

# Former Racer from Summerfield Named to Speedway Hall of Fame

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Former stock car race driver Buddy Pearce of Summerfield listens in his "Racing Den" as his wife Beth reads congratulatory messages sent after he was inducted into the Palm Beach Speedway Hall of Fame last week.

Buddy Pearce was overwhelmed when 320 former stock car racing acquaintances showed up recently at the Palm Beach Fairgrounds to see him inducted into the Palm Beach Speedway Hall of Fame. Pearce, who lives in Summerfield with his wife, Beth, was in the second class of six racers to receive the honor.

Pearce said he never owned a race car or was famous for winning races, but was known as the "Have Helmet, Will Drive" guy.

"I would show up at raceways with a helmet under my arm, ready to drive anything that needed a driver. My style was to simply pass the guy in front of me,

doing whatever it took. I was always clean. I may have 'moved' some guys at times, but only when they were holding me up, and I never intentionally wrecked anybody," Pearce said.

Pearce, now in his 80s, raced at the speedway in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Back then the speedway was located at the fairgrounds. While the fairgrounds is still there, the speedway was demolished several years ago.

This is the second hall of fame honor bestowed on Pearce, who lives in the Spruce Creek South community. He was inducted in 2007 into The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club Hall of Fame.

"He's still emotionally high as a kite," said (former) club president Gerry Hafer of Pearce's most recent honor.

"One of the things we stand for, in addition to supporting local racing, is promoting recognition of racing history. Although he's not noted for winning the 'big events,' Buddy is one of those local racing personalities who was always there, always infecting the crowd with his enthusiasm and always endearing himself to race fans. He's like that today; you can't not like Buddy, or 'Uncle Buddy' as he was typically called by his fan base back in the day," Hafer added.

Bobby Brack was inducted into the speedway hall of fame in 2013. He was in attendance this year to see his old racing pal honored.

"Buddy was very deserving of the award," Brack said during a phone call from his home in Miami. "Car owners would seek Buddy out to drive their cars as they knew he would not tear up their equipment as some other drivers might. I have many fond memories of racing with him."

Al Mincey, a racer friend of Pearce's, drove from Gainesville with his son Al Mincey Jr. to "chauffer" Pearce and his wife to the ceremony. Beth Pearce said a lot of racing memories were talked about during the round trip.

"Many people came up to the autograph table telling him they remembered his driving days," she said of her husband at the event. "Several brought old black-and-white photos to be signed."

Pearce said several days after the ceremony that he was still "on a cloud."

"It made me feel good I was recognized for being me, and not because I drove fancy, fast cars," he said. "At times, I would drive any old junk no one else would touch."