

BANJO MATTHEWS

Born: Feb. 14, 1932 **Died:** Oct. 2, 1996

Hometown: Akron, Ohio

Championships (3)

Cup – 1976-78 (car builder)

Years on Ballot: 4



If you won a NASCAR Cup Series race in the 1970's or 80's, odds are the car originated on a surface plate in Banjo Matthew's shop.

Matthews was a master car builder who found his calling supplying cars to teams at all levels of NASCAR. His work transformed the sport, introducing custom chassis built for both speed and safety.

Matthews began his career racing and working on modifieds, driving to Victory Lane 50 times in 1954. In 1963, however, Matthews traded in his helmet, opting to focus on the mechanical side. He worked for Ford Motor Company before starting his own shop, Banjo's Performance Center.

It was estimated that in the 70's Matthews built cars for at least half the Cup field. From 1974-85, cars built by Matthews won 262 of the 362 Cup races held (72%). In 1978, his cars won all 30 races of the season, including the third consecutive championship for a Matthews car.

It's no wonder that Matthews was often referred to as the 'Henry Ford of race cars.'