



national sprint car hall of fame



dave Darland



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by Doug Kennedy

David Lee Darland who was born and raised in Lincoln, Indiana, and has lived, for the last three years, in Atlanta, Indiana, is 50 years old.

Dave's resumé speaks for itself. In 1997 Darland won the USAC Silver Crown title and, then two years later, he captured the USAC National Sprint Car Championship. In 2001 and 2002, he won back-to-back championships in the USAC National Midgets. "They called me the odd ball because I won in the odd numbered years," said Darland of his Triple Crown years.

He is now one of only six drivers to earn USAC's "Triple Crown" by winning championships in all three major divisions - Midgets, Sprint Cars, and Silver Crown - during a career. Darland was the third driver to achieve this honor and joins Pancho Carter, Jerry Coons Jr. and Tracy Hines as drivers who have won those three titles, but not necessarily in the same season. Only Tony Stewart in 1995 and J.J. Veley in 2003 achieved the "Triple Crown" in a single season. Mike Curb and Cary Agajanian are the only car owners to win the "Triple Crown" in the same season.

Four times (1994, 1997, 1999, and 2003) Dave was awarded the HARF (Hoosier Auto Racing Fans) Driver of the Year. "It's a special award to win and to be recognized," said Darland. "I enjoy winning that award and the people involved with it."

He also enjoys being called the "People's Champ." "I got that nickname about ten years ago from Funny Car driver J.R. Todd because I'm always hanging around and chatting with people after the races," said Darland.

One of his more special wins during his career was when he won the 2008 Bob Darland Memorial race in honor of his late father. Besides his four USAC championships, Dave also won the King of Indiana Sprint Series in 2011 and four track championships at Kokomo Speedway and three at Lincoln Park Speedway.

Some of his other big wins during his career were the 2007 and 2013 Turkey Night Grand Prix and he is a three time winner of the Oval

Nationals at Perris Auto Speedway in Perris, California. On August 7, 2015, Darland won his 100th USAC event at Amsoil Speedway in Superior, Wisconsin. In all, he has amassed nearly 350 career feature wins.

In 2014, Dave became USAC's winningest driver by passing Tom Bigelow's record of 52. Dave now has 59. He won his first USAC race in 1993 at 26. "I got a late start there," said Darland.

Dave has won a USAC feature for 25 straight years and has been in the top ten in USAC National Sprint Car points for 20 straight years.

His racing career began in a quarter midget when he was four years old. At the age of 16, Dave and his dad pieced together their first Sprint Car but his first feature win didn't come until 1986 when he was a 19-year-old kid and he beat Bob Kinser at Kokomo on Father's Day. Dave went onto win 100 features with the family ride.

The list of car owners he has driven for is quite impressive. In 1995, Darland began driving for Galen Fox's Silver Crown team and continued doing that for the next 17 years. In the beginning, he drove the Silver Crown Car on the dirt and the pavement. He also drove a Sprint Car for the famous Hoffman Race Team. Don Lambert and Bud Whittaker owned a pavement Sprint Car that Darland also drove. "The cars looked the same, but, really, they were two separate teams," said Darland.

Another special part of his career was driving a Midget for Steve Lewis. The team was called Nine Racing. That began as a full-time ride in 2000 and Darland won championships in two of the next three years, finishing second in the other year. "That was a special time for me and I had a lot of fun driving for a powerful team like that," said Darland.

Bob East was the chief mechanic on the car while Kasey Kahne, who won the title in the season that Darland didn't, was his teammate.

Other owners of note for Dave Darland included Jeff Walker, who he drove for in 2005, 2006, 2012, and 2016 and Steve and Carla Phillips who he drove for in 2013, 2014, 2015, and once again for the 2017 season.

In all, Darland plans on 47 USAC races with the Phillips team, 20 or so other Sprint Car races, 30 to 35 Midget races- and a few Silver Crown events this season.

Are there thoughts of slowing down for Dave Darland and his racing career? "No, I don't see that happening yet. If I ever hit the lottery, I will slow down, but things are still going great."

Besides the Phillips ride for 2017, Darland will also be driving for Midget car owner Brad Gray. "I drove for them last year, but it wasn't as good as it is going to be this year. I'm really looking forward to my brand new Toyota Spike."

His wife, Brenda, and children Trenton, Tristin, and Destiny are part of his race support team, along with his three grandsons, Treyce, Brycen, and Maxwell.

There are times when Darland regrets that he never had the opportunity to take his skills to a higher level but, for the most part, he is content with what he has accomplished during his illustrious racing career.

As for the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame, Darland said that "It's awesome. When my dad and I first put together a Sprint Car, we had no intentions of this happening. I was the only boy in a family of four kids. Dad had to work in a steel factory and mom didn't work and just raised us kids. Being elected to the Hall is a humbling experience and I'm pretty proud of the accomplishment."