

Tasmanian speedway sedan and NASCAR driver Denzil Mead had a reputation for being a fierce competitor, but while he may have been a hard nut to crack on the track, Denzil was always a gentleman in the pits or when the racing had stopped.

**O**n the track, he took no prisoners and often the surest way to bring out the best of Denzil was for an official to send him to the rear of the grid for a racing indiscretion.

What usually followed was a fired up Denzil Mead and another outstanding performance.

Denzil's involvement in speedway can be traced back to the very origins of the sport in Tasmania.

He owned the very first speedway car to race in Tasmania – a Three Quarter (TQ) midget built by ex-pat New Zealander Bill Haycock, who is credited with starting speedway in Tasmania.

Denzil raced the car (named "Bobo") from 1964–1967, giving up because he couldn't afford it any more.

After 10 years on the sidelines, Denzil returned to the sport when he purchased a V8 Chevrolet Corvette super sedan from visiting American driver Ed Wilbur.

It was to be the start of a long and successful career, both in Tasmania and interstate.

Denzil was always one of his home State's leading drivers, but due to the amazing depth of talent in Tasmania, was never able to crack it for a State title, although he won State titles and major events in other States, including titles in Victoria and South Australia and the 1984 Australian pavement championship.

That same year he was awarded speedway sedan racing's highest national award, the Jacko Award (equivalent to football's Brownlow Medal).

Denzil was also twice polesitter for the Marlboro Grand National (at Liverpool), once regarded as Australia's No. 1 non-title speedway race for sedans and Australia's richest race for distance covered.

In 1986 he also won the Victorian Grand National championship and the South Australian Interstate Super Challenge.

He also represented Tasmania in winning race teams in Tasmania, NSW, Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria as well as being a member of the Tasmanian State team which beat a visiting USA sedan team in 1980.

Denzil also won the season pointscore at his home club at Latrobe twice, and won the clubman of the year award twice, along with victories in major Tasmanian races at all tracks including the King of Carrick, Examiner TNT 1000, Jeff Oates Memorial, and the 7EX Cup.

In 1991 Denzil started NASCAR racing at the Calder Park Thunderdome in Melbourne.

During the 1992–93 season he claimed two world firsts when he won the rookie of the year at 51 years of age, making him the oldest NASCAR rookie of the year anywhere in the world.

Also, in round two of the Australian championship at Eastern Creek, Denzil became the first NASCAR driver in the world to qualify on pole using wet weather tyres, not long after the rules had been changed to allow wets on NASCARs.

Denzil often lent his cars (both speedway and NASCAR) to visiting drivers and had a number of high profile drivers race his cars, including Rodney Combes (US), Barry Graham, Jim Hensley (US), Allan Grice, Mike Klein (US), Andrew Miedecke, Johnny Pearson (US), and Adam Pay.

Denzil retired from NASCAR racing in 1997 after racing speedway and NASCAR in every Australian State.

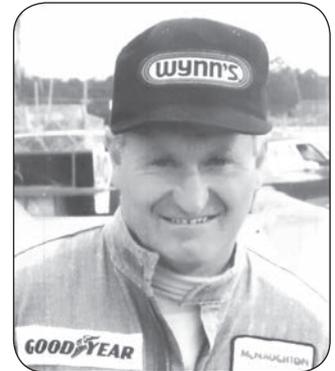
In 2008 he was made a "Legend of Tasmanian Speedway."

Profile by Martin Agatyn, Photo by Greg Blake.



## PROFILE

*Denzil Mead*



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