

BOBBY LABONTE

In His Own Words

As told to **Lew Boyd**

- *Born May 8, 1964, in Corpus Christi, Texas*
- *Popular, versatile, and unusually entrepreneurial, Labonte and his brother, Terry, are, with Kurt and Kyle Busch, the only brothers who have both won the NASCAR Cup Series championship. Bobby also won the NASCAR Busch Series Championship and IROC title, and is very much active today at age 58.*



By the time I was four-and-a-half, I was sitting in a quarter-midget. My dad would set up a track bordered by milk jugs filled with water. He'd push me off, and I'd make laps round and round until I fell asleep.

Dad had a background in racing, knew cars, and even promoted quarter-midget races in Corpus Christi on an old airfield. By this time my brother, Terry, seven years older, was already deep into racing. I remember there were *Hot Rod* and *Stock Car Racing* magazines all over the house.

It might seem that I was predetermined to race, but everyone would have been okay if that wasn't what I wanted to do. We have always had a great, supportive family. But I was smitten by racing big time—and, by the grace of God, good things happened for me.

Before long we were hustling from California to Alabama with the quarter-midgets, running against hundreds of kids. There were lots of trophies, but an especially big moment came in Colorado when they combined classes. I had to run with the older guys, and I was really anxious. That race turned out to be good for my self-esteem: I won, even though the win probably came because I was so light compared to the rest of the field (I was six or seven years old).

Soon I went into karts, hoping to move up the ladder however I could.

Another turning point came after Terry entered Winston Cup, and we moved to North Carolina in 1978. I was racing karts at local dirt tracks and began hanging out with Mike Swaim. He had a late model sportsman that Phil Parsons drove. I started working on the car and soon made myself the biggest nuisance in the Swaims' family life by hanging around the shop and helping the team.

Then I did something I shouldn't really have done with my level of experience. I persuaded Mike to let me take his car to Caraway Speedway. I borrowed a motor and tires, and managed to qualify in tenth, only to be spun out in the feature. But, I had put my toe in the big water instead of working my way up in mini stocks.

WehrsMachine.com



414-7-R



414D



608.486.4343

PARTS, TOOLS, & TECHNOLOGY TO HELP YOU WIN RACES!

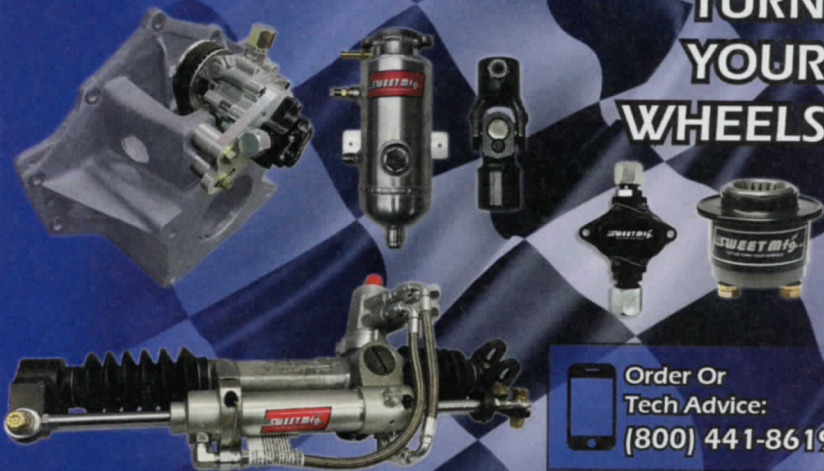


#WhehrsMachinery

WehrsMachine@gmail.com

SWEET Mfg. INC

LET US TURN YOUR WHEELS



Order Or
Tech Advice:
(800) 441-8619

Find Us On-Line:
WWW.SWEETMANUFACTURING.COM

Email Us:
SALES@SWEETMANUFACTURING.COM

CANTON RACING PRODUCTS

HIGH QUALITY
HIGH PERFORMANCE

CHEVY LS PARTS

OIL PANS, ADAPTERS
WATERNECKS & MORE



WWW.CANTONRACINGPRODUCTS.COM

203-481-9460



VOICE OF EXPERIENCE

I enjoy going fast. It came to me more naturally than I had anticipated. The bigger, faster tracks would be where I would have my most success.

From there, doors started opening. A lot of opportunities came through Terry, whom I really admired then and still admire today. We were close, and I was a fabricator on his cars at Hagan Racing.

I was always up for jumping on most any opportunity that came along. I'd just try to embrace it, thinking, "Hey, this is kinda different. Let's go figure it out."

In 1980, I ran the International Sedan Series, and in 1982, I ran my first Busch Series event. In 1987, I grabbed 12 wins at Caraway and the track title. But, in the background there were all kinds of tangents: taking a car to the Oxford 250 for Terry to run, and going to Unity, Maine, to run a mini stock, I think. And there was the time when my friends Kenny Wallace and Jeff Gordon talked me into running the Hoosier Dome indoor midgets. Warming up, I blew right by Sammy Swindell and promptly bounced off an infield tire marker, tearing off the left front. Then in the feature I was following Mel Kenyon, who flipped about eight times. Seeing that took about three-tenths of a second off my lap time!

