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national sprint car hall of fame



Photo by: Paul Arch

by David Sink

Eric Gordon

Eric Gordon was born to parents Fay and Betty Gordon on November 17, 1967, in Beech Grove, Indiana. He began his sprint car driving career in 1985 at the age of 16 at a winged show at Chillicothe, Ohio. He chose to pursue winged 410 dirt sprint cars due to the availability of events in Central Indiana. At the time, non-wing sprint car racing in the area was limited to very few tracks and events. He sat out the 1986 season and it wouldn't be until 1987 that he would return to the track.

By 1988, Gordon was showing promise and running up front regularly. He scored his first career sprint car feature victory that same season at Liberty, Indiana. USAC Sprint Car events that were being televised live on ESPN caught his attention and he contemplated running the USAC National Sprint Car Series schedule the following season.

He had previously made his first USAC National Sprint Car Series start on August 29, 1987, at a winged event at Paragon Speedway. He made his second USAC start at another winged event at the same track on September 10, 1988, where he scored a top ten finish in only his second USAC National Sprint Car Series start.

His rookie season with the USAC National Sprint Car Series was successful by all accounts. He finished second in the final standings and claimed Rookie of the Year honors. In addition, he picked up his first series win at Toledo, Ohio, on September 10, 1989.

He was second in the series standings the next two seasons as well. Despite being the bridesmaid between 1989-1991, Gordon found victory lane on six occasions.

In 1990, he made his USAC Silver Crown debut. Gordon finished second in the series standings and claim Rookie of the Year honors. He captured his first series victory on September 8 at the Milwaukee Mile in West Allis, Wisconsin, as a series rookie.

Between 1991 and 1994, Gordon placed within the top ten in USAC Silver Crown Series points three times.

Prior to the 2006 racing season, USAC management decided to scrap the existing USAC Silver Crown car in favor of a new design that was created to race on larger sized tracks in hopes of becoming a feeder system for NASCAR or the IndyCar Series. The Premier Racing Association emerged using the existing USAC Silver Crown Series pavement cars.

Gordon won the inaugural PRA event at Illiana Speedway in Schererville, Indiana on June 13, 2006, driving for car owner Larry Contos. Gordon also won the 2007 series championship during the final year of the series.

Despite his success on pavement, it wouldn't be until 1992 that he decided to compete in the Little 500. "Back then if you were running USAC, you went and ran the 'Night Before the 500' midgets," Gordon once explained. "In 1991, there were like 100 cars, and I drove my ass off and got eighth in the feature and only made \$200. I told myself,

I think I'm gonna do something different."

Gordon's 1992 Little 500 debut went unnoticed. Driving a Bob Parker owned Beast chassis, with a V-6 engine, and Glen Niebel turning the wrenches, Gordon was involved in an early race accident. On lap 47, he got pinched into the wall while attempting to lap a roadster on the outside exciting turn four.

While watching the rest of the race from the infield, Niebel leaned over and asked Gordon if he had learned anything. Indeed, he had. He quickly learned the virtue of patience and being cautious while lapping slower cars early in the race.

Gordon returned the following year in his own car. Using lessons he had learned the year before, Gordon led a total of 215 laps and captured the first of his nine total Little 500 victories. He racked them up in 1993, 1998, 2001-2005, 2007 and again in 2010.

The Indiana native is the most accomplished driver in Little 500 history. He owns nearly every record associated with the race. He has collected nine wins, 16 top-five finishes, and 29 starts at the time of his induction into the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame. He also is the only driver in Little 500 history to have completed over 10,000 total laps in the race.

Other notable accomplishments in Gordon's career include victories in the 1991 Tony Hulman Classic and 2000 Joe James / Pat O'Connor Memorial as well as one career USAC Silver Crown victory and 12 USAC National Sprint Car Series victories. He also was victorious in an American Winged Outlaw Sprints 360-winged asphalt win at New Senoia, Georgia, on November 13, 1993.

Gordon was inducted into the Little 500 Hall of Fame in 2008.