

Michigan Teen Is Junior Drag-Racing Protege

HOLLAND, Mich. (AP) — Kerrie Smith is driven to drive fast.

A year ago, as a 15-year-old, Smith was one point away from winning a championship in Lane Bracket racing for Junior Dragsters at 131 Motorsports Park.

She lost her last race last season to her best friend, Trevor Wilson, but that's not going to happen this season. With four races remaining, Smith is 90 points ahead of second-place Taylor Green.

"Well I can (be caught), but only if (Green) wins all of the next four races and I lose every one in the first round," the Holland High School junior said.

It's that kind of confidence that has moved her to the top of the heap in the 7.90 Class of Junior Dragsters. She has two weekend wins so far this season — May 1 and July 31.

Smith said it is not a "Top Gun" need for speed motive that drives her.

"I like meeting a lot of new people and traveling and getting the experience that a lot of people don't get," she said.

This all began about five years ago, almost by accident.

"When I was in sixth grade, I started in a welding program at the tech center," Smith said. "My dad's friend welds and that's kind of what got me interested in welding. I went to his house and he had his dragster there and I saw it and I was like, 'Whoa, I've never seen anything like that.' They asked me if I wanted them to build me a car and I said 'Sure!' and that's how it all started."

Smith can continue racing junior dragsters in the 7.90 Class until she's 18. The 7.90 dragsters have engines modified so the cars do not cover the quarter mile faster than 7.90 seconds with top speeds somewhere between 80 and 84 mph.

With her increased interest in drag racing, Smith said she had to give up playing volleyball at Holland, though she can still try out and play soccer in the spring.

"Volleyball starts in mid-summer and the way my racing schedule goes I wouldn't

be able to do both," she said. "We have the next two weekends off, but we race pretty much every weekend."

As a girl driving a fast car, Smith said she gets different reactions from people when she gets ready to race.

"Most people are surprised when they see me," she said. "Most girls who see me are like, 'You go, girl' but most guys are like, 'Whoa, that's weird.'" Either way, they seem to not have a problem losing to Smith.

Her dragster, which boasts a bright pink and purple color scheme along with a likeness of the Pink Panther on the side, is a familiar sight at the Martin-area track.

It's also a bit of a tribute for a special person, Smith said.

"My uncle Eddie (Parish) died from Agent Orange cancer, and I really looked up to him. He really liked the Pink Panther so that's why I did that," she said. "He wasn't really that into getting me started, but everybody has a special paint scheme for their car. I decided the Pink Panther should be my

thing."

The racing also has tightened up family ties in the Smith home.

Her dad, Doug, is pretty much her pit crew and mom, Amanda, is her No. 1 fan.

"She and her dad never spent this much time together until the racing started," Amanda said. "At first I was seriously concerned until she went to drag racing school, but I'm a little more relieved now."

"It's not bad, and she does a good job handling things. When she gets into trouble, she knows what to do."

Kerrie also knows what she wants to do.

"I look up to (drag racing veterans) Shirley Muldowney and Ashley Force, for sure," she said. "I'd like to go a lot further. At the end of this year I'd like to get my top dragster license (because) you can only drive Junior Dragsters until you're 18."

"It's still bracket racing, but it's faster than the 7.90s. It's not Top Fuel Dragsters, but they'll still run close to 200 mph."

LTU Students Host 'Friendly' Race Car Competition

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McInally is excited about the prospects of EV racing. "The electric drive has a big advantage over the internal combustion engine. It has all kinds of torque right off the line," said McInally. "They can get up to speed really quick."

McInally said technology is moving quickly to get EV transmissions up to par with those in traditional powertrains.

Hanson said automotive engineering is still appealing to students and the racing competition is an important activity to students wanting to enter the industry.

"We are told almost every time we have a professional ride here that there's a demand for engineers, especially

in automotive, especially hybrid automotive and the key thing they look for out of college is some sort of SAE competition," said Hanson.

Wafa Bunney, an IT manager at Ford Motor Co., attended the event along with fellow Ford employees.

"We're here to share the celebration for students and our good relationship with Lawrence," said Bunney. "We will be back on campus recruiting, as well."

Ford had its soon-to-be-launched Fiesta on display.

Besides enhancing their resumes, Hanson said racing is important for engineering students to transition into actual engineers.

"You can learn the classroom stuff all day long, but un-



PHOTO: CHRISTINE SNYDER

Lawrence Tech holds a friendly competition between engineering universities for an end of racing season, start of school event.

til you know how to actually apply it, or teach somebody else how to do it on an actual vehicle . . . until they actually come out and get on a vehicle,

design a model, bolt the parts together, all they can say is they learned it in a classroom," said Hanson. "It completes the puzzle."

