

Sam McQuagg

Columbus, Ga. Native Sam McQuagg got his first taste of racing in the mid 1950's, when he decided to participate in a spectator race at a small local dirt track in his street car.

He won that race, and was hooked.

McQuagg quit his construction job and became a racer on the local dirt tracks.

He was a constant winner at Valdosta, and at Auburn-Opelika, Al.

McQuagg entered his first NASCAR Grand National (now Sprint Cup) event at Valdosta in 1962.

In 1965, McQuagg made 14 starts in NASCAR's top division, recording two top fives and five top tens en route to being named the rookie of the year.

McQuagg was leading the Southern 500 that year when he tangled with Cale Yarborough, sending Yarborough's car over the fence and outside the racetrack.

Footage of that crash would be shown as part of the opening of ABC's Wide World of Sports for several years after.

McQuagg won his only Cup event the following year in the Firecracker 400 at Daytona Beach, Fl., piloting a Ray Nichols owned Dodge that was equipped with the first spoiler in NASCAR history.

McQuagg ran his last NASCAR event at Charlotte in 1974 following a four-year absence from the sport.

Away from the track, he was a commercial pilot.

He retired in 1997.