



Roto-tiller racing includes everything from stock races with ordinary tillers to modified machines, where the tines are often the only recognizable tiller part.

Tiller Races Attract Big Crowds

By Dee Goerge, Contributing Editor

Roto-tiller racing has nothing to do with tilling a nice straight row to plant seeds. With souped-up, custom-built “tillers”, racing is more about hanging on for dear life.

“I wear ankle and back braces. At times photos show both my feet are in the air,” says Shane Waller, known as the Mario Andretti of roto-tiller racing after winning the world championship of tiller racing 5 years in a row. The Junction City, Ark., man averages speeds of 25 to 28 mph, and he holds the world record of 200 ft. in 5.72 seconds, set in 2004.

The sport of tiller racing was born in 1990 in Emerson, Ark. (pop 359), when newspaper columnist Glen Eades suggested holding

tiller races at a local festival.

The now deceased Eades might not recognize the event his creative mind conceived.

“In 2003 we had 5,000 people attend the races,” says Bill Dailey, Pea-R Guy for the festival. “We became a true world championship race in 1995 with our first international tiller racer, Dominique Niessen of Holland.”

The races have grown into several divisions with everything from stock races with ordinary tillers to the Super Duper Dirt Slangers modified division, where the tines are often the only recognizable tiller part.

Having long legs helps, says Waller, who

works as an electrical lineman foreman. But the real secret is his tiller “Radio Flyer” built by his father, Kevin, from a 60 hp, 750 Honda motorcycle. The Wallers let friend Erica Butler use Radio Flyer, and she has won the women’s modified event four times and holds the record at 6.19 seconds.

Waller, 33, says he trains for the race on weekends for three months before the festival at the end of June.

“I’ve got a track at my house that I disk up with a tractor,” he explains. On racing day, he takes practice runs to check out track conditions.

Some racers change tines, Dailey notes, to match wet or dry soil conditions. In recent years racers complained the track was dug too deep. Race officials admitted it was deeper - to slow the tillers for safety.

Officials have had to set a few rules over the years, such as requiring racers to wear shoes. There’s a 100 hp size limit, too, which even Waller thinks is a little nuts. His 60 hp tiller already pushes the envelope.

It isn’t a sport for the faint-hearted, he says. He’s never broken any bones, but he has pulled some muscles. Still, it’s a lot of fun and his children, ages 7 and 11, compete in children’s divisions.

Wannabe tiller champs can find out more about the June 26 to 27 Purple Hull Pea Festival and World Championship Rotary Tiller Races on the event’s website.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Bill Dailey, Pea-R Guy, PurpleHull Pea Festival & World Championship Rotary Tiller Race, P.O. Box 1, Emerson, Ark. 71740 (ph 501 416-4657; www.purplehull.com; purplehull@juno.com).



Charles Marley, St. Peters, Mo.: “Here’s how I made a quickie shelter with no extra framing. I bought three shipping containers, which are readily available, and then bridged the spaces between them with sections of gable roofing.

“The canvas-covered roof sections are very light and can be moved by hand if I ever need to move the location of the containers and shelters. I simply wire them down into place.”

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Mark Newhall, Editor

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