



Fred Rahmer

by Bryan Householder

When Fred Rahmer won the sprint car feature at Pennsylvania's Lincoln Speedway on April 4, 2009, it was his record 163rd at the Pigeon Hills oval and his 400th career win in a sprint car. And when he won again at Lincoln on May 2, 2009, against the All Star Circuit of Champions (ASCoC), it was his 500th career feature win, which includes 99 modified stock car main event triumphs.

Rahmer's racing career started in 1978 when the 20-year-old Salfordville, Pennsylvania native followed his father Fred's footsteps into modified stock car competition at places like Grandview, Big Diamond and Penn National. Before he left the modifieds for good at the end of the 1985 season, "Fritz" was scored first 99 times in feature races.

It was during his career in modifieds that Grandview announcer Ernie Saxton coined the nickname "Fast Freddie" Rahmer -- a name that stuck through time. It was also during his time in the modifieds that Rahmer began to dabble in sprint car racing. He secured a few rides with Todd Rittenhouse on the United Racing Club (URC) circuit, and was tabbed by famed car owner Al Hamilton to warm up Hamilton's car one fall afternoon on the mile at Nazareth National Speedway.

At the time Syracuse and Nazareth were hosting big events on the same weekend. Hamilton's driver, Keith Kauffman, was competing at Syracuse when practice was held at Nazareth. Rahmer warmed up the car and Kauffman raced it the next day.

It was in 1984, in the West Point Automotive Sprinter, that Rahmer scored his first sprint car win in URC competition. That win came at Penn National Speedway on July 15, 1984. That was also the year that Fred Rahmer married the former Debbie Rio of the famed Rio Brothers R-10 modified family.

Rahmer was still at the top of the game in modified racing at the time but found he really liked the sprint cars. For 1985, he decided to field his own sprint car on a limited basis with the URC circuit. While having another great season with the modified, he won again with URC at Williams Grove Speedway. He actually crossed first in another URC feature at Big Diamond, but URC officials felt he had been overly aggressive in that race and stripped him of the win.

As the 1985 season drew to a close, Rahmer felt it was time for a change. He no longer wanted to race the modifieds, and announced that he would quit racing if he didn't find a seat in a sprint car. Enter car owner Joe Harz. The furniture salesman had moved from the modifieds to the sprint cars a few years earlier and was looking for a driver for the 1986 season on the tough Central Pennsylvania circuit. He gave Rahmer a call.

The first year, however, didn't really indicate what was to come. The Rahmer/Harz combo went the entire 1986 season without a feature win. Rahmer was, however, impressive enough to garner Rookie of the Year honors at both the Williams Grove and Lincoln Speedways.

At the end of the 1986 season, Rahmer was faced with a tough decision. Scott Stackus offered what appeared to be a great opportunity for the 1987 season -- a chance to drive for Stackus, both at home and on the road. The problem was it would mean Rahmer had to leave the Harz team. Fred and Joe had established a strong relationship and it was a tough decision, but after much discussion, Rahmer took the Stackus ride.

The super deal wasn't quite so super but Rahmer did get his first two Central Pennsy sprint car wins that season. He won first at Port Royal in May and then later at Lincoln. At the end of the season, Rahmer was ride searching again.

He started the season in the Ben Cook "house car". From the start, they ran a limited schedule, but what a start. Rahmer won the season opening races at

Hagerstown and Selinsgrove in the Cook car. He later picked up the full-time ride with "Bud" Lawrence and scored wins at Williams Grove and Susquehanna.

Rahmer drove for Lawrence until the end of the 1991 season, and won numerous races throughout the area and point titles at Susquehanna in 1989-91. He also won the Selinsgrove and overall Central Pennsylvania titles in '90 and '91.

At the end of the 1991 season Rahmer was offered the ride with Bob Stewart's Apple Motorsports team. He put together several very good seasons through the middle of the 1996 season. During that time Rahmer won many races and a Lincoln point title. Probably his most noted win during that time was in the Slick 50 World Series TV race at the Canyon Raceway in Arizona.

In 1996, Fred and Debbie became the proud parents of triplets, Brandon, Freddie and Francesca. In mid-1996, car owner Al Hamilton called asking Rahmer to join his team. What followed were five-and-a-half incredible years. Rahmer won more races for Hamilton than any of the car owner's previous drivers, including one streak of 17 consecutive wins at Lincoln. They won so many point titles and beat Ted Johnson's tough World of Outlaws (WoO) troops, too.

