



LEGENDS OF THUNDER VALLEY

RICKIE SMITH

For an example of pure domination, fans should look no further than Rickie Smith's winning record at Bristol Dragway.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Smith racked up win after win in Thunder Valley. After claiming his first International Hot Rod Association national event title at the 1980 Summer Nationals, Smith would roll into Bristol's victory lane eight more times. Smith's ten victories give him the most of any driver to race in Thunder Valley.

In 1979, Smith made his first IHRA Pro Stock appearance and finished 10th in the season standings. He became the first Pro Stock driver into the seven-second range in 1980, and the first over 180 mph in 1982. Smith used that speed to take home the 1982 IHRA World Championship.

Smith's dominance was not restricted to Thunder Valley, however. In 1986, he started an impressive streak of championship performances. By the end of the 1989 season, he had collected four consecutive IHRA World Championships, had raced in both IHRA Pro Stock and National Hot Rod Association Pro Stock competition, and had dabbled in the world of NASCAR, starting a handful of Busch Grand National races.

Smith won his first NHRA "Wally" in 1993 and completed the decade racing his own cars, while serving as crew chief for other drivers. In 2001, Smith won the NHRA's first pro mod race.

After a tough crash at Bristol in 2011, Smith returned to Thunder Valley in 2012 and claimed the Pro Mod crown, once again asserting his force in the drag racing world.

Smith is still running strong and shows no signs of slowing. He currently competes in the NHRA Pro Mod category while watching his son, Matt, race in the NHRA Pro Stock Motorcycle category.

For his impressive Bristol record, Dragway officials named Smith one of the Legends of Thunder Valley during the 2007 running of the NHRA Thunder Valley Nationals.