



**A Major Record Looms Today...** As the 34<sup>th</sup> Copper World Classic gets under way, a milestone is within reach of racing legend Ralph Wilke and sons Greg and Mike Wilke. The Wilke name has long held a respected place in American auto racing; Ralph's father (Greg's grandfather) Bob Wilke started Leader Card Racers, which won the 1959 and 1962 Indianapolis 500s with driver Roger Ward and the 1968 "500" with Bobby Unser. Through the years, the Wilke family (later, after establishing a relationship with a Milwaukee technology company, evolving into Wilke-Pak Motorsports; though the relationship eventually ended, the name remains) has fielded cars in many USAC divisions and scored victories in Indy cars (36 wins), Silver Crown cars (10), Sprint cars (6) and Midget cars (81). Much of that success occurred in record-setting fashion in Phoenix; among the team's eight triumphs in Arizona, Ward won the final Indy car race on the dirt mile at the old Phoenix Fairgrounds track in 1963, Don Branson scored the last win for a front-engined Indy car on pavement in 1965, and Mike Mosley became the first Indy car driver to win a race after starting last on St. Patrick's Day in 1974. Wilke-Pak is the only car owner racing this weekend who also owned cars that raced on the PIR oval during the track's inaugural season in 1964. The Wilke-Pak team earned their 133rd career victory when Josh Wise won the "Pepsi Midget Nationals" at Sun Prairie, Wisc. The triumph enabled Wilke-Pak to tie owner Steve Lewis for the all-time lead in USAC national feature race wins. The Wilke-Pak effort has a chance to take sole possession of the top position with a win in tonight's 25-lap feature race. The team has already scored seven other USAC midget wins this year with Jerry Coons Jr. of Tucson at the wheel. Ironically, while Wilke-Pak has scored eight wins in Phoenix (seven at PIR), Coons – one of only five drivers to have won USAC national championships in the USAC Silver Crown, Sprint car, and Midget car series – is still seeking his first victory at the PIR one-mile oval.

**Greg Wilke** (owner, Midget #11) – "We've always enjoyed Phoenix quite a bit. The (Copper World Classic) race used to be in the spring and we'd always look forward to coming out here for the weather. Being from Wisconsin, it's much better that time of year and the track is, for the midgets, they just put on such a wonderful race. I just hope we can continue the tradition another 30 years, 40 years. (re: approaching the career record) It's something we never really even realized was taking place until somebody brought it up, and apparently we're dead even right now. Whether here at Phoenix or someplace else it'll mean a lot, but, I mean, the next race is only a week away and it just never ends, you know? They just keep going... If we ever get tired and stop, you know, where we are that'll probably be, we'll have time to reflect on the records and be a lot more significant then. (re: PIR) This mile is probably not our strong suit. Realistically, we'd be happy with a top-five (finish). Our motor program is really state-of-the-art, but on a track like this to have somewhat of an advantage is really difficult to keep up. Everybody is so quick. I think you'll see that later in the race that it's not an endurance race. This is a 25-lap sprint."

**Jerry Coons Jr.** (driver, #11 Midget and #27 Silver Crown entries): "It's close to home, being from Tucson. I've been coming to this racetrack for a long time now. It's (the Copper World Classic) certainly one of the crown jewels of our sport. It would mean a lot to win either race here. I think that's my best shot in a midget. We're a little off (in the handling with both cars) so (winning) either one would be very special. With the way our Silver Crown year has been after we won the championship last year, I would love a win. I think we finished three (Silver Crown) races – an awful year. If we could end the season in a win that, would probably help a lot of us going through the winter time waiting till the first race of next year. To go out with a win, it would mean a lot."