

## **Something old, something new for Nicotra Racing**

April 11, 2012 – This spring marks six years since the blue G&I Homes Nicotra Racing supermodifieds first graced the west end of Oswego Speedway's pit area.

Led by top driver / crew chief Otto Sitterly and team owner John Nicotra, the newly formed team entered Oswego's 2007 season on a one-race deal. If things went well, they'd be back next week. If things didn't go well, they might not.

Over a half-decade later, Nicotra and Sitterly continue to view their supermodified racing effort as a similar race-by-race deal they made when joining forces back in the winter months of 2006 and '07. But now, if and when they decide they've had enough, they'll leave as one of the most successful owner-driver combinations in the history of supermodified racing at the "Steel Palace."

### **Something old... a look back at the last five years**

Nicotra Racing's statistics speak for themselves. After Sitterly finished fifth in Oswego's 2007 point standings and did not win a main event, the Canajoharie, N.Y., wheelman has put together one of the more successful four-year runs in the history of the famed lakeside oval.

One feature win and a track championship in 2008 gave fans a glimpse of what was yet to come. The 2009 campaign saw two more regular season feature wins, another track championship and the team's first Budweiser International Classic 200 triumph – the richest, most prestigious award in all of supermodified racing.

Sitterly kicked off 2010 with four straight feature wins, which propelled Nicotra Racing to its third straight Oswego track title.

The 2011 season saw Sitterly notch three regular season wins before the team accomplished an unprecedented one-two finish in the Classic with Sitterly taking the victory over teammate Mike Lichty.

In all, Sitterly's last four years have seen 10 regular season feature wins, three track championships and two International Classic triumphs.

Not bad for a team on a race-by-race deal.

"I never would have dreamed we could have accomplished all this in the few short years Otto and I have been together," Nicotra said from his Homestead, Fla., home. "Otto and his crew, all of our great sponsors – we couldn't have done it without every supporter and team member we have. To go up to Oswego, the place I grew up and love, and be able to compete at the front of pack has been remarkable. Now, like it always goes, we want more and more. And we're going to try to keep it going."

Nicotra also speaks with much pride when recapping the talent he's had in his supermodifieds since the team's debut. While Sitterly leads the charge on a weekly basis, he's been joined by 11-time Indianapolis 500 starter Davey Hamilton, NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour champion and USAC standout Bobby Santos III, multi-time International Super Modified Association (ISMA) champion Chris Perley and ISMA feature winner Mike Lichty.

"I'm so honored to have had some of the biggest names in supermodified racing behind the wheel of Nicotra Racing cars. I've been very fortunate to have some really good drivers. Otto puts together great cars, and I think Hamilton, Santos, Perley and Lichty all would agree with that. It's been an honor to have those guys come on board."

Speaking as a close friend of Nicotra's who's had a consistent hand in the team's success, Davey Hamilton offered his thoughts on Nicotra Racing's achievements.

"Johnny has wanted to do this – own a supermodified team – since I've known him," Hamilton said. "For him to be able to find a guy like Otto and go on to all this success, it's obviously a great accomplishment for Johnny, Otto and all the guys involved. To help Johnny succeed has been very cool for me and fun to watch."

Before looking ahead to the new 2012 season, Sitterly spoke about Nicotra Racing's accomplishments over the last five years.

"I think it's been a really good deal for both of us," Sitterly said, speaking of himself and his team owner. "Johnny (Nicotra) had no idea of what we were going to accomplish or how long we'd be together, but neither did I. It's been quite a ride. In some respects, it seems like our years together have lasted a long time. Then, in other respects, you get in a rhythm of working so hard day in and day out, and it feels like time has flown by."

And does any one moment or accomplishment stand out from the rest?

"There's no one moment that I can pinpoint," Sitterly responded. "Thinking about our years together, obviously it's a nice feeling. But I truly try to stay grounded. I'd say the nicest, most satisfying thing is to be able to go (to Oswego) every week and be one of the guys to beat. To know the simple fact that teams go there and know that they're going to have to run hard with us, that's probably the most gratifying thing for me about this entire experience."

### **Something new... looking ahead to 2012**

After last season Nicotra sold one of his three potent Hawk Jr chassis to New Englander Jeff Locke, which left the team with a pair of Classic and track championship winning racecars.

Nicotra says he was leaning toward putting a new winged supermodified together with tentative plans to run select Oswego non-wing and ISMA winged events. But when

Oswego management made changes to their supermodified rules that allowed more leniency with bodywork, Nicotra changed his mind.

“When Oswego decided to play with the rules, I felt obligated to continue to concentrate on the non-wing stuff. I felt like the opened-up rules may have other guys coming out with new stuff, and I didn’t want our team to fall behind. So I talked to Joey (Hawksby), and we got the ball rolling on a new car,” Nicotra said.

Production of a brand-new supermodified began at the Oswego-area Hawk Jr shop, and now, with Oswego’s opening day on the horizon, Nicotra, Sitterly and Hawksby are aiming toward an early June debut.

“The new car won’t be ready for opening day,” Nicotra offered. “I told Joey to take his time and work to the best of his ability. We have two proven race-winning cars ready to go. We’ll go testing with the new car once it’s ready, and when Otto says we’re running it, that’s when we’ll see it in a race.”

“The new car is definitely a one-off deal,” Sitterly added, pointing out that the design is unlike any other supermodified at Oswego. “Joey and I kind of put our heads together and came up with some new ideas to try. I think it’s going to be really good once we get it out and tested.”

One of the current Nicotra Hawk Jr supers will be wheeled by Hamilton for at least opening day and Classic weekend, says Hamilton.

“We’re going to do opening day and Classic, for sure,” Hamilton said. “We’re going to try for three or four shows total, but we’re not sure which ones we’ll run between the opener and Classic.”

Sitterly and Nicotra Racing will begin their quest for a potential fourth track championship in six years when Oswego swings its gates open on the 2012 season Saturday, May 5.