Former professional driver learns about dirt; teaches safety

By Joey Falkoff

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Randy Lajoie had a look of exhaustion on his face as he leaned on his trailer and sucked down a Gatorade while conversing with crew members between races at the Thomas County Speedway Sunday.

It was Lajoie's third consecutive day of racing dirt track after running in Jetmore Friday and Dodge City Saturday. Not one time, however, during his 23-year professional career spanning from 1983-2006 did he race on anything other than hard surface.

For even the most schooled of racers, it's been a learning experience to say the least.

"I've been like a sponge for the last three-and-a-half days," said Lajoie. "It's really neat and it's different. In open wheel, I can be as fast as anybody, but racing and getting hit in the head with rocks and driving through enough dust that you're 90 percent blind, it's all new to me. I'm not going to make a career out of it that's for sure."

Dirt track racing may not be in Lajoie's future, but he's found another career that's suiting him just fine. Lajoie's stop in Colby Sunday was another leg on his "Safer Racer Tour," which gives him an opportunity to promote driver safety on the shortracks. It's a tour he started in 2007 and has continued to expand this year.

"We need to get safe anyway we can do that," said Lajoie. "At 25 miles per hour, you hit something the wrong way or the right way, your next option is a pine box. I don't want to see the jaws of life trying to get a guy out of a car, because that's not for me. There's enough information out there so we can keep these guys safe, have some fun and let them go home to their wife and kids."

Lajoie spent time before the races speaking to drivers, showing videos and inspecting their cars. He was also given 10 minutes to speak to the drivers as a group. From looking inside each

Upsets were abound in the first fifth by Norfolk to put them ahead ished 2-3 with a home run, three but too much damage had already weekend of play at the College 7-1. Norfolk scored four in the first RBIs and three runs scored. Sager been done. to gain the early lead and Colby's was 2-4 with a home run, an RBI For the third straight game, only run came in the fourth before and two runs scored.

egion team wins Nebraska tournament

Colby finished with 11 hits. Arn-

JOEY FALKOFF/Colby Free Press

Two-time Busch Series champion Randy Lajoie, left, relaxed in the pit area between races Sunday at the Thomas County Speedway. Lajoie was in Colby to preach driver safety and promote his aluminum seating company, "The Joie of Seating."

to get hurt, you need. I'm slowly,

but surely changing the industry.

Let's protect the driver number

car around the seat let's do that."

Lajoie's seats can be ordered

online at his website, www.joi-

eofseating.com, and he also takes

them on the road to let driver's test

them out. In Colby, Lajoie said he

levels of the industry.

car, Lajoie said northwest Kansas drivers face many of the same difficulties as other stops he's been to across the country.

"There's probably 100 cars here, and I walk around and there's probably only a few that are safe to today's standards," said Lajoie. "A lot of these people don't have seatbelts mounted correctly. It's not necessarily the driver's fault, because the people that build the race cars put their location up wrong. I don't know why more promoters and sanctioning bodies one, and if we have to build the won't mandate stuff the industry knows is better. That's something where I want to at least educate

and give these guys an option." Lajoie believes a driver's best option is to purchase a new, alu-

minum seat made by his company had a couple of interested custom-"The Joie of Seating." Lajoie reers. In the last two weeks on tour, tired from professional racing two he said he's sold six. 'We've planted a lot of seeds years ago to concentrate on the business, which has already put that's for sure," said Lajoie. "The seats in cars racing at the top three

first two days you're a traveling salesman, but by the end of "It's a totally different style than the week if you feed them some what's out there," said Lajoie. moonshine or have a beer or 12 "Yes, it's more money, but it's with them, they'll buy a seat from something where if you don't want you."

The 47-year old former Busch Series champion has two kids who both use his aluminum seats. Other young drivers can purchase seats as well and have them refitted every year for only the cost of shipping and handling. It's part of what Lajoie calls his 'development program.'

"If they buy a seat from me

JOEY FALKOFF/Colby Free Press

go to them."

first modified heats Sunday at the Speedway. This weekend marked the first time in Lajoie's racing career he'd ever run on a dirt track.

they'll never have to buy one They're not coming to me. I gotta again," said Lajoie.

"I don't penalize parents for their kids growing. It's a neat program, and I least I know the kids are safe. All of these race car drivers feel it's never going to happen to the. The only problem is when they do feel that way, the next time we're going to be at their funeral."

The idea for the aluminum seating business first came about in 1994 for Lajoie. That year, his fiber-glass seat he had used up until that point was banned by NASCAR. Lajoie was forced to switch to aluminum seating and his newest venture is an attempt to recoup losses he occurred initially.

"With forming the aluminum, you're talking about a \$500,000 investment," said Lajoie.

"I had an accountant that went to jail that accounted for \$600,000 too. I have a lot of money to make back and the only way to tell shorttrack America they need a safer seat is to go show them.

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before returning home to North Carolina. However, he says none have im-

pressed him more than Colby's.

Lajoie will take his tour on to

Oberlin tonight, which will be his

seventh track in the last 14 days,

"Colby is by far the nicest facility racetrack-wise we've been to," said Lajoie.

"This is what dirt should feel like. The other two race tracks, I'm black and blue from rough rides and potholes."

Lajoie said he's also enjoyed the beautiful scenery the area has to offer, but after two weeks on the road and in the dirt, he's ready for a little break.

"I'm ready to head east and see the mountains," he said.

