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## Remember When: Dale Hafer

The first time I saw Dale Hafer in action was at Mon-Duke Speedway in Export Pennsylvania. I was attempting to campaign a 1937 Chevy while attending California University in the early 60's. I wasn't very competitive and Hafer, Jack West, Jim Magill, and Fran Gower lapped me in the feature. They were the hot dogs in the division and made it very clear that I was in over my head.

Dale drove his first race back in 1958 at the Greater Latrobe Speedway in a 1949 Ford. The next twelve years Hafer never drove anything but a Ford. He moved up to the Modified class in 1961. He drove to his first track championship at the Greater Latrobe Speedway. During the mid-sixties Hafer ran with the Penn-Western Racing Association and was track champion at the Windber Stadium in 1965 and 1966. During '66 he also drove the Holiday Ford sponsored No.9 to a 100 lap championship race at Windber.

Langhorne qualifying races were a specialty with Dale, having picked up three of the silver bowls, one each at Greater Latrobe, Windber and Motordrome. After the 1967 season, which saw Penn-Western start to fade as a power in area racing, Dale realized that the modifieds were on their way out in Western Pennsylvania. He sold the coupe to James Kell and began Late Model racing with Holiday Ford as the sponsor. When the new 66 Ford came out fans were really surprised to see a light yellow No.37 instead of the familiar orange and white No.9. Dale decided to give the asphalt a try and became a regular at Heidelberg.

He concentrated on the asphalt during '69 with a few dirt track shows thrown in for good measure. Through consistent driving he finished in the top ten Pittsburgh Racing Association point standings. Although Dale liked the asphalt racing much better than the dirt but he found

the cost of keeping up a competitive car prohibitive and therefore returned full time to the dirt ovals in 1970. By the end of the season he had taken four wins at Lernerville, Motordrome, and Jennerstown and had about a dozen top three finishes to his credit. In addition he finished among the top ten point leaders at all three tracks.

Dale had the Ford for sale during the latter part of the '70 season but most everyone expected he would be out with a new Ford in 1971. One of the biggest surprises of the early 1971 racing season in Western Pennsylvania was the news that Sarver's Dale Hafer was changing from Ford to Chevrolet. He surprised everyone when he teamed up with Nick Chevrolet, of Tarentum to field a '66 Chevelle powered by a 454 Chevy engine. The new car, owned by Nick and built by Dale with the help of crew members Leroy Cressley and Gerald Wainwright wasn't ready for the early season racing so the Ford was put in to action once more. The Ford engine expired at the Motordrome Speedway and Hafer was out of action for several weeks until the new Chevelle was ready.

The new car made its debut at Lernerville in June just in time for the Annual Twin 25's which Dale had won the previous year. Naturally the car was the pre-race center of attraction in the pits and rightly so as the car was a show piece. The first 25 lapper came and Dale dropped out early with mechanical problems which gave him the pole for the second feature. Sitting along side of him was Pee Wee Flick who had split the twin 25s with Hafer in 1970. The green flag came down and Dale was off and running, leading all 25 laps for the victory. The next night overheating problems sent him to the pits at Schmucker's Speedway but the problem was corrected in time to score the runner-up honors at Motordrome on Sunday.

Racing is really a way of life for the Hafer family. Dale's wife Beverly was a scorer for many years at Lernerville, Jennerstown, Windber, Motordrome and Greater Latrobe. In addition to his driving and car building, Dale found time to serve two terms as president of the Penn Western Racing Association.