



***Eric Wilson — RUSH Late Model 27***

Racing has a reputation for being a family sport. That aspect is certainly true with eighteen-year old Eric Wilson of Cortland, OH. The history of racing in the Wilson family starts in 1956 with Eric's grandfather, Dale Wilson. Wilson and a "half-dozen of his friends" pooled their cash to build a racecar. The total they had? \$27! Hence the number "27" became part of the Wilson Racing Family. Today the number 27W graces the side of the potent RUSH Late Model. Not only did Dale race but he passed on the 'racing gene' to his sons, Chris and Mike. Chris then passed the talent on to Eric. Eric's mother, Dawn, works at a hospital as a Medical Lab Technologist so doesn't get to all the races but she is his biggest supporter. Chris is a millwright for an automotive parts supplier. Both parents are college educated, both alumni of Youngstown State University. Eric is an only child, born April 24, 1997 and has lived his entire life in Cortland, OH.

Early in his career, when only eight years old, Eric was tagged "The Shark" by a competitor's father after a daring outside pass. To this day he is known for his daring on the track but also has a reputation for driving clean at all times and is well respected by other racers.



Dale Wilson...patriarch of the Wilson Racing Family.



Chris Wilson, father of Eric Wilson, after a feature win at Raceway 7 in 1989.

The family home is situated on four acres outside Cortland , OH where Eric had the advantage of a small dirt oval carved in one corner on the lawn when he was a child. From the age of four, he was on the kart track practicing. His formal education was in the public school system at Cortland where he was a three-year Varsity Letterman in soccer, earning a place on the all-county soccer team. He describes himself as “a decent athlete” and is a 2015 high school graduate, currently attending the Trumbull branch of Kent State University majoring in business management.

Eric started his career in karts first, at the tender age of seven, eventually scoring 52 wins and 5 season championships, two at Naugle Speedway, two at Albion, and one at Goodhope. At age 13 Eric raced in “Mod Lites” for one season, without a win, before moving into RUSH Late Models at age fourteen where he won his first feature race at Sharon Speedway on August 20, 2011. Two more feature wins, both at Sharon, on August 5, 2012, and June 1, 2013, have followed along with several heat wins. Although Eric has yet to score a feature win during RUSH Tour events he has four heat wins during RUSH tour events in 2015.



At twelve years old, Eric finished up with Kart racing.

When asked what is the best time of racing Eric replied, unsurprisingly, his three feature wins, but added “Making friends is probably the coolest part”. The racing “fraternity” is a tight one with his closest friends now his competitors.

Dale, Eric’s Grandfather, who won in stock coupes in the 50s at Morgantown, WV, had a 30 year career. Dale won a “handful in the 60’s”, then came to Warren, OH from his native West Virginia in 1965. He then raced at Raceway 7, Expo, Sharon, and Mercer Speedways. Running Semi Lates he won three features in the 70s. Dale hung up his helmet in the late ‘80s but, at 77, he is present at every one of Eric’s races.

Fifty-three year old Chris, Eric's Dad, started racing semi Lates in 1981 at age 19. He won at Raceway 7 in 1984 in a Semi Late Model. He went on to score two wins that year at 7 and captured the points title. 1985 he won a feature event at Sharon, and was second in points to Bob Vogt. In 1989 he advanced to Super Lates and won his only Super Late Model feature at Raceway 7. He retired in 1991, but drove a car for his brother, Mike, in 2004 when Eric was only seven and just starting his kart racing career. Part of the reason for driving his brother's car was to set an example to his young son. He competed at Sharon with the stock car and won a few races during this time. To free up time to get Eric started in kart racing Chris only ran a limited schedule. All during his racing career Eric has been given 'free range' from his family and encouraged to "live his own life", but he has always chosen to race.

Over the last five years it's apparent Eric has "the right stuff" to succeed. He purposely tries to race the best drivers in the area and has traveled to 13 tracks over five years, racing against the best in the sport. Potomac Speedway in Budd's Creek, MD and McKean County Raceway in East Smethport, PA are his favorite ovals but Sharon Speedway is his home. He was thirteen years old when he started racing full sized racers in 2010. Following the RUSH series is tough with the competition including Max Blair. When asked what how his relationship is with Blair, Eric stated "definitely good" even though he has finished second to him "at least three times this summer", including the McKean County Raceway Fall Classic October 10. Wilson started from the pole and led the first nine laps with Blair right behind, but eventually Blair used lapped traffic to get by the youngster.

Finances are tough. Chris and Dawn launched their son's career with limited funds. Sponsors have not come easy. Significant help from sponsors has only come in the last two years. As Eric has matured and moved to the top echelon of local drivers, the quest for sponsors has been more successful. Paul Hovis Tire and Automotive, of Cortland, owned by a life long fan, is the primary sponsor and is responsible for a "co-operative" regional sponsorship from Pennzoil, who came aboard in 2015. Other sponsors include Lyman-Ray Racing, Falls Recycling, Speed Bear Fasteners, and F K Rod Ends.

However, the team is still "low-budget", towing with a pickup truck and only having one car available. As a result it is imperative that Eric is careful with his equipment and does not 'tear things up'.



Racing is a huge part of Eric's life. He uses the term 'all-consuming'. "I do some normal stuff but racing is "it". And as with all racing people Eric does have favorite drivers. When asked he replied Rich Gardner and David Scott with reasoning being that both are "very smooth yet very aggressive".

When asked about aggressiveness Eric replied:

"I feel aggressive driving is maybe some bent aluminum but dirty driving is bent front end components. Racing at such speeds sometimes contact happens unintentionally; the job of the track is to decide whether it's unintentional or intentional. However in racing you must be patient so if there is a slower car in front of you, you just have to wait for the opportunity to pass him clean. If I was racing a top driver in a close race I would do just that, be patient and wait for him to slip up, the problem is the best drivers rarely slip up or make a mistake. Everybody wants to win its just you gotta earn it, and with so many good drivers in our area it's very tough."

As for the future Eric replied "Right now I'm happy where I'm at. If I were to gain more sponsorships that allowed me to go super late racing that would be great, but in no way am I saddened because where I am now. I'd love to be a presence in the racing world five years from now."

Stay tuned for more news on Eric Wilson. With a bright future looming for this 18 year old racer, fans will be the real winners.