

2023 Eastern Motorsport Press Association Hall of Fame/Award Nominees

Hall of Fame: Vote for 4:

Ted Christopher

When it comes to northeast asphalt Modified racing, Ted Christopher or "TC" is highly regarded as one of the toughest and best there was. Over four decades he blazed a trail of winning regularly whether it was with a touring series or on a weekly basis at his New England based home tracks. Christopher was an aggressive driver, known for his infamous "Three Tap Rule" when passing cars in front of him, though his driving style changed in his later career and brought more success to his racing career. Teddy has a documented 377 career wins which include 48 on the NASCAR Modified Tour and the 2008 championship. At Stafford Motor Speedway he visited Victory Lane a track record 132 times, 84 at Thompson Speedway and 40 wins at Waterford Speedbowl plus on the ARCA Menard's Series East, Southern Modified Tour and the Indoor Series with a TQ Midget. Ted was killed in a plane crash on September 16, 2017 while enroute to compete at a NASCAR Modified Tour race later that evening.

Kevin Gobrecht

The "G-Man" Kevin Gobrecht, a native of New Oxford, PA was only 30 years old when he passed away from a Sprint Car crash at I-80 Speedway near Greenwood, Nebraska on September 24, 1999. At the time of his passing he was beginning to make a mark in as a rising star in the 410 Sprint Car ranks. His racing began in go-karts then Micro Sprints where he amassed multitude of wins and championships. By 1994 he turned his attention to Sprint Cars and would earn his first win a year later against one of the all-time best, Fred Rahmer at Lincoln Speedway. More wins soon followed, and he eventually began making inroads with the World of Outlaws Sprint Car Series. Some of his career highlights included winning on March 27, 1999 at Lincoln in the afternoon and Port Royal at night. The next afternoon, he won at Williams Grove. Later that same year he would win the "Big One" at Eldora Speedway. He was the 1995 WoORookie of the Year and since 1999 the WoOSprint Car Rookie of the Year is named in his honor.

Brett Hearn

Brett Hearn started racing stock cars at 16. Now, at age 65, he has amassed an incredible 920 career wins at 48 different tracks including 574 in big block modifieds, 343 in the small blocks and 2 in sprint cars. He earned 94 series and track championships including the Mr. DIRT Modified title 8 times and the Super DIRTcar Series crown 10 times. His 308 wins at Orange County Fair Speedway include 12 Eastern States 200 wins and 17 ES 358 Mod victories. Brett has 6 Syracuse Super DIRT Week Modified wins and 6 Small Block Mod race titles. He is also the all-time feature winner at Albany-Saratoga Speedway with 136. He also ran 20 NASCAR Busch Grand National (now Xfinity) races in the late '80s with his best finish, a tenth, coming at Dover.

Ace Lane, Jr.

Ace Lane Jr., is a distinguished motorsports photographer. For years his work has been at the forefront. His work has appeared in countless publications over the years. He is the son of legendary Hall of Fame photographer Ace Lane Sr., for whom the EMPA Photographer of the Year award is named for. Ace Jr., is a two-time recipient of the prestigious award. His sons, the late JJ and Tommy have also followed in the family footsteps. JJ was also a winner of the Ace Sr. award.

Steve Park

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.

Don Prudhomme

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, at age 82, climbed on board to warm up the 11,000-HP beast. Whether in a Top Fuel dragster or a Funny Car, the man was a machine.

Billy Pauch, Sr.

Billy 'the Kid' Pauch has won hundreds of races at dozens of tracks across seven states. He has won in modifieds, sprint cars, winged sprints, and has done so on dirt and asphalt. He set fast-time-record at Syracuse in a World of Outlaws sprint car that will never be broken. He won at Flemington after starting last in a pavement modified. Now father to two of his own kids making careers in racing, Pauch shows no sign of slowing down as he continues thrilling fans as he has for decades. After winning a SpeedSTR feature at Bridgeport, Pauch declared the ages of second and third place didn't even add up to his.

Steve Smith, Jr.

