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Brothers Follow Dad's Footsteps in Auto Racing...By Dave Dragovich

One of the most exciting drivers competing at the Roaring Knob Motorsports Complex is Josh Bendishaw, the driver of the No. 33 Street Stock. Fans enjoy watching the 21-year-old Hopwood resident as he strives to pass cars in front of him, while simultaneously attempting to stay ahead of drivers who are trying to overtake him.

His brother and mentor, 38-year-old Jim Bendishaw, Jr., has a great racing resume. He was the 2002 Street Stock Champion at Roaring Knob, and has won approximately 50 feature races since he started racing in 1995.

The brother's late father, Jim Bendishaw, Sr., whose friends fondly called him "Bender", was a well-known local racer and businessman. He was involved in the sport of auto racing for many years. A friend to many people, he has been sorely missed in the racing community and elsewhere since his passing in June, 2007, at 63-years of age. Bender is the one who got his sons involved in auto racing.

"I've been around racing my whole life," said Josh. "My dad and my brother Jim have done it forever. I wanted to race since I was old enough to remember. It's in my blood."

In 2002, at the age of sixteen, Josh made his racing debut. He remembers, "My first race was pretty overwhelming. It was nothing like I expected. I couldn't believe that I was finally doing something I waited for so long to do. It was so much more than what I thought it would be."

He's had good nights, and not so good nights. "My best run this season is second," he said. "That was the last race my dad actually came to watch. He was really happy about that. That was the best he saw me do. We had a good night that night."

Josh's most memorable race occurred earlier this season. He recalls, "One night I was leading the feature, and had a flat tire. I came back on the track after getting the tire changed, and came from 16th place to finish third. To win a feature has been my goal for a long time. I've been close, but just haven't been able to make it happen."

Probably the worst evening of the racing season for Josh happened about two weeks ago. He was hit hard on the driver's side in a multi-car pileup after he spun to avoid another race car that had crashed in front of him. He was taken to the hospital for a checkup. After being released, Josh indicated that he injured ligaments in his neck and suffered a possible concussion. His Camaro Street Stock was destroyed. The photo was taken just a few hours before the crash. Josh and his pit crew now have a Chevy Monte Carlo ready for Roaring Knob action.

His No. 33 Street Stock is sponsored by Benders Pit Stop, Creative Touch Florist, Garry's Auto Sales, Mahoney's Bar & Grill, Village Upholstery, Bobby Lake Motorsports, Miller's Yamaha, and Danny Moore Albright Lime Striping. Kenny Mitchell and Dick Rugh built his 358 cubic inch engine.

Josh's pit crew includes crew chief Richard Teets, John Pompura, Tanner Pritts, Tyler Pritts, Johnny Thorpe, Jim Bendishaw, Jr., Jimmy Bendishaw III, and Bryce Bendishaw. "I want to especially thank Donny Moore, my Mom, Jimmy, John, and Richard, for all of their help," said Josh.

Racing at the Markleysburg speed plant is usually enjoyable for Josh and his crew. "Roaring Knob is close to home and convenient to Uniontown," said Josh. "I hate traveling. I hate to have to drive somewhere. Roaring Knob can be pretty rough at times. But when they prepare the track right, it's nice."

Josh has never considered racing on the asphalt. "Dirt's for racing, asphalt's for getting there," he laughed. "That's what I've always been told."

Away from racing, Josh is a very busy individual. He's the head chef during evening hours at Bender's Pit Stop on Connellsville Street in Uniontown, a restaurant that was established by his late father. 'I work there six days a week,' he said. 'My mom Pam and I run it. I also work in a junkyard during the day, and have been helping my friend Dave Yowler move mobile homes.' Josh enjoys spending time with his girlfriend, Shannon Martelli, and his son Bryce, who recently experienced his very first birthday.

'I'm juggling three jobs right now,' said Josh, whose first job was working for an excavator. 'I'm a big football fan. I like country and Rock n' Roll music, and I like riding four wheelers when I have the time. I stay busy. And I have a one-year-old son to take care of. Between working, racing, and taking care of my son, that's about all I have time to do.'

When asked if he ever played a musical instrument, or considered doing so, he replied, 'No. No. You don't want to hear me play something. I play with my foot in that race car. That's my music!'

Jim Jr. would like to get back behind the wheel of a race car sometime in the future. 'I ran one time in the last two seasons,' said the past champion. 'I've had offers to drive a Late Model and some decent race cars, but I don't want to commit to anything. I've been concentrating on helping Josh out.'

Josh and Jim Jr. will always remember their father, Jim Bendishaw, Sr. (Bender), and the influence he had in their racing careers, and more importantly, in their lives.

Josh said, 'I got a lot of friends. My dad was my best friend, by far. If it weren't for him, I wouldn't be here right now. That's why it would mean so much to get a win, and honor my dad. He put a lot of money into the race car, and all of us put a lot of time into it. If it weren't for my dad, none of this would be possible. I wouldn't have anything. There's not a day that goes by that I don't think about my dad.'

Jim Jr. echoed his brother's thoughts and added a few of his own. 'I watched my dad race since I was able to walk,' he said. 'I've been going to the races since I was a kid. My dad was a

wonderful guy. He was a good guy to everybody. He'd help anybody out. Obviously, a lot of people loved him, family or not. I think he was one of the smartest people I've ever known, that's for sure. He was a very intelligent guy. You name it. He was fun with the racing and everything else through the years. I think he was the best race car driver I've ever seen. He won with stuff that he shouldn't have won in. He won races in a lot of junk. Definitely, as far as the Street Stocks go, nobody's ever going to be better than he was."

Josh plans to return to Roaring Knob in 2008, with one major change. He'll be using No. 7 on his Street Stock, the number that his dad ran for many years. His brother has some plans, too. Jim Jr. said, "I'm having fun helping Josh right now, hoping to get him his first win. Then I'm going to go out and rub some paint with him, I hope," he chuckled.

'Bender' taught his sons plenty of things about auto racing. They've learned those lessons well.