

# 'Hooked' on auto racing, retiree enjoyed 40-year career at the wheel

Orlando Sentinel

Tuesday, January 25, 2011

By Earl Watson

The day Buddy Pearce first climbed into a race car and the starter dropped the green flag, he was off and running in the world of motor mayhem.

"I was hooked," recalled the 78-year-old Pearce, who lives in Spruce Creek South next to The Villages.

His long career spanned nearly 40 years of stock-car racing in western Pennsylvania and later along Florida's Gold Coast from West Palm Beach to Homestead, as well as Tampa and St. Petersburg.

He doesn't have a count of his victories in all those years, other than to say he saw "a million" checkered flags coming at the now-defunct Palm Beach Fairgrounds Speedway, a high-banked half-mile dirt track.

His trophy room at his home is replete with scores of photos that bear witness to his success.

"Buddy was very popular with fans at Palm Beach. They loved him," said Al Mincey of High Springs, who owned several cars Pearce drove. "Buddy was a great driver. I always felt he was the best driver in Florida who never made it to Daytona."

He added: "He could drive anything that I brought to the races ... and he always did well."

Pearce said he never owned a race car himself.

"I was a driver for hire and raced in all divisions, wherever there was a ride," he said. "I drove everything and anything – heck, even go-carts in later years. Would you believe I won a go-cart race at The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club's social gathering at Fruitland Park?"

"Haven't lost my touch," he said with a grin.



Buddy Pearce