

Chasing a Championship

Vernonia's Doug Davenport is Having a Winning Season On The Dirt Track

By Scott Laird

Doug Davenport, from Vernonia, is having a great year on the dirt track.

Racing in his Open Wheel, Modified Stock Car, Davenport, who



drives truck for Mike Pihl Logging at his day job, is tearing up the local Dirt Track circuit this season on the weekends. Davenport, in his number 8 car, is currently the points leader at River City Speedway in St. Helens, has won a few races at Sunset Speedway in Banks and has also been competing in Northwest National events this year.

Recently at two Northwest Modified Nationals, Davenport finished second at Gray's Harbor Raceway in Elma, WA.; at Cottage Grove Speedway Davenport finished sixth. "These are the fastest guys in the five western states and western Canada and the races draw about sixty or seventy cars," explains Davenport.

The Open Wheel Modified class is most often the featured event at small local dirt tracks. The races are fast paced

and exciting—with cars racing a very close quarters, at high speeds. "I think everybody should go and check it out at least once," says Davenport. "You put a bunch of guys out on a track at three inches apart and it gets pretty intense. And most of the time we're sideways or up on three wheels. It's pretty easy to get hooked on it."

The vehicle that Davenport races is basically a car with no fenders—it is almost fully fabricated with the front end of the frame coming from a stock car like a Chevelle or a Monte Carlo; everything else is fabricated for motor sports use only. The vehicles weigh about

2500 pounds with 650 horse power. "It weighs what your normal Honda car would but has five times the horse power," explains Davenport.

Davenport races on dirt tracks only—the track at River City and at the Banks Speedway are a quarter mile and are about 50 feet wide with speeds on these smaller, tighter, tracks (racers call them Bull Rings) reaching about sixty-five miles per hour. On the larger, half-mile tracks, speeds can reach up to 150 MPH.

In addition to racing at Gray's Harbor and Cottage Grove, Davenport has raced in Bakersfield, CA and Reno, NV. "We go all over, wherever the money is, and we race close to home for the local shows," says Davenport. He is planning on attending the "Dual in the Desert" at Las Vegas Motor Speedway

in November where he finished 40th last year out of 300 cars. "These are the fastest guys in our sport nationwide; everybody is either the fastest driver from their local track or some kind of a regional champion, they're the best at what we do," says Davenport. "I learned



a ton last year—what I was doing wrong and where I was doing it wrong and came back and spent the next few months doing research and studying."

Keeping up with new technology and equipment is a challenge in auto racing, as Davenport learned last year. He spent time and money updating his vehicle and says it has made a big difference in his performance this year. "I have fourteen starts and have eight wins, two second place finishes, finished fourth once, sixth once." He expects to have a serious shot at placing high in Las Vegas in November. "We have all the pieces in place this year," he says.

Davenport's good friend Fletcher Toffmire works as his crew. "We think a lot alike, work really well together

and we win a lot of races together," says Davenport about his partnership with Toffmire. He says his step sons, Tyler and Trevor, also help a lot in the shop and at the track.

A Vernonia native, Davenport grew up around racing and started out racing motorcycles as a kid. He won four amateur motocross championships before getting injured. He worked on stock cars for other people for several years before deciding he wanted to race himself and has been steadily improving over the last few years.

Davenport does all his own work on his vehicle, fabricating his own parts. He also supplements his racing program by doing work on vehicles for other drivers.

Davenport has continued to race this season at his home track in St. Helens after winning the first race of the season. "Since I started out with the points lead I went ahead and stayed over there and am racing for Championship points," says Davenport. "I need to have a championship—I won four championships racing bikes and I've been racing cars now for sixteen years and I haven't won a championship yet. I've won lots of races all over the west, but I don't really have anything to show for it. I would really like to win a championship—have some kind of accomplishment to show for what we've done."

Davenport's last race of the season at River City Speedway will be September 17th.

CAT Builds Energy Efficient Home in Vernonia

By Jill Hult

At an open house in Vernonia on August 31, 2011, Community Action Team, Inc. debuted one of their latest building projects: A home built and equipped with some of the latest energy efficient technologies. The idea to build such a home was born at a company retreat with a two year goal set to accomplish the task. This year they got the opportunity when building a home for the Mark and Deanna Brown family who agreed to let Community Action Team experiment with the idea.

Community Action Team specializes in self-help, affordable housing and typically works with USDA loans that adjust interest rates based on the income of the homeowners. Casey Mitchell with Community Action Team

(CAT) thanked the Brown family for trusting CAT to do a bit of experimenting with the home. He also thanked the Mennonites who have been assisting Vernonia rebuild since the December 03, 2007 flood. He said, "Without their labor, we couldn't have gotten here. A lot of the gear in the home is pretty expensive stuff and by supplementing with volunteer labor we were able to buy that equipment and still make it affordable."

Earth Advantage Institute, a not-for-profit organization based out of Portland, Oregon that works with the building industry to implement sustainable building practices, provided guidance to CAT to ensure the measures to build the home and equipment used within were cost effective for the homeowner. They also tested the indoor air quality of the home.



The Brown family with members of CAT in front of their new home.

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