

Veteran Racer Steve Barnett Announces Retirement from Racing  
For Immediate Release  
By James Essex

Longtime Brownstown Speedway Late Model Racer Steve Barnett has announced effective immediately his retirement from racing. Barnett, who turns 60 on April 18 was just recently named the mayor of his hometown of Franklin, Indiana.

Barnett, who began his racing career in 1975 ends his career as one of the most accomplished short-track racers in Indiana history.

Barnett had said last year that the 2017 racing season would be his last. This was before a vicious accident at Brownstown last October where Barnett barrel-rolled four times resulting in several injuries.

Barnett had just been cleared in recent days by doctors to race again, but being voted in by a caucus to fill out the term of former Franklin mayor Joe McGuinness prompted Barnett to make his decision on his racing career now and not wait until the season was over.

“I had all intentions of racing this year, and retiring after this season. I am completely healed up from the injuries the doctors said, but when I became the mayor elect back in January I decided then it was time to step away from racing. We had a long-time sponsor of mine Bradley Chevrolet coming back this year and we were really looking forward to one final year together with them.”

Besides a serious back injury Barnett had two black eyes, a broken nose and a broken collarbone. Barnett leaned on longtime friend and racing partner, Tony Stewart during the recovery process. “Tony had been through his back injury early last year. He told me what I needed to do in the recovery process and I followed what he and the doctors recommended. I fractured my T-5 vertebra. I still have two rods in my back.”

At the Brownstown awards banquet in January Barnett urged all drivers out there in every division to upgrade their safety equipment. “I urge each of you to get a self-containment seat, a head and neck device, a window net and update your belts, helmet, uniform and gloves.”

Barnett is no stranger to politics. For the past eight years, he served on the Franklin City Council and for the last five years as its president. When McGuinness resigned as mayor in early January to become the director of the Indiana Department of Transportation, Barnett became the interim mayor.

In a special Republican caucus conducted on January 30 Barnett was chosen to become the new full-time mayor by a 14-7 vote. McGuinness had served as mayor of Franklin since 2012. Barnett will serve out the remaining three years of the former mayor’s term ending in 2019 when he can run for re-election. Per the Franklin Daily Journal Barnett will receive a salary of \$80,000 per year.

It was then Barnett was questioned by those who did not vote for him fearing his racing endeavors could lead to another serious injury or worse.

“Just about everyone who lives in Franklin knows that I have been involved in racing for years. There were concerns raised by those people who did not vote for me that I could get hurt again and not be able to serve the people of Franklin. It got me to thinking quite seriously about retiring from racing.

Franklin is a city of 25,000 people and the decisions I make affect every one of them and I wanted to make sure I was going to give 100% of my time and energy to those people.”

Barnett’s career highlights are enormous. He is a 6-time Northern Allstars Champion and recorded 10 wins during the series’ history, he is a 4x time Brownstown Speedway Super Late Model Champion, he has multiple track championships at Twin Cities (IN) Raceway Park in Vernon, Indiana, Lincoln Park Speedway in Putnamville, Indiana and Whitewater Valley Speedway in Liberty, Indiana. He also won a track title at Scott County Speedway in Scottsburg, Indiana.

Barnett is the fourth all-time winningest Super Late Model driver in Brownstown history. His 50 career wins trail only Jim Curry, John Gill and Don O’Neal on the tracks all-time win list. His four track titles at Brownstown ties him for most all-time at the Southern Indiana track with Curry. He was elected to the track’s Hall of Fame in 2008. He won his first Brownstown feature in 1982 and for the next 11 years he recorded at least one win per year.

Barnett also holds the distinction of starting the most Jackson 100’s in the history of the event with 27 starts. While he never won Brownstown’s most prestigious race he finished second a total of three times and ran third on two occasions. He finished in the top ten 13 times.

He was the 1993 STARS “Rookie of the Year” and finished second in the 1997 Dirt Late Model Dream to Jimmy Mars at Eldora (OH) Speedway earning his biggest payday of his career (\$20,000). He finished fourth in the 1986 USAC Late Model Points and was ninth in 1986.

For the past few months Barnett had kept his newest retirement plans under wraps telling very few people. One of those he confided in was Stewart, who was looking forward to racing with Barnett at Brownstown this year on a few occasions. “When I first told Tony that I was retiring he was kind of shocked. He was really looking forward to racing some against me this year. We have been friends for more than 25 years and I could tell he was disappointed, but he said he backed my decision 100%.”

“It’s tough, really tough,” said Barnett of his decision to retire from racing. “To do it for as long as I have I am extremely grateful. I want to thank all the fans for their support. I had a great time racing all of those years at Brownstown Speedway there are a lot of great memories racing against some great drivers.”