

The

Mid-South **PULLER**

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Inside this Issue Coverage from

June 2009

Murray Ky.

Jamestown Tn.

Lawrenceburg

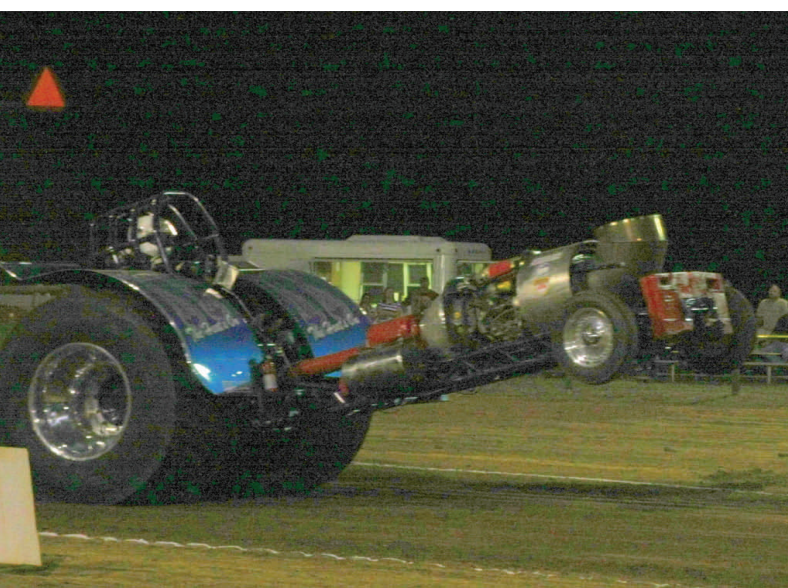


Tech Article by
Bryan Lively
“Tracks”

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Murray Ky.

Once again the College boys put together another great track. Old Iron as well as new was put to the test on this well hooking track. Most notably the tractor of Bill Thalmann, "The Heat is On". Bill found out the hard way where he needed another 200 lbs. Somewhere before mid track fuel had to be taken away from the turbine and when it came back down for a landing it was pretty much over with. Ned Thalman didn't fare as well loosing the front end in a wild ride. Mike Rigsby won the class with a pull of 302.97 feet and appeared to back out early to stay in bounds. Mike Griffin didn't take any chances and hid behind the light pole located out past he full pull mark. Gary Cook returned to MSPA puller to take home a 2nd place finish with his 2 engine Ego Trip.



The Super Farm guys showed up for tight competition but Darrin Hunt's "Livin a Dream" had the class covered. Showing strong power, the red tractor edged out a good pass by Larry Dean. New to MSPA was the tractor operated by Sam French name Wild Cherry Southern Edition. Also new to pulling is Clay Wells, one of three drivers of the Green Reaper John Deere formerly known as Green Fiend or sometimes called Green Friend. Not to be overlooked is the Green Pete, one of the farm trucks used on the Brown and Wells farm. Their attention to detail and vision is evident in the sleek look and reflects their creativity with the Green Reaper and making it their own.



Kenneth Hale picked where he left off at the Manchester pull in late 2008. Pulling well past the full pull mark, another Nite Trouble takes home top spot. Murray being a diesel track, brought another good running smoker to the front of Kent Payne. Super Rooster took second and almost caused a pull off. Back in the saddle and much admired was Larry Parish. He's still got it and drove thru a little back and forth rocking motion to get within two feet of Kent Payne. Larry was met at the end of the track by an excited Phillip Parish who climbed onto the tractor and gave Dad a slap on the leg. Larry's smile was not evident behind the full face helmet, but after all he has been thru, a third place finish was good medicine.

The 10 Pros blew smoke high and wide at Murray and when the dust settled, the top spot was once again given to the 2009 National Farm Machinery Show Champion, Phillip Parish. Nick McCormick ventured south for a little competition and probably some fine tuning to take a second place finish. Last years MSPA 10 Pro Champion pulled within four feet of the Nasty Stuff tractor for a 3rd place finish.

June 5th & 6th

Hazel Green Alabama, 2,4,6,8,10,SF&P4

Softball game on Saturday after Lunch.

Jamestown

LSS

Action at Jamestown started slow with the Light Supers which didn't appear to be able to get a hold on the Tennessee red clay however each and every tractor had the same piece of real estate to cross. Mike Sandefur went home with the "A Purse" top check. After a sled reset, the Farmboy's Fantasy came back for a second look down the track. He is credited with the two best passes in the Light Super Stock.

