Bart Bast (Class of 1985) Honed the skills of discipline and focus wrestling for E.V. Cain Middle School and Placer High School, and later turned those into assets on the track to become a U.S. National Speedway champion.

For his performance on national and European race tracks, Bast will be inducted into the Placer High School Athletic Hall of Fame on April 27 in a ceremony in the school's iconic Earl Crabbe Gym.

The son of legendary speedway racer Harlan Bast, he followed his father and older brother Harlan Jr. in their love of speedway racing. Harlan Sr. passed away in 2023, Harlan Jr. has since retired, but at age 56, Bart still races.

You can catch him most often at Fast Fridays at the Auburn Gold Country Fairgrounds racetrack where even last year he was in the top 10 in Rider Points for the 2023 Speedway Racing Season. Fast Fridays have become a staple of Auburn activity for the past three decades.

Bast was ranked as the Northern California Speedway Point Champion for 21 years between 1986 and 2021, including nine years in a row from 1993-2001, and most recently in 2021.

He moved to Auburn from Southern California when he was nine and wrestled three years at E.V. Cain, going undefeated in the eighth grade. He wrestled all four years at Placer High from the 98-pound weight class to the 126-pound division.

He credits his coaches Bill Green and Bill Flake for being big influencers and for helping him to learn discipline. But he also credits his father, Harlan, for providing such good support, attending all his matches at both schools.

Placer High wood shop teacher John Balsam also provided positive influence as well. "He knew how to get through to you in a different way." Bast stated. "He taught business through woodshop."

He didn't participate in any other sports at Placer High as his extracurricular racing took up a lot of his time. He began racing at age 10 and turned pro at 16.

Although he did once have an invitation to join the varsity football team. It seems he was in the stadium during a practice when an errant football came his way. He punted it back onto the field "A perfect spiral, about 70 yards," he said.

"Some burly football coach came up to me and told me I was his new punter for the team. I was excited and told my dad that night that I was asked to join the football team. He said, 'No, you'll get crushed!' I wasn't very big and had to eat a lot just to make weight for wrestling at 98 pounds."

So he focused on speedway racing. "During the nineteen eighties and nineties I raced every weekend, often in Southern California." Bast recalled.

In 1989 he raced in Europe all year. He found the English racers to be tough. "English racing is like the NFL," he said. But he admitted that he was too young, "Athough it was a good learning experience."

During his long career, Bast claimed the U.S. Speedway National championship in 1998, and was named the American Motorcycle Association Racer of the Year in 2016.

"Speedway racing is a tough race," he said. "There are no gimmies. It's a sprint, and all the other racers are going all out for it at the same time. If you blink at the start, you're done."

He said he learned his racing skills through trial and error. Speedway bikes can reach up to 60 miles per hour and have no brakes. "The only way to slow down is to slide across the turns."

Bast does not use one particular motorcycle manufacturer. Instead, like most racers, he grabs parts and puts them together. “You might have a German carburetor, an English clutch, and an Italian moto,” he said.. “The bikes are useless except for racing.”

He also races motocross with jumps on vintage bikes with jumps. “At least there are age categories there, whereas speedway racing is open to age sixteen and older.”

Although he competes in the older age division, he feels he has a couple of years of racing left. “The younger racers today take chances that I used to take, but a fifty-six, it takes longer to heal from crashes.”

Today he owns Bart Bast Construction in Foresthill, but still loves to ride motorcycles and says he has a garage full of them.

Today, besides still racing, Bast works with one of the top Fast Friday racers, Louie Mersaroli, the son of his girlfriend Melanie Robson.

The Athletic Hall of Fame ceremony will be held in the Earl Crabbe Gym on April 27. A reception will begin at 6 pm followed by the induction ceremony at 7 pm.

Tickets for the reception cost $25 until April 15, and $35 after, and are available online at available online at *placerathletichalloffame.org*.

The 7 pm ceremony is free of charge to the public.