

2024 EASTERN MOTORSPORT PRESS ASSOCIATION HALL OF FAME

DON PRUDHOMME (NO VOTE NEEDED)

Collectible toys from the '70's include the 'Snake' and 'Mongoose' Hot Wheels cars, developed by Mattel to honor Don 'The Snake' Prudhomme and Tom 'The Mongoose' McEwen and broaden drag racing to a new audience. That audience witnessed a '91 Motorsports Hall of Fame of America drag racing inductee rack up a ton of accomplishments: '65, first to win both the Winternationals and US Nationals in the same season; '75 first to break the 6.0-second mark; 'first to run 250 miles per hour; '88 first to run 5.305 seconds; '20 induction into the International Motorsports Hall of Fame. The list goes on and on for the 4-time NHRA Funny Car Champion, as both a driver and a championship car owner. In '23 he reunited with his former driver, Ron Capps, at the US Nationals. Capps revealed a Hot Wheels-detailed car and Prudhomme, then age 82, climbed on board to warm up the 11,000-HP beast. Whether in a Top Fuel dragster or a Funny Car, the 83-year-old was a machine.

STEVE PARK (NO VOTE NEEDED)

Steve Park, the Long Island standout, actually started his racing career in a NASCAR asphalt Modified with his father, Bob, by his side. Once established at Riverhead, he moved to the then-NASCAR Featherlite Modified Tour, where he won several races and was a title contender on several occasions before moving up to the then-NASCAR Busch Series and eventually Cup. Park is likely the only person to have ever refused to return a call from the late Dale Earnhardt. Thinking it was a prank call, he ignored it. Fortunately, Earnhardt called again and that led to a relationship with him and, later, DEI. Park was injured, ending his career early, but not before he won 2 races in the Cup series, made his mark over the years, and represented the northeast in a professional and winning manner.

EMPA HALL OF FAME (VOTE FOR 4)

BONES BOUNCIER

Now in his fifth decade of writing, Connecticut native Bones Bourcier has set the standard for excellence in motorsports journalism. He's written hundreds of columns and features for newspapers such as *Speedway Scene* and *Speed Sport* while his byline has appeared in *Stock Car Racing*, *Open Wheel*, and *Speedway Illustrated*. He wrote books that include "Foyt, Andretti, Petty" and he has co-authored the auto-biographies of Bill Simpson, Tony Stewart, Bugs Stevens, Gary Balough, Eddie Flemke, and Parnelli Jones. A true historian of the sport, Bourcier has held drivers, car owners, and sanctions accountable throughout his storied career. Along with many awards and recognitions, Bourcier is a 2024 inductee into the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame and Museum.

RICK FERKEL

The late Rick Ferkel of Tiffin, Ohio, was nicknamed "The Buckeye Traveler" as he hit the road to chase big events and was one of the initial stars when the World of Outlaw Sprints started. He's not only one of the winningest Sprint Car drivers, but he has likewise spent years as an official, crew chief and team owner. He exceeded 250 feature wins including 21 with the WoO. During the 1970's 30-win seasons were routine. In 1978 he won a career-high 38 races. After driving he became a race director for the WoO and also served as a crew chief for Doug Kalitta's USCA Sprint Car team. Ferkel also continued to maintain his famous No. 0 Sprint Car for local events, mentoring many of the sport's current stars in their early years

CHIP GANASSI

PA born and raised, former driver turned owner, his teams have won 23 championships dating back to 1990. In addition, 2016 saw the team pick up their first-ever victory in the 24 Hours of Le Mans. Overall, Ganassi has won six of the seven most iconic races in the world of auto racing with wins in the Indianapolis 500 (5), Daytona 500, Brickyard 400, 24 Hours of Le Mans, Rolex 24 At Daytona (8) and the 12 Hours of Sebring (2). Ganassi teams include five Honda cars in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES, and a Cadillac V-Series.R in the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship and the FIA World Endurance Championship.

