



PROFILE

Robin Best



INDUCTED: 1999



Robin Best is a rare breed in motorsport, having achieved success in three very different disciplines of the sport, namely speedway sprintcar racing, drag racing, and NASCAR racing.

Robin's motorsport career started in 1967 when the Carrick Speedway was built near Launceston.

He competed for a season and a half in an old Ford Customline he described as "a piece of junk," before giving up speedway for 10 years to concentrate on building up his contracting business.

In 1977 plans were revealed to build a drag-racing strip in Northern Tasmania, at Powranna, south of Launceston and Robin wanted to become involved and get back into motorsport.

Despite admitting he knew nothing about drag racing, he purchased an ex-Bill Levitt Mustang funny car from the U.S., bolted in a Graham Hussey 426 Chrysler engine, and went drag racing.

When Robin buckled into the seat of his funny car, it was as if he was born to the task, and he promptly went out and slashed 4/100ths of a second off the track record at Heathcote (Vic), in his first outing.

In 1978 at the Australian national titles, he was fastest qualifier and finished runner-up after splitting an engine block in the final.

The following year, after he had returned from the U.S. with two new Keith Black-built engines, Robin returned to Adelaide and won the Australian alcohol funny car title, breaking the Australian record and becoming the first funny car driver to make a seven second pass.

After several more seasons Robin decided to sell the car and quit drag racing.

The following year after another of his regular U.S. "petrol-head" trips visiting various people and motorsport events, Robin returned home with a sprintcar from

speedway legend Jack Hewitt.

His return to clayway racing at Carrick was anything but world-beating and while never one of Tasmania's best drivers, he was one of the most spectacular and rapidly built up a big following.

After a season of more crashes than even he can remember, Robin's 1983 season was one of his best ever, winning eight features in a row and holding the lap record at every track in Tasmania.

In 1985 Robin again retired from speedway, but a year later while on yet another trip to the U.S. at the time NASCAR racing was being planned for Australia, Robin purchased a Chevrolet Monte Carlo and promptly put it on a boat and shipped it back home.

Almost two years later Robin was the first and only Australian to finish the opening event at the Calder Park Thunderdome in a star-studded international field, earning an entry into the 7-Up 400 at Sears Point, near San Francisco, in which he finished 10th.

Robin went on to become the first Australian NASCAR champion in 1989 and just to prove it was no fluke he did it again the following year - one of only a few drivers to have won it more than once.

After several more years at the leading edge of the Australian NASCAR scene, Robin hung up his helmet for good, but less than 12 months later was back involved in motorsport as the co-promoter of two Tasmanian speedways.

He continued in this capacity for two more seasons before finally retiring from motorsport.

Profile by Martin Agatyn