

FROM: James P. Chapman, Inc.
Suite 550 Washington Boulevard Building
Detroit, Michigan 48226
Contact: Jim Chapman (313) 961-6233 or in
Indianapolis: Atkinson Hotel, (317) 639-5611

WALLY DALLENBACH

Although he has been driving USAC championship cars only eight years - and at Indianapolis only six - Wally Dallenbach, driver of Olsonite Eagle No. 62, already ranks 15th among active drivers in all-time national point standings.

More significantly, only four active drivers with as few starts as Dallenbach (85) have compiled more championship points than the 36-year-old East Brunswick, N. J. resident. They are Joe Leonard (81), Billy Vukovich (82), Mike Mosley (68) and Gary Bettenhausen (77), each, as most race observers know, lucky enough to have landed better rides than Dallenbach during his eight years of championship competition.

Dan Gurney, Olsonite team captain, considers Dallenbach to be one of the most underrated drivers on the circuit, and that is why he offered him a seat in the third car in the Olsonite stable for this year's Indy race.

Dallenbach, openly jubilant over this chance to join Gurney's team, calls his Olsonite Eagle (the same car Bobby Unser put on the pole at Indy last year) "the best ride I ever had."

So it is not surprising that no small number of race-wise veterans at Indy are picking Wally as the dark-horse to win this year's event.

Dallenbach has never won a USAC championship race, although he has four seconds and four thirds to his credit. His best finish at Indy was in 1972, when

he managed to come in 15th even after his car caught fire three times during three of his pit stops, accounting for Vince Granatelli's famous "underwear strip."

In his best championship year, 1969, he led six laps at Indy and performed well on the rest of the circuit to gain a sixth place finish in USAC point standings.

Dallenbach started driving Modifieds when he was only 15, moving up to drag racing after three years. In five years as a drag racer, he established three track records and won more than 80 events.

Before he moved into championship racing in 1965, he returned to Modifieds, combining his efforts on that circuit with NASCAR and Open Competition. In 1964, he also added ARDC, URC, IMCA and USAC Sprint and Midget competition to his racing repertoire.

In December, 1971, Wally was one of a small group of race drivers sent to Viet Nam to entertain the troops, a journey he calls "one of the highlights of my lifetime."

Dallenbach lives with his wife Annette, a daughter, Colleen, 7, and a son, Paul, 5, in East Brunswick.

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