



The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club

Pit Report

December—2015

Next *Regular Meeting*—Wednesday, January 6, 2016

In This Issue

Ladies Night...the Other Side of the Story!	1&2
January Meeting Preview	2
Snowball Derby Recap	3
Rep. Posey at Hall of Fame	4
In Memoriam	5
Local Racing Corner	5
New Racing Series Announced	6
Christmas Parade Recap	6
Thursday Morning Breakfast News	7
Your Pit Crew	8
Conkle's Corner	8
Nominations for Officers	8



The Other Side of the Story!

December 2—We closed out the 2015 meeting schedule on a high note once again, this time with a tremendously successful "ladies night," featuring a panel of racing wives sharing their own remembrances from lives in Motorsports. Our slate of speakers represented the better halves of some of the greatest drivers of all time, as evidenced by this on-stage lineup:

- Mary Anderson, wife of Dick Anderson, one of the winningest and best known short track drivers in Florida racing history
- Pat Brack, wife of Bobby Brack, South Florida racing legend and former NASCAR competitor
- Cheryl Brewer, wife of dirt bike, sprint car, and mini sprint car driver Mike Brewer and mother of mini sprint car driver Kenny Brewer
- Kim Garcia, wife of Billy Garcia, midget, modified, and sprint car driver and California Racing Association champion

And, if that wasn't enough, we added Lisa LaJoie (wife of two-time NASCAR Busch Series champion, mother of rising Motorsports star Corey LaJoie and ace crew member Casey LaJoie, and daughter of club member Ernie Battee) to the mix using the magic of the Internet and the services of Skype.

As we expected, the night proved to be a lighthearted and free flowing series of fascinating anecdotes, from Mary's dilemma of being stranded after Dick's 1989 Governor's Cup win at New Smyrna to Lisa's recounting of the Randy LaJoie-Buckshot Jones rivalry. Kim's tales of using car parts as furniture and Pat's stories about traveling as Gypsies on the New Jersey circuit with Bobby and an infant son (with another son on the way) provided a pretty good look at "life on the racing trail." Cheryl spoke about fun times at an "Oh My God 100" dirt bike race, where her responsibilities focused on bringing the Gatorade, gas, goggles, and gum.



Our panelists spoke about their first experiences in the world of racing, as well as the various jobs they've held in support of their racing families and the

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The Other Side of the Story! (Continued)

trials, tribulations, and great times they experienced on the various racing circuits they travelled. Like Pat and Bobby switching drivers on the road (without stopping), Lisa and Randy needing a police escort to get out of Bristol, Kim supplying Billy with yellow goggles (the ones that made a white flag look like a caution flag), and Cheryl serving as a professional mud scraper.

While their stories varied, one thing was a constant throughout the discussion...they valued the family times, and wouldn't change a thing.



Some photo highlights from the event: Upper photo, from left—Cheryl and Mike Brewer, Dick and Mary Anderson, Pat and Bobby Brack, Kim and Billy Garcia. Bottom row (from left) Bobby Brack, Mike Brewer, Billy Garcia, Dick Anderson.

January Meeting Preview

Our guest speaker is Jamie Smith, Manager of the BG Vintage Racing Team and a Director of the Classic Race Boat Association. Jamie will discuss the making of the film "Harold & Lorna Wilson, World Water Speed Champions" and the story of the restoration of Miss Canada IV, the first boat to exceed 200 mph. Following his career in the automotive industry, he authored a book on wooden boats and consulted for the Muskoka Steamship and Historical Society's philanthropic programs

Jamie and his wife live in Bracebridge, Ontario, Canada and spend their winters in Mt. Dora, Florida.



Snowball Derby —It's A Really Big Deal!

December 4-6—A hearty contingent of club members made the trip “up north” to the Snowball Derby at Pensacola’s Five Flags Speedway December 4-6. Glen Carter, John Angiolo, Jerry Conkle, Lou Palmer, and Gerry Hafer, along with “The Ringmaster” Jim Hedlund, were on hand for the 48th running of this prestigious event, and were treated to some spectacular racing. Second generation NASCAR driver Chase Elliott laid claim to the coveted Snowball Derby Championship, but it wasn’t without controversy.

Elliott ran consistently in the top 10 through most of the 300-lap event, coming on strong at the end to finish second to heavily favored Kyle Busch Motorsports driver Christopher Bell. Post-race inspection, under the scrutiny of Ricky Brooks, found Bell’s number 51 entry to be in violation of the weight ratio rule requiring the left side to be no more than 58% of the total weight. At 58.3%, the car did not pass inspection, despite three separate weigh-ins. Although slight, the infraction resulted in Bell’s disqualification and Elliott’s elevation to number one in the finishing order. It was the second disqualification for Bell during the Derby... his top qualifying time on Friday was disallowed after a post-qualifying inspection revealed a discrepancy in the allowable opening between the rear wheel and the rear fender.

