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'NOT A BAD SEAT IN THE HOUSE' AT FERGUS FALLS SPEEDWAY

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By Heather Rule

Don Shaw raced late model cars on dirt tracks for 30 years. He still races some, but his career came full-circle when he purchased the I-94 Speedway in Fergus Falls in 2020.

It's a track where he always enjoyed racing and had some success there as well. "I've seen a lot of good about the place," Shaw said. "I just wanted to see if we could up the ante in

the whole place and make it even better yet." Shaw took over ownership of the speedway May 1, 2020, an opportunity that still gives him a chance to be at the race track, even if he's not racing. One of the more notable changes was re-naming the track – I-94 Sure Step Speedway – in a sponsorship partnership with Sure Step.

As far as other changes at the track, Shaw updated the kitchen, painted the bleachers and remodeled all of the suites. The building and roof underwent some maintenance, and they added billboards around the 3/8-mile, medium-to-high-bank dirt track for sponsor advertising. He's also going to work on making camping "bigger and better" at the track, adding more electrical hookups, for instance, so fans can stay for the weekend. Other than that, changes are minimal and guests can expect the same great racing they've come to know, Shaw said.

The racing season starts in early May and runs every Friday through Labor Day Weekend. Seven classes of race cars run at the track: Short Tracker, Street Stock, Midwest Mods, Limited Late Models, Super Stocks, Modifieds and Late Models. A race track should have one or two special events a year to be known as a premiere track, according to Shaw. At I-94 Sure Step Speedway, one such event is The Dick Johanneck King of Dirt Special. That event, featuring seven classes, was held in mid-September 2020 as the final event of the season.

Fans can take in the race from various spots, from tailgating to watching on either the backstretch or front stretch of the track. The north and south grandstands can hold 6,800 spectators, plus the tailgate area has room for up to 100 vehicles. Additionally, around 100 people will also bring their own lawn chairs and enjoy the action from the grassy hillside on the east end of the grandstands. Altogether, the track can accommodate about 8,000 spectators. "It's absolute perfect visibility everywhere," Shaw said. "There's not a bad seat in the house." The races at I-94 Sure Step Speedway pack lots of action into the three-or-four-hour period on Friday nights. Fans are close to the action, and can see every car on every lap, if they want to. "Well, if you've never been to a dirt-track race before, be prepared to get addicted," Shaw said. "Because once you go to one and see it, you want to go again."

The WISSOTA 100 is scheduled for September 15-19, 2021. This will be the third year Fergus Falls has hosted the race, and it is always a fan favorite.

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