

ARNOLD "BUD" BERGER

Arnold "Bud" Berger started his driving career in 1958 at Huset's, driving a car owned by Clarence Rubin, father of former Huset's owners Steve and Greg. Entered in the "strictly stock" class, the 1949 Ford tudor sedan had the word 'joker' painted on the side, and the "0" in the word became the official number. By the end of that first season Berger and Rubin had used up four Ford sedans, Rubin retired from race car ownership and Berger became a helmet-toting pit walker. He then drove the George Questad No. 9 Ford coupe with a miniature Yogi Bear strapped to the roof. The bear was the prank of longtime Huset's announcer Dave Dedrick, and the nickname stuck to Berger for the rest of his driving career. Berger flipped the coupe in a first turn crash, completely demolishing the car, but "yogi" survived the wild ride atop the car. Berger later drove cars for Russ Gaffney, Mel Hagberg, Harry Pollman and Ron Tysdal. The Pollman car was one of the first cut-down supermodifieds and designed for a smaller man than Berger and Pollman didn't want to move the seat back. "When I got strapped in the damn thing, my knees were around my ears, but I won the feature," Berger said of his first ride in the Pollman car. Pollman later decided to move the seat and Berger responded by winning the 35-lap season-championship race. He later ran the supermodified of Ron Tysdal and rode out a nasty third turn flip that left the car upside down against the wall. Attempts to remove Berger from the upended car were not going well because of his tremendous size. Hanging upside down and growing more frustrated by the minute, Berger said "Just tip the sumbitch back on its wheels and shove me off". Berger retired from driving mid-season in 1969 following a devastating spill of Marlyn Hanten at Madison. Hanten landed in the lake behind the third turn in Madison, and Berger was among the first on the scene. He held Hanten's head above water until the rescue crews arrived. Following his driving career, Berger became involved in the operation of the speedway and an officer in the Midwest Racing Association. He quickly became Hall of Famer Fred Buckmiller's right-hand man, and assisted in the weekly running of the program as a flagman, water truck driver, pit steward, and because of his intimidating size, he was also a combination bouncer and referee. He also served as flagman at Rock Rapids, Iowa and Brookings, South Dakota and was a member of the board of directors of the speedway.