



## ***Rookie Spotlight***

### Karting Sensation from Japan to Make Debut at Lebanon I-44 Speedway

The 2018 racing season is now only two months away and there are still a few rookies we have yet to introduce. Next up is Ryu Taggart. Ryu is a 16-year-old driver hailing from Jefferson City Missouri. Ryu has not always lived in the United States, in September of 2016 Ryu moved to the United States from Okinawa Japan where he was an accomplished racer. Taggart plans on competing in the Pro Late Model division here at Lebanon I-44 Speedway.

Ryu's racing career started when he was only 5-years-old and still living in Okinawa. "In 2006, we went to a go-kart track in Japan and have been hooked on it ever since," added Taggart. Ryu has six Track Championships in Japan and was ranked amongst other extremely talented kart racers in Japan. In 2013, Ryu got the



Ryu Taggart wheeling his kart around a race track in Okinawa Japan. *Photo Provided by Ryu Taggart*

opportunity to compete in the Red Bull Kart Fight where racers compete to represent their country and become known as the fastest kart racer on the planet. Ryu was able to finish in third place in the 2013 Red Bull Kart Fight. In 2017, Ryu raced at Lake Ozark Speedway in a USRA dirt B- Modified race car. In his very first season he was able to get a feature win along with a trophy dash win which helped him log 168 USRA National points.

This year, Ryu is making the switch to asphalt to continue chasing his dream of competing in a NASCAR National Series. "I have always raced asphalt and I want to keep moving up in my NASCAR career. I am trying to build a name for myself and make a living in NASCAR or another big series," stated the Rookie. Ryu plans on attaining at least one win this season, but most of all he just wants to become familiar with asphalt short track racing and build a name for himself. Taggart will have backing from the Millard Family Racing Team, Diamond Pet Food, and Prison Brews Restaurant.

You will be able to see Ryu, and all the other Pro Late Model drivers, in action on Saturday, May 5th for the Spring Sizzler. The Pro Late Models will be racing hard for the \$1,000 check that goes to the winner. We hope to see you there! Check out our website at [i44speedway.net](http://i44speedway.net) and be sure to like Lebanon I-44 Speedway on Facebook for track news and updates!

*By Dylan Bates*