

Racing.

Senior Jake Neal on track to his racing dreams

Andrea Kimball

by magazine editor

In August 2007, Kasey Kahne won the Sharpie 500 at Bristol Motor Speedway. Clint Bowyer has won multiple Busch Series races. Mark Martin has 48 NASCAR race wins.

Jake Neal has beaten all of them.

Multiple NASCAR drivers also race in the USMTS, or United States Modified Touring Series. North senior Jake Neal, 17, also takes part in USMTS and during many races, competes against these NASCAR drivers for the top position.

USMTS is home to more than 175 drivers.

How many students at North can say they have fans? Neal can. Every racetrack he goes to he has many dedicated fans.

"Having fans is exciting. They know my name and kids always ask for my autograph after the race."

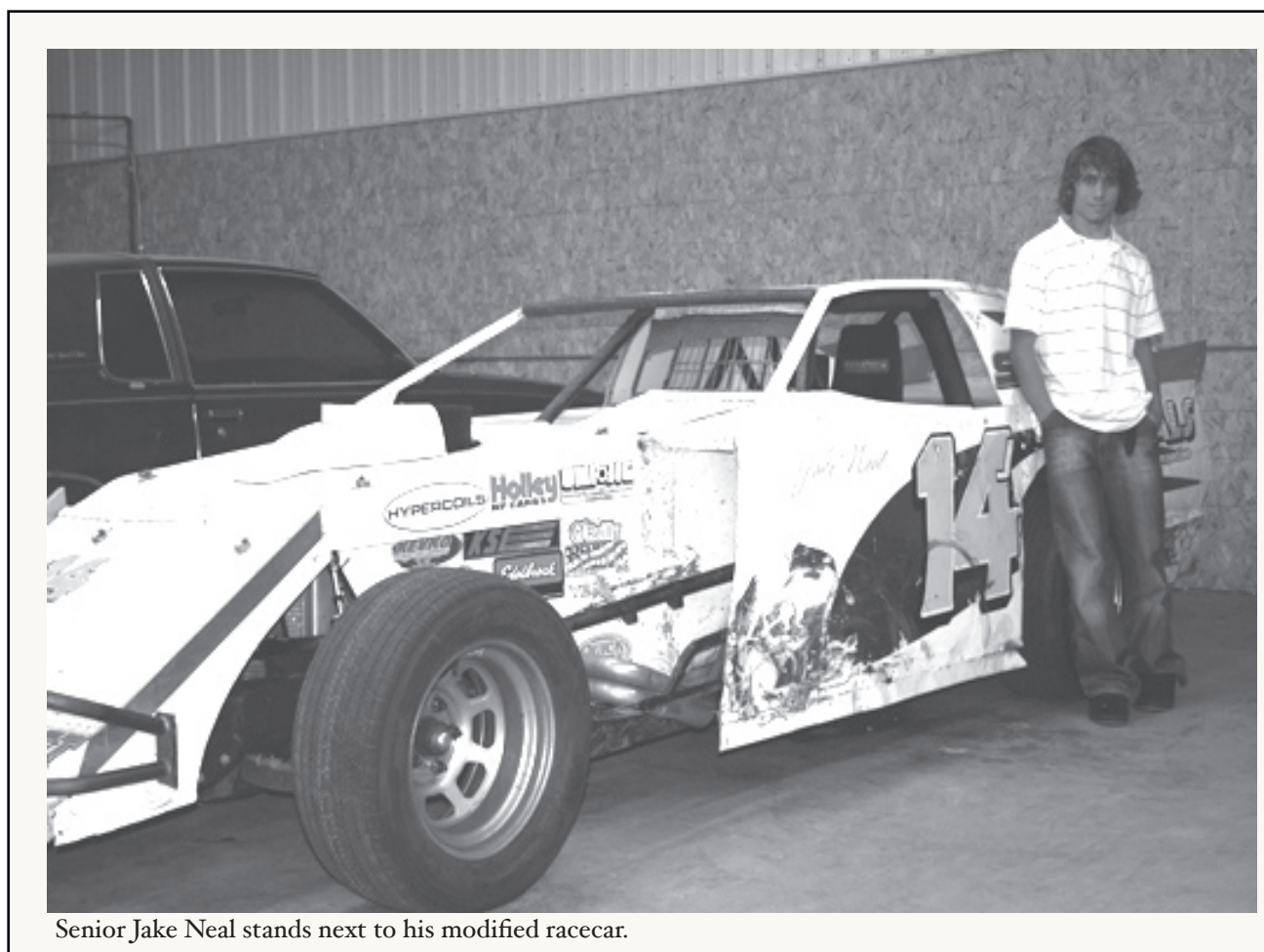
At the age of two most children are putting together puzzles. That is the age when Neal started racing. From racing dirt bikes at two, four-wheelers at five, go-karts at seven, and modifieds and stock cars at 14, he has done it all.

Modifieds are custom-built circle track dirt racecars, and Jake Neal has been racing them for three years.

"After I graduate, I plan on racing for the United States Modified Touring Series full-time. I am sure it will pay off to have a high school diploma as a back-up plan, in case racing fails for some reason. I don't know what I would do if I couldn't race cars," Neal said.

Neal has recently been nominated to be inducted into the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame and Museum in Knoxville, Iowa for being one of two youngest drivers to race a modified car (age 14). The ceremony is on September 29th, 2007, but he declined in order to attend North's homecoming.

Keeping up with school and still going to all the races is hard for Neal. After recently missing two weeks of school for USMTS races in Minnesota and Iowa, it's difficult for Neal to



Senior Jake Neal stands next to his modified racecar.

make up all of his homework and catch up in all of his classes. "I'm still trying to make up that homework," stated Neal.

It would be even harder for Neal to do school and race if it weren't for his dad.

"Ever since I started racing my modified, my dad has been by my side. He's been with me to every race and is in charge of everything."

Jake's father Scott owns the modified that Neal races and is head of his 1-2 person 'pit crew'.

"My little brother John sometimes comes to the races too and he helps in the pits."

If anything goes wrong with the car, Scott always knows what to do.

"Every couple races something goes wrong with the car, but my dad usually has it fixed fast enough for me to get back in the race," Neal said.

Keeping school and racing separate is different for Neal than you might think.

"I know I shouldn't but I put racing first and school second, but that's the way roll. I'd rather make money and make a living doing something fun than sitting in a business desk the rest of my life doing math or whatever some boss tells me to do."

"I basically drive around a dirt circle. That sums up my dream."

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