



• 2018 INDUCTEES • 2018 INDUCTEES

national sprint car hall of fame



dave Steele



PHOTO CREDIT: JOHN MAHONEY

by David Sink

David McFarland Steele was born to Parents Mac and Carol Steele on May 7, 1974 in Tampa, FL.

Steele's success, particularly on the asphalt, made him one of the greatest sprint car drivers ever. He has often been referred to as "The Greatest Pavement Sprint Car Driver of All-time". Over the course of his Sprint Car career, which began in 1991, Steele captured numerous wins and several championships.

Steele began racing Go-Karts at the age of 7. His father Mac owned Sprint Cars and young David would tag along each weekend. Although not old enough to get into the pits, he would spend his earlier years playing under the grandstands. It was only natural that he would take an interest in racing. Being smaller than most kids his age, racing gave him a more level playing field to be competitive. "When he was in the fifth or sixth grade he wanted to play football," father Mac explained. "One day I rode with my wife Carol to pick him up from practice and noticed he was running laps while the other kids were practicing. He asked us if we would be upset if he quit and we said no. He then said that was the greatest day of his life," laughs Mac. "He obviously was too small to compete with the other kids."

After several seasons in the Karts, Mac decided it was time to move David up and they purchased a TQ midget. David instantly took to the midgets, and all but dominated the division in his final full season, winning an amazing 24 of 28 feature events in 1990.

When the 1991 season approached, Mac decided David was ready to try his hand at a sprint car. He informed his regular driver, Paul Southwick, that David would race the smaller tracks on the Pavement Racing Organization (PRO) non-winged schedule while Southwick would race the larger sized tracks. David was impressive that first season. Although he didn't win, he had a second place finish at Lakeland, and along with Southwick, helped his father secure the 1991 PRO championship.

Mac Steele explained it was nerve-racking watching his young son race a sprint car that first season. "It made my stomach turn watching him on race days," explains Mac. "I would have to make sure I had TUMS before we left for the track. As he gained confidence and ran

some it wasn't as bad. He was a smart driver and never took unnecessary chances or tore a lot of stuff up. I realized he was gonna be a pretty good driver about the second year. We were at Volusia County when it was pavement and he passed Sam Rodriguez and Jim Childers and went on to win. I was amazed how easily he passed them, because they were really good cars. I knew then he was talented and was gonna have a chance in racing and get some opportunities."

Steele captured his first feature victory at Lakeland International Speedway on May 8, 1992 during a Central Florida Sprint Car Club (CFSCC) non-wing asphalt event. The initial victory interestingly came a day after his eighteenth birthday. Steele would follow that with two additional feature victories with the prestigious Tampa Bay Area Racing Association (TBARA). In addition, he finished fifth and claimed Rookie of the Race at the grueling Little 500 classic at Anderson, Indiana during that 1992 season.

By the 1993 season, car owners were beginning to take notice off Steele. After a dominating victory at Pensacola, FL during an American Winged Outlaw (AWOL) event on April 23, 1993, Mac was approached by fellow Tampa car owner Jack Nowling. "He asked me if he thought David would be interested in driving his Silver Crown car at Milwaukee. I said I don't know. Let's go ask him. He did, and of course David said yes, and that's kinda how his USAC career started. I believe that's really the race that got him noticed."

From late 1993 through 1995, Steele was traveling all over the southeast running full-time for Nowling. The team would occasionally head north for USAC events. During this period, Steele won multiple feature events with: TBARA, AWOL, CFSCC, and a 400 lap race at Punta Gorda, Florida in 1994.

Steele burst onto the national scene in 1996. He scored an ASCS dirt win at East Bay Raceway during Florida Speed Weeks. He then took a brand new Jack Nowling owned

Hurricane chassis with a brand new 410 Klein Engine supplied by Harold Wirtjes north and scored the USAC opener at Lakeside, Kansas on April 12. He then set a world qualifying record at Phoenix International Raceway a week later. He claimed the prestigious Little 500 in May and scored another USAC victory at Winchester, Indiana on August 8. He ultimately finished fourth in the final USAC standings and got an opportunity to participate in an Indy Racing League event at Las Vegas later in the year.