College Team Eyes New EV Land Speed Record

By PAUL FOY
Associated Press Writer

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — A team of Ohio State University students that set out to build the fastest electric car on the planet is heading home with a broken clutch and a big grin.

The Buckeye Bullet was clocked on Utah's Bonneville Salt Flats at speeds averaging 307 mph, which could set a new record if it is verified by the governing body of motorsports. The old record for an electric car was 246 mph.

"We've been at this for 16 years now and have our newest lithium-ion powered vehicle out," team manager David Cooke said by cell phone from the salt flats, about 100 miles west of Salt

Lake City. "Our vehicle was capable of going much faster."

The effort to reach higher speeds ended after three runs, when a clutch that connects the powerful motor to a gearbox ripped apart. The team tried to install a new clutch overnight but couldn't get the old one off. Test runs started later at slower speeds.

"Now its time to pack up our pits and head back to Ohio!" the Buckeye Bullet team said last week on its blog.

The car was designed by Ohio State's Center for Automotive Research, which is refining technology for electric cars of the future.

"They have just kicked the

butt of every car company in the world," said Louise Ann Moeth, an observer who has written books on racing history at Utah's vast salt flats.

It wasn't hard to beat an 11-year-old electric speed record with improvements in battery technology. The Buckeye Bullet used nearly 1,600 compact lithium-ion batteries, the kind that power laptops.

The record might have been broken years earlier, but electric cars are an obscure category in auto racing and few are interested in developing a battery-powered streamliner when piston-driven cars go much faster, said Dave Petrali, chief steward for U.S. Auto Club and a timer for the international motorsports body, the Federation

Internationale de L'Automobile.

"It takes a lot of power and a huge battery pack" for an electric car to attain high speeds, he said.

It could take a few weeks for the FIA to ratify the Buckeye Bullet's record. But there was no doubt it broke the previous record, set in 1999 by Pat Rummerfield, who conceded defeat and congratulated the Buckeye team, Petrali said.

A professional driver drove the Buckeye Bullet on runs Monday and Tuesday of race week in late-August. Track sensors measured the vehicle's speed. The fastest run at 307.905 mph last week was an average of back-and-forth runs.

Consumers Still Gun-Shy About Retail Spending

By Martin Crutsinger,
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON — Americans are spending a little more this summer, but hardly enough to rejuvenate the weakening economy.

What is needed is a bigger boost in salaries and more jobs. Economists don't see either coming this year, which is why the economy is likely to limp along.

Still, modest gains in spending were a welcome sign after a string of economic reports last week raised fears of the country slipping back into a recession.

"The consumer hasn't taken the economy back into recession," said Stuart Hoffman, chief economist at PNC Financial Services Group. "The consumer is still moving forward but they are doing it at a very modest pace."

Consumer spending rose 0.4 percent in July, with much of the strength coming from increased demand for autos, the Commerce Department reported Monday. It was the best showing since March, but it followed three lackluster months when spending was essentially flat.

Americans did earn a little more in July after seeing their incomes unchanged in June. Still, the 0.2 percent increase was mostly the result of small wage and salary gains that fell far behind increases seen in more robust economic re-

coveries, economists said. And some of the gains came from a jump in Social Security payments.

Without job growth, consumers are not expected to spend much more. But the economy is growing too slowly to support sustained hiring and companies are waiting to see more demand from consumers. That has left the economy stuck in limbo.

Last week the government reported that the economy grew at an anemic 1.6 percent rate in the April-to-June quarter and sales of previously occupied homes fell last month to the lowest level in 15 years. A private-sector report also noted that Americans bought new homes at the weakest pace in nearly half a century.

Also last week, President Barack Obama acknowledged the fragile economy while imploring Congress to pass a small business aid package when it returns next month from its summer break.

He mentioned extending Bush tax cuts due to expire this year for households making under \$250,000 a year, upping the nation's investment in clean energy, rebuilding more roads and highways and tax cuts designed to keep jobs in the U.S.

"My economic team is hard at work identifying additional measures that could make a difference in both promoting growth and hiring in the

short term and increasing our economy's competitiveness in the long term," he said.

Paul Dales at Capital Economics said the economy is likely to remain in a slow-growth rut for several years. He said economic growth is likely to average around 2 percent for the rest of this year and through all of 2011 and 2012 as well. That's far below the rates needed to drive the 9.5 percent unemployment rate lower.