Stevie Smith followed in his father, Steve's, footsteps and his 31-year career culminated with his induction in the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame in Knoxville, IA. He won 222 sprint car features across the country. He started his career racing in the Smith/Creasy 19. He went on to drive for a list of all time greats including Al Hamilton, Dave Helm, John Zemaitis, Dan Motter, Jack Elden, Guy Forbrook, Chad Clemens and Fred Rahmer. He won 84 World of Outlaw features, was named the 1990 WoO Rookie of the Year, and finished in the top 5 in WoO points five times with a best second to Steve Kinser in 1992. He won 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 recorded six top fives in the Knoxville National finals, running second for Al Hamilton in 1993 and third for Zemco Racing in 2009. He earned 8 other wins at Knoxville. He won the '15 PA Sprint Speedweek title and had 15 career PA Speedweek wins. In 2012 he won the Ohio Sprint Speedweek and totaled 19 All Star Circuit of Champion sprint car career wins.

Cathy Venturini

The matriarch of the legendary Venturini racing family, Cathy Venturini led the all-female pit crew that played a major role in Bill's first ARCA Championship in 1987. Alongside, racing with Bill, Cathy is mom to current ARCA car owner Bill, Jr. and NASCAR pit road reporter Wendy.

The following two gentlemen will also be inducted. No vote is needed:

Ron Hedger

Ron has been one of the industry's foremost motorsports journalists, having covered the sport for decades. Much of his effort has been with the well-respected Speed Sport News, from print to online. His columns are always presented with the utmost and in-depth information on each subject he writes about. Over the years his dedication to such detail has earned him countless writing awards and rightfully so. Ron is a three-time recipient of the Eastern Motorsport Press Association (EMPA) Jim Hunter Writer of the Year Award – one of only two individuals to have won that many times – joining the late Jerry Reigle as the other. He also served on the EMPA Board of Directors for many years including as a past president. In that role he helped guide the organization as a primary group of professionals who cover all of motorsports.

George Kent

In 1998 race fans, fellow competitors and motorsports media named George “The Duke” Kent one of the ‘Greatest Modified Drivers of All-Time’. When he was at his peak if the late Richie Evans didn’t win, it was a good bet that George Kent from Horseheads, NY did. It was nothing for George and the team to run 3 or 4 nights a week and to be competitive in every race at every venue. He earned 13 Modified championships (8 at Shangri-La, 3 at Fulton, and 2 at Spencer), he won the prestigious Race of Champions 5 times, and he won the NEARA championship twice. Kent is also a 2-time winner of the Winston Racing Series NE Regional Championship. While he hung up his helmet after picking up 203 career wins, this past year he guided his grandson, Jesse, to his career-first Sportsman Modified win and 2nd place points finish at Chemung Speedrome.

John Blewett III Young Gun Presented by New England Race Fuels...vote for 1

Austin Beers

20-year old Austin Beers of Northampton had a breakout year with the NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour, winning twice, (Richmond, Lancaster), taking six poles and leading 633 laps which was second best. Beers annexed 10 top-5s and 15 top-10s and finished a strong third in final points behind Ron Silk and Justin Bonsignore. Beers also competed with the Race of Champions Modified Tour and was a winner in August at Chemung. In 2023 Beers raced and won at Evergreen Raceway as well and running on the Tri-Track Series Tour.

Justin Grosso

Justin Grosso is one of the rising stars in dirt Modified racing. At his home track of New Egypt Speedway he continues to shine with strong outings and that includes trips to Victory Lane in the headline division. Before moving up to the Modifieds Justin was a standout in the Sportsman Mods, earning a 2021 championship. He has also races with the Short Track Super Series.

Katie Hettinger

When Katie Hettinger scored another win on November 11 at Hickory (N.C.) Motor Speedway she earned another first in a career full of firsts. The 16-year-old racer from Dryden, Michigan won in the Cook Out 100, her first victory in the Carolina Pro Late Model Series and became the series’ first female winner in the process. The victory was also Hettinger’s record-extending seventh career win at Hickory, the .363-mile oval known as the Birthplace of the NASCAR Stars where she is the winningest female racer in the track’s 73-year history. She kicked off 2023 by winning on night seven of the acclaimed World Series of Asphalt Stock Car Racing at New Smyrna (Fla.) Speedway, becoming the first female to win a Pro Late Model feature during the World Series and the first driver from Michigan to win a Pro Late Model race.

