



2019 Hall Of Fame

Thank you everybody for coming out here to be a part of our Third Annual Southern Oregon Racing Hall of Fame. We at Southern Oregon Speedway are proud to have been able to establish this event that we hope will be a long tradition for many years to come. Next year will be our 25th season of racing, but as you know, our racing heritage stretches back many decades. From Valley View Raceway in Ashland to the famed Medford Raceway at the Posse Grounds and even Cascade Raceway in White City, which is still out there in the Black Berry bushes all these years later, we have had a proud tradition of racing in the area.

We also want to thank Curt and Denny Deatherage for helping us establish this event. Curt and Denny are Oregon racing historians who also established Historical night at Cottage Grove Speedway over a decade ago. Sadly, Curt passed away in September last year. He is truly missed and will be remembered as somebody who had a passion for our sport and preserving its history. Denny continues his efforts and his son Ben is one of the top announcers on the West Coast.

Of course, one of the key ingredients in what makes our sport so special is family. In the early days of Medford Raceway, Cecil James was one of the top competitors. He not only won several races, including a 24-hour event, he was a champion and one of the first promoters of the Medford Raceway. This year, our little track saw the fifth generation of his family get into racing as Cecil's great great granddaughter, Saige King, began racing and Outlaw Kart track. Family is what it's all about.

As I said, this is an event we hope to feature here at the speedway for many years to come, and there are some truly great racers, and people behind the scenes, such as car owners, sponsors, officials and other people,. They're all going to be in the Hall of Fame eventually.

Our committee has the daunting task of going through a big list every year and coming up with people deserving of being inducted. We have a great group that we will be inducting this year, but rest assured, there are many others who help make the sport so special and have kept it going through the years who will also be honored in the future.

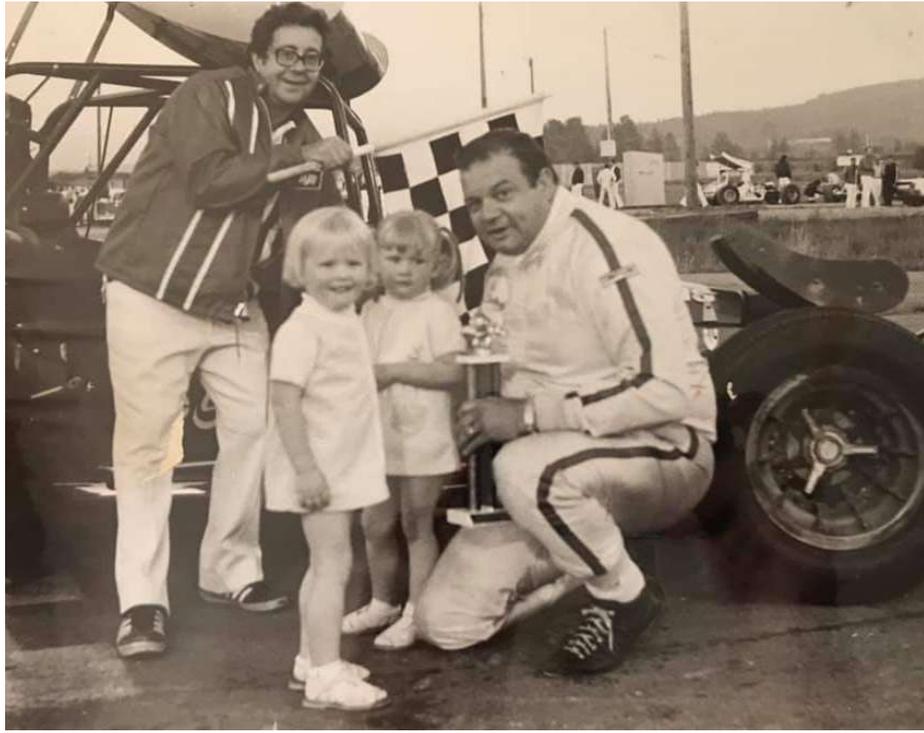
As I'm a relative newcomer to the area, I've done my best to get acquainted with the history of racing here and have enjoyed conversations with people who have been a part of it through the years. It's important to me, because I know it's important to you. This is one of the reasons why I pushed so hard to have this event added to the schedule. There's a wealth of knowledge available on the Medford Raceway Posse Grounds Facebook page, and you should check that out. There are lots of clippings, photos and stories from the people who lived through those times.

