



Thad Doshier



Photo Credit: Armin Krueger

by Bob Mays

Thad Doshier was born in Southport, North Carolina, on November 19, 1935, and came to Topeka Kansas, in 1953, while stationed at Forbes Air Force Base. He decided to stay in Topeka at the end of his tour of duty and got the racing bug at an early age.

Doshier bought his first car, a 1936 Plymouth, for \$12.50 and his first race was at Windy Hill Raceway, in Maple Hill, Kansas, in 1956. "My first couple of races I ended up upside-down. I figured I needed to keep it right side up to win. I still have the trophy from the first race I won," says Doshier.

In 1958 Doshier teamed up with car owner, Duane Vobach, who had developed one of the first supermodifieds to use fuel injection. Thad made steady improvement racing at Windy Hill, Shawnee Speedway in Topeka, Kansas, Savannah Speedway, Savannah, Missouri, and Riverside Speedway in Kansas City, Missouri. By 1960, he was a regular winner across the region and captured the track title at Savannah.

The Mid-America Fairgrounds in Topeka decided to start racing weekly in 1961 and this facility, more than any other would come to be Doshier's home track. Thad won his initial feature at Knoxville Raceway in Iowa in 1961 and followed it up with a victory in the inaugural Jayhawk Nationals at Mid-America, driving for Vobach. The same year, Thad won the "Most Popular Driver" award as voted on by the fans.

Thad bounced around early in the 1967 season, until getting a call from legendary Kansas City midget owner Jack Cunningham. Cunningham had recently purchased the former Luther Brewer Chevy supermodified which had been driven so successfully by Ray Lee Goodwin. At the '67 Knoxville Nationals Doshier qualified third and ran second to Joe Saldana for 14 laps before overtaking the future sprint car star and winning the race.

In 1968 Thad bought the former Bill Hoback Chevy sprint car, painted it lavender and white with the number 74, and ran the International Motor Contest Association (IMCA) and Big Car Racing Association (BCRA) circuits in the Midwest. By this time he was also considered the top threat at the Mid-America Fairgrounds. He also won a feature at Eagle Raceway driving the Swenson-Williams number 24 machine. In 1970 Thad was reunited with his Knoxville Nationals-winning ride, now owned by Gary Hanna, and he won the Mid-America track championship and the Jayhawk Nationals, both for the second time.

Dean let Thad know that he was rooting for him, stating, "I don't want to put any pressure on you, but if you don't win, I lose my house, car, wife and dog!"

Early in the 1972 season Doshier was a regular winner at Eagle and Topeka in Hanna's car. He then teamed with R&H Farms and mechanic Wayne House late in the season and finished fifth in IMCA

points, winning his first IMCA race at the Nebraska State Fair. Joining him in victory lane was entertainer Jimmy Dean, who Doshier had met at Hutchinson, Kansas, in 1962. Shortly before the main event was to start, IMCA announcer Bob Lundberg interviewed the country music superstar about his friendship with the budding race superstar. Dean let Thad know that he was rooting for him, stating, "I don't want to put any pressure on you, but if you don't win, I lose my house, car, wife and dog!"

The crowd loved it and Doshier made sure that Jimmy still had a place to live, a way to get there, someone to cook his sausage and fetch a stick, if needed. Thad ended the IMCA season in fifth place and won the "Most Improved Driver" award.

A 1973 trip to the IMCA Winter Nationals in Florida yielded two seconds, a third, and a fourth-place finish. Thad's first big win of the season came with the BCRA at Wakeeney, Kansas, followed by IMCA wins at Wichita,

Lincoln and Spencer, Iowa. Of the twenty IMCA races held, Doshier finished in the 'top five' 11 times and was the 1973 champion. Thad was also inducted into the very prestigious S-K Mechanics Hall of Fame following the 1973 season in a ceremony at the John Hancock Center in Chicago, Illinois.

Thad tested the United States Auto Club (USAC) waters in 1974 and scored a seventh in the dirt championship car 100-miler at Sedalia, Missouri. He also won the Best Dressed Pit Crew Award, in IMCA and the Hard Charger Award by the Topeka Auto Racing Boosters in 1974.

Doshier ran USAC for Bobby Hillin in 1975 and finished in the 'top ten' four times. Driving the Quality Portable Buildings USAC champ dirt car, Doshier sat on the pole for the 1977 running of the Tony Bettenhausen 100 at Springfield, Illinois. He was presented the Bill Hoback Memorial Award in 1977 for outstanding contribution to the sport of auto racing by Lee A. Fagala.

Thad also raced Jerry Wilson's supermodified on the tough southwest circuit and with the National Championship Racing Association (NCRA) against such racing legends as Emmett Hahn, Harold Leep and Ray Crawford, before calling it a career in the late 1970s.

The veteran sheet-metal worker was inducted into the Knoxville Raceway Hall of Fame in 1979 and the Big Car Racing Association Hall of Fame in 2011. Thad Doshier, the 1967 winner of the Knoxville Nationals and the '73 point champion of the International Motor Contest Association, lives in Supply, North Carolina today.

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