Steven Snyder, Jr.

Steven Snyder Jr., of Rising Sun, MD was far and away one of the best regional racers in the highly competitive world of 600cc Micro Sprints. If Steven was showing up at a track, chances are he was winning. He was the Northeast's leading feature winner with 17 victories and number of those being high profile races. He also amassed 40 top-5s and 43 top-10s with the Micro. Steven also did stints in Midgets and Sprint Cars

Drake Troutman

Drake Troutman, from Hyndman, PA, used to call Bedford Raceway home. But that was a couple years ago when he WAS home. In 2023 Troutman visited no less than 55 different dirt tracks up and down the east coast, picking up wins at 13 of those tracks. As evidence of his skill and versatility, Troutman's wins came in three classes - Super Late Models, Modifieds, and INEX Legends. He packed a lot into '23, a year that began at Volusia and will conclude in mid-December in Missouri. Drake started racing Go-Karts at age 4 and he moved up to a DIRTcar UMP Modified at age 11. Sadly, his father (crew chief) passed away in '21 at age 39 from Covid complications. Now 18 years old, he's doing exactly what he and his father had set out to do together.

Richie Evans Memorial Northeast Asphalt Driver of the Year...vote for 1

Wayne Helliwell, Jr.

Wayne Helliwell Jr. is a three-time American Canadian Tour champion and the Oxford 250. Since Helliwell and car owner Bruce Bernhardt joined forces in 2007, they've combined for over 100 victories throughout New England and Eastern Canada. A few recent seasons were soft on wins, but in 2023, the team rebounded and found victory lane again. Helliwell is a clean and highly-respected racer on and off the track.

Matt Hirschman

2023 was another signature season for Northampton's Matt Hirschman and that in spite of a broken arm that put him out of action during four race weekends. But he would return afterwards and win seven of 11 events that brought his season total to 19 which would be 50% win percentage of the races he ran. That 19-win total was once again the most among all northeast asphalt racers. He was the 2023 New Smyrna Speedway World Series of Asphalt Racing champion and the 2023 Tri-Track Open Modified Series champ. He was the only driver to win a race in all four major asphalt Modified Tours – SMART, Whelen, and RoC and Tri-Track. He had three Whelen Modified wins most notably North Wilkesboro Speedway. Winner of the 50th annual Fall Final at Stafford Motor Speedway and finished the season by winning final three Tour Type Modified events in November – North South Shootout (Caraway), Islip 300 (Riverhead) and Turkey Derby (Wall Stadium). Aside from his 19 wins Matt also collected 26 top-3s, 28 top-5s and 32 top-10s.

Todd Owen

Summers, CT driver of the No. 81 Modified, Todd Owens picked up his third straight SK Modified championship at Stafford Motor Speedway. He is the first driver to win three titles in a row with the SK class. Owens also added a second title this season, coming at Waterford Speedbowl.

Ron Silk

For the first time since 2011, Ron Silk is a NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour champion. After going the entire 2022 season without obtaining a victory, Silk, of Norwalk, CT, kicked 2023 off in thrilling fashion by holding off a stalwart charge from Justin Bonsignore to take home a checkered flag at New Smyrna Speedway. No one knew it at the time, but the battle between Silk and Bonsignore would set the tone for the rest of 2023. The two NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour heavyweights exchanged literal and metaphorical blows during the remaining 17 races on the schedule. A solid outing from Silk one race would be followed up by a stellar performance from Bonsignore the next, with neither side giving the other any room to work with. By the time the two championship contenders arrived at Martinsville for the Virginia is for Racing Lovers 200, they each

had five victories on the year with almost an identical number of Top 5s and more than 625 laps led apiece to complement their stellar title bids. Silk's 6th place tally was enough to clinch the title.

