level playing field. There are always haves and have-nots in racing. But you would like to give them all the same chance of winning or racing at their highest level."

Talking with Lumpy is always entertaining, but coming away from the conversation it is clear that Tech Officials who desire respect and, consequently, success must stick with three basic principles; write clear rules; enforce those rules uniformly; keep open communication with racers, promoters, and series owners.

By the way, if you were wondering how he got the name Lumpy, just like we were, you might be surprised at the answer. "I don't really know," he quipped. "Maybe because it rhymes with Lempke? All I do know is it came about back in the day when I was traveling around with Trickle"...as in short track legend Dick Trickle. 🐻