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## Remember When: Bud Middaugh

Motorsports writer Walt Wimer stated “If you ran into Bud Middaugh when he was not wearing his driving uniform you might take him for a bookkeeper, a school teacher or even a house painter, but you would probably never guess that his hobby is wheeling three thousand pound race cars around the asphalt ovals of Eastern Ohio and Western Pennsylvania”. Bud, whose real name is Lewis, just doesn’t fit the image of a race car driver. He is quiet, soft spoken friendly and rarely loses his cool. These personality traits are the reason for the reputation of being “Mr. Nice Guy”.

In the 1950s Bud used to attend the races at the Old Sportsman’s Park at Bedford, Ohio. He liked what he saw and in 1957 decided to give it a try building a 1950 Ford.

Bud won many track titles and became as one of the best asphalt drivers in this part of the country.

Middaugh practically owned the Barberton, Ohio Speedway when he was running there and he won five straight track titles from 1964 to 1968. Midvale Speedway in Ohio was another ‘Middaugh track’. Bud also ran several seasons at the Cloverleaf Speedway in the Cleveland area and was track champ there in 1965.

Middaugh became well known to Western Pennsylvania fans in October 1967 after he won the prestigious ‘Pittsburgh 200’ at the Heidelberg Raceway. This was the first Pittsburgher on the asphalt and it attracted the best cars and stars. Joy Fair, Jim Cushman, Jim Bickerstaff, and Moose Myers were a few of the drivers in search of the \$2000 payoff.

Middaugh ran the race the year before when the famed half mile was still dirt. He qualified 19th from a field of well over 100 cars and started in the tenth row along side of Benny Parsons. However, when the afternoon was over, both Middaugh and Parsons were among the long list of non-finishers in Heidelberg's final race on the dirt.

In 1967 Middaugh was not considered among the favorites. He set third fastest time with his 1957 Chevy convertible but was still considered a long shot. He proved the odds makers all wrong by driving the greatest race of his career to take the victory. He was never out of the top three and he took the lead from Jim Bickerstaff on lap 75 to lead the final 125 laps.

When he pulled into victory lane at the end of the grueling 200 laps Middaugh was so exhausted that he had to be helped out of the car before he could accept the trophy. After the presentation he had to be helped back to his truck to rest before returning to Massillon. He beat the best asphalt Late Model drivers in a four state area and did it in a car he owned and built himself

Bud quickly developed a liking for the Heidelberg half mile and the following season Pittsburgh fans began to see more and more of Bud and his No. 84. Bud built a sharp looking maroon and gold 1961 Chevy and July 3rd he won both ends of the annual twin 50's while Bob Senneker ran second in both races. When the season ended Middaugh traveled to Florida and won a big invitational race at New Smyrna Beach.

1970 started off really well at Heidelberg. The Chevelle had just about taken over the Late Model circuits everywhere but Bud proved that old 1961 Chevy could still get the job done by taking the season opener in March. He came out with a new Chevelle won the Labor Day 100 lapper on August 29th.

He ended the 1970 season fourth in the Pittsburgh Racing Association points with three Heidelberg features to his credit. During the season he also won five features at Midvale and picked up a big 150 lap victory at Cloverleaf. In addition to the nine asphalt track victories, he

proved he could win on dirt too by borrowing a cousin's car and winning the feature one night at Wayne County Speedway in Orville, Ohio.

With the coming of the 1971 season Bud made a big change! Instead of running his own car, as he had for many seasons, he teamed up with Struthers, Ohio car owner Vince Carney. The new, team had their eye on the PRA championship but for a while things looked pretty bad. In February they took the '64 Chevelle to New Smyrna Beach, Florida for the World Series which is run during Daytona Speedweeks. The first night they lost an engine. Later, Bud became ill with kidney trouble and had to spend the rest of the week in the hospital.

After returning home to Massillon, Bud was advised that an operation would be needed to correct the problem. Since the PRA points went with the car, Vince quickly lined up veteran Bill Forney to drive the car in Bud's absence which was expected to be quite a few weeks. As it turned out, the operation was not needed and he only missed opening night. Forney had a rough time on opening day and failed to gain any points, but in just two weeks time Middaugh was able to place the car among the top ten in the standings. A fourth place in the May 1st 100 lapper vaulted him into third place and then he moved into the runner-up spot behind Bob Senneker for several weeks before both drivers were passed by Tom Colella who was the point leader going into July.

Wimer stated "Bud was somewhat of a streak buster as he was the driver to stop the Senneker streak at Heidelberg at five straight and then he ended the Joe Mihalic and Tom Colella domination of the Sharon Speedway with a 50 lap victory on June 20th. By mid-season he has scored three wins at Heidelberg and one each at Sharon and Midvale".

When Carney first brought the car out there was something missing and the Middaugh fans noticed it right away there was no "top hat" painted on the car. Bud's cars had carried a top hat on the side for many years and it was his trademark something the fans always looked for. A mass tangle at Midvale helped correct the situation for when Vince repainted the car he reversed the blue and white color and added the trademark top hat to the car.

In 1973, Ed Witzberger, due to business pressures, decided to stop promoting Heidelberg after nineteen consecutive years, and Tommy Colella took over the reins for a season. But the handwriting was already on the wall. At the end of the 1973 season, the gates closed for the final time, and a legend of auto racing history ended. Later a shopping center was built on the property.

Statistician John Stasiak explained "Bud's final year in competition was 1980 the last year Sharon Speedway operated as a paved track. His career then was pretty much running Sharon, with hitting the occasional Super Late Model shows at Midvale, Lorain and Sandusky. Bud had six career wins at Sharon, eleven at Heidelberg, thirty one at Midvale and several at Cloverleaf. He also won quite a bit at Barberton Speedway between 1960 and 1969". Stasiak credits him with winning at least eight features in 1968 alone.

Highlights of his career include a Pittsburgher 200 win at Heidelberg in 1967, Twin 50's win at Heidelberg in 1968, 100 lap win at Heidelberg in 1970. He held track records at Both Heidelberg and Greater Pittsburgh between 1968 -1970, Midvale 200 at Midvale in 1973, several 100 lap wins at Cloverleaf. He was inducted in the Midvale Hall of Fame the first year they had it. Lorain County Speedway Hall of Fame 2008 nominees included Ron Fike, Tony Lavati, Kent Stauffer, Rollie Beale, Bob Sibila, and Bud Middaugh just to name a few. When Middaugh retired he was considered one of racings "good guys".

Special thanks to Walt Wimer and John Stasiak for their input.