



Lebanon I-44 Speedway to Pay
Tribute to the Roper Family

Press
Release

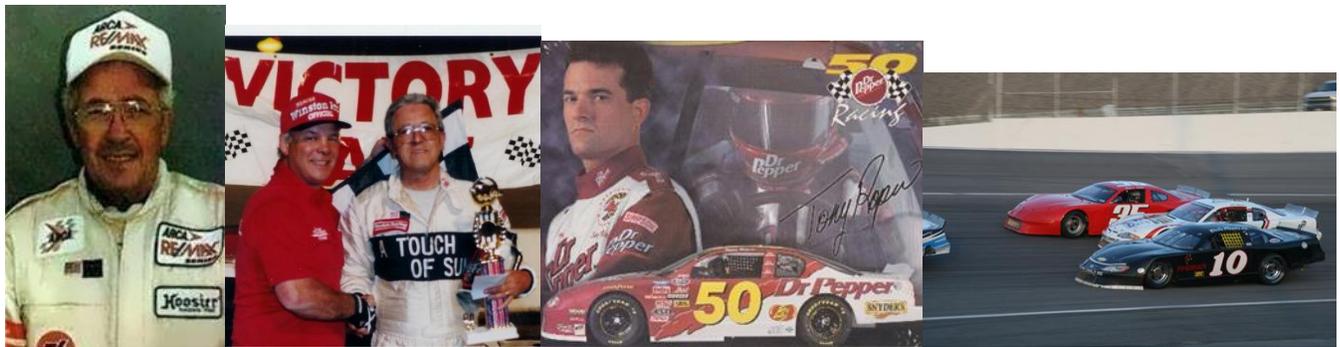
This Saturday, June 2nd, the gates will open once again for night number two of the 2018 season. On Saturday, we will be paying tribute to one of the most decorated family of racers in the area, the Roper family. The Roper Classic will host double-features for each division including the debut of our new 1/5-mile “Little Track” in the infield of the larger 3/8-mile race track.

The Roper clan, from Fair Grove Missouri, consisted of two father-son duos. Dean and Dale were brothers who caught the racing bug. Dean and Dale cut their teeth running at the local short tracks such as the Springfield Fairgrounds, Bolivar Speedway, and later Lebanon I-44 Speedway. Dean found a lot of success in the early 80s. He was the USAC Stock National Champion in 1981, 82 and 83 and, at one time, was the winningest driver on dirt in the ARCA RE/MAX Series. Also, in 1983 Dean ran the Daytona 500 and finished 15th! Throughout most of Dean’s successful years you would find his brother Dale on top of the spotter tower guiding his brother around the track through radio communications. While Dean was dominating in the 80s, his son Tony was making a name for himself back home on the High Banks of Lebanon I-44 Speedway, I-70 Speedway and Bolivar Speedway. Tony Roper began running the ASA Series in the early 90s while managing his own team with help from many fellow drivers who still compete at Lebanon I-44 Speedway today. In 1995, Tony took his talent to Concord North Carolina where he raced 60 races for the Mittler Brothers NASCAR Truck team. In 1999, Tony tried his hand in the NASCAR Xfinity Series where he recorded 10 top 10s in 16 starts. In 2000, Tony took a short hiatus at the beginning of the season but returned to the Truck Series with the Mittler Brothers towards the end of the season to run a few races. On October 14th, 2000 at Texas Motor Speedway the Ozark Area Racing Family lost one of the greatest drivers to come from the area. Tony Roper lost his life in a NASCAR Truck accident. This wreck shook the entire NASCAR community, especially here in Missouri near his hometown. The Roper family did not field a race car in a race for 10 months after this. On August 19th, 2001 Tony’s father Dean strapped back into a race car, with his brother Dale on the other end of the radio, at one of his most successful tracks, the Springfield Mile. On lap 17, Dean’s car came to a stop. Dean had passed away from a sudden heart attack. Dale Roper claims that “Dean passed away from a broken heart” after the loss of his son. After Dale had lost his brother and nephew, he continued the family racing legacy along with his son, Dale Roper Jr. Dale Sr. competed on the High Banks of Lebanon I-44 Speedway and Bolivar Speedway for many years racking up wins. Dale made his last start in a Modified at Bolivar Speedway in 2008 but continues to attend races on a weekly basis. He is known for his close connection with retired

NASCAR Monster Energy Cup Series racer, Carl Edwards. Dale Jr. was a threat at any track he raced at, whether it was dirt or asphalt, with many Track Championships to show for it! Dale Jr. was a Track Champion at Lebanon I-44 Speedway in the Sportsman division in 2010 and later moved up to the Pro Late Model Division and brought fans to their feet each week battling with Chrissy Wallace for the 2011 Championship. Dale Jr. also continues to attend local races and cheer on his friends and longtime competitors.

As you can see, the Roper family had a huge impact on short track racing in the area and we would like you to join us as we pay our respect to Dean and Tony and thank Dale and Dale Jr. for everything that they have done. The Grandstand gates open at 6:00PM and racing starts at 7:30PM! Only \$12.00 to enter for adults, and kids 10 and under are free! Until then be sure to Like us on Facebook to keep up with track news and updates or visit our website at i44speedway.net!

By Dylan Bates



Dean

Dale

Tony

Dale Jr.