

## SHORT TRACK FEATURES



# Change of scenery

Former Mosport Speedway racer Grant Edwards sets up shop in Calgary

By J. Wally Nesbitt

It has taken 25 years, a lot of miles and equally as much effort, but as of mid-August, Grant Edwards had grown from an 18-year-old race fan, sweeping floors and washing cars in Junior Hanley's Georgetown, ON race shop into the proud owner of Evolution Racing Products in Calgary, AB.

Learning the industry, literally from the ground up, Edwards has experienced the full racing spectrum, from the inside. His duties and accomplishments over the years have ranged from the aforementioned shop 'gofer,' to fabricator, race driver, series creator / director, car distributor and now shop owner. And through all of it, it's been done in combination with his

supporting wife Charmain and their ever-enthusiastic "race nut" son, Dale.

"It started out simply enough," said Edwards. "I grew up watching the races at the old Pinecrest Speedway [north of Toronto] and then just started hanging around the Hanley shop.

"Junior finally put me to work and I ended up being part of his race crew. When Jeff [Junior's son] took over the shop, I got really busy and eventually became a full fabricator, building Late Model and Super Late Model cars for him."

Using his acquired skills, Edwards finally took the plunge and built his own mount, venturing onto the Mosport Speedway half-mile for the first time in 1993. A regular competitor in the Late

Model division, Edwards raced there until 2005, winning "a ton of heat races and finishing second a lot," but only scoring one feature victory.

Nevertheless, his consistent driving style earned him top finishes and kept the new Port Perry, ON resident in virtually every championship chase. The white #10 Chevrolet inevitably ended the season in the top-three in Mosport's intense top class.

A separate racing venture in the short-lived Ontario Super Late Model Racing (OSLR) series (in 2002) resulted in another third-place overall finish and a satisfying Rookie of the Year title.

However, in 2005 the Edwards family was looking for "a fresh start." A vacation-inspired notion and some business-con-



nected advice resulted in a decision to move the family, and their sign installation business, to western Canada and the city of Calgary.

Settling into family and business life in Calgary (but without his beloved Late Model racecar which, along with all of his support equipment, had been stolen before the move), Edwards was keen to stay connected with the motorsports fraternity.

Son Dale was at the age and mindset where racing was a foregone conclusion, so in 2007, the Edwards Racing Team moved into the karting ranks. Having obviously inherited his father's heavy right foot, Dale enjoyed enough success (including a second-place finish in the West Coast Challenge championship finale) to secure the Rookie of the Year crown.

"But we were out of place in karting and the road racing... all we knew were ovals. We looked around and couldn't find anything that fit our situation," said Grant. "But I happened to bump in to the American Mini Cup series and that really caught my attention.

"I talked to some of the local tracks and a few other people who had children looking for a place to race and that's how we put together the Evolution CUPCAR Racing Series. We put Dale in one of the cars and we've got five or six others who regularly show up. It's a start. The fans love us and I think it will take off."

This innovative oval program is based on half-scale Late Model cars powered by 13 horsepower Honda engines. The driver line up is restricted to youngsters 8-16 years of age. Beginning as a support class for the former NEWALTA Series, the CUP-

CAR division has blossomed this year and has joined forces with the Mac's ARCA West tour, racing on the same calendar and giving the novice drivers an opportunity to run in front of a large and appreciative audience.

Following the formation of the CUP-CAR series, another business opportunity opened up which again, "proved to be a perfect match for our shop."

"The Baby Grands dealer for Western Canada was looking to get out of it," continued Edwards. "These cars as popular here and are an ideal next step up from the CUPCAR series. We took on the dealership and that's given me a chance to race a little bit again. This is another great development division, next year we hope to have Dale running in both classes."

With wife Charmain already involved in the T-shirt and racing apparel end of the industry (Evolution supplies ARCA's promotional shirts), and with the burgeoning growth of the development racing enterprises, Grant decided to expand his involvement even further and has opened a new shop with hopes of getting back to his roots and building full sized Late Model and Super Late Model cars.

"We sell, service and repair the CUPCARS and the Baby Grands already. Ideally, our goal is to offer a full-line manu-

facturing centre. I'm already doing some tuning work for guys like Trevor Boys; this just seems like the next logical step. This is something that's needed in Calgary. We're covering as many bases as we can."

Edwards concludes, "I don't know if I'll ever have time to race again but Dale has the passion and Charmain still looks forward to going to every event. This is a family business; all three of us are together at a track somewhere every weekend. I guess it's just my way of staying in the game and feeding this obsession." ♦

(Far left) Grant Edwards' Evolution Racing Products, in Calgary. (above) Edwards and his son, Dale. (below) Grant Edwards raced in Ontario prior to heading to western Canada. Here, he's shown in Mosport's victory lane following a win in an Ontario Super Late Model Racing Series (OSLR) at the Toronto-area, half-mile oval.

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