

Buck Track Head Anxious For '75

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many more. "Weather really hurt us this year," Funk said Tuesday morning at the track. "Friday nights were especially bad. Next year we're going to be thinking about eliminating Friday nights altogether, and schedule everything for Saturdays."

Tractor pulling is one sport hat's dominated by farmers. "I think 80 percent of the top pullers in the state and the country are farmers," Funk said. "Tractor pulling started as a farmer's sport, and I think it's going to stay that way."

"The first tractor pulls were held when farmers got together at county fairs and tried to see which tractor could pull a dead weight rather than any other tractor. These tractors came right out of the field, and arm classes are still an important part of the sport. Today, though, pullers are getting more sophisticated. They're building modified tractors and super stock machines that really put out a lot of power. A modified

tractor can be built for \$4000 or \$5000.

"Converting an old field tractor to turbo-charged super stock machine can get a farmer into the sport fairly cheaply. But the man who buys a new tractor and converts it for super stock competition can lay out up to \$20,000 or \$25,000."

Funk pointed out that pullers very seldom get into the sport to make money. "Most of them are there to have a good time and they'll usually be happy if they can make enough prize money to pay expenses."

If tractor pulling is to grow as a sport, there will have to be skilled drivers, with competitive machines, pulling on top quality tracks. Funk feels that the track at the Buck is helping drivers develop the skills they need to compete against the top national pullers. "We give the drivers a chance to pull every week, and I think there's been an improvement already. There was a time when pullers from the Midwest could come into our national meets

here and just clean up. This year we gave them some competition. Our drivers stayed right with the best in the country."

Another factor in the growth of the sport is the size of the audience. Here, too, Funk feels the Buck track is helping tractor pullers. "We were really stung by the weather, this year, but we still had an average Saturday night crowd of over 1200 people. Next year we hope to do even better. We may decide to change to just Saturday nights, next year. I'm not sure we can get enough people out on Friday nights to justify a pull."

"We've got to have the spectators there. The more spectators we get, the more prize money we'll be able to offer, and the better show we'll be able to put on. And the better show we put on, the more spectators we'll get. The whole thing feeds on itself."

Funk feels there is still a tremendous potential for growth. Every night there's a pull at the Buck, the announcer asks the audience, "How many people are attending a tractor pull for the first time?" The reply is a waving forest of arms and hands. "How many are going to come back?" is always the next question. Virtually everyone of the hands stays up in the air.

Tractor pulling has been a big sport in the Midwest for 20 years or more, Funk noted. Some of the big national pulls in Indiana might draw a crowd of 25,000 people. Crowds that size are a bit out of reach for present day Eastern pulls, but Funk noted that population densities here are greater than they are in the Midwest. And as people become more aware of tractor pulls, audience size should increase.

People do come from a wide area to witness the Buck pulls. "Surprisingly enough, we get a lot of interest from Maryland pullers and fans. We didn't



Elwood Woody Funk, Lititz, is seen here with the world's first tractor pulling stadium in the background. Funk is president of Buck Tractor

Pulls, the track in southern Lancaster County which is winding up its first year of business.

plan on their support, but I think our location in the southern part of the county helped the Maryland pullers decide that they should be up here competing."

Funk noted that there are two more pulls scheduled for this season at the Buck. One is set for this Saturday, October 19, and another for next weekend, Friday, October 25, and Saturday, October 26. This latter is the Buck Pull Off, and will feature the track's top pullers of the season competing for prize money and trophies. The first pulls are scheduled for 6:00 p.m. on October 19, and at 7:00 on the 25th and 26th.

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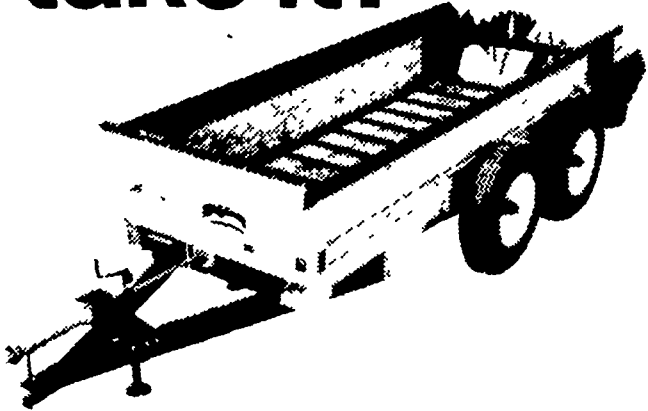
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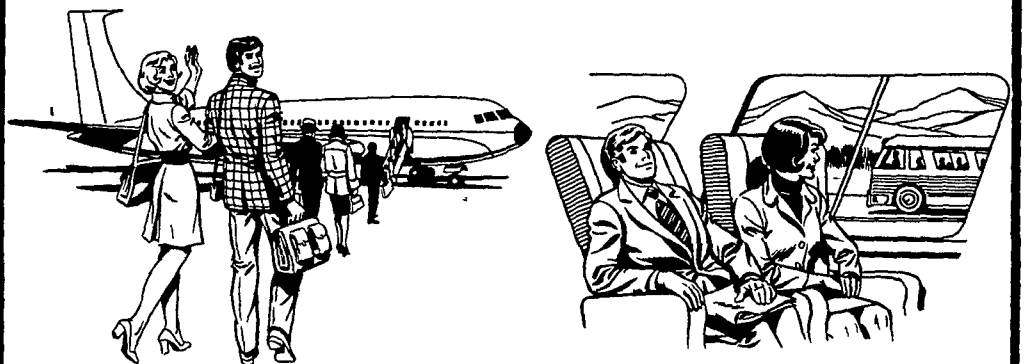
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