

NATIONAL SPRINT CAR HALL of FAME & MUSEUM

DEB SNYDER

Adelbert "Deb" Snyder, the original "Buckeye Bullet" from Kent (Ohio), was born May 29, 1910, to parents Job and Dora Snyder. They also had one daughter, Rita.

Snyder's love affair with racing started when he was a teenager. "In the late Twenties, I would ride my bicycle 12 miles to Akron and sneak into the pits at the board track there. One time, I was hanging around the pit of car owner Arthur Chevrolet and a cop saw me and told me to get out of there.

Chevrolet told the officer that I was with his team, and from then on whenever I pedaled to Akron and the Chevrolet team was there, Mr. Chevrolet saw to it that I got in. Both he and his driver, Charles "Dutch" Baumann, had driven at Indiana-polis and I idolized both of them."

Deb's first race was in 1932 at Sharon Speedway (Hartford, Ohio) in a D.O. Hal. During the early Thirties, Deb raced

with the American Automobile Association (AAA) and the Central States Racing Association (CSRA).

Prior to World War II, Snyder's D.O. Hal was nestled in a 1936 car built by Roy Richter, a Californian working out of the Detroit-area shop of Mert Harris. Other known drivers of Richter-built machines during this era were Travis "Spider" Webb, Beauford "Doc" Shanebrook, George Connor, Johnny Wohlfeil, Johnny McDowell, Joie Chitwood (Sr.), "Rajo Jack" DeSoto and Emil Andres. The Richter Hal owned by the Iddings Brothers and wrenched by Henry Meyer was driven by Morris Musick, J. Carlyle "Duke" Dinsmore, Elbert "Pappy" Booker and Tony Bettenhausen.

In 1938, at the Iowa State Fairgrounds in Des Moines (Iowa), Deb drove his first International Motor Contest Association (IMCA) race in his Richter D.O. Hal number 47. It was the same year that Emory Collins finally beat Gus Schrader (and Jimmy Wilburn) for the IMCA title.

In May of 1939, at Greenville (Ohio), Deb crashed and broke both legs and one arm. While recuperating, Deb put a number of dri-

vers in his 'big car,' including Johnny Holmes of Los Angeles. Deb also drove some midgets in the Thirties with his friend Duane "Pappy" Carter (Sr.)

In 1941, Deb was back racing IMCA with an Offy against the likes of Schrader, Wilburn, Ben Musick and Ben Shaw.

Before the war, Snyder ordered another car from Richter, who had moved back to Southern California. However, by the time the car arrived for Deb to install an ex-Gus Schrader 270-



Deb Snyder (Bruce Craig Collection)

cubic-inch Offenhauser motor in it, the ban on racing had taken effect.

After the ban was lifted on racing on Thanksgiving Day, 1945, Deb was on the move in his lightweight (1430 lbs., wet) machine. His first time in 1946 out he set a new track record at Owasso (Mich.) in the Richter Offy. The time of 19.69 seconds stood for many years. Snyder suffered two bad crashes during this time, one in Milwaukee in 1946 and another in Danville (Ill.) in 1948.

Another Richter body and frame, built in 1936, was sold to and owned by Joe Catone of Struthers (Ohio). However, it was never finished nor raced until Snyder bought it from Catone in 1948. Snyder put a Miller 220 motor and his nephew Garth Diltz in the car for the 1949 IMCA circuit.

Deb captured the 1948 National Speedways circuit title, although he fell short of the full IMCA national crown won by Emory Collins.

In 1949, Deb won twice at the Iowa State Fairgrounds, beating the likes of Bobby Grim, Bert Hellmueller, Cliff Griffith and Joe James, Frankie Lueptow claimed the '49 IMCA crown.

In 1950, Snyder finished third in IMCA points behind Lueptow and Collins. Others on the IMCA circuit that year were Bobby Grim in Hector Honore's "Black Deuce," Jimmy Wilburn and Pete Folse (Sr.). Also that year, Deb took on the top NASCAR drivers in a special two-hour stock car race in Birmingham (Ala.) and he won easily with a two-door, six-cylinder Plymouth.

In 1951, Snyder tied Bert Hellmueller for second in IMCA points, both behind Frankie Lueptow. Grim, Bill Holland and Clair Cotter provided major competition on the fair circuit.

In 1952, Deb Snyder was the IMCA Champion racing the Richter car sponsored by Miracle Power. He won 32 out of 37 feature races and held seventy track and seven national records. Deb ran almost exclusively for Frank Winkley's Auto Racing, Inc. circuit, while Grim, Jimmy Campbell, Holland, Don Branson and Bob

Slater (in a Kurtis-Kraft Offy) ran for National Speedways, Inc.

Snyder repeated the title in 1953 by running for Winkley, defeating Slater, Grim, Campbell, and Leon DeRock in the overall IMCA points. During 1952-53, Deb won an amazing 58 of the 69 races that he entered. During IMCA's three-day stand in St. Paul in '52, Deb set five different track lap records. Deb's last race was on Labor Day of 1954 in St. Paul. When he retired, he still held 87 track records and two world marks. During his career, Deb won nearly 200 races and two national championships on the dusty half-mile tracks of the Midwest in the 1930s, '40s and '50s.

After 22 years in the sport, Deb left racing and spent the next 19 years testing tires in Texas for the Goodrich Tire Company. In 1973, Deb retired totally and returned home to Kent (Ohio), where he still lives today. Both of Deb's wives, Nona and Cloris, have passed away.

According to champion Deb Snyder, "I had a great time in racing. When I went to IMCA in '38, Schrader, Collins and that gang treated me so well that I just stayed there. If I had to do it over again, I wouldn't change a thing."