Super Farm

Mid-South's Super Farm class is shaping up to be one of the most competitive classes around. Darrin Hunt's tractor keeps holding it's own while everyone else gets closer and closer. A four way fight to the finish develops between Jed Pettus, Paul Young, Dennis Brown (another new comer to MSPA) and Darrin Hunt. Brown on the Green Reaper manages to hold off the Dixie Deere and the Dirt Track Deer but the Case/IH of Darrin Hunt's proved to be to much. Partially due to a strong engine program and the rest has to be credited to Darrin driving straight and never touching the brakes. If Dennis Brown could have managed a straight pass without the frictional direction controllers, we may have seen another full pull.

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Two Wheel Drive

The spectators at the “Pull on the Mountain” were treated to some of the best two wheel drive action available. Among the competitors was Ricky Long and everyone into truck pulling knows the name “Willy Make It”. Another hard charger came out to play with his “Dog House” truck. Mike Rogers who eventually took home the trophy is no rookie at reading a track. The Teasley’s brought both trucks which totaled 6 trucks between 3 teams. The upset came in the later part of the pull when Randy Groves took his White Lightning bucket truck down the track and around the 225 foot mark the front lifted and it looked more like Greased Lightning. The top 4 competitors finished within four feet and a very few inches of each other. In the end, Mike Rogers made the proper adjustments, lined up on the right side of the track or more correctly stated the proper side of the track which looked to be the “left” side managed to apply exactly the right amount of power to the track. Close scrutiny of the video shows the butterfly’s not fully open. Hat’s off to Mike. Also of interest, Larry Gorham drove the Child’s Play truck of the Wallace Family to a strong 4th place finish. Larry was seen grinning like a kid and said, “What a blessing”. Southern Hospitality is still alive.

HSS

There is not much to be said about the Heavy Super Stock other than Mike Sandefur “Owned” Jamestown. Finishing 1st in both Super Stock classes, Mike earned more than enough fuel money to come back and play south of the Mason Dixon.





Darrin Hunt, doing a little more Livin and a little less Dreamin

HSS

Lawrenceburg completed 48 hooks starting at 6:30 and ending at 10:30. Weather conditions were perfect for all involved. The crowd came expecting to see a full night of pull after last years rain out after a couple classes.

The action started quickly after the National Anthem, performed by none other than Guy Penrod, Lead Singer for the Gaither Vocal Band.

The Heavy Super Stocks were lined up and ready to go as soon as the crowd found their seat after cheering for Ole Glory and Kenneth Hale took the first pass which he dropped, having had to use the brakes to stay away from the left side chalk line. Jay Fuqua lit Tennessee Tracks and had a great pass going until a belt broke. Kevin Essary took the new look of Evening Thunder out to the sled and hooked up for his first pass of the season. The Case lit and pulled away with it's familiar high pitch whistle and headed toward the end of the track in a hurry, stopping a little short. Brandon Hunt set the mark early on with a great pass and some impressive smoke to hold off everyone else in the Heavy class. Bobbie Barbee made her first pass on the Stormy tractor to secure 6th spot. It appeared that Stormy had a few more horses under the hood.

2 Wheel Drive

Jenni Teasley took Hytek out front early and held off the field. Larry Douthit made a good pass on the opposite side of the track but came up about 16 inches short. Will Teasley started a pass straight down the track but seemed to get sucked toward the left side a bit early and just eleven inches would have come between him and 2nd place.

Super Farm

In the Super Farm action another 4 way pull of erupts. This time Mike Palmer on Country Classic joins Jed, Darrin and the Green Reaper tractor driven by the 3rd member of the Brown and Wells team. 5th 6th 7th and 8th place tractors were separated by less than 12 inches and just 3 feet from the full pull line. The red clay track seemed to be just right as the top four were spread out in the order of hooking. Dixie Deere made the first crossing and Dreamin Too edged past by about a foot. The final tractor to cross the line was the Green Reaper which appeared to add another foot past Dreamin Too. At the pull off, Jed Pettus made another expected Full Pull while Mike Palmer came up a little short but still making 300 plus feet. Darrin Hunt had the pressure on but managed to do everything right for the 3rd Mid-South event in a row and edged past the John Deere of the Pettus/Counce pulling team. The final Super Farm to hook to the sled was the Green Reaper. Mark Wells, a rookie driver, at his first pull as the driver, having made a full pull on his first hook is now in his first Pull Off. Jon Hancock was on hand to coach the new team, now the owners of his former Green Fiend tractor. The rookie's have all had a turn at holding the pressure against the particularly heavy weights on this tractor now but bragging rights are on the line if the Green Reaper comes out on top and probably a lot of ribbing if the driver screws up. As luck would have it, either the leg gave out or the patience to bring the RPMs up to the right spot and the John Deere leaves the line a bit soon. This time it's a 4th place finish for the new team however among 15 tractors, not a bad place to be. Expect this team to win several times this year.



