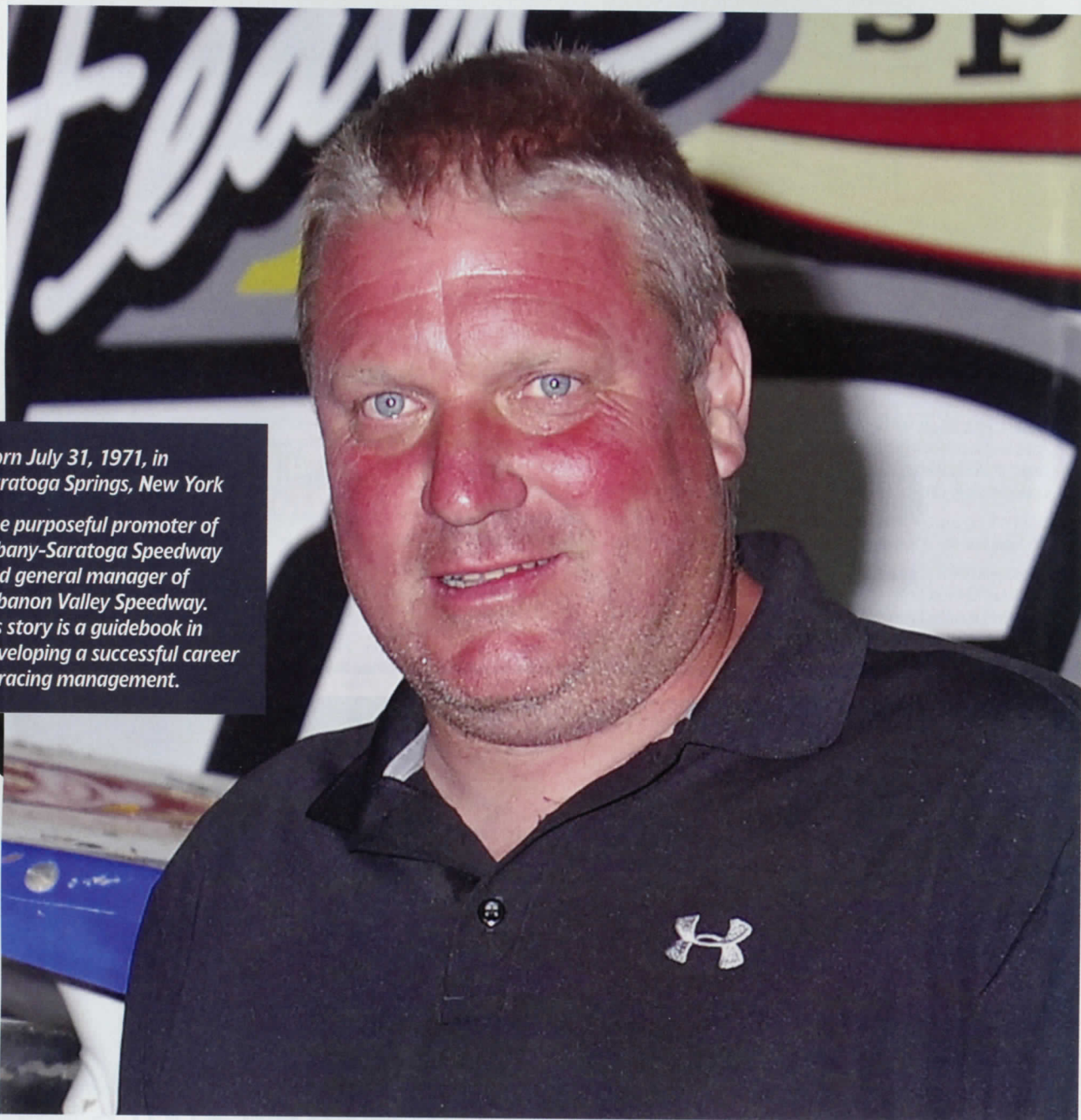


# Lyle DeVore

*In His Own Words*



- Born July 31, 1971, in Saratoga Springs, New York
- The purposeful promoter of Albany-Saratoga Speedway and general manager of Lebanon Valley Speedway. His story is a guidebook in developing a successful career in racing management.

MARK BROWN

## As told to **Lew Boyd**

**L**ike so many in upstate New York, my parents took me to the races a lot growing up. Of course I was thrilled, and “Super CD” Coville was

my favorite driver. But somehow my situation was a little different. I became obsessed with the tracks themselves. I can’t explain why—and it never went away. Even today when I’m off grading a track, I settle into some kind of strange mental comfort zone.

It might have been child labor, but I loved it. At age seven I began picking up trash at Albany-Saratoga in Malta, New York, for promoter C.J. Richards, in return for a ticket. He could see how motivated I was, so picking up rocks off the track was next. I climbed onto the grader at 13 and haven’t

gotten off in 35 years. By 14, I was also busy on race nights as a handicapper.

When I got my license, I also worked summers at Devil's Bowl, C.J.'s track in Vermont. My high-school counselor just went numb when I told him I wanted to be a racetrack operator. I decided to go to Le Moyne College in Syracuse, majoring in business and management information systems. I thought that might come in handy.