It takes stronger growth — around 5 percent for a full year — to drive down the unemployment rate by 1 percentage point.

"This is a pretty weak recovery coming out of a recession that was deeper and more painful than most downturns," Dales said. "That means the unemployment rate is likely to remain stuck around 9.5 percent this year and it won't fall below 9 percent for a number of years."

One area that has grown since the recession is the personal savings rate. While it slowed to 5.9 percent of after-tax income in July, it is still nearly three times higher than it was before the recession. Economists had long worried about low savings in the United States. But now they fear households have become too frugal and that is holding back consumer spending.

Economists had expected a rebound in spending for July.

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Studies Triple Efficiency Of U.S. Vehicles by 2035

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in a gearhead world attuned to nuances of power performance. DeCicco identifies emerging trends for what he dubs "efficiency compatible" design strategies, enticing buyers away from brute force and toward smart technologies, intelligent safety features and svelte styling. Amenities like Bluetooth hooks, communication bandwidth and other information technology enhance customer value with minimal demands on power.

The report develops new interpretations of technology cost estimates that better depict the benefits of ongoing innovation while acknowledging the limits of how much consumers can spend. The analysis reflects the three-way trade-off among efficiency, performance and cost that the car market is likely to face in the years ahead.

"The fleet I've modeled for 2025 does not give up any of the performance and creature comforts consumers already enjoy," he said. "You don't have to go back to being Fred

Flintstone, but you will see lower fuel costs instead of ever more mass and muscle."

DeCicco teaches courses in sustainable energy and transportation energy policy and researches solutions to transportation energy and climate problems. Before returning to academia, he was the green world's top vehicle technology expert, most recently as senior fellow for automotive strategies at the Environmental Defense Fund.

DeCicco's earlier studies of auto efficiency were influential in building the policy foundation for major policy changes, including recent updates to Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards. He also pioneered environmental rating methodologies for motor vehicles as father of ACEEE's Green Book and designer of the Yahoo! Autos Green Ratings.

The University of Michigan in Ann Arbor has a close working relationship with the global auto industry and often works on complex problems such as this in association with local and global participants.

General Dynamics Exec Named an LTU Trustee

General Dynamics Land Systems President Mark Roualethas been named to the Board of Trustees at Lawrence Technological University in Southfield.

His appointment was announced by Lewis Walker, president of the 4,500-student independent university.

Trustees at Lawrence Tech establish strategic direction, help formulate and approve major institutional policies, and hire the University's executive team. They serve without compensation.

Roualet has been president of General Dynamics Land Systems and vice president of General Dynamics Corp. since 2008.

He joined General Dynamics Land Systems' predecessor corporate entity, Chrysler Defense, Inc., back in 1981 as a quality engineer. He progressed through positions of increasing responsibility over a 29-year leadership career.

Prior to his current position, Roualet was Land Systems chief operating officer responsible for all ground combat systems, including



Mark Roualet

main battle tanks, amphibious vehicles, combat and tactical wheeled vehicles, robotics systems and operations in Canada.

He was recognized by the National Defense Industrial Assn. (NDIA) with its coveted Silver Star award in 2010. Roualet has a bachelor's degree in business administration from Michigan Technological University and an MBA from the University of Dayton.

He lives in Bloomfield Hills.

Mustang Favored in Test

The Ford Mustang earned a Very Good road test score and otherwise outscored the Chevrolet Camaro, which earned a Good score, in a face-off between V6 versions of the two vehicles in Consumer Reports' October issue.

In last year's CR face-off between V8 versions of these two iconic muscle cars, the Mustang also outscored the Camaro — in spite of being an older design.

Opting for a V6 engine did not overly dilute the fun factor in driving the Mustang, but it did for the Camaro.

The Ford's new V6 engine is not only more refined than the Camaro's, the magazine's testing says, but it delivered stronger acceleration and better fuel economy.

The Camaro provides decent acceleration, but it's not as readily available. The car

rides well enough but it's almost 300 pounds heavier than the Mustang.

"The Mustang is more agile and enjoyable car to drive of the two," said David Champion, senior director of Consumer Reports' Auto Test Center in East Haddam, Connecticut.

Prices for the vehicles were \$28,660 for the Mustang and \$28,195 for the Camaro.

The Mustang corners well, with good steering and little body lean. The Ford Mustang V6 Premium is powered by a 305-h.p., 3.7-liter V6 engine that is quick and gets 24 mpg overall in CR's own fuel economy tests. The six-speed manual transmission shifts crisply and the braking is very good, according to the magazine's test drivers.

They said the interior is well-finished and the dashboard has a cool retro look.