JIMMY HORTON

Recently honored by the DIRTcar Modified Hall Of Fame in New York, Jimmy's 450 plus career feature wins include ARCA Superspeedway races, Syracuse SuperDIRT scores, Eastern States 200 successes and, now, has taken charge of Art's Radiator in the aftermath of the passing of company founder, Art Lentini, Jr.

NICK IGDALSKY

CEO of Pocono Raceway who does an outstanding job of working not only with race teams during event weekends but is a huge supporter of the media, especially EMPA. For years Nick has been just a phone call away to lend assistance to the organization and likewise to a great number of charitable groups throughout the region and beyond through the efforts of the Mattioli Foundation. Has kept Pocono Raceway going strong as one of the only independent tracks on the NASCAR circuit. His grandparents, Dr.'s Joe and Rose Mattioli are founders of Pocono Raceway, and both have been inducted into the EMPA Hall of Fame.

ALAN JOHNSON

In a career that began in 1975 he then proceeded to win at least one feature each year for the next 48 years. He has earned over 560 feature event at 39 tracks in seven states and two Canadian provinces. He is a Super Dirt Week champion three times (1983, '89 & 2003) which all took place the Syracuse mile. In 2004 he was named as the EMPA Richie Evans Memorial Northeast Driver of the Year and was inducted into the Northeast Dirt Modified Hall of Fame in 2017.

STEVE SMITH, JR.

Stevie Smith followed in his father, Steve's, footsteps and his 31-year career culminated with his induction into the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame in Knoxville, IA. He won 222 Sprint Car features, 84 of those coming in WoO races and for a list of all-time owner greats including Al Hamilton, Dave Helm, John Zemaitis, Dan Motter, Jack Elden, Guy Forbrook, Chad Clemens and Fred Rahmer. Some of highlight wins include Port Royal's Tuscarora 50, Selinsgrove's National Open, Williams Grove's National Open 3 times and the Grove's Mitch Smith Memorial 3 times, the '93 Gold Cup at Silver Dollar Speedway in Chico, CA and the '05 Brad Doty Classic at Attica (OH) Raceway. He won the 2015 PA Sprint Speedweek title and had 15 career PA Speedweek wins. In 2012 he won the Ohio Sprint Speedweek.

SAMMY SWINDELL

A name synonymous with sprint car racing excellence, he has carved out an extraordinary career marked by numerous victories and accolades. With a career spanning several decades, Sammy is renowned for his tenacity and skill on the racetrack. He has claimed three World of Outlaws Sprint Car Series championships and boasts over 300 career World of Outlaws Feature victories. Sammy's talent extends beyond sprint cars, with notable performances in midget and silver crown racing. He has also competed in NASCAR and Champ Car competition and attempted to qualify for the 1987 Indianapolis 500.

JOHN BLEWETT III YOUNG GUN PRESENTED BY NEW ENGLAND RACE FUELS (VOTE FOR 1)

LUKE BALDWIN

18-year-old asphalt Modified rookie, Luke Baldwin, won the 2024 SMART Modified Tour championship. The third-generation modified racer secured the title, and the Rookie of the Year honors, with the SMART Mods by finishing third in the season finale at North Wilkesboro Speedway. He scored SMART wins at South Boston and Dominion Speedways. He also raced in several other Tour Type Modified events registering solid top 5 runs.

TREVOR CATALANO

Trevor Catalano comes from a family of racers, each of whom has made his or her mark in racing. In 2024 he announced he'd be running the full NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour in a car owned by his mother, Amy. He had some decent finishes for a newcomer but at Monadnock Speedway in July he not only beat his two brothers, but he also picked up his first-ever win by holding off 2-time Tour champion, Ron Silk. Now 18, he won that huge race at age 17.