Growing up, I also helped my dad with his business. When I graduated, he kindly paid me back by loaning me money for another kind of schooling. I took a summer off from working with C.J., bought an '81 Chevy pickup with a cap—and a sleeping bag—and headed off on a three-and-a-half-month tour around the country to check out Eldora, Tri State, Knoxville, Belleville, and all those tracks I'd heard about. It was lots of miles, lots of truck stops, but it was pretty cool. I'd go during the week, studying everything—the equipment, stands, concessions, restrooms. I watched track prep, the water trucks, their valving, and how the track was groomed. Frankly, I was looking, watching and discovering, more than talking with personnel. But I'd certainly also go on race nights, and I began to build a network with competitors and some promoters.

When I got home, I knew there was one more important adventure. I flew out to the Promoters Workshop in Reno. There I met some key promoters from New York like Howard Commander and his son, Scott, Harvey Fink and Alex Friesen. I hung out with them. And, wouldn't you know, when I got back home, Alex was on the phone asking me to come work for him in Buffalo.

I have to say, there was never anyone like Alex. Whether working for him at Lancaster Speedway or on all kinds of specials in Delaware and Pennsylvania, he turned my passion into excitement. There were just a couple of us, but we brainstormed and carried on. Alex's mantra was "just do it."

Alex then purchased Fulton and Utica-Rome Speedways, and I moved nearby. Alex came from his home in Canada on



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**A 20/20 LOOK AT 2020**

**What will be the predominant entry-level class?**

- Some kind of mini-stock, which means it will probably be a front-wheel-drive car.
  - Dan Hamilton, Day Motor Sports
- Hobby Stocks.
  - John Logue
- Sport Compact to be the entry-level class of the future.
  - Brett Root

Excerpts from a 2011 feature in *Speedway Illustrated*

weekends, and it was racing, racing, racing, even on off nights with the sportsman Alex drove. We worked hard; played hard. Some thought we were extreme, but when we worked, we worked.

After Alex died in a snowmobile accident in December of 2006, I helped his father, Stan, sell off the tracks, and I moved back east to rejoin C.J. Then in 2000, Reno paid back again. Scott Commander called and said I really should come talk with his dad. I did and became the number two guy at Lebanon Valley, another key moment in my career. Howard is so knowledgeable after over 50 years of promoting. He is also a whiz in financial analysis and investment. I hit the trifecta of mentors—C.J. had that wonderful old-school, yet innovative approach to the sport; Alex, the young marketer, was the high-impact visionary; Howard is racing's businessman personified.

My years as General Manager of Lebanon Valley have also benefited my career because Howard and I would go to promoters' meetings and World of Outlaw meetings, and I continued growing my network of contacts. Then a surprise. In 2011, C.J. called Howard about taking over Albany-Saratoga. Howard asked my opinion. That was easy. "Let's go!"

Along with my duties at the Valley during the week and on Saturdays, I became promoter at Malta, running Friday nights—my first time as top man. Needless to say, the last nine years of my life have been super busy. I have tried so hard to take with me everything I have learned along the way.

I believe that we have to step back, take off the blinders. I wanted Malta to be different, with better ideas. To be honest, whenever I go to a concert or even a grocery store, I think about anything they are doing that could work at a race track. My mind never seems to stop.

Following Alex's ways, we have a very small staff, essentially my fiancé Marcy Mangino and her daughter Mia, though we are supported by both our families and some close friends. It's constant work each day, and most nights it's brainstorming on all aspects of the operation. Our goal is to

personalize the whole Albany-Saratoga experience for our fans and employees.

For example, for the fans, we focus on delivering a strict three-hour show with no intermissions. And we do everything to try to connect the competitors with the spectators. For example, Mia goes live on social media Friday afternoons, and prior to the start of the program she interviews drivers, quite personally, on the flag stand.

With the teams, I have a special challenge because we attract cars from DIRTcar-sanctioned and independent tracks. I am the final decision-maker and aim to ensure everyone is treated fairly and equally regardless of where else they race. I work to avoid the decision conflicts that can take place between a track operator and a promoter at many tracks. We also work overtime to raise sponsorship money to support our drivers. Marcy works to personalize not only our banquet but race events throughout the season. That's integral to our success.

At the end of the day, we mostly concentrate on the track itself. Albany-Saratoga is for racing, and I am a student of the science of the cushion! Track preparation is my world, and I know no one understands it completely, but here at Malta, I want to have the top and the bottom nearly identical. And, if some guy can grab the middle, you'll have three grooves.

I've been nominated by my peers as Eastern Region Promoter of the Year for the last two years. It is a great honor to be recognized for all the hard work. From the start, I believe we have had the largest weekly fields on the DIRTcar circuit averaging more than 100 cars weekly. I also believe we have the strongest field of modifieds anywhere in the Northeast—every Friday is a mini Super DIRTcar Series race. Almost every Friday spectator cars overflow our capacity and park on Route 9. The biggest high for me is just seeing a fantastic weekly race with a huge crowd and nobody getting hurt.

All I know about my future is that I will do everything in my power to improve on the success we have at Albany-Saratoga and at Lebanon Valley. I want to be successful at doing this for years and years to come. 🏆