

Hot-rod

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Sporting a dark beard and Mountaineer hat, he does not convey the "typical image" of most men in this sport. But, he too, has made a name for himself on the track. He was voted last year's most popular Puller.

Flowers says he has been "fooling around with this" for about five years now. He first became interested in it after seeing a national pull, a happening which has become somewhat contagious since tractor pulling is America's fastest growing outdoor sport.

A member of the Southeast Pennsylvania Tractor

comment about "a lot of nice people being involved in it." Amos Stauffer and his family, for example, have been pulling against each other for years. Owners of a tractor dealership in New Holland, the trio souped up a couple of German Deutz diesel tractors. Son, Mark, frequently sits aboard a super-stock Deutz 9006 which develops between 500 and 600 horsepower. It's normal rating is 96 horsepower.

Owners and drivers take great pride in their work, accomplishments, and make of tractor. The fans love it and generally cheer for all, although even they are

"Woody" Flowers is ready for the pulls. His modified tractor is equipped with an elaborate exhaust system, chrome air intakes, chrome valve covers, oversized tires which cost nearly \$800 a piece, and a fuel injection system, and more. He burns a mixture of 99 per cent alcohol and one per cent water at a rate of nearly four gallons per 30-second run. There's lots of action when his machine stands up on its rear wheels, jumps from side to side like a wild stallion, and screams towards the finish line.

Pullers Association, which has a membership of close to 100, Flowers says he enjoys the competition and work involved in getting his machine ready. "It's the cleanest hobby I've ever had," he added.

Marlin Brubaker, perennial competitor with his Allis-Chalmers D21, burns a mixture of one gallon diesel fuel, a half gallon of water, and a cup of alcohol in his tractor engine. It's all used up in the 30 seconds it takes to make the run. "If you run one of these engines for even three minutes, it would burn up," he commented, explaining that the modified engines and fuels are designed purely for short runs and maximum power.

The strain on the engine and drive train is tremendous. At the championship pull-off, when this reporter visited the track, three pullers suffered major breakdowns of equipment. A Case tractor came hurling down the track until the increasing weight of the sled caused its pistons to pound with a deafening roar. Suddenly, the crankcase burst open, oil gushed out, and chunks of metal flew like bullets. Two other tractors, both owned by Clarence Leggett from Boonesboro, Md., were disabled when a hub broke on the one's rear wheel and the other blew a head gasket.

Leggett is a tanned and weathered farmer who operates seven farms — a total of 1,200 acres, and milks 140 cows with the help of three other men. Only about half of the major pullers are active in farming, since the sport has also attracted mechanics, truckers, and agri-businessmen.

Brubaker calls tractor pulling a "good, clean sport which has a lot of nice people involved in it." He pointed out that the crowds, which come from farms and urban areas as far away as New York, are well-behaved and enthusiastic.

The competition causes rivalry between friends and family. Fortunately, it's all of the friendly variety, and many agree with Brubaker's

partial to different makes and favorite drivers.

Lititz agri-businessman, Woody Funk, has his hot-rod tractor equipped with an 1100-cubic-inch tank engine capable of churning out 600 horsepower. Last year crowds of up to 2000 people were on hand to watch him and the others tear up the track.

Aside from being a colorful and noisy event, innovative drivers and owners have made it a little more amusing by painting fancy names on the side of their machines. One tractor has "Here We Come" written across the front of it, and at

the rear are the words "There We Go." Other names, often beautifully inscribed in glistening colors, are "The Streaker,"

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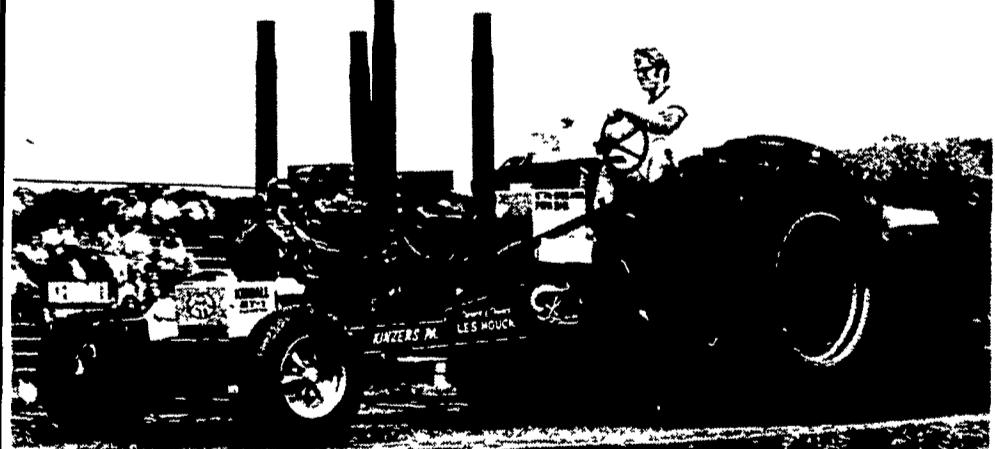


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