In the 4 wheel drive action Larry Douthit was King, again. Coming off a MSPA championship in 2008, Larry and his family put together another successful run. It is said that on “any given Sunday” anyone has a chance to win. Larry and his family with the help of his nephews are quite good at eliminating the little problems that come between starting a pull and finishing a pull. These little details are sometimes hard to fine like in the case of Yellow Fever which lost a blower belt. Stuff happens. Sometimes you have to get the announcer to ask if anyone has about 12 inches of number 6 hose, like in the case of Nathan Replogle. In the end “Rip” got 2nd and 3rd. The new look of Yellow Fever is a real eye catcher. Great job Randy!

The diesels dominated the Super Stock class at Lawrenceburg. Randy Payne took Guesswork down the track in front of “team clean” as Wilbur calls it and held off Mike Sandefur. Stormy showed some power but didn’t manage to find what the diesel did and settled for 3rd.



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Tracks

By Bryan Lively, Reprinted with permission from "The Puller Magazine"

A few months back, I was given the opportunity to write about sleds and their role pulling. The unsung heroes of the pulling, good sleds and good operators blend into the action and test the mettle of man and machine, limiting the distance a puller may travel. What isn't readily apparent is another battle being waged that tests the sled and the puller--the battle with the track. Pullers and sled operators, for all their work to put on a show, are ultimately limited by the surface they pull on. This article will examine the basic components of a pulling track, methods of track preparation, and, the ultimate question, "what makes a good pulling track?"

For some of us, examining the composition of a pulling track is a travel back in time to a soils class in college or a soils unit in a high school classroom. To the uninitiated, soil has three major components (in order of particle size small to large), clay, silt, and sand. In lesser amounts, organic matter (or humus), water, and air are also soil components, with trace amounts of minerals like calcium also turning up in many samples. To explain the role of each component, it is best to look at the parts as being ingredients in a recipe. Just like any recipe, when one ingredient dominates it can make for a less than desirable concoction, but when they are added together in a manner that is complimentary, the results are outstanding. Sand, silt, and clay are the major ingredients, just like flour and other dry ingredients found in large quantity in a recipe. Organic matter and air are the "spices"--found in minute quantities yet delivering a powerful affect. The last ingredient, water, acts just like water in a recipe as it binds the mixture together.

Among the primary components, clay is king. Clay particles are microscopic in size, but when added to a track in correct proportion to water this tiny particle can produce tremendous bite. Clay particles bind together easily and display a phenomenal ability to latch onto water molecules and other material in the soil. This binding action tightens up a loose track. Conversely, with too much clay comes the risk of having to fight to prepare a pulling surface before an event that has more in common with a concrete drag strip than a pulling track.

Continued

Silt particles are barely visible to the naked eye and the predominant ingredient in two of puller's biggest enemies, dust and mud. Silt's ability to be carried by wind and water can affect pulling track quality, especially on tracks prone to erosion in the off season. Silt is very apparent on tracks where sled operators and track workers have to spend time cleaning the front of the pan where the silt gets deposited in fine grained piles (not in clods like a clayey soil). Where clay can tighten a track up, silt provides a means for "shearing" the soil under the tire into small pieces, making it easier for the sled to glide down the track. An overabundance of silt makes for a soft and undesirable track and doesn't allow a puller to "set" the tires into the track, hindering performance.

Sand is a blessing and curse in a pulling track. Sand provides channels in the soil for water and air to move freely into and out of the soil and being a little more forgiving to situations where too much water is applied to the track or having had a downpour before the start time. By the same token, a sandy soil requires more water to maintain a consistent condition throughout a class. Sand particles do not bind together easily, and that quality doesn't lend itself to providing an optimum surface. Sand also can be hard on tires, as the larger particle size can damage lugs from the amount of speed that tires turn and the pressure being applied against the sand grains from the weight of the pulling vehicle.

Organic matter, or humus as it often called, is decayed plant material and helps hold water in the soil and adds pores for air and excess water to pass through. A highly reactive part of the soil, organic matter can fix itself to chemicals (like any number of fertilizers) and hold the nutrients from passing down through the soil. As a component in a pulling track, humus can loosen up a tight clay surface and has become sort of a magic "elixir" for a problem with the water utilized to prepare "dead" or "tired" pulling tracks, but we'll discuss that problem in a moment.

