

# Sports Outlook

## Monster trucks: brute mechanical strength

By Douglas Armour  
Thomson News Service

The age of the industrial revolution has long since passed, but man's fascination with machines lives on in the gear churning, flame-spewing world of the monster truck-pull.

Names such as Canadian Warrior, Every Which Ways But Loose and Rambunctious lend a burlish, swashbuckling air to machines that closely resemble what Dr. Frankenstein would have built had he been an auto mechanic.

Although a relatively new phenomenon in Ontario, these heavily modified trucks have been churning up the dirt at well-attended events in the United States for more than a decade.

And the fascination of watching truck power taken to the limits is not being ignored by Canadian motor enthusiasts.

Claremont resident Arnold Coburn, a six-year veteran of the truck pull circuit, owned a trucking business before the attraction of turning a hobby of watching the fuel-injected alcohol-powered vehicles proved irresistible.

After watching a few competitions, Arnold told himself: "Boy, this is something I can do myself."

Soon afterward, his daughter, Connie, began driving their 1,000-horsepower, 1975 modified GMC truck in competitions across Ontario and the United States where the truck that pulls a 50,000 lb. sled the furthest down a dirt track wins.

Asked how she handles their fuel-injected, \$50,000 Canadian Warrior truck when competing against men on the truck-pull circuit, the attractive 20-year-old simply says: "You get in the truck and drive it."

But she later admits there is a certain curiosity among predominantly male spectators fascinated, with watching a woman man-handle a bored and stroked, 562 cubic-inch racing engine.

Admirers watching a recent truck-pull competition at the Canadian National Exhibition agree that the main attraction is watching a driver harness brute mechanical power.

"I like to hear the engines go. I like to see the engines blow up, myself," says one teenager. "It's just awesome," adds another.

"They come to see a girl, a female, do what males do," speculates Connie, who works full-time job as a check-out girl at the Pickering Town Centre.

Beyond distinctions of gender, Connie suggests "it's more noise than anything. People like noise."

Arnold says that without the American truck-pull circuit to keep them busy, he could not make a living doing only Ontario and Canadian shows.

"You really don't get any recognition up here at all," says Arnold.

The cost of parts alone is prohibitive, since most of the performance equipment comes from the States. A corporate sponsorship, Arnold adds, would ensure a comfortable living. But in Canada, where the sport has yet to fully catch on, sponsorships are almost impossible to find.



Monster truck competitions have become big business in the U.S. and north of the border, there are those who are attracted by the "noise and the flash" as well.

And, sighs Arnold, "unless I get a sponsorship, my days are numbered."

Partners Mike Kucharczuk and Glenn Snow of Erin had to pull out of a recent competition at the Canadian National Exhibition when a throttle linkage broke on their 1972 Chevrolet truck, appropriately named Rambunctious.

Truck-pull competitions, Kucharczuk explains, are divided into 5,500,

6,200, and 6,500 lb. classes. The competitions usually take place with the added attraction of monster trucks, whose boulder-sized tires crunch delapidated cars to the uproarious applause of fans.

"For me, it's just the mechanical attraction - to pull weight it's never designed to pull. It's going beyond the limits," says Kucharczuk, adding that a normal truck might be able to pull 3,500 lbs. com-

pared to the 55,000 lbs. the modified trucks are capable of dragging behind them.

He ventures that for the crowds the attraction is "noise. Noise and the flash. The more things flash and the more things flash."

Kucharczuk and Snow, whose full-time jobs, respectively, are as a tool and die maker and a construction company owner, agree that to make money from truck-pull competitions "you have to go state-side."

"The only thing stopping them from doing just that "is the dollar figures, the tremendous cost," says Snow.

Clinton resident Jim Middleton has a heavily modified 1971 GMC containing a special clutch because explosion shield in case something goes wrong.

Middleton says he competes because of the power and the adulation of spectators.

"Just the feeling of the power and the people too. If you make a good run, the people cheer. It's an ego trip, I guess. It sends shivers right down the back bone," he says.

Middleton's full-time job working at a car dealership impinges on the time he can spend on his hobby. So he slicks to the Ontario truck-pull

circuit with occasional forays into the border states.

In a good summer season, he might take part in 23 truck pulls winning only a trophy and a \$40 check as the purse.

"I used to pull at a lot of fairs. Last count I had 76 trophies," says Middleton, crouched beside his battle-green mechanical partner named, with more than a bit of bravado, "Every Which Way Loose."

Although there are three tractor pull associations in Ontario, Middleton and Coburn would like to see one established solely for four-wheel and possible two-wheel trucks.

"The interest," says Middleton, "is there."

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