The 2015 Snowball Derby Championship is the second for Elliott...he won it in 2011. He also finished first in the 2013 Derby, only to fall victim to a post-race inspection that detected an unapproved material in a component of the car. That violation involved a weight that was composed of tungsten rather than lead, and forced him (just like Bell) to the rear of the official finishing order (37th).

In addition to the yellow shirts, our club was prominent at the Derby, with our logo carried by Corey LaJoie in the Sunday finale and by David Rogers in the Saturday night Snowflake 100. Rogers did not qualify for the main event, but did step one event closer to the all-time record for Derby starts. It was his 31st start in the Derby, putting him just one shy of the all-time leader in Derby starts, Charles “Red” Farmer.

Corey ran a solid race, staying in the top 10 through most of the event before an accident late in the running gave him handling problems. He wound up 14th in this year’s event. (As an historic note, club Hall of Famer Wayne Anderson won the Derby in 2001, and is 13th on the all-time list of Derby lap leaders at 174.)

Here are a few snapshots from the Derby:



Top: David Rogers' No. 11 with our logo; Middle: Our group mingling with Jeff Burton (center) and Corey LaJoie (behind Burton); Bottom: The incredible sell-out crowd on Sunday.)

In the Homestretch for the Ninth Annual Hall of Fame Event

January 23—Final preparations are now underway for what promises to be yet another grand event for our group...the induction of 19 new members into our Hall of Fame. Janine Woodsford and her crack crew of party planners are putting the finishing touches on the festivities for the evening, including the Keynote address from “Our Car Guy in Congress,” Rep. Bill Posey (Florida’s 8th District). Congressman Posey is renowned in racing circles as well as in the political arena, where he serves as Co-Chair of the Congressional Motorsports Caucus and the Auto Racing Caucus.



Posey’s racing career began in 1963 in a 1933 Ford sponsored by a Cocoa, Florida service station, a ride he piloted quite successfully at Melbourne’s Eau Gallie Speedway and Orlando Raceway.



In addition to on-track performances, he was the driving force behind formation of Mid-Florida Racing Association, the group that eventually bought, renovated, and operated Eau Gallie Speedway in the 1970s. The 1980s brought him back to the cockpit, competing at Orlando Speedworld, New Smyrna Speedway, Columbia Speedway, and Hialeah Speedway. His

multiple wins on the stock car circuit distinguished him as a skilled wheelman.

In more recent years, Bill has been active in racing classic cars at a host of Central Florida tracks, including New Smyrna Speedway, Volusia Speedway Park, and many others. Despite his full-time work in the U.S. Congress, he’s still an active car guy, working frequently on the lone remaining car in his stable, a 1966 Malibu he bought in 2005.



Bill’s racing-related Congressional acts include crafting and sponsoring the Earnhardt Family Protection Act, an Act that protects the dignity of the deceased, as well as laws designed to protect the insured from abuse by insurance carriers. This latter effort was spurred by his concern for long-time Florida racing standout Pete Orr during his battle with cancer. Bill also passed a resolution in 2005 declaring February 11, 2005 as “Chris Economaki Day” in honor the this motorsports journalist’s career.

One of his greatest recognitions in a career that is outstanding in so many ways is his 2008 receipt of the Victory Lane Racing Association’s Short Track Driver Achievement Award, an honor presented to him by Bobby Allison and the late Judy Allison in honor their sons Davey and Clifford.

NASCAR Loses More of the Great Ones

December 10—Ron Bouchard, 1981 Winston Cup Rookie of the Year and 1981 Talladega winner, lost his battle with cancer. Bouchard competed in Cup racing from 1981 to 1987, making 160 starts and logging 19 top-five finishes to go along with his three poles. He also competed in the Xfinity Series (then the Busch Series), running 20 events and logging two wins and eight top-five finishes. He is best remembered for his Talladega upset, which occurred in only his 11th Cup series start. He was a member of the New England Auto Racers Hall of Fame. Bouchard was 67 years old.



December 18—Judy Allison, wife of NASCAR Hall of Famer Bobbie Allison died from complications following surgery. Larry McReynolds, posting on Foxsports.com, called her “The Glue that Held the Alabama Gang Together,” while the NASCAR Hall of Fame’s comments described her this way: “Judy Allison epitomizes everything good about faith, family and NASCAR. She will be deeply missed, but her memory, impact and incredible legacy will live with us forever.” She was 74 years old.