Richie Evans Memorial Northeast Dirt Driver of the Year...vote for 1

Brent Marks

Brent Marks, the Myerstown Missile, got his 2023 season started in Florida and he ended it when he shot off a major missile and won the World of Outlaws finale in Charlotte. Prior to that one, the PA hot shoe won another WoO race at Williams Grove and a pair of events on the All-Star Circuit of Champions. He picked up wins at 5 PA tracks, including 5 at Williams Grove, and single feature wins at BAPS, Port Royal, Lincoln and Selinsgrove Speedways. A racer since 1999, Marks is now a contender wherever he unloads his powerful car. In total for '23, Brent picked up 13 wins, 39 top-5's and 57 top-10's in the 74-race year, earning him nearly \$425,000.

Freddie Rahmer

In 2023 Freddie Rahmer strapped into his 410 Spring Car in 69 events, winning 17 of them while amassing 32 top-5s and 47 top-10s. He also claimed track titles at Lincoln Speedway and Williams Grove Speedway. 14 of his 17 wins occurred at Lincoln. This year marked his fourth consecutive track title at Lincoln. 2023 was his third Williams Grove championship. His 17 wins placed tops overall in the Northeast among all open cockpit drivers.

Matt Sheppard

Matt Sheppard continues to make his competitors 'meet their Waterloo' when he shows up to race. The 41-year-old Waterloo, NY racer won the Super DIRTcar Series championship for a record-setting 10th time by winning 5 of their 20 races. He also picked up 7 wins in various divisional STSS events and was the 2023 Elite Series champion and North Series champion. Whether in a Big Block, where he posted 30 wins in 72 starts, or a Small Block, where he win 2 of the 3 races he entered, Sheppard, in his #9s, is a factor to be reckoned with. Once again, his season statistics speak volumes about his consistency.

Mat Williamson

On the Super DIRTcar Series Mat Williamson finished second for the third-consecutive season, earning more wins than any other driver in 2023 with seven. The St. Catharines, ON driver, started the year with two wins at Volusia Speedway Park and opened the points-paying season with two wins at Bridgeport Motorsports Park and Weedsport Speedway. Then, he finished the year with three more victories, another win at Weedsport, a last-lap pass to win at Brewerton, and his third Billy Whitaker Cars 200 win at Oswego Speedway during Super DIRT Week. Williamson also earned the DIRTcar 358 Modified Series championship in 2023. In 75 total feature starts Williamson won 31 times, and had 58 top-5s and 66 top-10s.

Al Holbert Memorial National Asphalt Driver of the Year...vote for 1

Ryan Blaney

The 2023 NASCAR Cup Series Champion fulfilled his multi-generational family dream in earning the title. Growing up with a high-profile father (Dave) and grandfather (Lou) helped Ryan build confidence in his abilities along his own racing journey. In his sixth season driving for Team Penske, he and the team had momentum on their side in the playoff and, for the first time in his career, Blaney made it to the final four. His 2nd place finish in Phoenix had him rising above all the others and gave Roger Penske something he never had earned, back-to-back Cup series championships. In '23 Blaney earned 3 wins, 8 top-5's and 18 top-10's in the 36-race schedule. He also picked up 6 stage wins and led 562 laps. Blaney believes confidence-building is what makes teams successful, and that momentum is real. In '23 he had all that.

William Byron

While he didn't win the '23 championship, William Byron drove his #24 Hendrick Chevrolet to a career-best 3rd place finish in the NASCAR Cup Series standings. He picked up 6 wins (Las Vegas, Phoenix, Darlington, Atlanta, Watkins Glen, and Texas) in the 36-race schedule, ending with 15 top-5's, 21 top-10's and having led 1,016 laps. But he doesn't like to limit his racing to the Cup series. In February he started his Speedweeks off with a pair of Late Model wins at New Smyrna (FL) Speedway. Byron believes that racing in Super Late Models is great for drivers hoping to move up, as well as for others as a way to leave their comfort zones and take on new challenges.

