

national sprint car hall of fame



BRAD NOFFSINGER

BY NORM BOGAN

Bradford A. Noffsinger was born on August 29, 1960, to Patricia and Alfred Ace Noffsinger in Los Angeles, California.

As a youngster, Brad loved to play with toy cars, but, by age ten, his need for speed and competition found him riding moto-cross. In 1976, at the age of sixteen, he began to race in open wheel categories and soon took over the wheel of the family super-midget, capturing the 'Rookie of the Year' honors at Ascot Park in 1977. In 1978, Brad moved to the United States Racing Club (USRC) midget car organization and garnered another rookie title.

1979 found Noffsinger back in the midget, but he soon moved up to the family California Racing Association (CRA) sprint car, finishing twentieth in season points and being presented the 1979 rookie trophy from Chris Economaki.

In 1980, younger brother Bart registered as a rookie and kept the family tradition going by securing the 1980 CRA 'Rookie of the Year' title. A year or two later, Todd Noffsinger joined his sprint car racing brothers. Todd's career, though, was cut short at age nineteen in a fatal accident at Ascot Park in 1983. Bart then suffered a serious back injury, decided to retire, and pursued a successful technical career in the aerospace industry. For over three decades Brad has been the one to carry the Noffsinger racing banner.

Since coming on the scene in 1979, Noffsinger has exhibited the racing talents of a top qualifier and strong competitor, with the natural ability to easily work with sponsors, teams, fans and officials.

From 1979 to 2003, Brad raced in 1480 sprint car races, including dashes, heats, consolations, semis, and mains. He competed in 520 main events and accumulated 250 'top five' feature finishes, plus an additional 121 in the 'top ten.' He has posted 92 fast times, 46 trophy dash wins, and 57 main event wins. Noffsinger won the 'Most Fast-Times Award' from 1984 through '87. In '84, Brad tied Mike Sweeney with 9 each, then posted 10 in '85, 15 in '86 and an incredible 30 in '87.

Brad's fifty CRA main event wins rank him seventh on the all-time list behind Dean Thompson (103), Norman "Bubby" Jones (80), Lealand McSpadden (69), Ron Shuman (69), Bob Hogle (63), and Jimmy Oskie (58).

Noffsinger also raced midget cars occasionally during this time, participating in 81 main events, posting nine feature wins, 21 'top five' finishes, plus an additional sixteen in the 'top ten.' On November 20, 1990, Brad gave up his qualified D. Mike Kelly car for the Turkey Night Midget Grand Prix, so that Jeff Gordon could secure the United States Auto Club (USAC) national midget car championship.

Noffsinger drove for several car owners during his CRA days. The most prolific was a six-year alliance with Jack Gardner, Jr., posting 41 main event victories and, in 1986 and '87, capturing the CRA season point championships.

After claiming two CRA titles, Noffsinger moved from sprinters to the pinnacle of stock car racing, NASCAR Winston Cup, in 1988, uprooting the family from their southern California base and relocating to North Carolina. Mike Curb and Cary Agajanian, who had been affiliated with the Jack Gardner sprint operation, felt that Noffsinger had the charisma and public relations savvy to deal with the stock car set and they offered him a full season ride for 1988.

The highlight of 1988 was starting alongside Richard Petty in his first Cup race. For a totally rookie team, they struggled, especially on the short tracks, where the fields were smaller than on the super-speedways. But, by the end of the season, Brad finished third in the rookie points behind Ken Bouchard and Ernie Irvan, both veteran stock car drivers.

After Sunoco pulled their sponsorship from the Curb Motorsports team at the end of the season, the team shut the doors and the Noffsinger family made the cross-country trek back to California. Brad re-enlisted with Jack Gardner Motorsports for 1989 and '90. He scored another nine wins and finished fourth in points for 1989, and followed-up with eight additional wins and a third in points for '90. This was a year of heartbreak as the mighty Ascot Park in Gardena, California, was closed down after 33 years of continuous operation.

Several highlights from his sprint car career are notable. First, Brad was the pole-sitter for the Mopar Million race at Earl Baltes' Eldora Speedway in 2003 in the Billy Wilkerson/Dick Woodland non-winged sprint car. Second, Brad finished second in the 1984 Western World at Manzanita Speedway in Phoenix, Arizona, sandwiched between winner Ron Shuman and third-place finisher Steve Kinser. Third, winning the (Don) Peabody Classic in 1987 and the Pacific Coast Nationals in '89, both at Ascot.

Also, Noffsinger posted the first 18-second qualifying lap at Ascot on October 8, 1983, and turned the first 16-second lap at Baylands in Fremont, California, on May 22, 1983. Brad set 21 sprint car track records at nine different tracks across the country. He was honored in 2008 by being inducted into the "Legends of Ascot."

Another highlight in Brad's Sprint Car Career was at Ascot on October 26, 1986, when several of the big-time car owners and sponsors, J.W. Hunt (Jack Hewitt, Brent Kaeding), Frank Lewis (Mike Sweeney) and Mike Curb (Brad Noffsinger) each put up \$2500 per car for a \$10,000 winner-take-all match race purse. Brad gave his owner the bragging rights by bagging the big bucks.



PHOTO CREDIT: MIKE ARTHUR

Since returning to North Carolina in 1993, Brad has functioned in various positions involving auto racing. He has been a driving instructor for the Richard Petty Driving Experience for twenty years. He has worked with some very talented drivers in the three NASCAR traveling series, as a spotter, crew chief, team manager and a developmental driver instructor. He has taken the wheel of a racer with the effort to produce a higher level of performance for the whole team. Acting in the various capacities has given Brad the overview of what works and what doesn't. His experience quite often kicks in with a solution, either mechanical or psychological, that will lift a team to the next level. He has worked in over 25 television commercials and shows since 2009, as a stunt driver and as a coordinator.

Noffsinger ran for several years in the USAC Silver Crown division, which produced one victory at Memphis, Tennessee, four fast times and a world track record at St. Louis, Missouri. He also competed with the International Super-Modified Association (ISMA) asphalt super-modified series in the northeast and tallied one heat race win.

Brad and his wife, the former Robin L. Taplin, were married on September 6, 1980, and they have two daughters. They have three grandchildren living in North Carolina and two grandchildren living in Las Cruces, New Mexico, where their dad races a winged 360-cubic-inch sprint car.

Since his own racing career has slowed down, Brad wants to pass on his love of open wheel racing by training the up-and-coming generation. For the last nine years, he has been promoting open wheel racing in stock car country, a tough feat. His shop builds, repairs and maintains midgets as well as offering rental programs and driver training. Adding sprint cars to the program is in his future, as sprint cars have a special place in his heart.

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