

HEPPNER

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Local man realizes pit crew dreams

From Heppner High, to Indy Car race tracks



Thomas Gould at the race track -Contributed photo

By David Sykes

How does a young man from Heppner get to be member of the AJ Foyt Indy Car racing team pit crew, and in only two years? Hard work and persistence, or as Thomas Gould puts it, "If you want something bad enough, don't ever give up until you get it" And he certainly did not give up.

Gould graduated from Heppner High School in 2015, and along with his

diploma carried with him a deep-seated desire to be on a big-time racing team. "He told me when he was a junior he wanted to go to NASCAR Tech," (a training school for race car technicians) Thomas' dad John said when the two of them sat down with the Gazette-Times recently.

Thomas was back in town for a visit with friends and family, taking a break from racing. "He has always

wanted to do this. When he was a little boy he was putting together his sister's toys and calling them all race cars," John says with a smile. "He's always wanted to be involved with racing."

But to realize his dream, Thomas needed to gain training and experience, an endeavor he embarked on in August after graduation. Like many young people he went off to school, but this was not a regular state or community college, but NASCAR Tech, a school dedicated to race car training, and located in the heart of NASCAR country in Mooresville, North Carolina.

And to begin getting that needed experience, in addition to the class time, Gould managed in March 2016 to get on with a truck racing team. There he worked on the truck interiors such as safety updates, driver comfort and installing seats. It was a volunteer job without pay, but he was receiving the racing experience that he needed, if he ever wanted to get on with a team full time. Gould worked on the trucks until September of 2016 when he then joined a Super Late Model racing team. Working from 6 a.m. to 1 p.m. he was also still going to school from 1:15 until

7 p.m. in the evening. In November of 2016 Gould graduated from NASCAR Tech, and, because of his hard work, did it six months ahead of schedule.

Staying around North Carolina for a while Gould was only able to find volunteer work, which didn't help pay the bills, so he came back to Oregon, but not for long. While in North Carolina Gould had made contact with Larry Foyt, grandson to the legendary AJ Foyt, owner of the racing company. Being the persistent young man he is, and chasing his dream, Gould called Larry asking for a job interview, not just once ei-

ther. "I kept calling until he finally said yes," And so he left Oregon in the dead of winter, on Jan. 1 on his way to Texas for the interview. "The weather was terrible, we almost didn't make it over Cabbage Hill" (Highway 84 East of Pendleton and a notoriously bad pass in the winter). But down through Idaho he drove to Utah where there was more bad weather, and finally on to Waller, Texas, and the AJ Foyt racing headquarters. He wasn't given a job immediately, however, but was told the company was planning on forming a third

Heppner to lift burn ban

The burn ban for Heppner will be lifted on Sept. 27. Contact Heppner City Hall at 541-676-9618 for additional information.



Twenty-year-old Thomas Gould is a member of the AJ Foyt Racing team pit crew. Here he is (back to camera) on the "wand", which operates the jack, lifting the car up for the tire changers to do their work. -Contributed photo

Heppner celebrates homecoming



Heppner High School homecoming court: (L-R) Junior prince and princess: Keegan Gibbs and Maddison Combe; Senior prince and princess: Coby Dougherty and Reiah Waite, Senior Queen Morgan Correa and Senior King Wyatt Steagall, Senior princess and prince: Sophie Grant and Beau Wolters; Junior princess and prince: Jacee Currin and Hunter Nichols. First grade pennant bearers: Mikalie Duncan (not pictured Kord Dickenson) -Photo by Kirsti Cason

Ione Education Foundation holds dinner, auction



Ione Education Foundation held its 15th annual dinner and auction Saturday, Sept. 23. with Dustin Padberg serving as auctioneer. -Contributed Photo

The Heppner Gazette-Times wants to see pictures of your trophy animals from this hunting season. Stop by to have your picture taken, drop off photos, mail them to PO Box 337 in Heppner, email them to editor@rapidsolve.net or text cell phone photos to 541-980-6674.

G-T Trophy Corner



Above: Faith Fatter of Heppner bagged her first buck Sunday on Buttercreek out of Heppner. Faith took the three-point buck while hunting with her uncle Jim Healy under the mentored youth hunter program. Below: Diana Healy, 16, of Heppner also took her deer on Buttercreek Sunday. This is her fifth consecutive successful hunt and her largest take to date. -Contributed photos

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