Doug Kalitta

"I'm living proof that you never give up on your goals," Doug Kalitta said at the 2023 NHRA banquet after winning drag racing's biggest prize, the Top Fuel championship. The title came after 26 years of trying, 6 times ending the year as the runner-up in points. In 2023 he picked up wins at Maple Grove (PA), Concord (NC) and the finals in Pomona (CA). With the championship format, it all came down to Kalitta and Leah Pruett. Winner took all in one of the most memorable finals in NHRA history. His advantage at the finish line wasn't huge, but the impact of the win was. Back in 1994 Doug Kalitta won the USAC Sprint car championship AND was the USAC Midget rookie of the year. He switched over to drag racing in 1998 and was the top rookie that year as well. He's now on top of the world as the reigning champion.

Kyle Larson

Kyle Larson won four NASCAR Cup races enroute to being in the Final Four for the championship. He fell just one point short of the title to champion Ryan Blaney at the conclusion of the 36 race season. Larson had 15 top-5s, 18 top-10s and a pair of poles. He also won the NASCAR All-Star race. Larson added to his '23 stats with a win in one of three Xfinity starts and in his only Truck start as well. He also made his CARS debut in June and finished seventh.

Alex Palou

With five wins, nine podiums, a dozen top-5s, 16 top-10s and two Pole Awards, Spaniard Alex Palou scored his second NTT INDYCAR SERIES championship. And he led all drivers in those same categories along with races led and laps completed. With one race to go in the season, Palou secured his second championship by leading 69 laps in the 110-lap race at Portland International Raceway. He bested teammate Scott Dixon en route to the title. Palou races for Chip Ganassi Racing.

Leah Pruett

It all came down to the final race in the NHRA's Top Fuel division. Leah Pruett and Doug Kalitta staged in that final, but only one of them would win their first championship. Leah, now married to and driving for Tony Stewart, had picked up wins in Ohio and Texas. The Texas win vaulted her to the points lead in the countdown to the championship. None of that mattered anymore in Pomona, CA. It was all about this final race, one of the most-watched moments in NHRA history. She ended the year as the runner-up, but a winner to many for her respectful demeanor in accepting defeat and congratulating Kalitta. Pruett's father was also a drag racer who had set 12 land speed records and achieved a top speed of 250 MPH. She started in a Junior Dragster at age 8, racing at 78 MP. With her 2 wins in 2023, Leah's resume now includes 12 Top Fuel wins and her top speed to date is 334 MPH.

Brandon Queen

Brenden Queen won the CARS Late Model Stock Car Tour event in May at North Wilkesboro by topping Dale Earnhardt, Jr., Kevin Harvick, Brad Keselowski, Ross Chastain, and Chase Briscoe.

Al Holbert Memorial National Dirt Driver of the Year...vote for 1

Rico Abreu

He stands tall in the world of Sprint car racing, and in 2023 he put together his best season to date. Rico Abreu, from St. Helena, CA, is a fan favorite wherever the #24 car shows up to race. Rico picked up 10 Sprint Car wins, with a previous season-best of just 2 wins in that series. On the World of Outlaws tour, big wins came at Lincoln, Eldora and 81 Speedway. His 13 podium finishes in 46 WoO events ranks him 4th best in that category while only having run 63% of their races. Rico credits Ricky Warner, his Crew Chief, for the maturity he demonstrated in '23 and how he's helped turn disappointments into learning moments.

Jade Avedisian turned 17 years old in mid-September of this year and less than a month later was crowned the first female Xtreme Outlaw Midget champion. Driving for Keith Kunz Motorsports in the seat vacated by Buddy Kofoid, Avedisian won at Du Quoin Illinois in her second start for the team. She followed that up with many great runs including additional triumphs at Marion Illinois, Chillicothe Ohio, Pevely Missouri, and Paragon Indiana.