COREY DAY

At just 18-years-old, this star in the making turned the Sprint Car world on its head during the 2024 racing season. With some Midget racing still to go, he currently sits at 11 wins on the season. Eight with the High Limit Series, one with the World of Outlaws, one with the King of the West Sprint Cars and a prelim win at the Chili Bowl. His talents even caught the eye of Rick Hendrick and Jeff Gordon at the end of the season as they scheduled some ARCA and NASCAR Truck Series starts for the phenom. In 73 starts in 2024 he has 11 wins to go along with 25 top five and 44 top 10 finishes.

STEVE SNYDER, JR

This 17-year-old phenom out of Rising Sun, MD had a career season thus far in 2024. Leading the Northeast for Micro Sprint wins for the third consecutive year, he has netted over \$100,000 in earnings racing a 600cc Micro Sprint from coast to coast which include several \$10,000 to win races with upwards of 100 cars in attendance. He also made his first career Chili Bowl Midget Nationals back in January. His final stats on the season include 18 victories in 49 starts with 32 top five and 35 top 10 finishes.

DRAKE TROUTMAN

From Hyndman, PA, 19-year-old Drake Troutman set out on a tough mission while still just 18, in January of 2024. Mission: earn Rookie of the Year honors in the Lucas Oil Super Late Model (LOSLM) series. Running the full tour for the first time, plus competing in other Late Model and Modified events, he set sail with his equally young but dedicated crew. Mission accomplished! Drake ran 44 LOSLM events, finished 11th in points among 371 drivers, and is the 2024 O'Reilly Auto Parts Rookie of the Year. He also earned wins in DirtCar UMP Modifieds, Precise Late Models, and even in a Legends race.

RICHIE EVANS MEMORIAL NORTHEAST ASPHALT DRIVER OF THE YEAR (VOTE FOR 1)

JUSTIN BONSIGNORE

By taking the win in the NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour season finale at Martinsville Speedway on October 26, Justin Bonsignore not only won for the first time at the historic half-mile, but it also earned him his fourth Tour championship. A late-season surge in which he won the final three races of the season gave Bonsignore the edge over two-time Tour champion Ron Silk, as they carried their season-long contentious championship

battle into the final race of season for the second year in a row. The win also gave him sole possession of second on the all-time Whelen Modified Tour wins list with 45.

BRANDON GRAY

The Vermont-based driver has channeled life challenges into a focus on racing, primarily in the Flying Tiger division. The 2024 season was the culmination of dedication and talent as Gray went undefeated at White Mountain (NH) Motorsports Park with a perfect 14 wins in 14 starts. At Thunder Road in his home state, Gray won a record-setting 8 races in 19 starts. Not once finishing outside the top-10, Gray had 28 top-fives in those 33 starts.

MATT HIRSCHMAN

Matt Hirschman continued his dominance in northeast pavement Modifieds with another season as the top winner with a total of 15 wins in 47 starts as of November 16. In 2024 he won the World Series of Asphalt Racing at New Smyrna Speedway, taking three of five wins. Was the '24 Tri-Track Open Modified Series champion for an unprecedented ninth time. He scored victories on the NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour, Tri-Track Series, RoC, and other open competition events. His win in the annual Race of Champions at Lake Erie Speedway was his record-leading ninth. He won the Fall Final at Stafford Motor Speedway for a second consecutive time and notched his 10th win during the recent North/South Shootout. Since 2019 when the award was first given to an asphalt driver, Hirschman has won consecutively in each of those years.

JON MCKENNEDY

Jon McKennedy has been successful in winged, big-block supermodified races as well as tour-type modifieds for nearly 20 years. In 2024, McKennedy won his fifth Star Classic at the New Hampshire quarter-mile in his super, just a few weeks prior to winning the Tri-Track Series modified race at Thompson (CT) Speedway. The quiet, unassuming driver is as well known for his supreme understanding of how the car's suspension works as he is for aggressive-yet-clean driving.

RON SILK

Ron Silk missed out on a second consecutive and third overall NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour title when he fell short in the season finale at Martinsville Speedway. But despite that Silk still put together a solid season winning three of the first five races and adding another late in the going which enabled him to hold the point's lead for most of the season. He also collected victories during the World Series of Asphalt Stock Car Racing, on the Race of Champions Tour and The Spring Sizzler at Stafford Motor Speedway.