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Less than two hours down the road in Columbus, Neb., the their sixth inning explosion. Colby American Legion baseball team pulled a shocker of their own by winning the Columbus Tournament Sunday.

World Series in Omaha, Neb.

Despite being the smallest town in the field, Colby went 3-1 and finished in a first place tie with Norfolk, Neb., who they had beaten 11-7 Friday. Colby also beat Hastings, Neb., 9-4 Saturday and Columbus 9-7 Sunday to claim the tournament title. Their only loss was to Freemont, Neb., 10-7 Saturday.

Colby (10-5) has now won eight of 11 games away from home to start the season. They return home to 3-0. for the first time since June 1 to take on Hays 6 p.m. Wednesday.

Columbus Tournament Recaps are listed below:

Game 1: Colby 11 Norfolk 7

Whether the games are in Kansas or Nebraska, it doesn't matter. Nobody, nowhere can get Levi Schlick out right now.

Schlick, who entered the tournament 16 for his last 24, went 3-4 with five RBIs and helped Colby overcome a six-run sixth inning deficit with a grand slam to tie the game at 7. Colby went on to score four more runs in the inning and held off Norfolk in the seventh to pull out an improbable, comeback victory.

came on the heels of a three-run summer for both. Arnberger fin-

Colby finished with 11 hits in the game. Cade Carter and Brandon Rasmussen each had two. Carter also drove in two runs and scored two. Rasmussen had an RBI and scored a run.

Brent Arnberger finished 1-3 with a double and drove in two. Stephen Dinkel, Eric Blanton and Preston Krzycki each went 1-3 with a run scored.

Rasmussen came on in relief of Krzycki in the fifth and pitched 7 2 2/3 scoreless innings to get the victory. He allowed just two hits

and struck out two as he improved Krzycki rebounded from a

rough first inning with three straight scoreless innings before running into trouble again in the fifth. He was pulled after 4 1/3 innings in which he allowed seven runs, eight hits, struck out three and walked three.

Game 2: Colby 9 Hastings 4

Colby didn't waste any time getting the offense going Saturday. Colby put up four runs in the first and five over the next three innings for their starter Schlick, who took it the rest of the way.

The Legioners finished with 11 hits and five different players had two hits. Arnberger and Cory Sager each added a long ball to the Colby's 10-run sixth inning attack, which was the first of the

RBI double. Schlick and Blanton also collected two hits. Blanton added an RBI. Dinkel had Colby's other base hit and finished 1-4 with two RBIs.

Schlick (1-2) gave up two runs in the first and third innings, but was otherwise spotless. He pitched all six innings and gave up just four runs on four hits, struck out nine and walked four.

Game 3: Freemont 10 Colby

After riding the big inning to victory against Norfolk, Colby was doomed by it in their only loss of the tournament to Freemont. Freemont used a nine run third inning to surge ahead 10-2. Colby rallied with five runs in the fifth, but it wasn't enough.

Colby committed a couple costly errors, but eight of the 10 runs were charged to Rasmussen and relievers Garret Rogers and Krzycki.

Rasmussen was lifted after 2 1/3 after giving up six runs, five hits and an uncharacteristic four walks. Rogers lasted only two batters after walking both, one of which forced in run. On came Krzycki who didn't record an out and was tagged for three runs and three hits.

Carter came on as Colby's fourth pitcher of the inning and managed to stop the bleeding with 3 1/3 scoreless innings of relief,

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Rasmussen was 2-3 with an berger led the way going 3-4 with a double and two runs scored. Carter also had a double and finished 2-3 with two RBIs. Schlick was 2-4 with a run scored.

Sager, Dinkel, Krzycki and Chaz Winger each had a hit. Dinkel drove in two and Winger had an RBI. Garrett Zweygardt and Blanton also drove in a run.

Game 4: Colby 9 Columbus

Another 11-hit attack and another Colby victory.

The offense continued its amazing consistency as Colby held off a late rally to defeat the hometown team and capture the tournament title. Colby broke a 2-2 tie with a run in the fifth and put up six in the sixth to pull ahead 9-2. Columbus made it interesting with five runs in the seventh, but could get no more off of Dinkel, who won for the third time in a row.

Dinkel allowed just five hits in his seven innings. He got into trouble with four walks, but was able to escape serious damage with the help of nine strikeouts.

At the plate, Dinkel came through with three RBIs and a base hit. Four Colby players had two hits, including Sager, Schlick, Arnberger and Blanton. Schlick, Arnberger and Blanton each had an RBI.

Krzycki finished 1-4 and also drove in a run. Rasmussen had Colby's other base hit.



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Royals take two of three from first place Arizona

DeJesus was looking for a fastball from Micah Owings.

He delivered one and DeJesus hit it into Chase Field's pool area for his first career grand slam, lifting the Kansas City Royals to an 8-3 victory over the Arizona Diamondbacks. DeJesus also doubled and singled and had a career-high five RBIs.

just ready if I saw a fastball," said for us."

PHOENIX (AP)- With the bases DeJesus, who hit his seventh homloaded in the fourth inning, David er and his second in as many days. "And I was able to get a good swing on it and it went out."

DeJesus raised his average to .304 as the Royals, last in the AL Central, took two of three from the NL West-leading Diamondbacks. "It's a big deal for us right now with what we've been through this season, some of the ups and the downs," Kansas City manager "He threw a changeup down Trey Hillman said. "Hopefully, for the first pitch, and then I was this is the start of a long upswing

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