

KEITH KAUFFMAN

by Brad Vores

Keith Kauffman was born on June 9, 1950, in Danville, Pennsylvania, to Lois and Robert Kauffman. He has two sisters, Greta and Gail.

Kauffman started racing in 1970 and has competed in go-karts, late models, dirt championship cars and, of course, sprint cars. After owning his own team for nearly the first ten years of his career with sponsor John Groninger, Keith Kauffman then earned the right to drive for the some of the best sprint car owners in the country. While it would be nearly impossible to remember every car that Kauffman has strapped himself into, he has been in cars owned by Daryl Saucier, Jasper Petite, Bob Hampshire, Walter Dyer, Gary Stanton, Denny Ashworth, Sandy Chinen, Don Berry, Allan Nott, Jim Wahlie, Leon Wintermyer, Rod Fauver, "Red" Powell, Rick Woefling, Roy Morral, Sal Scarpitta, Craig Eshenaur, Gil Sonner, Bob Stewart, Warren Johnson, Bob Weikert, Al Hamilton and, most recently, Dave Middleswarth. He also drove a United States Auto Club (USAC) dirt championship car for Jim and Ralph DePalma and did a stint in Western Australia for Luch Monte. His career win mark currently stands at 290 feature victories. He's won races in twelve different states, including two features in Australia.

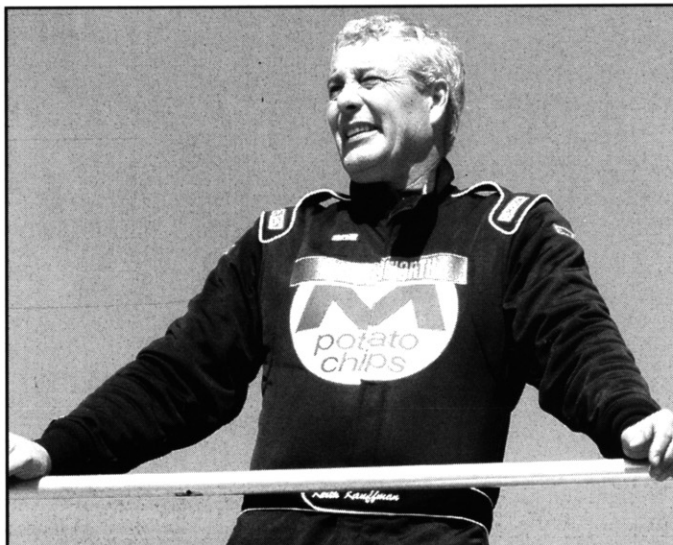
"The Man from Mifflintown" had great success driving for Bob Weikert in the number 29 sprint car and for Roy Morral in the number 880, but his greatest moments in racing came behind the wheel of the Al Hamilton's famous number 77 sprinter. Hamilton has fielded the top-rated team out of Pennsylvania, and Kauffman won 84 times driving for Al and Betty Hamilton. "It's nice to be in there along with Al and Bob because they are definitely Hall of Fame car owners and were very good car owners to me during my career," said Kauffman. "They were well-respected across the country because they had very good race teams, and if you get with good teams, you're going to win races. They were great people who loved to race and they were a big part of my career."

Kauffman is the all-time leading feature winner at Pennsylvania's Port Royal Speedway with 119 career wins and 11 track championships there. He currently ranks fourth on the all-time Williams Grove Speedway win list with 48 victories and still holds the records at the Grove for the most wins in one season and the most "top five" finishes in one season. Both feats came in 1984 while driving for Hamilton, when he had 13 feature wins along with an amazing 25 "top five" finishes. Another unique record that Kauffman holds is that he is the only driver in the country to win the Pennsylvania Speedweek, Ohio Speedweek and Western Pennsylvania Speedweek titles.