Photo Credits: Bouchard—en.Wikipedia; Allison—Charles Poindexter (Facebook)

Local Racing Corner

These tracks represent the local roots of racing and they need our support! If you’ve been to an event at any of these tracks recently, you’ll no doubt agree that attendance is down. Car counts are down as well, and it’s easy to see that either of these facts represents a cause-and-effect situation. If the cars don’t come, neither will the fans, and it’s becoming a downward spiral that can only lead to the closing of tracks here in Central Florida. Let’s do our part to keep the sport alive! These tracks are where the future big-league drivers cut their teeth, and they need us in the stands. Remember...without these tracks, there’d be no NASCAR!

Track	Location	Telephone	Web Contact
Auburndale Speedway	Winter Haven	863-551-1131	Auburndalespeedway.net
Bronson Speedway	Archer	352-486-4998	Bronsonspeedway.net
Bubba Raceway Park	Ocala (Zuber)	352-622-9400	Bubbaracewaypark.com
Citrus County Speedway	Inverness	352-726-9339	Citruscountyspeedway.com
Desoto Speedway	Bradenton	941-748-3171	Desotospeedway.com
East Bay Raceway Park	Tampa (Gibson-ton)	813-677-7223	Eastbayracewaypark.com
Marion County Speedway	Ocala	352-812-3922	Marioncountyspeedway.com
New Smyrna Speedway	Samsula	386-427-4129	Newsmyrnaspeedway.org
Original Speedway Park	Fruitland Park	352-348-4336	Speedwaypark.biz
Orlando Speedworld	Bithlo	407-568-1367	Orlandospeedworld.org
Putnam County Speedway	Satsuma	386-649-6969	Putnamcountyspeedway.org
Showtime Speedway	Pinellas Park	727-561-9646	Showtimespeedway.us
Volusia Speedway Park	De Leon Springs	386-985-4402	Sportsvolusia.com

(Note: It’s our understanding that Citrus County Speedway will not re-open until after the March Fair event.)

They're Gonna Try it Again!

December 15—(From Rick Williams, Port Consolidated / Southern Racing Fuels)

“Just when you thought you’ve heard it all, two rival Florida short tracks have teamed up to do what many people said couldn’t be done. Auburndale Speedway and Desoto Speedway have teamed up along with two prominent racing forces, Sunoco and American Racer to create the latest Florida Super Late Model Series. After much deliberation an agreement was made between all parties involved to create the Sunoco Challenge Series, “It was time we got some tracks working together to make this happen, I think it’s going to be good for all involved” said Rick Williams owner of Southern Fuels.

The series will be boast a 12-race deal with six races at each facility. All races will be run on the new American Racer tire and will prove to be the right choice. “We had a tire test with two of the area’s top competitors and everything proved this was the right choice.” Said Auburndale Owner Rex Guy.

The first event kicks off at Auburndale on Saturday, January, 16th and Sunday the 17th with Triple 50’s then heads to Desoto on Saturday, February 6th and Sunday, February 7th for the Ice Breaker & Randy Fox Memorial 104. “We got a good thing going with Auburndale, Sunoco and American Racer and are very excited about 2016” said Desoto Speedway General Manager Ron Bacelo. Ricky Brooks has played a big part in pulling everything together and was hired to control the technical side of things and will officiate all Sunoco Challenge events.

“I’m looking forward to being a part of this series and what we’ve created here with Sunoco, American Racer and the two racetracks.” says Brooks. For more information/rules contact Ricky Brooks at 850-324-6821 and the complete Sunoco Challenge schedule, go to www.auburndalespeedway.net or www.Desotospeedway.net.”

(Editorial Note: Sort of reminiscent of the 2010 FAST Series, don’t you think? Just hope they have a better spirit of cooperation between the tracks involved. Just saying.)

Club Shows Up Big at Christmas Parade

December 12—With Janine Woodsford and Barb Pappas leading the way, our club fielded 14 entries in the annual Christmas Parade in The Villages. The weather was beautiful, and our contingent sent a clear message to the spectators that our group is one of the best!

Note in the photo directly below that the “gone-but-not-forgotten Arthur “Buster” Burt was with us in spirit. The sign board on the middle cart, of course, was a product several years ago of Buster’s handiwork. We keep it ready for events like this in his honor!



The Breakfast Group Gets A Visit From the LaJoie Family

December 24—Our Thursday morning breakfast group once again had a few special guests...this time the LaJoie family: Lisa, Randy, Corey, and Casey. The family was in town for a holiday visit with Lisa's dad, longtime club member Ernie Battee.

