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national sprint car hall of fame



bill Endicott



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Bill Endicott was born in Montgomery, Indiana, on November 5, 1876. His early days were spent on the farm and it was from the plow that he graduated to auto racing. He started his racing career in 1902 driving a one-cylinder Thomas, later driving a Panhard, Loco Steamer, a two-cylinder Thomas, Moline, Tincher, Cole, Westcott, Schacht, Case Tornado, Scat, Maxwell and Case Comet.

In the winter of 1909 and spring of 1910, Endicott entered 14 races and won 10 with four second-place finishes. He won an additional nine races during the summer of 1910. Endicott also set a 24-hour record at Brighton Beach, New York, traveling 936 miles driving a 216-cubic inch Cole. He drove 18 of the 24 hours. He established records of 5, 10, 25, 75 and 100 miles at Los Angeles Speedway. He also won dirt track races at Atlanta, Georgia; Louisville and Latonia, Kentucky; Long Island and Massapequa, New York.

Endicott finished fifth in the 1912 Indy 500, driving a Shacht Special. Dirt track victories included Old Orchard, Maine; Fond du Lac and Milwaukee, both in Wisconsin, and a pair of wins at Peoria, Illinois. At this time, Bill was captain of the Cole Racing Team. He was the first racing driver employed by the Cole factory team.

Harry Endicott followed his elder brother into the sport and was particularly gifted in road racing. Harry started his career in 1904 and won the 1912 Wisconsin Trophy at Milwaukee, as well as the Jencks Trophy Race at Elgin, Illinois. In the former, Endicott wore, unusually for the time, a leather face mask. Harry Endicott died when his tire burst, pitching his car into a steam roller which had been parked just outside the track, crushing Endicott and killing him instantly. As a result of his younger brother's death, Bill Endicott retired from racing.

Back on the farm in Indiana, Bill missed the adventure racing provided more than he thought and was soon lured back to the motorsport world. As a publicity stunt, the factory Buick team had him drive a Buick 6 the full length of Capital Avenue at one mile-per-hour to show how smooth the new 1915 model would run no matter the speed.

After scoring an early season Triple-A victory at Columbus, Ohio, Endicott joined J. Alex Sloan for the balance of 1915 to race in IMCA. Endicott, at age 40, was the dean of dirt track drivers and was assigned a Maxwell to drive. Endicott was victorious in IMCA races at Detroit, Michigan; Lincoln, Nebraska, twice, and Hutchinson, Kansas, during the 1915 season.

Wild Bill was quoted as saying, "Driving a car on a speedway is not as difficult as driving one on a dirt track. On a speedway, a driver has opportunity to prepare for the turns while on a half-mile track it is practically all turn, making you keep tense nerves throughout the race. I work a great deal on getting my car ready to race. Mechanically, the car must always be sound as it cannot perform to its utmost and will most certainly cause a dangerous situation if a critical part breaks at speed. I go over every piece of the car before a race to make sure everything is as good as it can be. When that is done and the race begins, all that is required is nerve and steady attention to what you are doing. People pay good money to watch us put on a show and it is my duty not to disappoint them."

In 1916, he again scored at Zanesville, Ohio; Hutchinson, Topeka and Ottawa, Kansas; Shreveport, Louisiana; Detroit and Lincoln as well as Helena, Montana.

As an example of the type of racing going on in 1916, this report comes from the Wichita Eagle newspaper on IMCA races on July 4th of that year: "Bill Endicott won the five-mile race in which were entered only the cars of 450 cubic inches piston displacement. This race was a thriller from the start, Horey taking the lead and holding it until the fourth mile. Then, "Wild Bill" gave an exhibition of driving. He smashed into the curves on the next two laps, skidding far away toward the fence in great gobs of dust to the amusements of the crowd. On the last lap, Endicott caught up with Horey and, on the homestretch, they were neck-and-neck. Now, the stands were cheering themselves hoarse. Within 100 yards of the finish tape, Endicott's car leaped ahead by a foot, crossing the tape that way. It was the most sensational finish of the entire meet."

Bill kicked it up a notch in 1917 with victories at Salina (twice), El Dorado, Wichita, Ottawa and Hiawatha, all in Kansas; Beatrice, Nebraska; Fargo, North Dakota (twice). In 1918, Endicott scored at Calgary, Alberta and River Park, Manitoba, as well as Lincoln, Topeka and Hutchinson. Edmonton, Alberta, and Weyburn, Saskatchewan fell to the fleet Hoosier in 1919. He also added wins at Muskogee, Oklahoma and Dallas, Texas. Endicott personified the incoming Roaring Twenties by taking up residence on Sloan's eastern circuit and roaring to big victories. Medford and Fitchburg, Massachusetts, wins were recorded by Endicott in 1920 while Fitchburg and North Adams in Massachusetts and Lewiston, Maine, victories came in 1921. His last full season of racing was 1922, and he scored victories at Huron, South Dakota, and twice at Sioux City, Iowa.

In an interview in early 1921, Wild Bill had this to say about his career, "Any track suits me, just so you keep the crowd a safe distance from the fences. I like the odor of castor oil and skidding around the turn on a fairground's dirt track. I guess you could say racing is my passion. My friends have tried to induce me to give up motor racing but I still enjoy the pursuit of speed. There is no better feeling than when the machine you are driving is perfectly balanced through the turns and gaining power on the straights. You know, when you can hear the roar of the fans above the roar of the engine, you know they are getting their money's worth."

At the conclusion of his driving career, Endicott went back to farming and also worked as a traffic cop. For a time, he also ran a car dealership selling Cole, as well as Ford, automobiles. Bill Endicott passed away on June 7, 1944, at the age of 67, in Indianapolis, Indiana.