RICHIE EVANS MEMORIAL NORTHEAST *DIRT* DRIVER OF THE YEAR (VOTE FOR 1)

BRIGGS DANNER

One of the most talented and versatile drivers to come through the northeast in a while, Briggs Danner had a breakout season in 2024. After making his first career Chili Bowl A-Main in January, the question was when, not if he would pick up a win on the USAC National Sprint Car Tour but when. That night came back in June at Grandview Speedway in the USAC Eastern Storm kick off. Danner went to back that up with a USAC National win in the Indiana Sprint Week finale at Bloomington Speedway and another at Lawrenceburg Speedway. Locally the Allentown, PA earned an additional eight victories across USAC East Coast, SpeedSTR and 600cc Micro Sprint competition.

STEWART FRIESEN

In addition to his full time effort in the NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series, in his spare time, Stewart Friesen had a year some can only dream of in Dirt Modified racing. Racing to 22 victories aboard the Halmar No. 44 Dirt Modified which included a Super DIRT Week 200 win at Oswego Speedway worth \$52,000 where he led every lap, he backed that up just two weeks later by winning the Eastern States 200 after starting last on the field. And just for kicks he also earned a 360 Sprint Car win at Utica-Rome in July. His Modified season ended with 22 wins in 59 starts with 42 top five and 49 top 10 finishes.

ANTHONY MACRI

A force to be reckoned with wherever his No. 39 team unloaded throughout the 2024 410 Sprint Car season, Anthony Macri netted 15 victories throughout the year coming one short of leading the nation in that category to only World of Outlaws champion David Gravel. Macri's season highlights included a win against the High Limit Series at The Dirt Track at Texas Motor Speedway, his second straight Pennsylvania Speedweek title and a fifth place finish in the coveted Knoxville Nationals. Macri ended the season with 15 wins in 85 races with 38 top five and 53 top 10 finishes while racing all over the country.

MATT SHEPPARD

With another 30 win season during his 2024 Dirt Modified campaign, 'Super Matt' earned titles on the Short Track Super Series North Region as well as the STSS Combined title in addition to the Utica-Rome Speedway track championship. He was the runner-up in the season long points on the Super DIRTcar Series and picked up victory in the prestigious Fonda 200 in September which was worth \$53,000. His final stats in the year were 30 wins in 84 starts with 66 top five and 74 top 10 finishes.

MAT WILLIAMSON

It seems that wherever he unloaded during the 2024 season, Mat Williamson was fast. He dominated the Super DIRTcar Series with eight victories on his way to his second career series title. His 27 win season also included weekly track championships at Ransomville and Land of Legend Raceways. His two major victories over the year came in the Outlaw 200 at Fulton Speedway and the Salute to the Troops 150 at Oswego Speedway during Super DIRT Week, both of which were worth over \$20,000. His final stats on the year included 27 wins in 88 starts with 71 top five and 79 top 10 finishes.

AL HOLBERT MEMORIAL NATIONAL ASPHALT DRIVER OF THE YEAR (VOTE FOR 1)

ANTRON BROWN

Going from a hired gun to a multi-team owner and driver makes winning a championship for yourself that much harder, given all the added responsibilities. NHRA Top Fuel ace Antron Brown entered the final event 3rd in points. He had to do everything right if he had any chance of leaving California as the '24 champion. He was under pressure when he qualified a disappointing 12th of the 16 who made the show. Excitement built as he faced off against some tough competitors. One by one, he got the win light and made it to the finals. Pressure was at an all-time high where he lined up alongside the '23 champ, Scott Kalitta. It was a winner-take-all, highly anticipated faceoff. The tree went green and less than 4 seconds later Brown had earned his 4th title but first as a team owner. Antron Brown ended the year with 5 wins.

