

The Region 1 Quarter Midget Alumni Association (R1QMAA) began inspired by Johnny Morgillo as a means of bringing together past members from Silver City Quarter Midget Club and Little 'T' Custom Quarter Midget Club, which together once comprised QMA Region 1. Created in October 2020, the initial platform was an online social meeting place. As a Facebook page we rocketed to over 400 members in very little time. The outpouring of memories and story telling – the reacquainting along with the sharing of photographs and vintage video footage was remarkable. The former Region 1 drivers who came to the group spanned over 50 years of quarter midget racing history and represented at least 3 generations of racing families, most of whom had been out of touch since the days when they were racing.

Very quickly it was realized that the opportunity here was more than getting reacquainted and sharing memories—the greatest way an alumni organization could use all of this enthusiasm was to direct it towards the current membership and culture at Silver City - the last remaining Quarter Midgets of America (QMA) Club on the East Coast. As a non-profit, the R1QMAA could sponsor initiatives to help restore membership and community interest at the racetrack.

Enter Danny Kaminski and Samantha DellaRocco, former drivers who, along with Johnny, collectively had quarter midget careers spanning 1992–2005; the "golden age" of quarter midget racing in Region 1 and nationally. The sheer numbers from this era—regular weekly car counts of 150+, became the membership model towards which all R1QMAA incentives would be inspired and directed. With Johnny as president, Sam as treasurer, and Danny as secretary this team formally established the Region 1 Quarter Midget Alumni Association as a non-profit and began creating organization incentives that would serve Silver City towards a second golden age.

The Driver Development Program (DDP) was conceived specifically to address the problem of entry level costs for novice racing families. Acquiring and restoring 30 quarter midgets to race-ready status, the R1QMAA established a novice year car rental program that drastically reduced entry level investment for beginner families. By addressing the steep costs of a novice racing year and alleviating the worry that a young driver wont take to the intensity and commitment required by the sport to continue, the Driver Development Program successfully filled every seat to help generate the largest novice class at Silver City in over 20 years, effectively doubling membership from 2020 to 2021.

Taking on the task of acquiring a 30 car fleet from scratch was certainly daunting. But when thinking about the number of cars on track during 2000–2005 vs. the number of cars on track today, it began to dawn on us that the veritable wealth of chassis and equipment unused and falling into detritus must be staggering. We learned very quickly that people don't throw out quarter midgets—if they can't be sold they either go to the back of the garage or they go to the back yard where they brave the elements, patiently awaiting resurrection.

Two substantial acquisitions helped set us on the right course and give us encouragement towards our goal of 30 cars. The first involved organizing pick up from 4 different retired families from the south east PA area. The R1QMAA rented it's first 26 foot box truck to travel from our Plainville, CT headquarters to the Oaklane Quarter Midget Club to pick up 8 race cars

in various stages of wear and tear, along with an excess of spare equipment, much of it rusted but still solid, useable equipment imbued with much history. Johnny organized the pick up, Danny drove the truck and Sam signed the check—and with the assistance of Silver City alum Chad Gaudiosi, who helped organize the rendezvous, the first major step towards actualizing the Driver Development Program was under way.

The second acquisition brought the R1QMAA to Cumming, GA. It may have been 1,500 miles away, but the yield was just too good to pass up. When the Eastern Grands was in Cumming, GA in 1999 at North Georgia Quarter Midget Club, Jody Tallant was racing at his home track. Fast forward 22 years and when Johnny reached out to Jody about the lot of cars and equipment he had listed, Jody sympathized with our Alumni Association mission and responded in kind with a generous 11 car deal plus a whole array of parts, engines, and miscellaneous equipment.

With an itinerary of logistics that included a train, a bus, a plane, various Ubers and a 1,500 mile return at the helm of our second 26 foot box truck expedition, I set off to retrieve it all. Jody had been involved in quarter midget racing for near on three decades and, as he said when I arrived to make the pick up, he had a hard time letting go of anything over the years and was glad to have the equipment go towards our program and achieve a second life.

Once back in CT and unloaded at HQ, the reality of the work that lie ahead overflowed the whole shop from wall to wall. By this time it was mid-winter and we were just about at our goal of a 30 car fleet. "Phase acquisition" was now giving away to "phase restoration" and it was time to roll up our sleeves and dig in. For everyone involved it became clear we now had a second full time job. Our small, dedicated team put in hundreds of hours of work, arriving at the shop after our day jobs on weekdays and almost always staying past midnight. Many of the cars had been outdoors for years and required a thorough process of de-rusting and de-gunking. All the spare parts we had collected came in handy, and we had to invest in various brand new parts as all of these cars needed something replaced. Marty Membrino deserves special mention for his long hours at the shop helping set up the cars and getting them race ready for the DDP families.

As we neared opening day at Silver City, COVID restrictions relaxed and we were finally able to come together in person for club meetings. With our first race scheduled for early May we learned in the April meeting that the club received a generous donation from Silver City Alumni Joey Logano to go towards sorely needed track renovations, most notably a new surface for the race track which hadn't seen fresh asphalt in over 40 years. The decision was made to start construction right away, and the high anticipation for this unprecedented season kicked up several more notches.

Opening day ultimately fell on Saturday July 10th. The offseason excitement culminated and over 30 novices took greens, yellows, reds, and checkers for the first time. It was a real joy to see all of the off season hard work come together—especially the track restorations so carefully executed by the returning Silver City board and membership as well as all of the equipment on the track that the R1QMAA Driver Development Program had salvaged from

obscurity, literally bringing it back to new life. The point was driven home what a strong Alumni Association can do for reintegrating past drivers into the sport—as spectators, handlers, and club members—and facilitating a new era of strong car counts and exceptional competition at the racetrack; the kind that fosters future NASCAR champions.

The culture of our racing history is essential to integrate into the growth of quarter midget racing towards a new golden age in the sport. The stories, the knowledge, and the memory of past generations are equally vital to the present as the fresh ideas and perspective of the modern era. Program initiatives aimed at addressing the barriers that keep potential racing families from joining the sport, as well as organizing enthusiasm latent in the rich, personal sagas of quarter midget alumni, infuses a vital energy that draws together the resources of past, present and future.

The Region 1 Quarter Midget Alumni Association is a volunteer, grassroots effort motivated by a great love for the sport and a deeply experienced personal history. We are already looking ahead towards 2022, determined to expand the Driver Development Program and diversify our initiatives to further integrate alumni participation at the race track. We want our success to serve as a model for the whole of Quarter Midgets of America that we can work together to create a national success for the growth of quarter midget racing in the country.

written by Danny Kaminski  
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