Many club members are aware that Ernie is permanently paralyzed as a result of a December 2012 auto accident in The Villages, and has been residing at Lake Harris Health Center in Leesburg since shortly after the accident. And those of you who know Ernie also know that he is and always has been an avid race fan, and has followed closely the career of his son-in-law, NASCAR Champion Randy LaJoie, throughout Randy's racing years. He follows grandson Corey LaJoie's career with equal interest, watching as many races as he can and reading as much as he can.

Lisa often comments about how much he appreciates visits from club members, and reports that she is planning to attend our January 23 Hall of Fame event with dad Ernie in tow. Lisa is pictured in photo at top right displaying her official invitation to the event (she was a member of our panel presentation earlier this month), while Randy reaches for further coffee fortification.

In the bottom photo at right, Ernie is joined by Randy's dad, Don LaJoie (far left), grandsons Corey and Casey (far right) at Dover International Speedway in 2012. Corey was competing in the "American Real TV 150" in NASCAR's Pro Series East. He won the race handily.



Honoring "Our Girl" Marybeth

December 17—Our Thursday breakfast group has been meeting regularly for about eight years now, and we've played a major role in analyzing the state of motorsports in America today while thoroughly investigating and reporting on virtually every major happening in NASCAR, Indy Car, and other racing series. There are on average about a dozen of us in attendance at these early morning sessions, and on occasion more than 15 around the table at Bob Evans on CR 466.

While the composition of our loosely-knit group has evolved over the years, one factor has been a constant for us...the special attention we receive from our favorite Bob Evans associate, Marybeth Oats. Each year we've awarded Marybeth a token of our appreciation and this year we upped the ante, so to speak, with a die cast replica of a vintage Bob Evans delivery van. Check out the absolute joy in Marybeth's eyes as she savors the truck!



Your Pit Crew

Jerry Conkle, President/Crew Chief (750-1185)
 Wendy Touchette, Vice President (303-9734)
 Silky Meegan, Corresponding Secretary (259-2029)
 Mike Anderson, Webmaster (217-714-2245)
 Gerry Greim, Recording Secretary (215-630-1402)
 Tom Horrmann, Treasurer/Official Photographer (430-0195)
 Darren Ivey, Special Events Coordinator (552-1977)
 Bob & Camille Sherman, Membership Coordinators (751-1771)
 Wayne Nolan, Member at Large (750-9082)
 John Angiolo, Member at Large (414-305-8094)
 Mike Touchette, Member at Large (603-5077)
 Syd and Nancy Baker, Hospitality Coordinators (750-2126)
 Gerry Hafer, Immediate Past President/Newsletter (396-9961)
 Glen Carter, Past President (874-8152)

Nominations for Club Officers Now Being Sought

As is the case every year at this time, your Pit Crew is looking forward to another great year, and we're also on the lookout for interested members to contribute to the planning and operation of our organization. 2016, as you know, marks our tenth year, and we're looking forward to the future that is only limited by the imagination, creativity, and energy of a dedicated team...that's where you come in!

Give some thought to stepping to the plate and taking advantage of the opportunities being on our Pit Crew can offer. You've seen what we can do as a group, and you probably have a few thoughts and ideas on how to raise our bar even higher in the years ahead. Now's the time to jump in and lend your talents to what has become one of the premier groups here in The Villages, and one that has received critical acclaim from many quarters of the motorsports world.

All positions are open for consideration, from President/Crew Chief to Members-at-Large. And this includes the position of Newsletter Editor...you'll notice that this current issue is the 100th in our history, so this would be a great milestone for some new editorial thoughts to grab hold of this club medium.

We'll talk more about this in the months ahead, but go ahead and start giving it some thought.



Conkle's Corner...

OK...I've now had the opportunity to experience the Snowball Derby, and I can say without reservation that it was all I expected...even more than I anticipated. All of us were so impressed we even made hotel reservations for the 2016 edition. Special thanks to Lou Palmer for handling the weather arrangements for the Sunday race...66 degrees and sunny!



The 2016 NASCAR season will be on us before we know it, as will the local racing scene. We're all kind of holding our breath to see what happens at our local track (Citrus County Speedway), so keep your fingers crossed.

Now, for the lighter side...

It was raining hard and a big puddle had formed in front of the little Irish pub. An old man stood beside the puddle holding a stick with a string on the end and jiggled it up and down in the water.

A curious gentleman asked what he was doing. "Fishing," replied the old man. "Poor old bugger," thought the gentleman, so he invited the old man to have a drink in the pub. Feeling he should start some conversation while they were sipping their whiskey, the gentleman asked, "And how many have you caught today?"

"You're the eighth."

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