



This Sears is still in business

SAMSULA, Fla. (Feb. 15, 1995) — For several decades New Smyrna Speedway has had several fixtures, from the pit road arrangement and the administrative building by the tech line to the Jim Jones Photography trailer. Each February visitors from all over North America encounter it all at the World Series of Asphalt Stock Car Racing, and during other times of the year such as the Governor's Cup in the fall.

Next to that tech line toward the turn-four side of the half-mile oval is the hauler spot which for the longest time was reserved for the #11 multi-time track champion and longtime Orlando favorite David Rogers. After Rogers lost his battle with cancer in 2020, that parking spot now belongs to the #9 of Brad May and team owner Bobby Sears.

May has his own long history at Speedweeks. He was the 1996-97 Limited Late Model champion of the World Series, winning three features each time while driving a family-owned entry. On those first two nights of the 1996 grind, he and Sears finished 1-2. Nearly two decades later May and Sears teamed up, and that combination has easily topped New Smyrna's in-season victory list, also collecting several Super and Pro Late Model track championships.

May succeeded Sears as the Limited titlist at Speedweeks. Sears racked up plenty of honors in the four-cylinder class, which at the time was on a couple of Speedweeks cards every winter.

"I drove mini stocks so long that they told me I had to move up," said Sears, from Osteen, Fla. "I bought a used Howe car – a third-design big-spring Howe, which back then was the best car made – and skinned it all the way down to the frame. I built a motor for it with the help of Dennis Boyd. We took it to (Orlando) Speedworld and won the first night out with it. Back then

they had two-barrel (carburetors) and they drove no different than mini stocks; you run off in the turn and bury it. If I had new tires, I could make the car go, but I couldn't afford to buy tires every time. I know people that won, then they couldn't run in the top five the next night 'cause of the tires."

With fresh rubber on his #9 for the fourth night of Speedweeks - 29 years ago today - Sears scored his first New Smyrna triumph in one of the headline divisions. Two nights later he won again, and those wins powered him to the points crown.

About five years later Sears hung up his helmet. He returned to New Smyrna in 2001 with Michael Williams behind the wheel, and Williams had success at that year's Speedweeks and in the old SARA circuit. Williams wanted to focus on Super Late Models by the next season, and at that time Sears didn't have a dog in that fight.

Rich Clouser, a veteran of several support classes, took over that seat and reeled off plenty of wins in the #9. Included was one track championship and two crowns in the old FASCAR Good-year Challenge Series (although surprisingly only one Speedweeks feature win and one points title). And when Clouser was aboard, the rear bumper covers of Sears' machines bore the phrase "Built in a Barn, by Some of the Best."

In 2015 – in fact during the World Series – Sears brought in May, who was a close friend and occasional teammate of legend Rogers. The words on the rear bumper were replaced by the logo of sponsor and drywall company R.K. Edwards, but the sentiment is the same.

"Rich was just looking to do something different," said May, from Oviedo, Fla. "We'd raced against each other for so many years, and I'd been over to (Sears') shop before. He called and



LMD file

Bobby Sears occasionally uses help to get around the pits at New Smyrna Speedway, but for nearly three decades his Late Models have been fixtures at the half-mile in Samsula, Fla. The first Limited Late Model Speedweeks win came 29 years ago today for Sears, now the car owner for multi-time track champion Brad May.

asked if I'd be interested. I was still running a little bit for David Rogers at the time, and my dream was to run a TM Ranch #11, but at the time I was only running a couple of races a year. I told him that I'd love to run for championships, and David said, 'You'd be crazy not to jump at it. They're a good group.' Being able to run Supers and Pros full time is different than anything I'd ever had."

May, who just turned 44, has enjoyed being a part of this racing family, but for the 79-year-old Sears, a grandfather of two and a great-grandfather of two, it is a true family effort. His primary helper is his son Danny Sears.

"It's hard to believe Danny will be 60 in August," the elder Sears said. "I

don't think he ever had the desire to drive, but he loves front-end work. It's all he's done all his life; he works for Dodge. I worked for Fields BMW for 34 years and they retired me. My other son Steven doesn't come too much; he likes racing and all but he's got more family. Danny never had any; he said there are enough kids out there now."

Limited Late Model Night 4: 1. Bobby Sears; 2. Mike Todd; 3. Joe Strehle; 4. Craig Brown; 5. Herman Reiss; 6. Claude Colignon; 7. Bobby Beauchemin; 8. Johnny Marlowe; 9. Sid Stites; 10. Jeff Moyer; 11. Ed Griesmeyer; 12. Danny Bancroft; 13. Larry Cook; 14. Glen Bradley; 15. Randy Cook; 16. Donnie Rackcliff; 17. Rick Martin; 18. Paul Cutlip; 19. Don Roberts; 20. Jerry Smith; 21. Darren Gould; 22. Eddie Rice; 23. Bruce Gayton; 24. Bill Movis; 25. Randy Strehle; 26. Tony Cataldi; 27. Allen Rhodes; 28. Jerry Scheidel; 29. Barbara Pierce.