

NATIONAL SPRINT CAR HALL of FAME & MUSEUM

GUS SCHRADER

Gus Schrader was born in the mid-1890's in Newhall, Iowa, which is a small farming community near Cedar Rapids. He started racing in 1917, following a hitch in the army in the first World War. In his early racing years, Gus didn't have the sponsorship money that others had and he was forced to wander from circuit to circuit and from car to car. However, Gus carefully saved his money and one day bought himself a brand new car...a 200-horsepower Miller Special which he drove on the American Automobile Association (AAA) circuits. Because a lot of the AAA racing in those days was on brick and boards, the Iowa dirt-tracker became disenchanted. In mid-1932, Schrader broke his contract with the AAA to race with the International Motor Contest Association (IMCA), paying a \$2,500 fine to AAA to do so. The following year, Schrader stole the headlines by snatching the IMCA point title away from Sig Haugdahl, who had owned it the previous five years. Sig soon after retired from 'big car' racing.



Gus Schrader
Bob Sheldon Collection

Beginning in 1934, Schrader's competition on the IMCA trail came from a fellow Iowan (albeit transplanted Canadian champion), Emory Collins. Their head-to-head battles became legendary on the dirt tracks of the midwest. During the mid-thirties, both drove Harry A. Miller-built cars (which cost approximately \$15,000

apiece). Usually the point championships were decided during the last race of the season, and Gus Schrader's driving abilities allowed him to successfully defend his IMCA national title in 1934, 1935, 1936 and 1937. In doing so, Gus became known as "King of the Dirt Tracks".

In 1938, Gus lost the IMCA title to Collins, not unlike the way Haugdahl lost the title to Schrader just five years earlier. That season, both Schrader and Collins drove 250-horsepower Offenhausers. Not one to ever quit, Gus came back in 1939 with one of his best years ever, again clinching the IMCA national point title over Collins and Indianapolis-based Jimmy Wilburn. Gus retained the crown in 1940 and 1941, although he was tragically killed on October 22, 1941 at the Louisiana State Fairgrounds after a tangle with the same Jimmy Wilburn.

Gus has been inducted into the Des Moines Register Sports Hall of Fame and the IMCA Hall of Fame (1971). His widow Eunice lives in Southern California, while his niece Viola (Mrs. Richard) Bergen lives in Cedar Rapids.