

# CLASS OF 2023

**Dirt Empire Magazine** is pleased to present our second National Sprint Car Hall of Fame issue and are honored to have partnered with the NSCHoF to prepare and publish the official Hall of Fame biographies for all 13 of the 2023 inductees into the class of 2023. Every

year, the Hall of Fame inducts a select group of drivers, owners, wrenches, innovators, media members and officials into an elite club housed off the second turn at Knoxville Raceway in Knoxville, Iowa. Thanks to Bill Wright and Bob Baker with the National Sprint

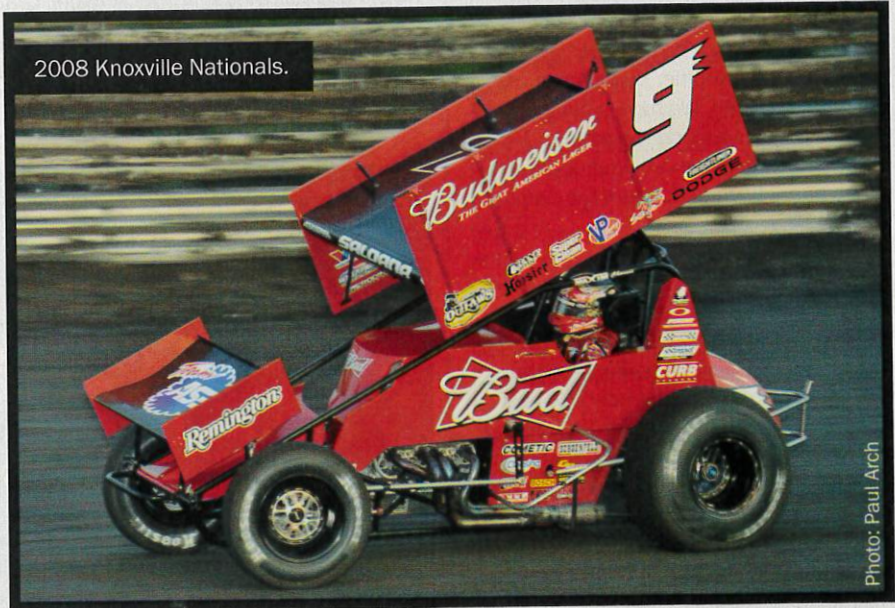
Car Hall of Fame and everyone who contributed to this special section. This year's class will be officially inducted into the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame on Saturday, June 3, 2023 in Knoxville, Iowa. Congratulations to all the inductees! ■

## JOEY SALDANA - DRIVER

By Ashley Zimmerman

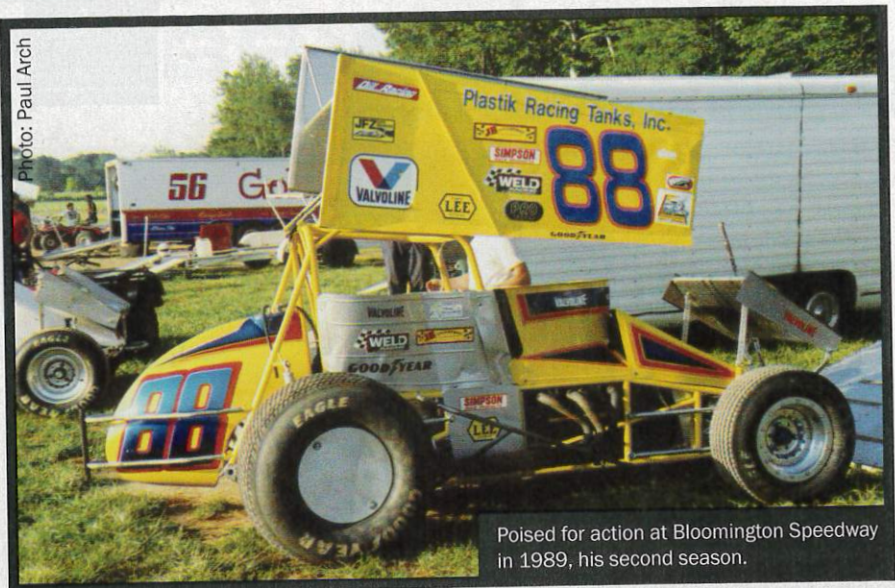


**BORN THE SON** of a legendary driver and now fellow Hall of Famer, Joe Saldana, Joey Saldana carried the pressures and weight of the rather large footprints he followed with ease. Born March 14, 1972, in Indianapolis - a town known to produce racing legends - he wasted no time chasing the same



dreams as heroes Lee Osborne and Doug Wolfgang. Joey first scratched that itch in 1986, after stumbling upon a kart in Steve Stapp's race shop and he raced it for two years. Through the wisdom of his father, he left karts behind and began learning engine building from Donnie Ray Everett,

and chassis design from his hero, Lee Osborne. In 1988, he started racing winged sprint cars throughout Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio, honing his skills and experience lap by lap. His first win came in 1989 at Spoon River Speedway in Canton, Illinois. Joey took a short hiatus from winged



racing to racing on pavement with USAC from 1990 to 1991. Not able to shake the dirt track itch, he made his return in 1992, earning his first All Star Circuit of Champions win, doubling up on the sentiment by earning the victory in a car he built while at Stealth Chassis. With his success with All Stars, he committed to the tour for 1993 and 1994, running the Tim Hughes 94 and the Warren Johnson U2 respectively. In 1995, he went racing with Art Wendt and Larry Hazelwood in the 77w and visited victory lane a total of 22 times, 18 of which with the All Star Circuit of Champions. Those 18 wins stand as a record even decades later and he remains third on the series' all-time wins list in 2023 with 74 wins. Those wins did not come easily as he battled the likes Bobby Allen, Jack Hewitt, Kenny Jacobs, and Danny Smith. Joey's win at I-96 would be the cherry on top of his breakout year and he went into the history books with his first World of Outlaws win. Capitalizing on his 1995 success, he

shot for the moon and joined the World of Outlaws for his rookie tour partnering with Dennis Roth in the coveted 83 of Roth Motorsports. After securing his Rookie of the Year title in 1996, Joey split his seat time amongst various teams, however his efforts would not go unnoticed with nine trips to the trophy stand. However, as a new century began in 2000, a new era of "The Brownsburg Bullet" emerged with a nearly two decades stretch running with the World of Outlaws, while not always in the Saldana owned #17, Joey again solidified his name into the record books with 108 feature wins. Overall, Joey left the tour ranked seventh on the all-time win list. Joey is one of the only a handful of drivers to win 20 WoO features in a season, successfully completing this feat in 2009. During this stretch, Joey amassed some of his most prestigious wins such as the 2002 and 2006 Kings Royal, 2007 Brad Doty Classic, 2007 and 2009 Gold Cup, 2009 Iron Man 55, the Four Crown Nationals at Eldora in



2007, 2008, 2011, and 2014. Joey has qualified for 19 Knoxville Nationals, and finished runner up in the finale second on three separate occasions. He has ten top ten finishes at the Knoxville Nationals. He was successful abroad and won the 2003 Grand Annual Sprintcar Classic in Australia and the 2006 New Zealand International Sprint Car Classic. While the story may have begun with a young Saldana following in the footsteps of his legendary father, the records clearly indicate Joey Saldana emerged upon a path he cleared through his own historical statistics. With over a three decade career and the school of hard knocks training in engine building, chassis fabrication and even car ownership, Joey not only raced with the best in the business, he became one of the best in the business. There is no better descriptor for over 105 World of Outlaws feature wins, 74 All Star Circuit of Champion wins and with victories against the best throughout the world. ■

