

VAULT REPORT

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The Weekly Report from the



SK MODIFIED



Todd Ceravolo

TVMS Town
Fair Tire 100
Feature Winners

LATE MODEL



Bruce Thomas Jr

SPORTSMAN



Al Stone III

MINI STOCK



Phil Evans

TVMS 100



Les Hinckley

INSIDE THE VAULT

Rob Janovic Jr - Now & Then

By Bob Freeman

As each season of racing dawns, a fresh crop of wide-eyed rookies tries their hand at racing at the Speedbowl. Each with their own motivations, it seems especially true here at the Speedbowl that a connection with another driver fuels the desire to become the next Charlie Webster, Bob Potter, or Dennis Gada. But as fast as rookies come, many of them quickly vanish from the scene due to costs, time commitments, or simply an underestimation of the amount of talent it requires to be competitive. Who will last, let alone find a degree of success is largely a guessing game in these early stages.

Rob Janovic Jr. made his decision to tackle the tricky Speedbowl oval in 1986, a move sparked by an ongoing friendship with Mike Gada. Considering the Gada connection, one might think that Rob's first entry would have been a Ford Torino. But since there were no Torinos readily available and a better understanding of GM products, Rob instead opted to enter competition driving a former CJ Frye driven Chevelle he purchased from Artie Moran, Jr.

Perhaps the next important decision a driver/car owner can make is number selection. This can be as unique as the initial motivation itself to start racing. In Rob's case, he received a Dick Butkus #51 football jersey from his mom as a youngster. Dick is widely regarded as one the greatest linebackers of his generation playing college football at the University of Illinois and professionally for the Chicago Bears. In researching Dick Butkus' career, Rob's developed an affinity to the #51, which has adorned most of his creations during his tenure at the Speedbowl to this day.



The team of John Volpe and Rob Janovic Jr. formed VoJan Motorsports in 1987. Here John and Rob pose next to an early version of their current SK Modified.



Rob Janovic Jr.'s first Late Model ride: The Mac's Auto Truck and Marine Parts Chevelle. (Rene Dugas Photo)

Rob competed with his immaculate Chevelle, during the late-1980s and would learn his lessons well. In fact, for a brief period the team expanded to a three-car operation with Rob's brother Gary occasionally driving a back-up #35 for Rob with racing friend Scott Gregory painting his familiar #57 in a similar "Janovic" scheme. For Gary, his endeavors found him more successful working behind the scenes, while Scott Gregory continues to be active in racing with the All-Star Truck Series and the highly regarded Racing against Cancer program.

Rob would take a few years from racing during the early 1990's to further his education at the University of New Haven. Like many of us, the desire to see what's out there on a Saturday night besides racing was also a contributing factor at the time. Rob would return to racing in the Late-Model division during the mid-1990s in a division that had undergone substantial upgrades during the years he was absent. Without missing a beat, Janovic would earn his first career feature victory during the 1996 season – a season that would see him in victory lane a total of three times. Rob would win a total of 7 times in the late-model division and would begin a transition to his present day role as a driver in the SK Modified ranks during the 2000 campaign.

Ironically, Janovic's rookie season in the SK Modifieds was the only time he did not run his familiar #51, as it was registered to long-time owner Howard "Jiggs" Beetham and his legendary driver Bob Potter. A win in his rookie season cemented the decision to advance in divisions, but he would run both late-model and SK modified during the 2001 season, scoring his last feature win in the late-model division that season. In respecting the history of the #51 in the Modified division, Janovic would make the request from Beetham to begin utilizing the #51 beginning with the 2001 season.



Rob along side his #51 Late Model which he scored his last division win during the 2001 season (photo courtesy of Vojan Motorsports)



Rob with a young Tyler Chadwick, Rob's Godson and now fellow SK Modified competitor. (photo courtesy of Vojan Motorsports)

Today, Rob forever finds himself engraved in the record books as the defending 2007 SK Modified Track Champion. A place that he prides himself being not only in the company of the great drivers of the past, but also along side his more contemporary and current rivals like Dennis Gada and Jeff Pearl. He has 17 SK Modified wins and tied with Ron Yuhas Jr, is seventh on the Speedbowl's all-time win list for the SK Modified division. This leads to a combined total of 24 feature wins between the Late Models and SK Modifieds during Janovic's career competing at the Waterford Speedbowl.

Rob has been hard at work establishing his own legacy at the Speedbowl. His godson is none other than Tyler Chadwick, a rising star within the SK Modified ranks. Regarding Tyler, it is now not an *if*, but *when* Tyler will make his way to victory lane in the SK Modified division. In fact, Tyler is actually ahead of Rob in the 2008 point standings.

And Rob can always be counted on to take part in any event as a good will ambassador for the track, especially for the betterment of children. These include regular participation in the Town of Waterford's Summer Reading Program – and most recently talking with Girl Scouts as part of Scout Night, are examples of this commitment. This exposure with young fans very well may be a contributing factor influencing the next generation of superstars here at the Speedbowl.

Rob's involvement at the Speedbowl has not been limited to on-track activities. Knowing Rob would be missing a couple of weeks of racing while waiting for an engine, and I would be missing a co-announcer during the same period, I invited Rob to spend an evening with me calling the races. Rob adapted quickly and received high praise in his abilities behind the microphone. His ability to share the driver's perspective as only another driver could possibly know made the show particularly enjoyable to all in attendance that evening. These days, you can keep up with Rob and the Vojan Motorsports team on the web at www.vojanmotorsports.com.



Always interested in spending time with the younger crowd, Rob shares a moment with a young fan at a Speedbowl Pit Party(photo courtesy of Vojan Motorsports)