Kyle Larson

Kyle Larson is well known for his dirt racing while racing throughout the year in NASCAR Cup Series. From the Larson home page in less than 36 races Kyle tallied ten 410 Sprint cars wins, 5 World of Outlaw wins, 3 High Limit Series wins and 2 All Star victories. He recorded 3 USAC National Midget wins and was the inaugural High Limit Racing Series season point champion. He won just over 36% of the dirt races in which he competed and ran top five in 72% of those races. 2023 was the first year that Kyle Larson and Brad Sweet joined forces as owners of the new High Limit Racing Series. Since the end of the '23 racing season, they also purchased the All Star Circuit of Champions from Tony Stewart.

Hudson O'Neal

Hudson O'Neal is the 2023 Lucas Oil Super Late Model Champion. In just his first year driving the Rocket 1 house car, he picked up 6 wins, 32 top-5's and 44 top-10's in their 53 events. Those stats placed him 2nd in points entering the season finale. With the format Lucas Oil used this season, the top 4 drivers would contend for the championship, with the title going to the driver who finished ahead of the other three. That was Hudson, whose 2nd place finish in the race sealed the championship deal for the driver nicknamed 'the new deal'. Earlier in the season, in what was likely his second-most-favorite moment as he looks back, he won the 53rd running of the World 100 at Eldora. While Hudson is following in his championship father Don's tire tracks, only he of the two won the world's most prestigious dirt late model race.

Bobby Pierce

In 2023 Bobby Pierce, 27, committed to run the full Case World of Outlaws Super Late Model schedule. His win at Volusia set the tone for what was to come. In their 38 races, he earned 14 wins, 25 top-5's and 32 top-10's. Pierce is also the 2023 Castrol Late Model Series champion, a title he won by default when the final race fell to rain. The XR Super Series will conclude next month, and he enters their final race as the point leader in what could be his third '23 championship. Bobby also ran 11 Lucas Oil events and picked up 5 wins in that series. Pierce, guided by his National Dirt Late Model Hall of Fame inductee father, Bob, capitalized on the team's mindset to go for it and his race results garnered him over \$1 million in winnings.

Brad Sweet

Brad Sweet continued his reign as he captured his fifth straight World of Outlaw sprint point championship in 2023. In 72 WoO features, Sweet tallied 11 wins, 44 top 5's and 64 top 10s. The "Big Cat's" average finish in the Kasey Kahne Maxim #49 was 5.35 and he earned \$378,325. Sweet now has 90 career World of Outlaw feature wins. Limited in his ability to race in non-WoO events by WoO rules, Sweet filled his schedule by

partnering with Kyle Larson as co-owner of the High Limit Sprint Series for the inaugural season for the 410 sprint group, acting as race director on race nights. After the All-Star Circuit of Champions completed their season, Sweet and Larson purchased that organization from Tony Stewart.

Ricky Thornton, Jr.

Ricky Thornton, Jr., a Chandler, Arizona, native, who relocated to Indiana in 2017 to expand his access to more late model races, had a breakout year in 2023 with 35 late model wins in his SSI Motorsports Longhorn #20. He led the season-long Lucas Oil Dirt Late Model points in dominating fashion going into the “winner take all” playoff finale in Eldora, where a race tangle cost him the title and slotting him third in points. He earned over \$1.2 million for the '23 season. Thornton won 23 of 53 features and recorded 41 Top 5's in LODLM national action. He also won in World of Outlaw and Hunt the Front tour competition and in open late model races. This year Ricky won four \$50,000-to-win races (Smoky Mountain, Maryville, TN; Lernerville, Sarver, PA; Fairbury, IL; and Knoxville, IA) and captured a \$100,000 win at Off Road Speedway in Norfolk, NE.

Tim Ward

Tim Ward is a 29-year-old racer from Mesa, Arizona who moved to Harcourt, Iowa in order to “live bachelor cheap” and make a living running a modified in one of the toughest areas in the country to do so. In 2023, he won the IMCA Super Nationals (over 300 cars), the Winternationals in his home state, the Dakota Championship, and the Harris Clash at Deer Creek in Minnesota among dozens of other victories.

