

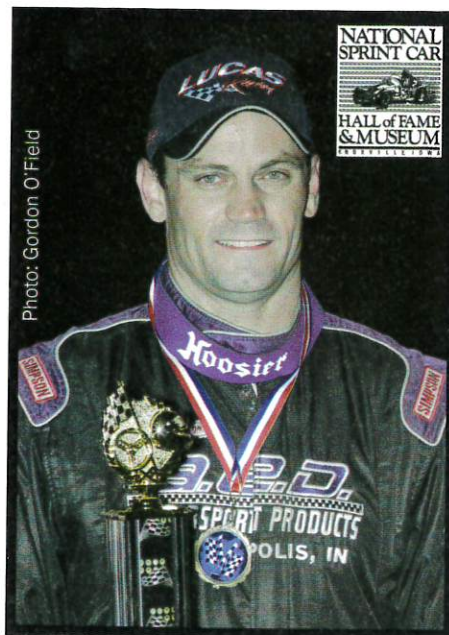
NATIONAL SPRINT CAR
HALL of FAME & MUSEUM
KNOXVILLE, IOWA



CLASS OF 2023

JON STANBROUGH - DRIVER

By Kevin Oldham



FOR THE FIRST decade of this new millennium, Avon, Indiana's Jon Stanbrough was literally the man to beat in the traditional sprint car arena. Producing the bulk of his staggering career statistics over an eight-year span, those achievements would never have been realized had he followed through on his plan to retire from the sport after a trying two years with car owner John Davis in 1997 and 1998.

Despite owning three USAC victories, he was dejected, down on confidence, and without a ride, ready to hang it up after just ten seasons. But after extensive encouragement from his wife, friends, and fellow drivers, he decided to give it a go one last time. Armed with just one car and engine, he also agreed to drive a few races for Frankfort, Indiana's Chris Hoyer. Instantly developing chemistry with Hoyer and crew member Josh Uitts, the trio eventually caught the eye of iconic owner Paul Hazen, who offered Jon a ride for the final three races of the '99 campaign. Aligning similar soft-spoken personalities, one would think that communication would have been an issue, but Stanbrough and Hazen instantly meshed, nearly winning a local Gas City show and qualifying quickest at Eldora's Four Crown Nationals.

Looking towards 2000, Hazen already had another driver lined up with significant sponsorship. Forcing Jon to step out of his comfort zone and sell himself, he mustered enough courage to convince Paul to keep him in the seat. The end result was a confidence-building and career-changing four and a half seasons, accompanied by 37 thrilling triumphs. Their first came at the narrow and flat Kokomo Speedway, a demanding layout that had previously intimidated

Stanbrough. Quickly becoming the king of Kokomo, Hazen and he proved to be equally potent at Terre Haute, winning five times including the 2002 Tony Hulman Classic. A spectacular 2003 season saw this underdog duo score 19 feature wins, even slaying the omnipotent J.J. Yeley in USAC action at Eldora and Lawrenceburg, the latter coming on live television during Indiana Sprint Week.

In the June of 2004, he won his last race with Hazen and indulged in a brief stint in the famed Hoffman 69, claiming yet another Lawrenceburg Sprint Week feature. Finding better chemistry with car owner Roger Tapy and mechanic Jim Whiteside, 13 of his 15 victories from 2004 came in the Trucker's 24-Hour Service machine. Chasing USAC points with Tapy in 2005, he only scored four times, but two of them came while moonlighting in Steve and Brad Fox's 53. In what was originally planned to be a limited effort until resources were depleted, a magical six-year span with the Fox boys began full-time in 2006. Once again pairing similar personalities and agendas, the three Avon High School classmates were joined by yet another Avon alum in Tim Mehner. Together, they claimed 20 of Jon's 21 triumphs in 2006 and 28 of Jon's 30 tallies in 2007, amassing winning percentages of 40

Settled into the Hazen 57, where Stanbrough began to build a Hall of Fame career.

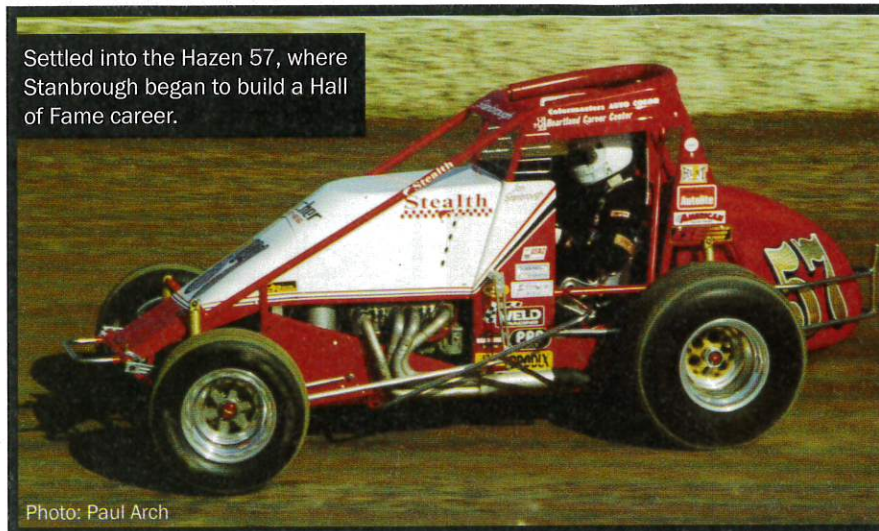


Photo: Paul Arch

and 53 in those two sizzling seasons. Including another scintillating 2010 summer in which they secured 20 of Stanbrough's 21 conquests. All told they notched 96 victories, averaging 16 wins each year.

