

Young'uns

It's no secret I'm into old things. I spend a lot of my time and money on Inman Farm Heritage Days, the annual celebration at our farm featuring antique equipment and old ways of doing things. We're heading into our 25th annual show on Sept. 16-18, so there's an extra push going on here at the farm this year.

(Now that the little plug for the show is out of the way, back to racing.)

Like a lot of racing folks my age (almost 65), I fondly recall watching NASCAR battles between Richard Petty and David Pearson and others of their era.

On the local scene, it was drivers like Roscoe Smith, Leon Archer, Doug Kenimer, Buck Simmons and other legends of the dirt-racing scene that kept me interested. Many of those are gone now, but Roscoe's still around, and this weekend's Southern All Stars race at Senoia will be run in his honor.

I'll be there, and I hope lots of you will too.

While those drivers from decades ago hold a special place in my heart, lately I've enjoyed watching a new crop of young drivers.

On the NASCAR circuit, Ross Chastain stands out to me.

For one thing, he's a watermelon

farmer. From my conversations with him about farming, if the racing deal were to go away, he'd be an asset to his family farming operation.

Early in his career I got to wondering how much he really knew about growing watermelons. I asked him some questions, using my years of growing vegetables, to see just how much he knew about things agricultural.

After listening to his answers, I realized he knew far more about modern methods of growing melons than I did.

Another tell-tale sign that he's no newcomer in the melon patch is the way he handles melons just before he smashes them as part of his victory celebrations.

Years ago, I used to make a little spending money helping load melons at the Atlanta State Farmers Market. I know an experienced melon handler when I see one.

Others in the NASCAR world, who also have some knowledge of farming, have noticed the same thing. Chastain treats his melons gently, but deftly maintains control of them.

I've heard that he personally selects the melons that are carried on his transporter each week. It wouldn't do his industry any good to



bust one on national TV and have it be green as a gourd.

On Saturday nights at Senoia, I still pay attention to the graybeard veterans like Glenn Morris and Ricky Williams, when he makes an occasional start.

But I also like to watch youngsters like Ricky's grandson Bailey, who won in Limited last week and is looking more and more like the smart driver his grandfather was and is.

I keep up with Morgan Alexander, who I first met at the farmers market. I've followed his career from the

start.

I've also starting paying attention to Charlie Oxenford, a young antique tractor enthusiast who is starting his racing career in a Hotshot car. He's already showing signs of being a real wheelman.

There are other youngsters out there too that are poised to carry the sport forward. I'll be watching them as well.

See you at the races.

Visit Rick's blog at tracksidewithrickminter.blogspot.com for more.

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