I continue my efforts to try and chronicle all of the history, and others have joined in this effort as well. Sadly, through the years, the list of champions and the winners list kind of disappeared. Most of those records are still out there and will be recovered through research. We'd like to paint as clear a picture of all of the great history of the various tracks in the area as possible, and though it will take some time, it will happen.



Southern Oregon racing has had some of the best drivers you would find anywhere in the state or the West Coast. This goes all the way back to the very early days of Cecil James, Crock Hunter and Jack McCoy in the 1950s, right into the 1960s when Harold Hardesty and Ben Neel were burning up the circuit and into the 1970s & beyond with such legendary competitors as Don Hood, Don Harper, Jack Keck, Tom Wyatt, Bruce Rayburn, Rick Singler, John Arnberg and Dane Smith. Some of these competitors are already in the Hall of Fame, and the rest of them and many more will be there one day. In fact, we've had some good racers who started their career here at Southern Oregon Speedway, and one day, racers like Tom Glover, Don Estermado, Frank Word III, Brian Popoa and even Mark Wauge will be honored.

For tonight, we will be inducting six people into the Southern Oregon Racing Hall of Fame. Five of them are racers, and one was a beloved and respected official. So without further ado, let's begin.



Our first honoree was an official at the Medford Raceway for several years. He was the man who worked as the flagman. He served in those duties through some of the biggest races ever seen at Medford Raceway, He was so well respected that other tracks would bring him into flag their special events as well.

Being an official is a tough job, and sometimes you are on the receiving end of the wrath of a frustrated racer. In his case, because he was the most visible official on the flag stand, this might also include fans coming up to the flag stand to tell him whatever was on their mind. There were times when he would actually invite an unhappy racer up to the flag stand to get a better perspective on the job that he did. They often left with more of appreciation and respect for him.

A couple of times it even got scary for him as he was knocked from the flag stand during a race, but he came back each race. He had a passion for the job. Because of that, there were many racers who held him in high regards and respect. So our first honoree for this evening is flag man Freddy Higginbotham.

Here to accept the award for Freddy is



Our next inductee was one of the top racers at Medford Raceway during the 1960s. In a time when Hall of Fame members Harold Hardesty and Ben Neel were burning up the circuit, he made his presence known as well. He won several races and was even the 1968 champion. He continued to compete until moving up to California in the early 1970s. We are proud to induct Silent Sam Dykes into the Hall of Fame.

Here to accept the honors for Sam is



Our third honoree is another one of our early stars from the late 1950s and into the 1960s. He was a fierce competitor who won Main Events at both the Medford track and the White City track. In fact, he also won the championship at the White City track. He raced until a crash at the Medford Raceway in the early 1970s ended his career, but he was still involved in the sport. In fact, his sons Tony and Jimmy became two of the top racers at both the Medford Raceway and Southern Oregon Speedway after that. The Southern Oregon Racing Hall of Fame welcomes Jim Walker Sr



Our next inductee raced at the Medford Raceway going back to the 1960s. He was not just one of the top competitors, but one of the more well liked people within the community. In the 1980s, he really hit his stride. When the Super Stock division was discontinued at Petaluma Speedway in California in 1986, the top drivers from there and top drivers from Oregon formed the Pacific Outlaw Super Stock Enterprise. This series in its first few years was known for exciting, and fast racing. This driver was the first champion in 1987. Tonight, we induct Dave Shinn into the Southern Oregon Racing Hall of Fame.