While we may not think of it the soil we deal with has air space in it, giving room for water to pass through and a bit of cushion to the soil. Removing most of this air space is important in track formation and provides the firm surface to pull on.

Continued

Last but certainly not least, is water. Water's ability to bind all the other crucial components together is the critical service it performs. Water, either too much or too little, can make or break a pulling track's performance. It is also the cheapest and easiest soil component to monitor and adjust. Because water is often added to tracks, it requires a veteran track builder with a keen eye and an understanding of the sand/silt/clay ratio in the soil as to when to apply the water and how much to apply in one pass. Adding water to tracks has long been an important practice in track prep, but in recent years tracks have begun turning up as being called "dead" or "tired", meaning they do not fold together and maintain the consistency that they may have exhibited in years past. Veteran track builder Jim Miller has noted that the used of chlorinated water on pulling tracks has likely been a contributing factor, and with good reason. While a valuable tool in making our drinking water safer, chlorine is a highly reactive, negatively charged ion, meaning it will easily morph itself into a completely different substance given the right positively charged chemical reacting with it. The form of chlorine found in greatest concentrations in water systems is Hypochlorous acid. The acid reacts with minerals or metals, most often with calcium (a strong base), producing calcium hypochlorite (a salt). This acid/base reaction and the resulting salt likely promotes greater binding properties of the parent materials in the track, tightening the the soil up. The simple act of adding common forms of organic matter like straw, manure, or a cover crop on a pulling track "softens" the effects of the chlorine due the ability of organic matter to latch onto chemicals, just as it improves the ability of a corn field to retain a portion of the nutrients that have been added.

Now that we've discussed all the parts, how do they all come together in a timely manner?

The answer to that discussion came from a conversation with Miller. Miller has built tracks in Ohio for nearly thirty years, building no less than three tracks this past year on the Grand National Circuit--Wellington, Greenville, and Sandusky. It must be prefaced that the practices Jim utilizes are primarily on soils in Northern Ohio, grey and yellow clays with a wealth of organic matter, and results can and do vary.

Continued,
(this Bryan guy can be long winded)

While many tracks are built over a period of a week or so, Miller employs practices that allow him to get a track in competition shape in 8 to 10 hours. Using a chisel plow and disk, Miller begins opening up the track and applying water with the intent of getting between 2 and 3 thousand gallons before noon, with a 7pm event start time. Ultimately, he and the rest of the track crew will have applied 5 to 7 thousand gallons of water before the event starts, all the time mixing the water in with a chisel plow and disk. The chisel plow is run at a depth of 6 to 8 inches. The disk is used with significant care, as multiple passes over a track with a disk and no chisel work literally build a road bed. Two hours before the start of an event, a road grader is employed to start folding the track together, adding water as needed. Scraper tractors soon take over, and the track receives final touches 45 minutes before the start time. Holding true to his mantra "water is the key." Miller will use an additional 2 to 3 hundred gallons of water with scraper-mounted tanks and spray bars during classes in the waning hours of sunlight as the solar heat even then can dry a track out and soon change its' consistency. A roller is employed throughout the classes as well, to firm up grooves and holes that inevitably develop even in the best of tracks. When the pull is over, the work is not done. A track should be chiseled and disked again, leaving a slight crown in the center to shed water. The importance of this final touch is moving soil back into places where grooves and holes have been created in a track and the cumulative effect of water gathering in these low spots over the course of a year is averted.

Having prefaced the preparation portion with the kind of track these practices work on, Miller also deals with tracks in southern Ohio from time to time that are a completely different animal from those to the north, red clay. Miller concedes there are challenges to developing red clay tracks into good pulling surfaces, but again, water is the key--and Miller is quick to acknowledge that on red clay that "there is a fine line between too little and too much (water)."

Red clay tracks are dominant from those tracks in southern Ohio, southward all way into North Carolina. The tight clay combined with low organic matter levels provide unique challenges for track builders in the South, as the tight structure slows the ability of water to soak into the track, and the problem is more often than not exacerbated by drought-like conditions.

The process ideally begins during the week prior to the event, with water being added and worked in as the rate of absorption permits.

Discussing track prep can't be completed without discussing the limitations that prevent these ideal practices being put into action. Many times pulls are held in conjunction with a fair and demo derby or some other event that can dramatically alter a pulling surface takes place before the pulling. It is then of first importance to get all of the metal and other debris out of a track before anything is done. Metal, glass, and other foreign material is hard on tires and potentially a hazard for trackside officials.