KYLE LARSON

31-year-old Kyle Larson proved his worth once again as one of the best racers in the country. His six wins in NASCAR Cup competition is a Series' best as was the number of laps led (1699) and races led in (25) and over half of his Cup races produced top-10 finishes. Larson also added a victory in the Xfinity Series. Furthermore,

he was in the spotlight back in May when he ran “The Double” with the Indy 500 and Coke 600 on the same day. At Indy he started fifth and led laps. Larson also collected 9 Sprint Car wins and a dirt Late Model victory, solidifying him as a versatile racer who wins on both asphalt and dirt.

JOEY LOGANO

Perhaps there was “something” that seemed almost inevitable about Joey Logano’s impressive run to his third NASCAR Cup Championship at Phoenix Raceway. The 34-year-old Connecticut native once again proved why competitors can never take him lightly, never count him out. He is not one to mince words and is absolutely convinced he can win every single time he climbs into his No. 22 Team Penske Ford to race. That confidence and bravado powers him and his team. Logano, who led 107 laps, had to hold off a hard-charging defending series champion – his Penske teammate – Ryan Blaney in the closing laps to have the chance to hoist the Bill France Cup for a third time (2018, 2022, 2024) – most among all active full-time drivers. The victory was his fourth of the season.

ALEX PALOU

Alex Palou won his third NTT INDYCAR SERIES championship in the past four years racing for Chip Ganassi Racing. Palou won two races in the No. 10 DHL Honda and scored 13 top-five finishes in 17 races to become just the 13th driver in history to earn at least three INDYCAR SERIES championships. He is just the seventh driver to win three titles in four years and first since Dario Franchitti won three straight from 2009-11 – also for Chip Ganassi Racing. Spanish driver Palou won the Astor Challenge Cup for the title by 31 points over Andretti Global with Curb-Agajanian’s Colton Herta, earning the 16th INDYCAR SERIES championship for Chip Ganassi Racing and the organization’s fourth in the last five seasons.

AUSTIN PROCK

At the end of the '23 season it was unknown where he'd be in '24, John Force Racing selected Prock to fill in for team President Robert Hite. By season’s end, he had rewritten a good bit of the NHRA record book. Working with his crew chief father (Jimmy) and his brother (Thomas), Prock was fast out of the gate and picked up his first of 8 wins in Arizona. When the team rolled into Pomona for the finale, he was leading the points and clinched the title during a qualifying run. Not just any qualifying run. He had the fastest run in NHRA history (341.68 MPH). and first to exceed 340 MPH. Then he produced the 4th quickest run in NHRA history at 3.804 seconds. At Pomona, he was the #1 qualifier for the 15th time (another NHRA record) and his 8 wins came in 12 final round appearances in their 20-race schedule. Everyone knows him now, and his 1st NHRA Funny Car championship was record-breaking in every sense of the word.

AL HOLBERT MEMORIAL NATIONAL *DIRT* DRIVER OF THE YEAR (VOTE FOR 1)

DAVID GRAVEL

David Gravel and his Big Game Motorsports team earned their first World of Outlaws NOS Energy Drink Sprint Car Series championship. He became the 11th different Series champion and first new champion since 2019. Also, his car owner, Tod Quiring, became the first new team owner to win a title since 2013. Gravel’s championship season started with him winning the second race of the year at Volusia Speedway Park and then taking home his third *Federated Auto Parts DIRTcar Nationals* Big Gator title. He was the master of consistency, finishing outside the top 12 only two times in the first half of the season. And in that time, he also picked up his first *Kings Royal* title and a *Summer Nationals* win at Williams Grove Speedway.

CANNON MCINTOSH

This Oklahoma Midget standout as of press time has secured two National Midget titles against the POWRI and Xtreme Outlaw Series and is in play for the USAC title with a handful of races still remaining. He has picked up a total of 11 National Midget wins as of press time with a handful of others coming in Micro Sprint action.

