



Ronnie Bond, the first of the Bond family to take to the dirt tracks, examines the track of Skyline Speedway in Stewart, Ohio on Saturday, October 10, 2009. Ronnie retired from racing in the 70's after a 20 year career. The family never kept track of his race wins or track championships but, throughout the racing community, Ronnie Bond is revered as one of the best. Ronnie and his wife Sarah are so engrained in the racing community, they even celebrated their 52nd wedding anniversary at Skyline. The speedway gave the couple a special plaque to commemorate their legacy and the occasion.

The Bonds of Racing

Three generations of the Bond family run the dirt tracks of Ohio and West Virginia.

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When Larry Bond was just a kid the late 1950's his mom and dad, Sarah and Ronnie, took him and his brother Andy to Ohio Valley Speedway near Parkersburg, W.Va. to see his first dirt race. As Larry and his father looked out at the cars sliding around the track, Ronnie Bond turned to his son and said, "I can do that." Those four words would change the family forever.

Later that week Ronnie disappeared into the family garage while the rest of the family was away and when they returned they found their family car had undergone a radical change. Ronnie had knocked out the windows and installed a roll cage and for the next two weeks the family had to hitch a ride from neighbors to get everywhere from work to the grocery store.

What seemed like an ill advised

and impulsive decision at the time defined the family from that point on. Ronnie quickly made a name for himself, winning feature races and track championships throughout the tracks in Southern Ohio and West Virginia. It wasn't long before Ronnie's sons began following their dad to the track every weekend.

"I grew up teething on a wrench," Andy Bond writes on his website.

By the time the boys were in high school their minds were made up.

"I knew I wanted to be a racecar driver," Larry said. All the kids we grew up with at the track, that's all we talked about.

Having worked on his father's pit crew for almost 20 years he knew the ins and outs of late model racing and when his father decided to retire in the 70's, Larry carried on the family tradition.

In the 30 years since he started racing Larry **Continued D2...**



Kyle Bond drives his mini-wedge around the track at Skyline Speedway in Stewart, Ohio. Kyle would blow a tire late in the race and finish third after running in the top two for the majority of the race. Kyle drives the "10" car just like his father and grandfather before him and hopes to move up to the modified series next year.



Trophies line the walls of Larry Bond's race garage at his home in Coolville, Ohio. Larry has recorded over 200 feature wins in his 30 years in racing and over 30 track championships, including one in the NASCAR Winston Dirt Racing Series.



Larry Bond races to the start/finish line in his heat race before the Harvest 50 at Skyline Speedway in Stewart, Ohio where he is the reigning track champion. Larry last won the Harvest 50, a major event that draws racers from across the country, in 1999. Larry was held out of the winners circle again this year, finishing in 11th place, behind his brother Andy.



Larry Bond skids through the first turn at Skyline Speedway in Stewart, Ohio on Sunday, October 11 as he runs hot laps in preparation for the Harvest 50, the track's biggest race of the year. Larry has been racing for over 30 years, amassing over 200 wins and over 30 track championships at numerous tracks throughout Southern Ohio and West Virginia. Larry won the Harvest 50 in 1999 but wouldn't be so fortunate this year, finishing 11th behind his brother Andy Bond in 10th.

and Andy have both made names for themselves in the racing community. Andy joined a professional race team and travels on the national circuit. Larry elected to stick to the local tracks, but experimented with the national racing circuit when NASCAR's short-lived dirt racing series emerged in 1995 and '96. Larry was the track champion at Ohio Valley Speedway in '96 and the overall series champion.

While Andy enjoys the luxuries of a big team with plenty of money to go around, Larry amasses parts and gear from the winnings he's made over the years. Most local races average a \$1,500 payout to the feature winner, and with over 200 feature wins, Larry has been able to keep his car in top shape.

Staying at home to race also means that Larry has the full racing knowledge of his mother and father to help him succeed.

Ronnie and Sarah Bond still own a racecar, driven by family friend Roy Rausch, and spend every weekend at the track.

The couple even spent their 52nd

wedding anniversary watching the races.

Normally Sarah, who raced at one point in a few special exhibition races for women, will take notes on other drivers as they run trials. With these notes Larry and Roy can know what to expect come race time. Both drivers carry the Bond's signature number 10 on the side of their cars as well (Roy's is modified to be 10X to avoid confusion).

Just as Larry watched his father at the track every weekend, his son Kyle is doing the same and just like his father, can't wait to get behind the wheel.

Kyle started racing in the mini-wedges (a form of go-kart) when he was 10 years old. In four years Kyle has over 30 wins and three track championships, two coming this past year. At 14 years old, Kyle has outgrown the wedges and is anxious to join his dad on the track.

"We might take a year off and see," Larry said of Kyle's racing future.

His son was quick to offer a rebuttal.

"Or we might not!" Kyle said giving his father a smile.



The Bond's signature 10 on Larry's car shows scars after a collision in Larry's heat race on Sunday, October 11.



Larry Bond and Roy Rausch go over notes taken by Larry's mother, and Roy's car owner, Sarah Bond before their heat races on Saturday, September 19. Sarah and her husband Ronnie, who started the racing tradition in the Bond family, sit in the stands and prowl the pits taking notes on other drivers for their own so Larry and Roy can be prepared when their heat races come. Only the top three from each heat race can make the feature and every advantage a driver can get is a help. Sarah raced occasionally in the '60's when tracks would put on special exhibition races for women.



Kyle Bond, driving a mini-wedge modelled after his father's #10 late model, runs in his final mini-wedge race at Skyline Speedway on September 19. Kyle has been racing a mini-wedge for four years, but after amassing over 30 wins and three track championships he's ready to move up to a higher class. Kyle would like to jump straight to late models next year, but his father doesn't think the 14 year-old should make the leap quite yet.



Larry Bond pushes his son Kyle back to his pit after Kyle's mini-wedge race at Skyline Speedway on September 19. Kyle cut a tire in the final laps of the race but held on for a top five finish.