Actually, it is a possibility that Kauffman would own just about every sprint car record at his regular tracks in Pennsylvania had he remained on the local scene during his entire career. Instead, Kauffman journeyed on the road to test himself against the best from Ted Johnson's World of Outlaws (WoO) and Bert Emick's All Star Circuit of Champions (ASCoC).

Kauffman was able to capture five final night wins on the WoO tour, his first coming at his home track of Williams Grove in 1980. He added another Grove WoO win in 1985 to go along

with others at the Hagerstown Speedway in Maryland, the Orange County Fair Speedway in New York, and the San Jose Fair Speedway in California. Kauffman has also tallied various World of Outlaws preliminary night feature wins. He finished eighth in WoO points in both 1989 and '90. "It was hard to get a good full-time ride because you basically had 12 to 15 cars that run that deal and about 100 guys in the country hunting for rides," said Kauffman. "So when things happened you had to be there to take advantage of it."



The last several years of Kauffman's time on the road with the All Stars were spent driving for Warren Johnson's United Expressline team. Keith has 24 career All Star feature event wins, but in 1999 he headed back home to again race full-time locally.

Kauffman's raced a million laps at hundreds of tracks, but he can still boil it all down to one crucial moment, and it has nothing to do with victory lane. His most memorable moment in his career came during the first-ever Historical Big One at Earl Baltes' Eldora Speedway. "That race was a good one for us as we ran third in the \$100,000-to-win deal," he said. "Jac Haudenschild won it and Mark Kinser was right behind him and I was right there with them. That was a pretty big deal for me. Definitely the closest we've come to winning anything real big."

That 1999 season saw Keith join Dave Middleswarth's Middleburg, Pennsylvania-based team. At that time, the Middleswarth name was basically known for it's great snack items, specifically potato chips. But over the next five years, the Middleswarth name became synonymous with "top-notch sprint car teams." Kauffman was instrumental in taking the team to the top echelon of sprint car racing. "We took a team from basically a fun type, get-the-race-car-out-and-take-it-to-the-track-and-play-a-little, to a team that has been pretty successful in Central Pennsylvania," he stated. "Dave has been a great car owner and the Middleswarth family are super people and very supportive of the race team. Dave gives us what we need to put together a winning team because it's very tough around here."

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KEITH KAUFFMAN, continued

Kauffman is also quick to give credit to his hard-working and dedicated crew that have made the last five seasons in the Middleswarth camp good ones. "I have a really good team, everyone works hard and they are just all good people," he said. "They are the ones who work the long hours to prepare the car and keep it all going. I just drive the car and try to give them back the satisfaction by winning races."

While Kauffman has been around a lot of good people during his racing years, he doesn't have to look far to know who has been the most supportive and instrumental in his career. His wife of 26 years, Kathy, has been there the entire time. She's seen it all and experienced life on the road trying to raise their children. Currently both Keith and Kathy work part-time at the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation.

And children Becky, 20, a sophomore at Arcadia University near Philadelphia, and Chase, 15, a sophomore at Juniata High School, have been raised around the racetracks. "My family is the main reason that I decided to come back to Pennsylvania and race," he said. "They are really important to me and I had to change my career because it is what I wanted to do. I didn't have to do it, but it's something I wanted to do."

"They have been supportive of my racing and all the stuff that goes along with being a race car driver, so I felt it was time to return the favor to them and come off the road and watch my kids grow up and spend more time with Kathy," Kauffman added. "Now I can go to Chase's football games, go see Becky

play field hockey, and I can even take Kathy shopping and out to dinner."

The former point champion at Port Royal (11), Williams Grove (2), Hagerstown, Selinsgrove and Susquehanna continues to race weekly in central Pennsylvania, competing with Middleswarth teammate Todd Hestor. On Friday, May 21, 2004, he won another feature race for 410-cubic-inch winged sprint cars at the historic Williams Grove Speedway in his Kriner-powered J&J number 7 machine. The legend continues for one of the finest ambassadors in the sport of sprint car racing today.