Around this time, Steele had completed an Associate of Arts degree from Hillsborough Community College and had enrolled into the University of South Florida. He debated whether to drop out of college and move north to pursue racing. "I told him there have been seventy-year-olds go back to college," explained Mac. "If you wanna pursue racing you gotta do it while you're still young." After that conversation with his father, Steele moved north to focus on racing and never looked back.

Over the next decade, Steele's career took off. He was victorious in USAC Midget, Sprint Car, and Silver Crown competition numerous times. His success led to opportunities with IRL, ASA, ARCA, and the NASCAR Nationwide series.

After 26 USAC National Sprint Car wins, 16 USAC Silver Crown wins, 2 USAC Silver Crown championships (2004 & 2005), and 18 USAC National Midget wins, Steele decided to scale his racing back and return home to start a family and pursue business interests. Steele opened Steele Performance Parts in Tampa, Florida and married Lynn Bunn on June 11, 2009. They later had three children: Bailey, Claire, and Brody.

Steele was instrumental in helping Taylor Andrews get the new Southern Sprint Car Shootout Series (SSSS) going prior to the 2016 season and came out of semi-retirement to run the new series full-time and help with car count. This may have been Steele's most impressive season to date. Steele competed in 12 of the series 15 races and scored 11 wins and one runner-up finish en-route to the inaugural series championship. It was his third Florida sprint car championship as he was also a three-time TBARA champion.

Steele sadly perished in a racing accident on March 25, 2017 during a SSSS event at Bradenton, Florida. His last event on February

national sprint car hall of fame



KNOXVILLE, IOWA



Dave Steele

continued from page 36.

25, 2017 at Punta Gorda, FL was also the final victory of his career. It may have personally been the most important of his career as it was his 100th sprint car victory in the state of Florida. He is the only driver to have hit 100. He acknowledged how important the feat was after the race that night because many of the drivers on the list he had passed were heroes of his as a child. He indicated it may have been the most fulfilling win of his career.

Steele's preference for pavement was partly due to his competitive

nature. "David always felt second place was the first loser," father Mac explained. "When we started we also had a dirt car but it wasn't a very good car. I put the best parts on the pavement car since I was a pavement guy. So naturally he had better success on pavement and just steered more in that direction."

During Steele's twenty-seven year sprint car career, Steele claimed two USAC Silver Crown championships, three TBARA championships, and a SSSS championship. In addition, he was a two-time Little 500 champion and scored sprint car wins with ASCS, USAC, TBARA, AWOL, PRO, CFSCC, MSR, AVSS, and HOSS. He was inducted into the Little 500 Hall of Fame in 2014.

SPEED CHART

Divided by Elapsed Time
Multiplied by Length of Track

1/4 Mile.....	.250
1/3 Mile.....	.333
3/8 Mile.....	.375
1/2 Mile.....	.500
5/8 Mile.....	.625
1 Mile	1.00

www.MantonPushrods.com

manton

Pushrods®

High Performance
Custom Pushrods &
Rockerarm Adjusting Screws

Toll Free: 1-877-626-8667

Phone: 951-245-6565

601 Crane Street, Bldg C | Lake Elsinore, CA 92530

SHAVAR-WESMAR

GEAR DRIVES

Since 1995 Shaver-Wesmar Gear Drives have been the standard in the sprint car engine business. Utilized by the top engine builders in the industry, Shaver-Wesmar Gear Drives have won every major race, track championships, and national titles numerous times!

**Does your engine have a
Shaver-Wesmar Gear Drive?**

Kelly Westphal

918-691-8096

www.shaverwesmar.com



CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THE INDUCTEES!



903-455-0811

**4400 Caddo
Greenville, TX 75401**