BOBBY PIERCE

He could almost be a candidate for *International* Driver of the Year, given that his first win of '24 came in Auckland, New Zealand. Once back in the states he quickly became the one to beat. He dominated the Wild West Late Model Shootout in NM by winning 4 (in a row) of their 6 races. The World of Outlaws regular then won 14 of the 41 races (34%). For the year, which is not quite complete, he's won 37 of the 93 races (40%). At just 27 years of age, this 'Smooth Operator' from Illinois made his mark among the best. Move over, honest Abe. In 2024 this young man established a new nickname for Illinois – "Land of Pierce".

BRANDON SHEPPARD

In 2024 Brandon Sheppard picked up his 5th World of Outlaws Super Late Model Championship. 'BShepp' competed in all 41 WoO events, earning 3 wins, 23 top-5's, 35 top-10's and over \$171,000 there alone. He also ran a limited schedule, 29 races, with the Lucas Oil Super Lates, where he picked up 1 win, had 9 top-5's, and 21 top-10's. After the success the team had in '24, Sheppard announced he's moving from his current Longhorn Chassis and making a return to drive for Mark Richards in the #1 Rocket house car in '25.

BRAD SWEET

Brad Sweet and the Kasey Kahne Racing, NAPA Auto Parts #49 team were crowned the 2024 Kubota High Limit Racing champions. It was his 6th consecutive national Sprint Car title. Sweet captured 7 victories and finished inside the top-five on 32 occasions and inside the top-10 a whopping 41 times en-route to the championship. Sweet's season is highlighted by his Heartland of America Showdown sweep at Lakeside Speedway in Kansas City, Mo., and a \$60,000 weekend May 3-4. Sweet also swept April 19-20's Oklahoma swing at Southern Oklahoma Speedway and Salina Highbanks. He also won May 10's series stop at Iowa's 34 Raceway in an epic photo finish over James McFadden that came down to 0.012 of a second. Sweet's season includes his first win in New York as well as he picked up May 16's victory at Outlaw Speedway. Sweet also won the season opener with the World of Outlaws Sprint Car Series at Volusia Speedway Park in February. All total he had 11 wins in 2024.

CHRIS ECONOMAKI MEMORIAL EMPA NEWSMAKER OF THE YEAR (VOTE FOR 1)

CARS TOUR

Born from the USAR Hooters Cup Late Model Series founded by Robert Brooks in 1995, the CARS Tour has seen unprecedented growth under the new leadership team of Dale Earnhardt, Jr. Kevin Harvick, Jeff Burton, and Justin Marks who bought the organization in January 2023. This year saw robust car counts in both their Late Model Stock and Pro Late Model classes and close championship chases that went down to the final race event. In the Late Model Stock, Brenden 'Butterbean' Queen was king despite finishing one spot behind rival Connor Hall. In the Pro Late Model division, Kaden Honeycutt started the final race second in points to Spencer Davis. When the checker flew, however, Honeycutt was holding the flag and wearing the crown as Davis was unable to battle back from an early-race crash.

DAVE BLANEY RETIRING IN VICTORY LANE

Long-time Sprint Car and NASCAR driver Dave Blaney hung up his helmet and he did it in style, doing so in Victory Lane at his home track, Sharon Speedway. Blaney had to fend off Danny Dietrich on his way to the checkers. What was even more special was the fact it was 16th Annual Lou Blaney Memorial, a race held in honor of his late father and EMPA Hall of Fame inductee. Blaney won 95 World of Outlaws Sprint Car Series features throughout his career and is one of just 11 drivers who have won a WoO championship in the series' 46-year history. Blaney also visited All Star Circuit of Champions victory lane 49 times throughout his Sprint Car career. And he is the father of NASCAR Cup champion Ryan Blaney.

