

The Racing Community Loses a Legend to Lung Cancer - Buddy Baker

By Phillip Prichard, MSA

Buddy Baker, son of two-time champion and NASCAR Hall of Famer Buck Baker, made his Sprint Cup Series debut in 1959 and ran his final race in 1992. Baker passed away on August 10th. Baker announced in July



that he had inoperable lung cancer.

Buddy Baker, a former NASCAR racer known as the "Gentle Giant" for his 6-foot-6 frame and as "Leadfoot" for his uncompromising, flat-out driving style, died at the age of 74. Baker raced for more than 30 years and, in 1998, was honored as one of NASCAR's 50 greatest drivers. In 1970, he became the first driver to exceed 200 mph on a closed course. He set the record at Talladega Superspeedway, NASCAR's fastest track, where he won four times. In 1980, he won the Daytona 500 with an average speed of 177.602 mph — a record that still stands. In all, he won 19 races in 699 starts.

In 1979, Baker joined an elite list of drivers to win from the pole at Atlanta Motor Speedway. Baker, driving for Harry Ranier, along with Bobby Allison who was driving for Bud Moore, staged a back and forth duel throughout the 1979 Atlanta 500. Baker took the lead with 19 laps to go and captured the checkered flag. He led 88 laps total for the race. Baker's win turned out to be the only victory for Oldsmobile at Atlanta.

His wins include the 1980 Daytona 500, the 1970 Southern 500, and the Coca Cola 600 (or World 600) in 1968, 1972, and 1973. He was inducted in the Motorsports Hall of Fame in 1997.

After retiring from the sport, he taught it at the Buck Baker Racing School in Rockingham, N.C.; He was a broadcaster for the Nashville Network, then CBS and fi-



nally SiriusXM NASCAR Radio when the station started a NASCAR channel in 2007. He was one of the greatest storytellers on the history of NASCAR, a unique skill that made a favorite to millions of listeners.

"Do not shed a tear," Baker said in his final radio appearance in July. "Give a smile when you say my name. I'm not saying goodbye. Just talk to you later."

"Red Clay and Dust - The Evolution of Southern Dirt Racing"

By Phillip Prichard, MSA

A new book on dirt track racing has been released called "Red Clay and Dust - The Evolution of Southern Dirt Racing." Actually, it is the only book currently out on dirt track racing, especially dirt late models.

That was the motivation by author Gary Parker. Parker, a retired anthropology instructor at the University of Tennessee, who has been around dirt late model racing since the 1950's. No book of this kind existed and many of Parker's racing friends persuaded him for years to write this book.

The book focuses on the evolution of the dirt late model racing in the south from the 1950's until present day. One chapter is one of the changes in the cars during that period of time.

"There is a whole chapter on the evolution of the dirt late models," Parker stated. "I had to be careful and not get too technical. I had to write it for the average fan. If you get too technical, some people will lose interest and might think the whole book is that way."

A book on dirt late model racing would not be complete without the drivers. A "Baker's Dozen" of drivers are covered from the early years to present day. Stories ranging from the intensity of certain drivers to humorous tidbits cover a wide range of the make-up of these drivers.

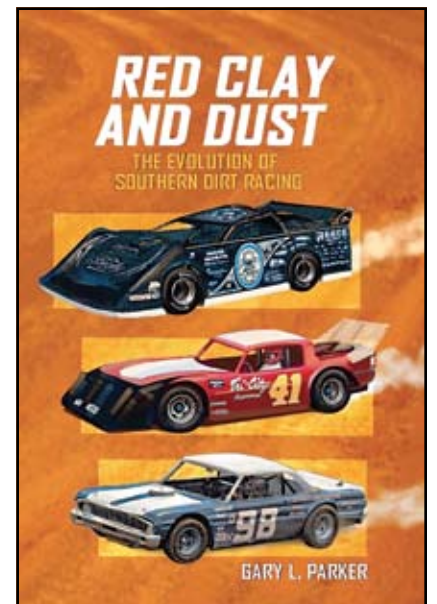
"There is some humor in the book," Parker said. "There are some stories the drivers tell about some of the situations they have been in. Many of them just opened up and would tell all kinds of stories, some were not suitable to put into

the book."

Another chapter is on the different series that has been a part of dirt late model racing over the years. Everything from the NDRA to Southern All-Stars to the Lucas Oil Late Model Dirt Series is covered in the book.

"I cover most of the series in the book," Parker added. "In doing research on the NDRA for this book, that gave me the idea for my next book, which will be the history of the NDRA. There just isn't a lot of information out there on it. I don't think dirt late models would be where they're at today had it not been for the NDRA."

The book "Red Clay and Dust - The Evolution of Southern Dirt Racing" is available at places such as Amazon and Barnes and Noble.



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