



BOBBY SANTOS III

In His Own Words

BRUCE A. BENNETT

- Born October 3, 1985, in Franklin, Massachusetts
- At 36, unquestionably one of the country's finest short-track racers. The popular and versatile full-timer has registered victories in midgets, supermodifieds, sprint cars, Silver Crown, and Tour modifieds on tracks across the country.

As told to **Lew Boyd**

My path was pre-paved. My granddad was a modified driver back in New England, my dad ran late models—and all of us kids, my sisters and me—were into quarter-midgets.

I jumped in at just five in 1990. We all made great friends racing that still last today, and I did well. It didn't take long to learn that I wanted to do this for the rest of my life. However, after nine seasons, quarter-midgets were getting a little old.

My dad called around to see what tracks would allow a 13-year-old like me to compete. He might have fibbed a bit saying I was 14. Bob Weber up at Star Speedway in New Hampshire said to come up for a tryout. So, Dad built a 350 supermodified. Up we went, hoping I'd be good to go.

I was super excited. Honestly, I'd gained confidence and felt capable of pulling it off. The speed really didn't bother me—driving wasn't the hard part. It was dealing with the personalities of the adults and learning how they raced. They were no longer just friends.

That decision to run Star in a super set a direction in my career. Joey Logano left those New England quarter-midgets a little after I did and, going into late models, his direction was completely different.

WehrsMachine.com



414-7-R



414D



608.486.4343

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



#billettrackera

WehrsMachine@gmail.com

AERO

RACE WHEELS

NEW FLORESCENT COLOR CHROME WHEELS

NEW COLORS!



Flo Orange



Flo Pink



Flo Yellow

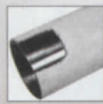
888-895-2376 | www.aeroracewheels.com

CUT HEAT FROM YOUR EXHAUST SYSTEM

Our White Lightning™ is a tough, durable ceramic thermal barrier coating. This thick white coating reduces radiated heat by up to 50%. Lower your engine compartment and cockpit heat for more racing comfort. It is easier to work next to your hot exhaust pipes with White Lightning. White Lightning is ugly and looks like rough sandpaper. It looks worse with use but it is an effective thermal barrier for all race engines. Captured radiated heat increases exhaust velocity and improves scavenging which may add power. Let us coat your headers, manifolds, turbo housings, down pipes and other exhaust parts. This is the coating when you want results not cosmetics. \$300 to \$450 for most headers depending on engine.



Ugly thick .015+/- coating



SWAIN
TECH COATINGS

585-889-2790
www.swaintech.com
Scottsville, NY 14546



By 2006, I was busy, mostly with midgets, all over the country. We won the most shows on the USAC midget tour, including the Night Before the 500 in Bob East's car.

I was winning, and, I guess because I was so young, other rides came along in midgets and open-wheel modifieds. Another early ride was Dave Lair's big block super at Oswego. I remember thinking, "Holy crap, is this thing ever fast!" But I got used to it, and we ran in the top ten. That lit a fire in me I've not extinguished yet. I really want to win the Oswego Classic!

In 2004 I graduated from high school, ready for racing full time. Dad scraped together a sprinter to celebrate. I became really interested in and focused on prepping the cars. I never had a driver coach, but my dad did teach me his style. I also learned a lot from the Seymour family in their midgets and then Silver Crown cars, and later from the Garbarinos in their No. 4 Tour modifieds.

By 2006, I was busy, mostly with midgets, all over the country. We won the most shows on the USAC midget tour, including the Night Before the 500 in Bob East's car. There was also quite a day at Iowa Speedway. Ryan Newman had previously set the closed-course speed record for midgets on the mile at Colorado's Pikes Peak, but I beat it on that 7/8th. I was so young then. I just got in the car, took off, and turned 147 mph. Surprisingly, I didn't feel the sensation of speed on that wide pavement. But in later years, I crashed there and sure was glad I hadn't wrecked in that midget.

