

Chevy Race Driver Takes A Spin on Local Track

Story and photo by Jennifer Knightstep

During a public appearance at Kart 2 Kart in Sterling Heights, we asked NASCAR Sprint Cup Series Driver Ryan Newman, driver of the #39 Chevrolet, how he thought his skills on the race track would translate to the go-kart track.

He replied with a grin, "I'm not worried." Turns out, he didn't have to worry; he won every race handily, lapping his competition to loud applause but little surprise. His competition, a group of 13 soldiers in the U.S. Army, was delighted to be beat by their favorite driver in the good-natured race.

The Army is Newman's sponsor with the Stewart-Haas Racing Team, so the briefing room at Kart 2 Kart was packed with young men in fatigues and camouflage, all eager to take their place on

the track against Newman, and then pose for photos with him.

Of his sponsorship, Newman said, "I'm proud to be sponsored by the U.S. Army. Their support means a lot to me, and it means a lot that I can be here with these guys today."

"I was in sixth place overall today, until Ryan Newman got out there," said Staff Sergeant Harold Montague, comparing an after-race print-out with another soldier. "I think we all did pretty good, considering." Explaining his success on the go-kart track to reporters, Newman said, "I started my motorsports career at four-and-a-half years old, racing go-karts. My parents were very supportive, and that's where it all began for me."

Aside from the action on the go-kart track, Newman also discussed his excitement about being back in Michigan, where



Chevy NASCAR driver Ryan Newman, lead kart, takes a sprint at the Kart 2 Kart racing complex in Sterling Heights.

he was set to take to the pavement at the Michigan International Speedway on Father's Day, June 17, for the Quicken

Loans 400. Newman currently holds the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series pole record at MIS, set in June 2005 at 194.232 mph.

"Oh, I definitely think the pole speed will be broken in June . . . by me," Newman said. "I always look forward to

coming back to Michigan." The local auto industry rents the Kart 2 Kart track occasionally for events like this.



From left are Dawn Collins (marketing), Lloyd E. Brown (president) and Shawn Morrissey (Gov't. Services) of Waltonen.

Waltonen Gains as Warren Defense Contractor

by Gerald Scott

One of the prevailing trends for auto suppliers in metro Detroit, buffeted hard by the harsh economic climate of the past five years, is finding refuge in defense contracting.

The latest example of an auto supplier sustaining itself with added defense work is Waltonen Engineering in Warren, which was one of the original engineering suppliers to the GM Tech Center in Warren dating back to 1957.

Of late, we caught up with President Lloyd E. Brown and Shawn Morrissey, executive director, Business Development - Governmental Services, at the recent military truck show at the Macomb College fieldhouse in Warren.

There, Waltonen had a recruiting booth along with 30 other major military suppliers attending the busy show.

Brown talked about Waltonen's historical offerings in the auto business now being supplemented by its recent

defense contract work.

"The company's roots, 1957, was automotive - GM was our first customer. About 15 to 17 years ago, we ventured into the defense space and supported the prime contractors - but since then we're a prime to the U.S. Army/TARDEC.

"We have direct contracts with the United States Air Force, working on the A10s (jets), and then we support NHTSA.

"What's interesting is that

some of the tools and techniques that we use are similar, irrespective of the industry. We have a huge suite of digital manufacturing tools and we can apply those, basically, to any product.

"But there are differences - because each customer has their specific standards, (but) that's why you hire an engineering company - you're looking for the expertise . . . and then we adapt their standards into our product deliverable."

Cruise-Ins Starting Up at Eateries Around the Tech Center Area

Story and photo by Gerald Scott

Warm weather is here and local car cruise season is in full gear, no real pun intended.

Pampa Lanes held its kick-off summer cruise earlier this month for the start of a three-month season for the popular bowling alley and restaurant on Van Dyke Ave. in Warren.

And Lime Light across from the GM Tech Center has an ongoing five-month season and has been hosting Tuesday night cruises for weeks now.

Then there is Applebee's at 12 Mile and Van Dyke, which hosts a larger Thursday evening cruise that has been drawing 80 cars or more, local cruisers say.

A visit to both Lime Light and Pampa Lanes revealed smaller but hearty car shows that draw the several dozens of cars from about 3 to 8 p.m.

For that matter, if you want to take the temperature of the local car cruise culture, just check in with Rock Bottom Bob, the DJ at Lime Light.

"Our show isn't the biggest, but we like to think we have the most fun," Bob said.

"Actually, the trend is that all of the (restaurant) cruises

have smaller crowds except that now more eateries are hosting them."

Indeed, if you look hard enough, across metro Detroit, you can find a restaurant cruise to anchor every night of the week, including Sundays.

At Lime Light, Don Gold of Hazel Park was there because he likes the friendly crowd and he likes to show off his 1984 Chevrolet Monte Carlo SS, whose unique color is kind of a calling card to draw visitors to his ride.

"It's called medium-blue-metallic," Gold said. "It was the only year they made that color for the Monte Carlo."

Perhaps only in the Detroit car cruise culture could you find a guy with the last name of "Gold" who bought a car largely for its blue metallic color. He bought the car in Lansing a few years ago but shows it off here in the Detroit area ever since.

Everybody has a car story and Gold's is that his dad was a car racer, back in the day.

"My dad raced cars - he had a car in the Daytona 500 and Benny Parsons drove for him," Gold recalls.

"Parsons' dad owned Met-

ropolitan Cab and he drove for my dad and won a lot of races."

Gold recalls the late Parsons driving a No. 98 Ford and they sometimes raced at Flat Rock, which was a staple on the race circuit back in the 1950s and 1960s (and still has Saturday night races today).

Finally, on the interior of Gold's Monte Carlo is one of those distinctive drive-in theater speakers from the 1960s.

Did Gold save it all these years as a keepsake of his youth?

"Actually, I got it off of eBay," he conceded.

Then, over at Pampa's, there was a reasonable crowd for first-night-of-summer cruising Tuesday, with everybody listening to the cover songs from the One Nite Stand band.

Standing tall in the parking lot at Pampa Lanes was Sterling Heights retiree Jerry Mallard, showing off his 1932 Ford.

"You know, I've had it since 1954 but have only driven it the last four years," said Mallard, who, by coincidence he said, has both of his sons



Cruisers at the Lime Light on Van Dyke Ave. across from the GM Tech Center.

working as engineers at GM - one at the Tech Center in Warren and the other at the Proving Ground in Milford.

Mallard is perhaps a true car guy - he moved from Nashville

to Detroit in 1953 and ran across that 1932 Ford sitting for sale in a gas station lot on Gratiot Ave. It cost only \$200 then so he bought it immediately.

Some five decades later, he

finally got around to fixing it up and driving it around to the many local Macomb County car cruises.

The car is like his automotive keepsake, he said.

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