JEFF TAYLOR

For over half of 57-year-old Jeff Taylor's life, he dreamed of being triumphant in Oxford Plains Speedway's legendary 250. He tried 28 times and came painfully close three times. In 2024, the only race he entered, Taylor – a chassis builder – took last year's car off the jackstands, loaded it up, headed for the track, and told his wife Sherry that if he won, he'd retire from driving. Taylor started 20th in the 41-car field and took the lead with just 25 to go. Georgia's Bubba Pollard was all over Taylor as the laps wound down, but had to settle for congratulating the jubilant Mainer in victory lane. With the trophy in hand, Taylor remained true to his word and retired from driving as a champion in his beloved Oxford 250.

JOHN FORCE RACING

In June, 16-time NHRA Funny Car champion John Force was second in points to teammate Austin Prock, who's filling in for team CEO Robert Hite. A bad crash sidelined 75-year-old Force and nearly took his life. Force Racing called on former champ Jack Beckman, who hasn't raced in 4 years, to run Force's car since an NHRA rule allows a team to use a substitute driver for a maximum of 8 events. After a nearly 5-month absence, John attended the event in Las Vegas, where his daughter Brittany won in Top Fuel and Prock won in Funny Car. Prock's qualifying run in the finals locked up the '24 Funny Car championship, and Beckman finished second. John Force Racing defied the odds and delivered a one-two punch in Funny Car and a 5th place finish in Top Fuel.

PENNSBORO SPEEDWAY

In October 2022 it was announced that XR Events and the Ritchie County Fairgrounds would be revitalizing the 5/8th mile Pennsboro Speedway, shuttered since 2002. Despite twists and turns in planning and implementation, the track opened just 4 months after the original targeted date. Concerns with extreme construction costs and permits forced a change in plans in early '23 for a ¼-mile track to be built inside the old one. Barry Braun, CEO of XR Events, was proceeding with that plan but was dissatisfied and had the full 5/8-mile track graded clear to take another look. Spring flooding held up construction and forced the targeted 2024 Memorial Day weekend opener to be delayed to the last weekend of September. 27 cars were on hand with Bobby Pierce and Devin Moran splitting the 25-lap, \$10,000-to-win preliminaries. That led up to the Mason-Dixon 100 with Pierce winning the 50-lapper that paid \$30,000. Early detractors had insisted the track would be too narrow to accommodate the high speeds and competitiveness of the current late models. But Pierce, who led the first 6 laps of the 50, went to the rear with a flat tire, and was able to charge through the field to regain the lead by lap 36.

EMPA PROMOTIONAL EFFORT OF THE YEAR (VOTE FOR 1)

DOUG ROSE/BRIDGEPORT SPEEDWAY, LITTLE BRIDGEPORT SPEEDWAY AND KUTZTOWN SPEEDWAYS

Since taking over the ownership of New Jersey's Bridgeport Speedway, Doug Rose has elevated the racing-rich dirt oval into new heights. The track was changed to a 3/8-mile which showcases not just weekly action but

some of the Nation's top touring divisions as well. Little Bridgeport Speedway is located inside the big track and plays host to Micro Sprints. Both tracks draw great car counts thanks to the ongoing efforts of Rose along with his wife Brittany. Rose also partners with Richie Tobias who runs the very successful Kutztown Speedway and their wildly popular Wednesday night races. Much like Bridgeport, the weekly car counts never cease to amaze not does the racing product.

JAMIE FRIESEN TRACK PREP EXCELLENCE

When NY's Land of Legends and DE's Georgetown Speedways had early season trouble with their racing surfaces, Jamie Friesen (father of Stewart) was called in to assist. Friesen who formerly owned Ransomville Speedway came in, got each racing surface under control and as the summer went on car counts along with reviews from drivers continued to grow.

ORANGE COUNTY FAIR SPEEDWAY

When the checkered flag fell over the 2023 Eastern States 200 at Orange County Fair Speedway in Middletown, New York, it was widely believed the track was closing for good. And it might have been, were it not for the commitment of Brett Hearn and Doug Dulgarian, two former OCFS competitors from vastly different walks of life who united to keep the speedway open and active.

