

?Joe James/Pat O'Conner Memorial at Salem Speedway

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? The 49th scheduled running of one of the most historic sprint car races in the nation is set to take place at Salem Speedway on Sunday, August 3, as the USAC National Sprint Car Series visits the super-fast oval for the Indiana Stone Works Joe James/Pat O'Connor Memorial.

The honor roll of past James/O'Connor victors reads like a "who's-who" in open wheel racing history with such names as A.J. Foyt, Parnelli Jones, Bob Sweikert, Mario Andretti, Bobby Unser, Pancho Carter, Rich Vogler, Kenny Irwin Jr., and Tony Stewart gracing the list of former winners.

The 2008 edition of the classic brings together USAC's finest open wheel drivers as they attempt to add their name to the list of racing greats who have won the prestigious event. Winning one Joe James/Pat O'Connor Memorial is a significant accomplishment, capturing a second classic is a distinction bestowed on just 10 drivers.

Originating in 1953 as the Joe James Memorial, in remembrance of the popular California driver, who lost his life in a racing accident the previous year, the event was renamed the Joe James/Pat O'Connor Memorial in 1958 following the death of O'Connor in that year's Indianapolis 500.

James, whose only feature win on the Salem high banks came on October 14, 1951, captured the 1952 AAA Midwest sprint championship. He competed in two Indianapolis 500's, finishing 33rd in 1951 and 13th the following year.

O'Connor, from nearby North Vernon, won the 1952 and '54 Midwest sprint titles with AAA and the 1956 USAC sprint championship. He was a five-time winner on the Salem oval, including victories in the 1954 and 1957 James Memorial races. O'Connor started five consecutive Indianapolis 500's beginning in 1954 and sat on the pole in 1957.

The August 3 racing program, which also features the annual visit by the Midwest Oldtimers Vintage Race Car Club, will be topped off with the 50-lap Joe James/Pat O'Connor sprint feature. The Lucas Oil Super Stock and Dave & Deb's Winner's Circle Street Stock divisions are also scheduled to compete.

Spectator gates are slated to open at 1:30 p.m. on August 3rd, with Salem hot laps at 2 p.m., Salem qualifications at 3:30 p.m., USAC practice/qualifications at 4 p.m. and the first race at 5:15 p.m. (EDT).

Advance tickets, both reserved and general admission, are currently selling for the Indiana Stone Works Joe James/Pat O'Connor Memorial and may be purchased by calling 812-883-6504 or toll free 1-888-2Go-Race (1-888-246-7223).