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Hometown Pride: Returning Home to Williams Grove Motivates Paulus

Mechanicsburg, PA — July 23, 2005 — By Chris Dolack, World of Outlaws Senior Writer



When a thunderstorm with heavy showers Friday night rolled over Williams Grove Speedway as the B-main on Night Two of the Cleveland Brothers Summer Nationals was completing the first lap, it postponed the World of Outlaws Sprint Series action to Saturday night.

The preliminary B-main and A-main are scheduled to be completed and the qualifying points tallied before the action kicks off to determine who will collect the \$20,000 checkered flag in the main event.

For many drivers, it was a chance to catch their breath in the midst of an always fierce battle with the highly competitive racers that make up the Pennsylvania Posse. On the first day of the event 10 touring Outlaws were in the B-main, and in the B line-up to finish the field for the second preliminary feature there are eight touring Outlaws.

But of all the racers who return with the Outlaws each year to Central Pennsylvania, nobody has more determination to thrill the fans than Brian Paulus. A native of Mechanicsburg, Paulus left Williams Grove in the mid-1990s to tour nationally, never establishing himself as a Posse member. He enjoys coming home to race at Williams Grove, but he perhaps has never looked forward to returning more than he has this time for the Summer Nationals.

Since June 1, Paulus has put his Arnold Transportation Maxim into Victory Lane three times. He won A-features at Rolling Wheels Raceway Park and Huset's Speedway, and the preliminary feature in the Duel in the Dakotas at Red River Valley Speedway.

Whether or not he finds Victory Lane at Williams Grove, Paulus was riding a wave of confidence for the first time in his Outlaws career as he headed home to Mechanicsburg.

"It's a lot like going home," said Paulus, who turned 32 in May. "Those people and the tracks and the streets going to and from, every time we got to the track I go a different way just to see how different neighborhoods have grown.

"I like to see people that I know and have them be able to see where we've come in the past few years, have them be able to be proud of what we accomplished. We started traveling full-time in 1996. It's been nine years that we've been on-and-off the road. We've run a couple of local shows. In 1997 we ran about a quarter of the season back home. We haven't a local show in Pennsylvania since 1999."

It's clear he wants to show the usual tough Central Pennsylvania crowd how far he's come. He went a long way in that effort when the Outlaws raced in May at Williams Grove and he brought the front-stretch crowd to its feet with a wheelie down the straight in an effort to make the final transfer spot in his heat.

"I think after that long wheelie I ran down the front stretch, and having such a good run through that heat race to get to that position to put that slide job on Doug Esh in the last corner and do the wheelie down the frontstretch and have him beat us by a couple of thousandths of a second, I think that opened up a lot of eyes," Paulus said. "Going out on the road and winning three shows in a month, that's something our team has never done. Not too many Outlaws teams do that other than the king and maybe Lasoski. Meyers is obviously still doing it this season, Schatz can do it, but not too many guys can put together back-to-back wins, especially at two different tracks. That's something we're very proud of as a team, and our sponsors are definitely supporting everything that's going on right now."



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That team has been one of the reasons for his success this season. After struggling to start the season, in late March Paulus and car owner Dawne Pender brought in Steve Pierce, Tim Kneppel and Ryan Vobach to turn things around.

"You watch all these teams and you see who's been with what team," Paulus said. "Maybe they've had a crew chief that's been with them for years. Maybe the whole team has been with them for a couple of years. There are a couple of teams in this pit area that started out with new teams this season or in the past couple of months switched teams around. They're teams you expected to run in the top-five in points, but had some horrible runs. It's not that their new guys were doing anything wrong, but instead of racing they're working on each person's job in the pit area.

"Our team went through the same deal. We switched our team around near the end of March and it took us about 10 races just to have each guy know, 'I'm the tire guy, I'll tighten the tire,' and this guy, 'I'll do the gears, you don't need to help me with them,' and the other guy, 'Well, I'll do my motor work, don't tell me how to do it.' That was the biggest stumbling block, just getting everybody to do his job. Ryan's in the trailer doing the tires, [Tim's] running around greasing the bars, maintenancing the driveline, checking bolts, Steve's been doing the motor work. It took 10 or so races to get them to not watch each other do each other's job. Once everybody got on the same page, I was able to step back and wasn't overseeing what was going on. I miss doing some of the work on the car, but as long as I trust the guys doing it, I can stand back. I might make a suggestion, but for the most part the car goes around on its own and all I have to do is point it."

Having the trust in his team to make his car work has allowed Paulus to turn his attention to the racing surface. Since he's not watching the guys prepare his machine, he's able to watch hot laps, time trials and heats to see how the track changes through the night, something 19-time series champion Steve Kinser has mastered.

"It's amazing what happens to a track from the first heat race to the last Dash," Paulus said. "You actually get to watch the track dry out, and see the fast line move from the top to the bottom back up to the middle, maybe back up to the top. That's stuff I was missing out on last year and definitely the early part of this season."

Still, a race at Williams Grove is a chance for Paulus to see his family, people most Outlaws racers have very little time to visit while racing all over the world from January through October. But after getting married in February, Paulus has had his wife Melissa to help keep him focused on racing. In fact, when he won at Huset's Speedway in Brandon, S.D., Melissa's family was among the crowd.

"When we get into Central Pennsylvania, my family is there," Paulus said. "We get to see her family a couple of times a year and we had a very good swing through her neck of the woods. But to go through my neck of the woods, and not taking away from the Midwest area, but the level of competition is not the same. When we get into [Williams Grove] I'm usually pretty stressed out. Then you throw my parents into the mix and my brothers and their kids and my sister and her kids. There're a lot of little distractions that I don't pay too much attention to, but she's new in our family so she has to pay some attention to it. It's just a matter of everybody getting used to seeing each other and getting to realize we're all just family and we still have a job to do."

While Paulus has no doubt won some more fans with his victories this season, he has no bigger supporters than his two brothers.

"For my brother Clayton, he's my oldest brother and he's the biggest race fan in the family other than me," Paulus said. "My dad is huge into the promoting, but for Clayton, he's got two boys and they're both Kinser fans because every time they go to the Grove, he one of the guys who wins. I think for him, watching me get faster and faster, when he goes to the races and people ask him about it, he can put his chest out a little bit and say, 'Yeah, that's my brother.'"



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"My other brother Alan is in the service. Out in California, a guy that he was stationed with when he was in San Diego was at the track, actually checking out to see if I was who he said I was. I talked to this guy for a while and he went back after the race and called my brother the next day and said, 'Dude, I just met your brother.' It was at Bakersfield and I think we had a decent run so Alan was able to stick his chest out and go, 'Yeah, that's my little brother.' It's all been cool."

Nothing would be cooler than a victory in front of his hometown crowd, but with a season that already includes three wins, Paulus and his team believe they're headed in the right direction no matter what happens in the Summer Nationals.

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