The two men put together a three-race Sunday afternoon schedule for the summer of 2024, promoted their efforts heavily, opened the gates, and hoped for the best. The results were stunning with good crowds, good fields and festive atmosphere. That led to the promotional duo running Eastern States Weekend 2024 in partnership with facility owner Mike Gurda; that too produced a successful outcome. Hearn's and Dulgarian's efforts have led to an optimistic forecast for OCFS's future whereas 12 months earlier the track was all but done.

STAFFORD MOTOR SPEEDWAY

Stafford Speedway continues to be a leader among northeast paved short tracks. From SK Modifieds to Late Models and Street Stocks the numbers of these weekly divisions prove to be some of the best. And, as a key host to the Monaco Modified Tri-Track Series Open Modified shows, which includes the annual Fall Final, Stafford maintains itself as a top draw for both fans and its race teams.

NEW SMYRNA SPEEDWAY 2024 WORLD SERIES

The turnout for the asphalt World Series in February more closely resembled the car counts and fan attendance of days gone by. Over the 8 nights, New Smyrna drew 765 cars for 34 features, or an average of 22 cars per event over the series. However, certain numbers are hard to ignore, such as the highest entries for the top divisions: Whelen Modified Tour 35; Super Late Models 52; Tour Modifieds 31; 602 Modifieds 28, and Pro Late Models 31 (twice). On day 5, running just 2 divisions (Super Late Models/ASA and Tour Modifieds) they drew 78 cars. On day 8, their '24 finale, 110 cars competed in 6 events. A well-designed schedule, better purse, and a healthy journey to Florida from teams in NY, PA and other points north spelled success for the Hart promotional team.

JUNIE DONLAVEY SPIRIT OF THE SPORT (VOTE FOR 1)

JEFFREY BATTLE

Despite his early-20s youth, Jeffrey Battle has been winning in 350 supermodified races for a half-dozen years. He won the final race of the season at his home track of Star (NH) Speedway enroute to the division's championship. Battle also made several starts in a tour-type modified owned by track promoter Bob Webber, Jr. Battle, however, refused to lean on any potentially favorable call during the

Tri-Track race when he was bumped into the infield and returned to the track without drawing a yellow or sending debris into the racing groove.

RYAN FLORES

This Manasquan, NJ native left home with a dream to make it in the NASCAR Cup Series, living on couches at the start he was picked up by Roush-Fenway Racing at the age of 20 working as a fabricator and eventually part of the road crew team. His career skyrocketed when he was hired by Stewart-Haas Racing where he would eventually become a tire changer before moving over to the Wood Brothers and now Team Penske on the No. 12 of Ryan Blaney. In his spare time, Flores is a racer to the core becoming one of the perennial contenders on the Indoor Auto Racing Championship TQ Midget trail and earned his first National Midget win in the Rumble in Fort Wayne in Indiana last winter. He is also a co-host of the podcast Stacking Pennies with Corey Lajoie.

TJ POTRZEBOWSKI

Veteran NY racer TJ Potrzebowski, 58, twice had to overcome adversity going for the Sportsman Modified championship at Chemung Speedrome. Six days prior to a double-header, and with a narrow point lead, he ran the car in an ROC Sportsman race at the track. Driven into the wall, he barrel-rolled and came to rest on his roof. His team thrashed for six days, made it to the track with no time to spare, and he won both features. A month later, and ten days before the final points race, his wife of 35 years suffered cardiac arrest and passed away in the driveway. Potrzebowski knew she'd want him to race and go for it. On Championship Night he won everything – his heat, the feature, and the 2024 track championship in the true spirit of the late Junie Donlavey.

RYAN SIMMONS

Hollywood couldn't have scripted it any better for New Egypt Speedway Sportsman driver Ryan Simmons in the first week of July. Following a serious UTV incident involving his sister leaving her in the hospital and the loss of his cousin and fellow racer Bill Liedtka, Simmons took the body off his fallen cousin's racer, mounted it on his own and went out and dominated the feature event picking up the very emotional victory with a number of family in attendance.