

## Rodney Erickson Interview

Interviewee: **Rodney Erickson**

Interviewers: **Zach Braun, Dale Kiley-Schaefer, Ryan Bensemann**

Rodney Erickson, the co-owner of Slinger Super Speedway (the worlds fastest quarter mile oval) was interviewed on Wednesday April 9th 2014. The interview was conducted at the Slinger Super Speedway track office located in Slinger, Wisconsin. Rodney's dad, Wayne, was a long time racer before he moved owned the track. Rodney would later receive the track in 2013 from his father and is now the current co-owner of the track along with Todd Thelen. Rodney was asked questions about the history of the track and how he runs the track today. The following transcript is from that interview.

### **MEMORIES**

Q: "What was your first memory of the race track?"

A: "When i was a little kid, my sister and I dressed up. I was George Washington and she was dressed up as the lady that made the American flag but we were out on the racetrack and it was for the national anthem and stuff and we were out there with all the fast qualifiers. My mom dressed us up and that was one of my earliest memories. I was pretty little. Maybe about 5 or 6 years old and my sister was probably about 7 or 8.

Q: "How was your childhood different having your dad as a racer?"

It was different growing up in that era then now because racing was kind of an unknown thing unlike it is now. Alot of the kids at school were like 'your dad has a race track?' It really wasn't something that was like the norm.

### **MEMORIES cont..**

Q: "As a child how much time did you spend at the race track; any interesting stories?"

A: "When I was younger, I was obviously here every Sunday, but I didn't spend a lot of time here during the week until teenage years. I spent a lot of time, like I said, kind of riding around with my dad and stuff like that but I didn't spend a lot of time here because my dad had somebody else take care of everything. I remember a story when one of my dad's workers that was working here and I was younger and we had a tractor we cut the lawn with and he was mowing with the thing and hit one of the power lines and burned all of the wheels off of the tractor. And I remember I was a little kid. They had to get fire extinguishers to put it out. The tractor was fine but it burned all the wheels off.

### **LIFE LESSONS**

Q: "What were the life lessons your dad taught you."

A: "Well one of the things I guess I learned the most from him was probably that you kind of have to work for what you're going to go after and you can't expect everything to come to you naturally. Especially something like this [owning a race track]. You have to work for it. It's not just something you can say, well, it'll be alright, you have to work at it. That's like a lot of businesses. He's also taught me you have to be around the place. You can have the business and you have to be the face of the business. And thats probably one of the biggest life lessons that way.

### **FAMOUS RACERS**

Q. "Describe some of the famous racers you have met throughout the years."

A. "Well, when I was growing up and working there, I often would kinda classify them as ones that were fun to be around and the ones that weren't so much. One of the stand outs that a lot of people know about was Dale Earnhardt, Sr. He wasn't the most pleasant guy to the staff. A lot of people liked him but he just wasn't a guy you could just walk up to and say "Hey what's up?" Bill Elliott couldn't get out of here fast enough. One of the guys that was the best over the years to the staff was Bobby Allison. He was a very nice guy. He would hang out until some of the last people were here. Ernie Irvan was another one. Kenny Wallace. Rusty Wallace was actually pretty decent. I remember meeting Rusty Wallace many times over my life. He never really raced here but was here quite a few times. One of the things I remember was the guys you wouldn't see for awhile and they still remember your name and they were famous. That was kinda nice and Matt (Kenseth) obviously. I kinda grew up with Matt really through life in a way. We had Matt at the track before he was famous and we were about the same age so I had lots of experience with Matt."

### **REMEMBERING A LEGEND**

Q. "What was your first impression of Miles Melius?"

A. "I think he is an icon that created racing in this state (as a premier place for short track racing). He's done a lot of stuff. My dad raced with him and he actually worked with him on occasions for my dad's construction company. He left an impression and one day should be in the history books as one of the founders of racing. He is one of the forefathers and he was very good. My dad said you couldn't beat him. Heck of a guy"

Q. "Does he still come to the races?"

A "Yes every week usually.