To me, racing is racing, no matter the division, it's all about competing. But, by 18, I had homed in on midgets and sprinters as my favorite race cars. Everyone told me, though, that I might not be able to make

a living from them. That's why, in 2006, I was all ears when Bill Davis called about running his ARCA car.

We got a couple of poles and top-fives, and, in 2007, I made some starts in Riley D'Hont's Busch car. But all said and done, I was just plain too late to the superspeedway party. That crazy time of development-driver stuff had nose-dived with the economy, so it was back to what I loved. I'd really never left.

About then I joined up with Rick Gerhardt from California, teamed with Billy Wease. It was fun, especially when later I married Billy's sister Kristy.

There was a lot of travel from Franklin, Massachusetts—like going to Irwindale, California, on Thanksgiving to win the Turkey Night Grand Prix. There were 60 fast cars, and I watched the B-main from the stands, thinking "Wow!" But I was determined because I felt I should have won it before—and Irwindale is my favorite short track.

With my open-wheel concentration, it made sense to move to Indiana, doubly because that's where Kristy's from. But that didn't mean I'd quit those East Coast modifieds. They pay well, and I call them half-way between open-wheelers and full-bodied stock cars. I took the 2010 NASCAR Modified title with Bob Garbarino, Martinsville clock and all. I didn't realize how big that was then, but I do now.

By 2010, things had taken a set. I opened a shop and started preparing a lot of cars. I'm now in my eighth season with Dick Fieler's DJ Racing, and it's been great. Without Cup, I never thought racing would bring me where I am—not rich, but supporting my family with my passion.

A memorable moment came in 2020 when Dick Fieler and I won the Little 500. It's so overwhelming you have to prepare for it over several tries, technically, physically, and mentally. I am spending a lot of phone time with Matt Seymour, who plans to run it this year, about just how tough it really is.

All the way I've been a pavement guy. I enjoyed trying some dirt racing in New England and some Silver Crown starts.

VOICE OF EXPERIENCE

I take pride in bringing some of the best prepared cars, and I'd say the results show.

But it seemed that opportunities always conflicted with my schedule. For example, Eldora's Triple Crown conflicts with the modifieds running at Loudon, New Hampshire, which is my chance to come East to see my family. Also, honestly, I don't want to start over, walking away from what experience I've gained on asphalt.

Last year I got a neat one-off gig to run the SRX race at Lucas Oil Raceway. I didn't know anything about those cars, but, hearing that they were all equal, I was ready. I ran fifth, but, as always, things I could have done better still run through my mind.

I had a surprise when I turned 30. My metabolism slowed, and I realized you need to be as conscious of your body as your car. Forever I'd been the skinny kid, never working out, eating anything. Suddenly I ballooned to 220 pounds, too heavy to be racing against today's 150-pound kids. So I went after it. I work out each night after leaving the shop and love it. It calms me down. Things can get a little wild at home with our kids Julian and Jack!

I'm fortunate that things have worked out so well here in Indiana, thanks in large part to Dick Fielier. He pays me to maintain the cars, drive them, and I'm free to engage in my other racing activities. In return, my goal is to never work on the car at the track—just tinker with the setup and drive. I take pride in bringing some of the best prepared cars, and I'd say the results show.

All's good, but I'd love to do Indy. With my skill set as a driver, I believe I could do it. I've never had that opportunity, and I understand that I'm 30 now so it might never happen.

But it's still out there.... 🍷

HEADER MANIFOLD BLANKET

COOL IT. Thermo Tec

MADE IN USA

WITHSTANDS DIRECT HEAT TEMPS UP TO **1000°**
WITHSTANDS RADIANT HEAT TEMPS UP TO **2000°**

Enter code **SPDWY20** to receive 20% off your order at ThermoTec.com
(800) 274-8437 www.ThermoTec.com Available at: **NAPA** **SUMMIT** **JEGS**

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 FERNCROFT RD #208, DANVERS MA 01923
HMSMOTORSPORT.COM 888-467-3269 • 978-774-1615