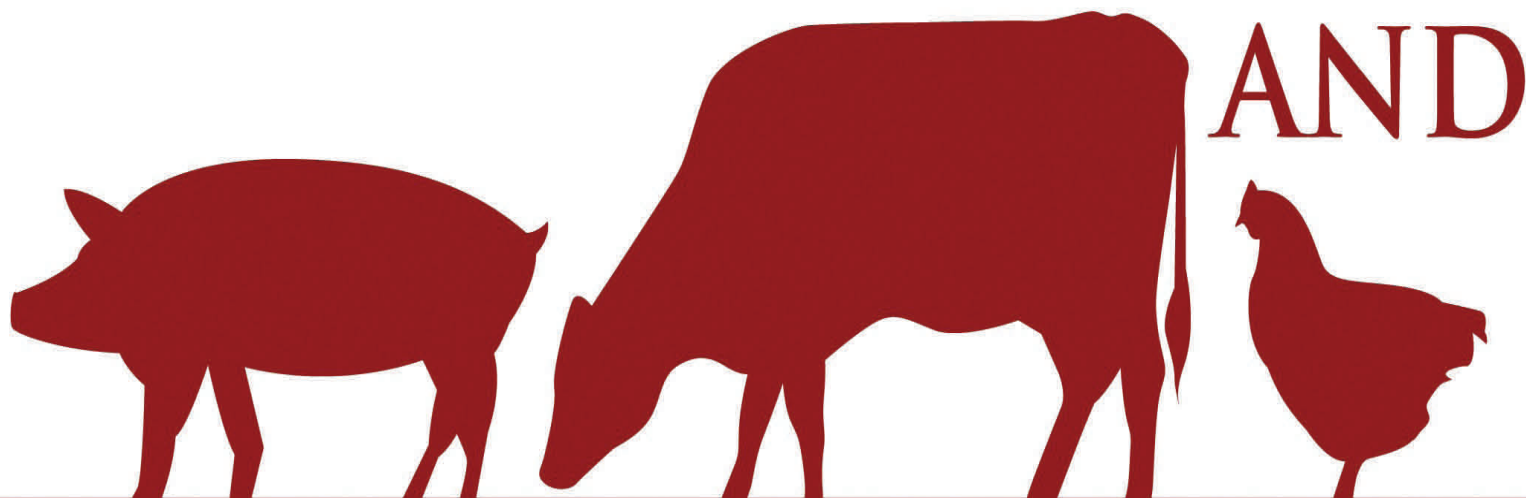
To wrap up a track story, the idea of the "perfect" track needs to be discussed. Needless to say, a perfect track doesn't exist. However, Bill Voreis, whose legendary pulling resume' is common knowledge, suggests that ideal track is not necessarily perfect, but offers a consistent surface for all competitors from the beginning of a class until the end. He cites Tomah as his example, where a Sandy clay loam surface isn't necessarily the optimum surface, but that the track builders at the event insure that it is the very best it can be and consistent throughout the class. In addition to acknowledging Tomah as a great place to pull, he also favors Bowling Green and Chapel Hill, as well as Mt. Sterling where he's won seven years running. As the representative of the big tire classes in this discussion, Voreis remarked that it is much easier to work a Modified or Unlimited on a questionable track versus a SS or PS machine, especially on the starting line. The increased horsepower level and ability to feather the throttle helps get a Mod/UL tractor out of the gate easier, whereas the turbo-motivated machines are hindered by the touchy nature of having to be in the throttle enough to keep the clutch locked and the turbo(s) on top of the motor.

The experience of a good pulling track from a truck puller's perspective comes from Andy Teasley. Andy was a person that could speak well about the truck puller experience, owning machines in both the TWD and SMFWD classes. Teasley echoed Voreis' comments about Bowling Green and their track preparation, and revealed that the trucks prefer a bit firmer surface than the tractors do, due to the higher pressure tire contact patch that the trucks possess. Both pullers provided similar comments about track preparation, with the right amount of preparation time for a given surface with sufficient amounts of water being critical to an ideal track.

Continued

This examination of a pulling track offers a brief glimpse into what they're made of, how they're prepared, and how pullers determine what a good track is like. By no means will this article make you an expert in track preparation, but the next time you visit a track, take time to look at the practices in place and ask yourself--are they rolling it every pass? Is water being added during the event? Is the track staying consistent? Is there sufficient manpower (another major issue) to run all the equipment needed to keep the track consistent? Answer those questions, and the hard work and dedication required to build a top-notch track is put into perspective and building our appreciation for the efforts of those who work before and after the event.

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Sam French on Wild Cherry