



Photo: Paul Arch

PAUL HAZEN - OWNER

By Ashley Zimmerman

AS WITH ALL FORMS of racing, if you know a region or a series, there are certain images, moments, and individuals that immediately paint a mental image of the sport. When it comes to Indiana sprint cars, it's Paul Hazen, and it's the iconic number 57. An image that has been consistent with racing there for nearly sixty five years, and an image that will remain consistent for likely more than another 65. Paul Hazen has defined and redefined the facets of not only competing amongst USAC's finest, but the fairy tale of the underdog rising to stand amongst the defining members of Indiana's sprint car history.

While Paul Hazen at 85 continues to push the limits across Indiana's finest dirt ovals and test USAC's newest generations, his extensive five decades surviving and thriving in an environment tough enough to turn dirt to diamonds covers pages upon pages of racing's most coveted history books.

A native of Indiana, Paul began his career wheeling a 1937 Ford stock car at Warsaw Speedway [Indiana] in 1957. It would be quite some time before Paul would first print his name into history, earning Warsaw Speedway's modified track championship in 1965. The ink barely dry and pages barely turned, he suffered a back injury and, paired with more responsibilities from his employer, a new plan was formed to put Jim Elliott behind the wheel. They dominated all competition at Warsaw Speedway for five consecutive years, amassing countless feature wins and three track championships from 1970-1972. However, a motorcycle accident in 1973 claimed Jim Elliott's life so Louie Mann

took over and added two more chapters of Warsaw track championships to the book of Hazen in 1973 and 1979.

In 1981, Hazen handed over the driver's seat to someone new, yet familiar - Jim Elliott's son Tony. It was a decision that picked up where Jim had left off - victorious. The duo stayed together through much of the early 1980s and revisited success multiple times throughout the 1990s. They had over 75 wins together and nine track championships (five at Kokomo, two at Gas City, and two at Warsaw Speedway). Elliott earned Hazen his first USAC National Sprint Car features in 1987, first at Santa Fe Speedway, and just one month later at famed Eldora Speedway at the 4-Crown.

Hazen wrenched for Larry Contos in 1990 and sat out 1991 but, up his return in 1992, he paired with Kevin Thomas and got another USAC win, this time at Lawrenceburg. Throughout the mid-1990s, Hazen filled his seat with some of the best in Indiana racing history, including the late USAC champion Robbie Stanley, before taking a hiatus after 1997.

Paul returned with Jay Drake but it was the Jon Stanbrough chapters that followed for four and a half years that put Hazen into new successful territory with 37 wins, 19 of which came in just the summer of 2003.

As the book of Paul Hazen begins to transition into its epilogue after 65 seasons, the chapters have been filled with the most dreamed about stories in race car ownership. Paul Hazen has amassed 16 track championships, one as recent as 2010 with Thomas Meseraull at Gas City, and 10 USAC national sprint

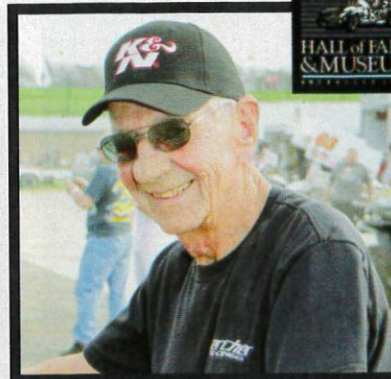


Photo: John Mahoney

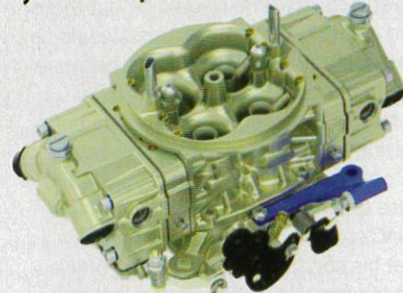
car feature wins, including his most recent in 2013 with Chad Boespflug. With a confirmed 147 wins, Hazen estimates a minimum of 200 feature victories, including moments such as scoring second in the 1978 Little 500. The list of drivers whom have bolted seats into the Hazen 57 is not only extensive, but a who's-who of racing, including the likes of Ted Hines, Tracey Hines, Jason Robbins, Casey Shuman, Kevin Briscoe, Josh Spencer, Bryan Stanfill, Critter Malone, Shane Hollingsworth, Travis Welpott, Scotty Weir, Colten Cottle, Shane Cottle, Tim Creech, Tye Mihocko, Tyler Hewitt, AJ Anderson, Bryan Clauson, Billy Puterbaugh, Matt Hardin, Marc Arnold, Jon Scisco, Clinton Boyles, Max Adams, Justin Grant, Isaac Chapple, Billy Jo Havens and many, many more!

While the book of Paul Hazen will continue to fill chapters yet numbered, filled with more mechanical knowledge than most can fathom, stories as long as the miles it took hauling, the epilogue ends so perfectly with his induction in the in the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame. ■

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