Chris Economaki Memorial EMPA Newsmaker of the Year...vote for 1

High Limit Sprint Car Series

The High Limit Sprint Car Series touted drivers from around the country battling for industry leading purses during mid-week events. The series was launched in the summer of 2022 by Kyle Larson, the 2021 NASCAR Cup Series Champion, along with co-promoter Brad Sweet, the four-time defending World of Outlaws Series Champion. The first, full 12-race season took place in 2023 with support and live streaming coverage provided by FloRacing. Larson beat Rico Abreu a slim seven points to become the inaugural champion. High Limit Sprint Car Series competed at venues across the country on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday nights to huge crowds in attendance and outstandingly high car counts.

Tony Stewart

The man/machine never sleeps, but don't doze off reading about his motorsports impact again in 2023. With partner Gene Haas, Stewart-Haas Racing has 4 NASCAR Cup teams and 2 Xfinity teams; at his Eldora Speedway he held several big shows, including The Dream, The Eldora Million, the World 100, and the Dirt Track World Championship; he runs the Superstar Racing Experience (SRX) that held 6 races at 5 venues, with an international cast of drivers; Tony Stewart Racing fields a stout and competitive Sprint Car; his newly formed 2-car NHRA team earned Matt Hagan the Funny Car Championship and a Top Fuel runner-up finish for his wife, Leah Pruitt; and he nearly won the Lucas Oil Drag Racing Series Top Alcohol title, finishing 2nd in his first full season. Also, his Tony Stewart Foundation is busy year-round raising funds for 57 grant partners helping children, pets, and injured drivers.

FloRacing

Throughout 2023 FloRacing has continued to bring local, regional and national racing into everyone's living rooms with extensive coverage of each event they broadcast. From national touring series to weekly action, virtually all forms of motorsports are covered through their streaming service. Each year they continue to grow exponentially with subscribers.

CARS Tour

Founded in the fall of 2014, the CARS Tour is an asphalt late model series that's now under the ownership of Dale Earnhardt Jr., Jeff Burton, Kevin Harvick and Justin Marks. The tour began in the Mid-Atlantic region with both Late Model Stock Cars and Pro Late Models. This pavement late model tour is showcasing local talent on a national stage in front of NASCAR elite.

Vores Compact Touring Series

The Vores Compact Touring Series lets grassroots racers take on the nation's most famous ovals. Drivers can run the same car on dirt and pavement as the series runs from Eldora in Ohio to Bristol in Tennessee and from North Wilkesboro in North Carolina to Winchester in Indiana. They're strict on safety, high on fun, and have more cash-paying sponsors that directly fund racers throughout the field than any other series in America.

EMPA Promotional Effort of the Year...vote for 1

Indoor Racing Series

After working through the pandemic, the Indoor Racing Series saw quite the boost this past season with great crowds and likewise in participant attendance. Thanks to a collaboration of good PR and a solid backing of marketing partners all of the events came together nicely as was evident by the numbers at the turnstiles. Events took place from December through February in arenas along the East Coast combining all of the exciting short track racing action – fierce competitors, high speeds, passing, bumps, crashes and flips.

Joe Skotnicki

As the head of the Racing Promotion Monthly (RPM), Joe Skotnicki continues to help bring focus and attention to short track racing across the nation and Canada. Annually hosting two workshops, (Reno and Daytona) which are open to anyone who organizes or officiates, promotes or sponsors racing events. Attendees learn ways to continue to bring fans through their turnstiles. RPM is now entering its 51st year. Aside from the successful RPM, Skotnicki also promotes the Race of Champions Modified Series.

Josh Vanada

JDV Productions believes they owe it to race fans to create an exceptional experience. When you choose to purchase a ticket for one of their events, they promise to deliver efficient, fast-paced events that start on time and end early enough for families to enjoy. JDV Productions showcases the best asphalt modified race teams in the country alongside the dedicated and talented competitors of the grassroots short tracks of the Northeast. They're now promoting Monadnock Speedway in Winchester, NH. "If we don't deliver on the promise, it's free."