Once the dream team disbanded at the conclusion of 2011, Jon still enjoyed some productive years with Bruce Leer and Danny Roberts (7 wins in 2012) and Mike Dutcher/RW Motorsports (8 wins in 2014). After returning to his own ride for three years, Stanbrough teamed with the Wingo Brothers for his final 2018 season. He wound up in victory lane at Paragon's Johnson Memorial, the same place where he produced a pair of 1996 USAC feature wins some 21 days apart. After becoming a grandfather, a father to a second daughter, and reaching a milestone 50th birthday, he had nothing left to prove on the track, choosing to channel his energies elsewhere. Always thinking big-picture and trying to do what was right, that is Jon Stanbrough in a nutshell.

Four years after retiring from driving duties, Jon chose to saddle up one more time, easily outdistancing a Midwest Throwback Sprint Cars field at his all-time favorite facility - the Terre Haute Action Track. That final under-the-radar score served as quite the contrast to his first in May of 1991, when incidental contact with Bob Kinser at the \$3,000-to-win Non-Winged Sprint Car Classic in Bloomington led to a smashed trophy, a near riot, and a police escort out of the facility.

When counting quarter-midgets, mini sprints, and late model stock cars, Stanbrough's racing years numbered 38, 30 of them from the seat of a sprint car which produced 191 feature victories occurring in 11 states, at 25 different tracks, and with 17 different

car owners. Thirty-five of them fell under the USAC banner, his first coming at the emotional Robbie Stanley Memorial at Lawrenceburg in June of 1994, as Jon and Robbie were quarter-midget competitors. Twice claiming the pressure-packed USAC Indiana Sprint Week crown (2006 and 2010), he is second in all-time Sprint Week wins, top-fives, top-tens, and laps led. He was a three-time National Sprint Car Hall of Fame Non-Winged Driver of the Year (2006, 2007, and 2010) and a four-time Hoosier Auto Racing Fan Club Driver of the Year (2004, 2006, 2007, and 2010). Jon absolutely owns the King of Indiana Sprint Series record book, serving as its all-time win leader and a six-time series champion. Twice taking the Midwest Sprint Car Series title (2012 and 2013), he was also a two-time Kokomo Speedway track champ (2003 and 2006). Tied with Rich

Vogler's all-time win total at Terre Haute, Stanbrough's 13 sprint car triumphs is tops at the Action Track. Twice a winner of the Tony Hulman Classic, he also produced a prestigious 2009 Pacific Coast Nationals victory at Tulare. A wingless warrior for 99% of his career, he even managed to triumph twice with an airfoil atop the Law Brothers 77.

All those accolades are great; but the manner in which he conducted his racing endeavors and the earned respect meant just as much to Jon. Squabbles and rubs were rare and winning never changed his understated and humble approach. Outsiders might claim he was quiet and unapproachable but when in the comfort of close friends, he enjoyed sharing his sharp sense of humor. However, once he was strapped in for battle, nothing broke that steely-eyed stare. When Stanbrough was confident, there might have been no one more difficult to defeat.

Working as a fabricator during the day, he learned his craft while toiling in his father's muffler shop during his high school years. After employment with John Bickford and Bob East, he branched out on his own in 1992 and became equally known for his skills at mending mangled chassis and restoring vintage open wheel equipment, with several of his pristine pieces displayed in racing museums.

Achieving lofty status as Hoosier sprint car royalty, when considering that the bulk of Jon's racing success occurred after he nixed his 1998 retirement decision, it is amazing to think just how different the record books would have read had he chosen to call it a career so early. ■

Prime Stanbrough kicking off the 2006 season.

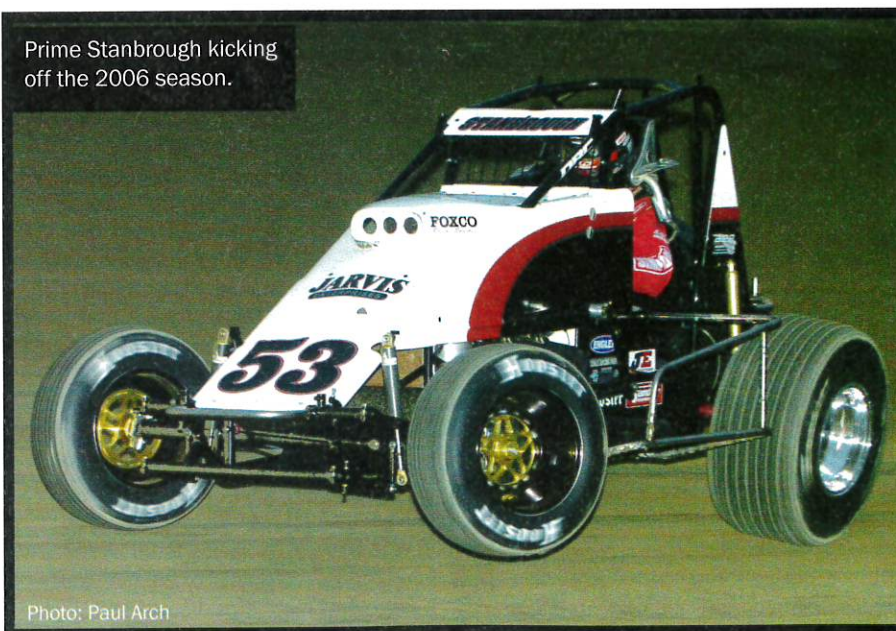


Photo: Paul Arch