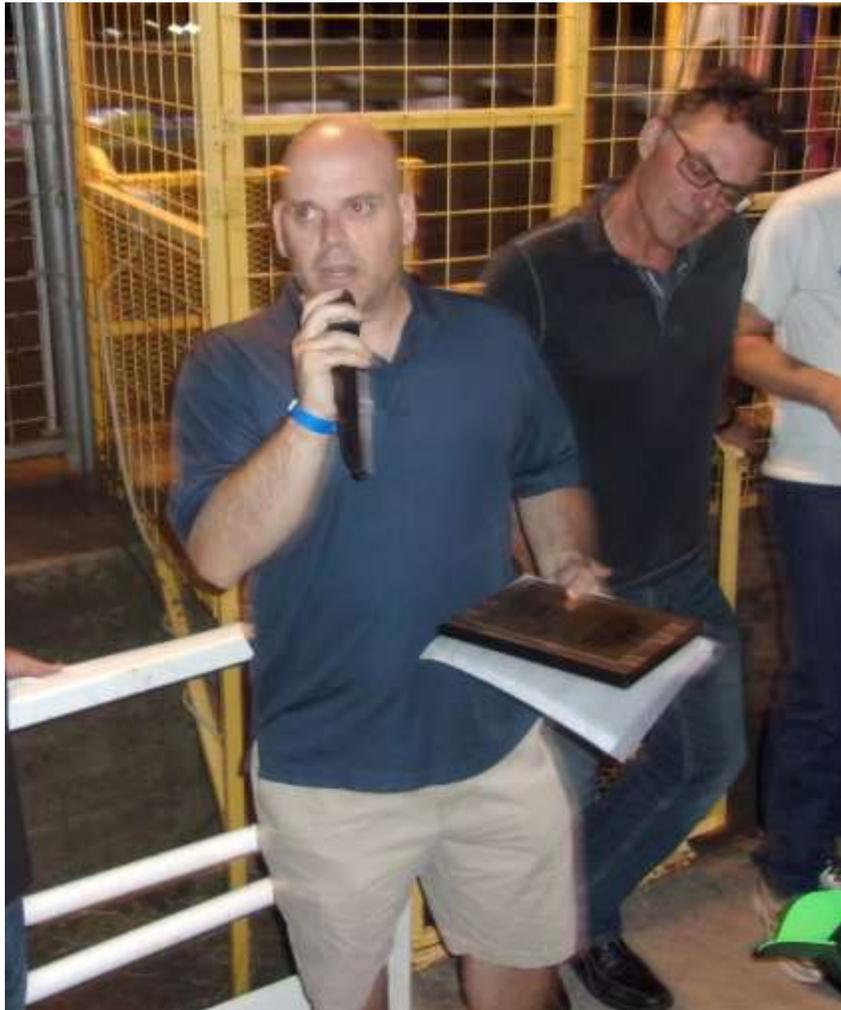
Dave is here to accept the honors.



Our next inductee was somebody who was a fierce competitor in Street Stocks, Limited Sportsman and Late Model competition. His best Late Model point effort was second in the 1980s. Though he wasn't really somebody who's preferred to race for points, he was a Street Stock champion at both Medford Raceway and Yreka Speedway. He was somebody who liked to test his ability at several different venues, and he counted big event wins at tracks such as Cottage Grove Speedway and Silver Dollar Speedway among his highlights.

He was another of the more popular competitors in the racing community, and he also ran the Central Point Auto Wreckers for several years. Sadly, he just passed away this year, but we can think of no better way to pay respects to him than to welcome Jay McCleary into the Southern Oregon Racing Hall of Fame

Accepting for Jay will be his son, Jason McCleary





Our sixth and final honoree for this year comes from a racing family that has been a part of Southern Oregon racing going back to the 1950s. I mentioned earlier, his family is now five generations strong in the sport and showing no signs of slowing down. When you have a legend like Cecil James as a father, you have an excellent teacher.

This driver was somebody who won for many, many years. In fact, he bears the distinction of being probably the only driver to win Main Events at the Southern Oregon area tracks in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and even the early 2000s here at Southern Oregon Speedway. He raced against the best drivers every era had to offer, and he beat them all. Not only that, he was known to go to tracks outside of the area and leave with the winners prize and trophy after another impressive effort. Tonight, Markey James joins the Southern Oregon Racing Hall Fame.

Here to accept for James is his son, Bret James.