Lyle Devore

Great racing with full fields in front of pack stands are common at Malta, New York's Albany-Saratoga Speedway and the primary reason is promoter Lyle DeVore. Named National Auto Racing Promoter of the Year, DeVore was universally praised by previous winners and fellow promoters. DeVore's love of racing was clear at age 6 as he had his father drive him to the speedway he now promotes so that he could pick trash in exchange for a ticket to that night's races. DeVore refused to let aggressive treatment for cancer interrupt any preparation for hosting races at his beloved speedway.

Monaco Tri-Track Modified Tour

Here's the ingredients you'll use in a recipe for success – have lots of cars, pay out lots of money, and put on a good show. That recipe has worked for the Monaco Tri-Track Modified Tour, which recently concluded its 10th successful season. Ownership and venues have changed over the years, but the lure of a good rules package, 6 events at 5 venues in 4 New England states resulted in an extremely successful 2023. Not necessarily a

competitor of the NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour, this one keeps modified race teams in the northeast. Their numbers for 2023 were solid, including a pair of races at New London-Waterford Speedbowl and the finale at Stafford that had 30-car fields. Now under the sponsorship of Monaco Ford in CT, the Tour is a model of promotional excellence.

Junie Donlavey Spirit of the Sport

Boom Briggs

Family, related by both blood and race fuel, is everything to Rick “Boom” Briggs. The Bear Lake, PA resident’s remote rural roots made it tough to do what they all enjoyed, always having to make the best with what they had but without big sponsors and big money. One of the most well-liked Super Late Model competitors, he’s looked at life, and racing, from all sides to broaden his ‘family’. In 2022, made Josh Richards part of a two-car team when he lost his ride. When Richards retired, Boom took on Centerville, PA’s Max Blair in ’23 as the other half of his team. Mirroring Boom’s never-say-die attitude, Blair hit the Lucas Oil Super Late Model circuit with him. Blair picked up a win and won Rookie of the Year honors. Though childless, Boom Briggs carries on lessons learned from his own family, helping guide younger drivers in their racing journeys and exemplifies a spirit that our sport honors.

Red Farmer

Charles “Red” Farmer is an original member of the famed Alabama Gang. With over 750 career wins, Farmer was inducted into NASCAR’s Hall of Fame, among other halls. Now 91, he not only builds and maintains a fleet of dirt late models, but he also competes regularly alongside his grandsons. While tragedies have hit the Alabama Gang over the years, Farmer races on. He’s the only survivor of the helicopter crash that took Davey Allison’s life, and in ’23 he survived double pneumonia and a broken collarbone from a wreck. He’s beaten the odds, loves the sport, and did things his way ala Junie Donlavey. Both men were, and Red still is, pioneers in the sport who overcame adversity. A legend is well known and greatly admired. Race fans everywhere know of and admire Red Farmer for all he has given to the sport for over 70 years.

Joe Renfro

Wyoming’s Joe Renfro was born without arms and his left leg lacks a knee. The amazingly-capable teenager, who does the breaststroke on his high-school swim team, wanted to race like his brothers. His father, Jimmy, built a car he can drive using his right foot to steer and his left leg to gas and brake. Last summer, Joe Renfro became a dirt-track feature winner.

Wiscasset Motor Speedway

Richard and Vanessa Jordan’s history at Wiscasset Motor Speedway goes all the way back to when they were dating. Ten years ago, their beloved track was in danger of closing. So, despite living two hours away, they bought the speedway, and went to work. Today, the property is manicured (including a graveyard that was grown-over before being discovered just off turn one). The pits and grandstands are full based on a “promise we made to keep the front gate at \$5 and the pits at \$20 regardless if it’s a weekly show or a tour is in town,” said Vanessa Jordan. Two retail parts stores – one new and one used – are in the pits as is a free-to-use lift for racers.

Keep going to the last page for the EMPA member awards for writing and photographe.....

Jim Hunter Memorial EMPA Writer of the Year Award...vote for 1

**Dan Anderson
Bruce Bennett
Thomas Pope
Ted Schmidt
Scott Walsh**

Ace Lane Sr., Memorial EMPA Photographer of the Year...vote for 1

**Evan Canfield
Rich Corbett
Debbie Gastelu
Michael Jaworecki, Sr.
Walt Smith**