

# Hermiston Raceway gears up for season opener

By ANNIE FOWLER  
STAFF WRITER

When Hermiston Raceway opens on May 1, there will be a little something for all racing fans.

The season opens with the Speed Tour Modified Series, then returns on May 15 with Saturday Night Thunder, which will include West Coast vintage sports cars, late models, legends and bombers.

“Every single night has something entertaining,” raceway promoter/owner Greg Walden said. “There’s not a weak show.”

Tickets went on sale earlier this week, and are available online only.

The raceway is following all state and county health guidelines, and will be limited to 25% capacity, which is approximately 1,050 fans. Concessions will be boxed in a to-go manner for the spectators.



Hermiston Herald, File

**Pit crew members look on as drivers make some practice rounds in 2019 ahead of Hermiston Raceway’s Labor Day Spectacular event.**

“We had three events last year, and the health department limited us to 250 fans and 250 people in the competitor area,” Walden said. “When there were only 250 in the stands, it looked pretty thin. There is hope if things keep going in the right direction that we might be able to add more fans.”

While the raceway was shut down, Walden and his crew made much-needed improvements to the three-eighths mile asphalt oval track, and sponsors are back on board for another season.

“The track was built in 1967,” Walden said. “There has really been no improve-

May 1	Speed Tour Modified Series
May 15	Saturday Night Thunder
May 29	Saturday Night Duel
June 12	Racing Dynamik’s Prolate Challenge
June 19	NW Super Late Model Series
June 26	NW Figure 8 Series
July 3	Thunder on the Hill
July 17	Night of Destruction, starring Mr. Dizzy
July 31	Saturday Night Thunder
Sept. 4	Labor Day Spectacular
Sept. 5	Labor Day Spectacular NWSLMS — Atomic 125
Sept. 12	Championship Night
Oct. 23	Racing Dynamik’s Prolate Challenge

ment since then. We had about a quarter of it resurfaced so that there is a better surface for them to race on.”

The back side of the track, and a 6-foot stretch between the wall and the track, which was a huge source of dust when cars went through, has been resurfaced. The starting line also has a fresh coat of paint.

“That small section was dirt for years,” Walden said. “The cars would kick up dust. This will be better for the fans in the stands. The place has been beat up for so long. We are treating it the way it should be. The sponsorships and competitors reflect that. The Hermiston people have been great.”

Walden said he has businesses in line to help put on a good show and entertain people.

Other events on tap for the raceway include Night of Destruction, starring Mr. Dizzy on July 17, Saturday Night Thunder on July 31, the Labor Day Spectacular on Sept. 4-5, and Championship Night on Sept. 12.

The final event of the racing season will be Oct. 23 with the Racing Dynamik’s Prolate Challenge, featuring pro lates, hobby stocks, legends, mini-stocks and hornets.

Gates open at 4:30 p.m. each night, with racing commencing at 6 p.m.

Walden, a former racer who used to compete at the raceway, has leased the raceway since 2018 with an option to buy.

The raceway opened as the Umatilla Speedway on April 30, 1967.

## Umatilla Electric Cooperative incumbents keep seats

By JADE MCDOWELL  
NEWS EDITOR

Both incumbents up for reelection for Umatilla Electric Cooperative’s board of directors kept their seats.

Bryan Wolfe will continue to represent District 3 and Phil Hamm will continue to represent District 4. Hamm had no challengers, while Lee Carlson, Patricia Maier and Danice McBee were unsuccessful in running against Wolfe. Members also approved a proposed update to UEC’s bylaws, which had not been updated to reflect current state and federal laws since 2008.

Results of the election, which was conducted by mail by the cooperative’s 10,700 members, were announced during UEC’s annual members meeting on Saturday, April 17.

According to a news release, 280 members and guests watched the lives-

treamed virtual event. The annual report released at the event states that UEC’s kilowatt-hour power sales were up by 24% in 2020, as the utility delivered 3.8 billion kilowatt hours.

While UEC’s growth in recent years has been mostly driven by industrial customers, the 2020 report shows growth between 2019 and 2020 was relatively equal across industrial, commercial, residential and irrigation customers, with the largest increase in revenue coming through irrigation.

During the pandemic, according to the report, UEC returned a combined \$7.6 million in Capital Credits refunds to members in 2020, in addition to providing utility bill relief to members affected financially by the pandemic, and providing \$800,000 in rebates and low-interest loans for energy-saving upgrades for customers. UEC also created

the Business Resource Center in April 2020 to provide free assistance to area businesses working to apply for the Paycheck Protection Program and other grants.

The report referenced several severe weather challenges for UEC as well, including the February 2020 flood and two major windstorms.

“During the year, our crews and operations staff faced historic weather events, making for long hours and dangerous working conditions,” a joint statement by Wolfe and CEO Robert Echenrode said in the annual report. “Through all, our employees have worked safely and efficiently and gone above and beyond to help our communities.

“None of us could have imagined how the coronavirus would have changed the world and our way of life. The year proved how deep the community spirit runs in Eastern Oregon.”

## Mark Johnson retires from Umatilla County Fire District 1

HERMISTON HERALD

Umatilla County Fire District #1 is saying goodbye to Paramedic/Firefighter Mark Johnson after 21 years with the district.

Johnson was hired by the district on July 1, 2000, after 13 years in California’s Emergency Medical Services, according to a news release. He retired from the district on March 31.

“Mark was a consummate professional when it came to pre-hospital medicine, always recognized as one of our finest paramedics on staff,” the news release stated. “Mark enjoyed people and helping those in need and taking a huge amount of pride in his work and paramedic skills.”

He was awarded UCFD1’s Medic of the Year Award in 2012, and in addition to his work locally, also traveled the country at times with a federal disaster team, providing medical assistance in disasters ranging



Nickolas L. Oatley/Contributed Photo

**Mark Johnson retired recently from Umatilla County Fire District #1 after 21 years.**

from hurricanes to the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

He was honored by the district on April 14 in recognition of his long career with UCFD1 before retirement.



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