

(Kaukauna, WI) – It took until July 13 last year before the Fox Cities Towing late model division saw a repeat feature winner during “Thursday Night Thunder” action at Wisconsin International Raceway in Kaukauna.

The class saw six different drivers wind up in victory lane in the first six outings. The first driver to double up was eventual track champion Travis Rodewald of Manitowoc. Rodewald didn’t seal the deal until the final night of racing in August, besting Markesan rival Jesse Bernhagen for his first WIR crown.

The defending champion predicts the road to defend his crown won’t be easy, as the same cast of characters who were frontrunners in ’17 will be in 2018 as well. “Without a doubt Jesse (Bernhagen) will be real tough just like last year,” said Rodewald. “I also see guys like Eddie Muenster, Mike Meyerhofer and Bryan Monday being real fast in the late model class. They’ve all got really good equipment and are great drivers. It all comes down to who can stay out of trouble and finish on the lead lap up front.”

For Rodewald some things will remain the same as last year. Rodewald will wheel the same LDI Industries-sponsored Pathfinder chassis weekly. “We do have a new tire we’ll have to get used to with the Hoosier D 800,” Rodewald said. “That tire is a little bit wider and it’s harder so it’s supposed to last longer and should be a tad more affordable for us.” The same pit crew is intact and consists of Curt and Heather Carstens, Travis’ father Bill Rodewald, Brandon Carstens and Doug Lange.

As a former Mid-American series driver who used to race at multiple tracks years ago, Rodewald is excited to add a few more events to his 2018 schedule. “We’re going to hit some TUNDRA races and

start with the first one at WIR May 12,” said Rodewald. “They added the late model division for that race under the lights and I think that’s great. We’ll also run The TUNDRA races as late models at shows in Wausau and Marshfield at the end of the year. We used to run there with Mid American and I’m really looking forward to going back to those tracks.”

There is more good news for all competitors in the division. Fox Cities Towing will serve up a \$50 fast qualifier award weekly and the pay-to-win weekly for late models has been bumped up to \$500. Fox Cities Towing, along with Eagle Graphics will also co-sponsor the weekly t-shirt giveaways for the race fans.

The season opening “Thursday Night Thunder” race at WIR will take place Thursday, May 24 at 6:45 p.m. A pre-season race party will take place Thursday, May 17 from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Admission to this event is free and fans are encouraged to bring their kids as many teams will have their race cars available for kids to take selfies. Food and drinks will be served in the pit concessions.

Tuesday night oval practices are slated to begin on May 1 with Saturday, May 5 serving as the annual FRRC practice and inspection day from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Spectator admission is free that day.