By 1990 I formed my own Busch team, and the next season we were the Busch Series champions. Honestly, I think that's when I was at my best as a competitor. They were my cars, I worked on them, and I knew them inside and out.

You'd think with all that short-track experience, that type of racing would be my forte. But, curiously, by the time I first went to Charlotte, I thought "Okay, *this* is pretty cool." I enjoy going fast. It came to me more naturally than I had anticipated. The bigger, faster tracks would be where I would have my most success.

So in 1995, when I joined Joe Gibbs Racing in the Interstate [Batteries] car, it was not like taking Mike Swaim's car to Caraway. I was ready. By then I had a lot of experience.

Those 10 years with Gibbs were the best car-owner relationship I ever had. Our first win came at Charlotte's World 600 in 1995. But the last race of the next year in 1996 at Atlanta was one of the most emotional and memorable moments of my career. I won the race while Terry secured the NASCAR Winston Cup championship, and we took a victory lap together.

Some of the guys there knew Earl Pearson Jr, and so I went to the Talladega Dirt Track to see him run. Earl and I became friends, and I bought his late model team. Later, with Terry and Justin Labonte, we started Longhorn Chassis to build dirt late model chassis.

In 2000, it was our turn at Gibbs to win the Cup championship. After the season, I was looking at some of my photos and wondered, "Who's that big fella?" and it was me. At 36, I'd become more aware of my health, especially since our mom had recently needed a stent. A brother-in-law suggested I get a bike. In the beginning, I figured I'd go on a 15-mile ride one day and then do something else. But I never stopped cycling.

While at Gibbs, I was open to interesting opportunities. Some of the guys there knew Earl Pearson Jr, and so I went to the Talladega Dirt Track to see him run. Earl and I became friends, and I bought his late model team. Later, with Terry and Justin Labonte, we started Longhorn Chassis to build dirt late model chassis. We ran the Lucas Oil schedule for years. I drove some there at Talladega, at the Prelude and the Dream at Eldora. But this type of racing was not really my cup of tea as a driver. As much as I loved dirt late models, I'd put up one good lap and then five bad ones!

Are
Our
Specialty!

5865
edway.com

North
esboro
vival



project street stock
y

ge 96

Balough,
Ernie
en.



KRC Power Steering

RIP
POWER

HAVE A
WEBSITE
SELL FI
SCAN THE

Quo

"NASC
their vic
on the

ADHESIVE-BACKED HEAT BARRIER

MADE IN
USA

**BEST
SELLER**

COOL IT.
Thermo Tec

PROTECTS FROM
RADIANT HEAT UP TO **2000°**

Enter code **SPDWY20** to receive 20% off your order at ThermoTec.com

(800) 274-8437 www.ThermoTec.com

Available at:



VOICE OF EXPERIENCE

While driving for Richard Petty Motorsports in 2006, I became interested in sponsorship marketing and public relations. I wondered why we couldn't provide motorsports marketing services ourselves to team partners like General Mills and Smithfield. As a result, I started a marketing agency called Breaking Limits to do just that. Some years later, I met my future bride, Kristin. No wonder it clicked. She's not only an accomplished bicycle racer, but a Duke MBA who owned a marketing company. We merged it into Breaking Limits—and this comes to you today from Indianapolis, where we are handling activation for our clients during the Indy 500.

That same year, in 2006, I shared a car with Terry, Jan Magnussen, and Bryan Herta at the 24 Hours of Daytona. I had no idea how a GT Prototype worked, but Bryan Herta was wonderful to me. From that experience, I came to like road racing.

I kept right on going after Gibbs and Petty, driving for Hall of Fame Racing, TRG, Robby Gordon, and others, running in 704 consecutive Cup events until 2016.

Fast forward to 2017, Kristin and I had a very different opportunity—to go to Europe and race in the NASCAR Whelen Euro Series for stock chassis-type late model cars in the UK, Germany, England, Italy, Spain, and Belgium on amazing and historic road-racing facilities like Brands Hatch. The language barrier was challenging at times, but the people we met were as amazing as the race tracks.

Today Kristin is 100 percent leading Breaking Limits. At 58, I'm still racing, most recently with SRX and also Northeastern asphalt modifieds. I've still got that bug—or should I say drug? I've been on the biggest stage, in front of 150,000 fans at the Daytona 500, for example, or in front of a packed Indianapolis Motor Speedway for the Brickyard, but I had that same feeling at the half-mile Stafford Motor Speedway in April in the Spring Sizzler. Racing like we are isn't easy. We've got a pickup and a small trailer and are learning modifieds as fast as we can.

I am determined to beat Matt Hirschman and Jimmy Blewett. 🏆

SHR III

FLEX

THE NEXT EVOLUTION OF HEAD AND NECK RESTRAINTS

- Certified to SFI 38.1
- High strength carbon reinforced materials
- SlipStop belt retention system
- Angle Independent articulating low collar
- Flexible form fitting lower legs
- Belt retention winglets



TWO RETAIL LOCATIONS

HMS
motorsport

119 BEVAN DR, MOORESVILLE, NC 28115
100 FERN CROFT RD #208, DANVERS, MA 01923
HMSMOTORSPORT.COM 888-467-3269 • 978-774-1615