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Pennsy Pioneer Driver Freddy Adam to Dirt Mod Hall of Fame

By Paul Weisel Jr.

The late Freddy Adam, a pioneer Pennsylvania racer and Reading Fairgrounds favorite, will be honored as a 2017 inductee into the Northeast Dirt Modified Hall of Fame. Driver inductions and special award ceremonies are scheduled for Monday, July 10 at the Northeast Dirt Modified Hall of Fame and Museum in Weedsport, NY, the night prior to Weedsport Speedway's Super DIRTcar Series Hall of Fame 100.

Named for his two grandfathers, Alfred Amandus Adam was a child of the Great Depression, born in Berks County, PA, in 1931, the eldest of three Adam family siblings, including sister Raydell and brother Marlo.

Freddy's boyhood in the rural borough of Kutztown was pretty routine by 1930s standards: Sitting with the guys on the curb on Main Street, trying to be the first to shout out the make of the car driving past; fishing in Saucony Creek; the occasional BB gun battle with rival groups in town; and the hotly contested scooter races which temporarily drove patrons from the sidewalks. However, the activity Freddy enjoyed most was accompanying his dad Titus on house calls for his welding business. Tagging along with his father also got Freddy to his first auto races — Sprint Car and stock car events at the local fairgrounds half miles at Allentown, Kutztown, and Reading, where a few of Titus' customers competed.

In October 1947, Titus Adam suffered a fatal heart attack, moving Freddy from first son to eldest male in the Adam family. In the midst of all the economic challenges in his life in 1950, a local used car dealer provided Freddy with a 1938 Ford coupe and he and his buddies transformed it into a stock car, bearing the #61. All the guys were members of the volunteer fire department and six short blasts and one long meant the fire was out of town. Hence, the car number: When they were racing, the boys were out of town.

Too young to drive himself, Freddy selected Jimmy Delcamp as his driver. After one unsuccessful race at Yellow Jacket Speedway in Philly, Delcamp took another ride and Freddy borrowed a helmet to launch his own driving career. The flathead engine blew in his first race, but Freddy was bitten and threw himself headlong into the sport of stock car racing.

Freddy adopted the #32 to honor Indiana Roadster driver Dick Frazier, and competed at Sanatoga Speedway in Pottstown, PA. His budding career was interrupted by a year of active duty with the 337th Anti-Aircraft Battery of the PA National Guard, stationed in Savannah, GA. Freddy spent any Sunday with a pass at Oglethorpe Speedway. How a Pennsylvania Dutchman talked his way into a Georgia stock car is unclear, but it worked twice!

Upon discharge from the service in 1952, Adam rounded up a couple of rides at the fifth-mile asphalt Dorney Park Speedway in Allentown, PA. For 1953, Freddy drove his own '37 Ford coupe as part of a three-car Kutztown team at Dorney Park, with teammates Jimmy Delcamp and Willie Miller. Working with brother Marlo at his side and learning from Dorney's '53 Modified champ Vince Conrad, Adam and his teammates had a solid season.

Freddy was always a popular fellow in Kutztown, but in the 1950s his racing exploits elevated him to the status of Kutztown's favorite son, a title he never relinquished. On track, Freddy won his first Modified race at Dorney Park on May 26, 1956 and grabbed additional wins at Evergreen and Reading. He became the president of the Lehigh Valley Stock Car Racing Association and won the final Modified stock car title at Dorney Park in 1959.

In 1960, Freddy won the Race of Champions qualifier at Hatfield and ran the big event with his Middletown and Nazareth owner, Roy Smith. By 1961 Freddy and his brother Marlo fielded their own #8 Modified, a number selected by the crew so they could identify their car right-side up or upside down! The Adam brothers were leading the '61 Hatfield points chase when they ran out of money with three races remaining and parked the car. Freddy finished third in driver's points and Marlo second as an owner.

In 1962, Freddy won the Hatfield championship, driving Russ Kresge's #777. After a terrible 1963 season, he joined forces with Joe Bullock's #76 team and used the Adam #8 in a backup role. The Bullock-Adam team won championships at Hatfield in 1964 and 1965, won the Race of Champions qualifier at Hatfield in 1964, finished second in Reading points in 1964, and won the 100-lap RoC National Open on October 11, 1964, the final event run on the mile dirt on the notorious Langhorne Speedway. Incredibly, Freddy and the Bullock #76 team nearly repeated in the first asphalt version of the Race of Champions on the newly paved Langhorne mile in 1965, leading after 102 laps in a race pushed to 107 circuits by late race cautions.

During his years with the Reading Stock Car Association, Adam was the only driver to compete at Reading during every RSCA season. He scored 34 RSCA sanctioned wins, including 20 feature victories at the Fairgrounds, where he finished in the top five 117 times and in the top ten 219 times.

Freddy Adam drove for some of the top owners on the East Coast during his career, but is best remembered for the homemade race cars, built and maintained in a cramped garage just off Main Street by Freddy, Marlo and their Kutztown-based crew from the 1950s through the 1980s. In an era when keen eyes could still find race car parts in junkyards instead of speed shop catalogs, the Adam brothers built some of the sharpest, most successful Modifieds in the Northeast. Dubbed "The Kutztown Komet" by famed Reading announcer Warren Ruffner, Freddy and crew spent hours in the pits after the races, interacting with their legion of fans — to them, he was simply "Freddy."

After the Reading Fairgrounds closed in 1979, Freddy continued to race with the MODCAR organization before retiring after an event at Williams Grove in 1986. During his career,

Adam competed on 44 race tracks in six states and won at Dorney Park, Hatfield, Langhorne, Nazareth National, Penn National and Reading.

In retirement, Freddy received the Checkered Flag Fan Club Jack Gunn Award in 1980, the CFFC Service Appreciation Award in 1989, and the CFFC Dick "Toby" Tobias Award in 2008. He was presented the key to the City of Reading by Mayor Warren H. Haggerty in 1991 and was inducted into the National Old Timers Auto Racing Club Hall of Fame in 2006 and the Eastern Motorsports Press Association Hall of Fame in 2010.

Freddy returned to Penn National in 1994 to record another victory in a special Legends race and scored his final speedway triumph at the Fairgrounds in Kutztown, PA, when he defeated a field of RSCA Legends in Tobias Slingshots. Freddy Adam passed away in 2013, a day after his 82nd birthday — and he's still Kutztown's favorite son.