

AMAC's Comeback Kid

AMAC Advantage Magazine
Fall 2014
By Gerry Hafer

Getting back in the game. Coming off the bench. Returning to the fast lane. Call it whatever you want, but for AMAC member Dick Anderson it's a homecoming of sorts, taking him back to a world he once ruled ... short track stock car racing.



The 66-year old Anderson is set to step back into competition later this year, donning the firesuit and climbing into this newest Modified Stock Car and bringing a renewed level of excitement to Florida's racing world.

In a career that spanned more than five decades, Anderson's was the car to beat in a sport known for its "beatin, banging, bull ring" contests, usually on oval tracks ranging in size from a quarter mile to a half mile. With well over a thousand feature wins in a racing career that spanned a forty-year period, Anderson has earned, over and over, the title "King of the Florida Short Tracks."

But Anderson didn't limit his performances to the Deep South. In the mid-1980s, for example, he took his show on the road, so to speak, joining the All Pro Racing Association's national touring series. The domination continued at this higher level as he found immediate success in the series, competing against more than 50 equally-seasoned drivers and winning some of the biggest events at tracks of all sizes across the nation.

Now, after four years in retirement, and suffering through repeated bouts of melancholy so common to those who have scaled the heights, he's getting set to hit the track again. This time he'll be carrying the colors of one of the racing world's premier journals, Circle Track Magazine, with the AMAC Foundation's logo prominently displayed on the car.

The Anderson Legacy

One of the often-repeated phrases in racing over the years, especially by racers at the top of their game, goes like this: "It's not bragging if you can actually do it!" Although he may never have actually said that, any set of Florida stock car statistics would bear witness to the fact that Dick Anderson would have license to voice that phrase.

He began his career in the Quarter Midget ranks at age 12, and launched his stock car career in 1964 at age 16 at Hialeah Speedway driving a 1949 Ford. Although predominantly known as a Florida driver, his career featured racing success at a host of Midwest and Northern states.

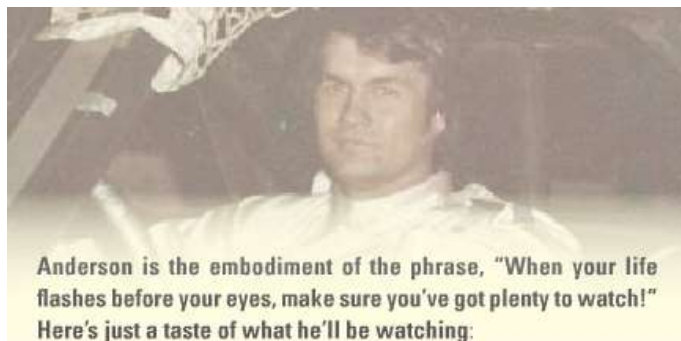
But it's not just the total number of wins he's compiled, it's the dominance that he and his No. 92 displayed throughout the years that have earned him the respect (oftentimes grudgingly) of his fellow competitors. In 1979, for example, he won 39 feature events at race tracks throughout Florida, setting an all-time state record. The following year, he topped that win total with 51 feature wins (out of the 64 events he entered – an 80% rate), becoming the nation's winningest stock car driver. That same year, he stunned Palm Beach Fairgrounds Speedway by winning every feature event held at the track that year ... an incredible 18 feature wins in a row!



Anderson retired in 2003 at age 56 and, in 2006, returned briefly to competition in the Late Model ranks, winning features at Columbia Speedway and Orlando Speedworld, the only two events he entered. If there were any fears that his driving skills had eroded, they were quickly swept away by his winning these two events in dominant fashion. The man was back ... if only for a cameo appearance.

From 2006 through 2009, Anderson focused most of his racing expertise on the development and nurturing of several up-and-coming Florida racers. He found immediate success with young Loxahatchee driver Jeff Choquette, winning major events at a variety of tracks, including the 2007 Governor's Cup at New Smyrna Speedway. Along the way, he's also engineered cars for emerging drivers like David Wilson, Matt Bowers, Todd Alan, Jessica Murphy and Devin McLeod, to name a few. So even when not behind the wheel, he continued to add to his incredible collection of motor racing accomplishments.

But wait ... there's more! In 2010, Anderson again shook off the cobwebs and re-entered Super Late Model competition, winning five of the six feature events he entered at Orlando Speedworld. Think about it ... six decades of racing and still in winning form! The comeback was short-lived, though, with the effects of Florida's economy causing the loss of his primary sponsor and leading to economic pressures that caused him to park the car.



Anderson is the embodiment of the phrase, "When your life flashes before your eyes, make sure you've got plenty to watch!" Here's just a taste of what he'll be watching:

- In the 1970s, he competed in dirt modified leagues in the north-east (New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania), and was crowned Rookie of the Year at Nazareth (PA) Raceway in 1974
- In the 1980s, he captured multiple Late Model Championships at Palm Beach County Speedway and Hialeah Speedway
- In 1985, he captured the late model Championship at Bronson Speedway, winning 16 of 20 feature events (including eight straight)
- He's won Florida's most prestigious stock car races:
 - The Marion Edwards 200 at Hialeah (1986)
 - The Florida Governor's Cup (1988 and 1989)
 - Multiple major Pro Stock features at Volusia Speedway Park in 1989)
 - The World Series of Asphalt Championship at New Smyrna Speedway (1989)
 - Winningest Driver at the World Series of Asphalt at New Smyrna Speedway (1994)
- In 1994, he was crowned the Florida Pro Series Champion, and was recognized as the winningest driver in that series
- In the 1990s, he competed in the NASCAR Slim Jim series, wracking up multiple wins at some of the country's toughest tracks
- In 1995 and 1996, he was the winningest driver in the Hooters Pro Cup series
- In 2001 (his last full year of competition), he captured the Florida Pro series championship, the FASCAR Late Model championship, and the FASCAR Triple Crown, winning 26 of 36 special events and earning the "Driver of the Year" designation

So, at age 62, Anderson hung up the driving suit for the third time, and resigned himself to getting his racing fix from race car design and engineering, and mentoring young drivers trying to break into the highly-competitive sport.

But was that enough? It wasn't long before the itch began to return and in late 2013, with support from Circle Track magazine, he built a brand new Super Late Model Mustang and began to think about driving it himself. The Florida economy, unfortunately, continued to be a stumbling block, and generating the funding required to run a Late Model racing program was a major impediment.

But Anderson hasn't let these obstacles stop him, and earlier this year he began building an Open Wheel Modified race car better suited for the Florida short tracks and capable of competing on a lower budget than that required for the Late Models.

Now, at age 66, Anderson is ready to get back behind the wheel, and the competition in this class is already fearing his return. One look at this magnificently designed and engineered racing machine will tell you that he means business, and with his reputation, it's pretty clear that he'll be the car to beat in any event he enters.

Anderson's plans are to enter four or five events later this year, with an objective of running a full season in 2015. Scheduling and fund raising are in progress, and it's likely that an early-Fall kickoff of his fourth comeback will happen. This will undoubtedly be one of the most significant developments in Florida racing this year, and the AMAC Foundation is pleased and proud to be a part of it!



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