When Rahmer and Hamilton decided to part ways at the end of the 2001 season, Rahmer didn't have to look hard for a new ride. Actually it was an old 'new ride'. Fred Rahmer and Joe Harz got back together and this time the wins and championships came regularly. They stayed together until Harz announced his retirement at the end of the 2005 season. Among their statistics during this time was a qualifying-night win at the prestigious Knoxville Nationals in Iowa.

After Harz retired, Rahmer joined the Jim and Sandy Kline team for the 2006 season and then moved to the Chad and Jenn Clemens team at the start of the '07 season.

While Rahmer has stuck mainly to the central Pennsylvania circuit, he has ventured away from the area to compete in special races. His stats show wins in nine different states, plus three wins in Australia.

All but six of Rahmer's first 400 wins have come in what are now termed 410-cubic-inch sprint cars (the circuit still didn't have any limits when Rahmer started). Of those other six wins, five came with URC and there was one win in Pennsylvania's 358-cubic-inch sprint cars. That win came at Williams Grove when Rahmer was helping some friends, current WoO car owners Jim and Laura Allebach, 'sort out' their car.

Fred Rahmer entered 2009 as the career win leader at both the Williams Grove and Lincoln Speedways. At Williams Grove, he entered the season with 79 '410' sprint wins. At Lincoln, he entered the season with an incredible 161 wins.

That Lincoln number eclipses the often thought unreachable 150 wins recorded there by Steve Smith. What's more incredible about Rahmer's Lincoln Speedway stat is the fact that he hasn't competed there regularly for his entire career. For years, Lincoln, Port Royal and Selinsgrove all hosted Saturday races in competition with each other. Rahmer was a Port Royal regular in 1987 and competed regularly at Selinsgrove from 1988-1991 and again for half of the 1996 season.

Rahmer sits third on Selinsgrove's all-time win list behind only Ray Tilley and Richard "Mitch" Smith. The majority of his 54 wins at Selinsgrove came on Saturday nights, making his Lincoln feature win number even more impressive.

For the record, Rahmer started 2009 with 31 wins at Susquehanna and 17 at Port Royal. Other 'Pennsylvania Posse' tracks where he has won include Grandview (9), Trailway's and Silver Spring (4 each), Path Valley and Lernerville (2 each), and he has one win each at Big Diamond, Sportsman's and Challenger.

Rahmer has five sprint car wins in Delaware with three at Delaware International and one each at Georgetown and Harrington. In New Jersey, he has won six times in sprint cars with four at Bridgeport and two at East Windsor. Rahmer has six wins at Hagerstown, Maryland.

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In Florida, Rahmer has won three times at East Bay, and once each at Volusia and Lake City. He has two Knoxville Nationals preliminary night wins, two wins at Sharon, Ohio, one each at Canyon, Arizona, and Winchester, Virginia, and the three Australian feature wins.

Rahmer's wins include five World of Outlaws A-Mains, four WoO preliminary night wins and two WoO Gumout Series wins. He has also won 22 times with the All Star Circuit of Champions.

Rahmer has numerous point titles to his credit: Williams Grove (eight), Lincoln (ten), Selinsgrove (three), and Susquehanna (four). He has won the Pennsylvania Speedweek crown eleven times and has claimed both Keystone Cup Series titles. And these do not include his seven track titles in modified stock cars.

While the Central Pennsylvania circuit hasn't always had an overall point series sponsor, stats have been kept for every year. Rahmer has won five official crowns, including the last three Speed Dawg-sponsored series titles. But he has also led the area on seven other unofficial occasions as well.

"Fast Freddie" Rahmer has won more sprint car races than any Pennsylvania driver ever, and due to the Pennsylvania "handicapping" system, a great majority of those wins have come from mid-pack starting spots. It's been a heck of a career for the racer born in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, on March 3, 1958, and it's not over yet.

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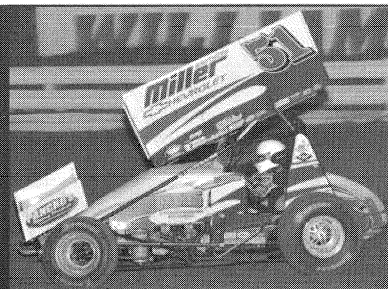
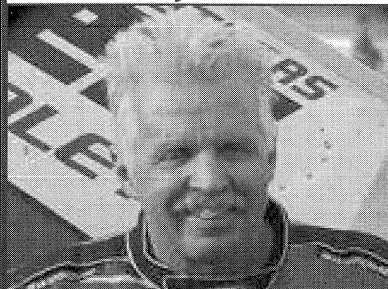
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