

RYAN MONTGOMERY

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BY DOUG KENNEDY

In 2011, at the tender age of 14, Ryan Montgomery of Fairmont, West Virginia, became the youngest driver ever to win a FASTRAK Touring Series race. All told, he won six features that season and was named Rookie of the Year at both Roaring Knob Motorsports Complex in Markleysburg, Pennsylvania, and Elkins Raceway in Elkins, West Virginia. In addition, Montgomery scored the Western Pennsylvania Rookie of the Year for FASTRAK as well, along with the FASTRAK Future's Cup Championship.

Following the familiar path of most aspiring young racers, Flyin' Ryan, as he is known, stormed through the competition while racing Go-Karts, winning 174 features and 17 championships.

"I won 55 features in both

2008 and 2009," said Montgomery. Ten of those championships came in 2008 and the other seven in 2009. "I ran tracks from Pennsylvania on down the East Coast," he said. Montgomery also spent time in the South and Midwest, racing at tracks in Mississippi, Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma.

At the tender age of four, young Montgomery's interest in racing was piqued when his dad, Jeff Montgomery, took him to Interstate 79 Speedway in Shinnston, West Virginia, to watch the races. Three years later he was competing in his own Go-Kart at the local Fairmont track.

For six seasons, Montgomery competed in Go-Karts before stepping up to a Modified. Because he was just 13 at the time, Ryan needed someone to sign him in and that

became the responsibility of his dad and Throw'n Dirt Chassis owner, Kenny Rogers. Kenny became an integral part of Montgomery's early career, as he provided him with a lot of help, particularly with the set-ups.

After running a full Go-Kart schedule, Ryan ran seven Modified races at season's end in 2009, and was able to score a victory at Roaring Knob. In 2010, he ran five more Modified races before moving up to a Crate Late Model for the beginning of the 2011 season.

"My dad thought I could be doing better in the Crate, so I quit running the Modified," said Montgomery. "We thought we might tour with the Crate, but I really wasn't quite ready for that, so I went back to Roaring Knob and worked on the local stuff to build up



JMSProPhoto./Joe Secka

Above photo: Ryan Montgomery in action at Sharon Speedway in 2012.
Below photo: Montgomery buckled-in, ready for on-track action last season.



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Above photo: Ryan Montgomery in Victory Lane at Pittsburgh's Pennsylvania Motor Speedway last season when he captured the RUSH Series win during the NDRL finale.

my confidence.”

In 2012, Montgomery ran the FASTRAK Northeast Series and captured two wins - one locally and one in the touring series. His goal in 2013 was to get better and win more features than the six he had in 2011 and hopefully capture a championship as well. And by the beginning of August, he is right in contention for that title. He also wanted to be able to capitalize on his mistakes by gaining more seat time and experience.

Montgomery’s youth, however, wasn’t widely-accepted by some of the veteran local drivers when he moved into the Crate Late Model class.

“There were some of the drivers who didn’t give me a lot of respect or room to race, and they thought they could just run over me,” said the driver of the #12. “As soon as they started to rough me up, I returned it back to them. By racing them hard, but competitively, I gained their respect. Most of the guys drive me clean now, but there are still a few of the local guys that think it’s their home track and that they are the best there. That’s when they start beating and banging each other when they’re back in the pack.”

At press time, Montgomery was in a tight battle with Mike Pegher, Jr. for the point title in the new Rush Series for Crate Late Models.

“It’s a really competitive series in every way,” he said. “The drivers are all really close and the motors don’t give anyone an advantage, so it comes down to the set-up and the driver.”

At 16 years of age, Ryan Montgomery will be entering his junior year at East Fairmont High School this fall. Throughout junior high school, Montgomery was a shooting forward on the basketball team, but quit because it interfered with his race schedule. “I was alright, certainly not the worst,” he laughed about his basketball skills. Ryan also played the violin and ukulele when he was in fourth grade, but again, quit them after a few years so that he could focus on his racing.

As far as his racing career to date, Montgomery says he owes

Right photo: Ryan Montgomery in Sharon Speedway victory lane after he captured the win on night two of the Bill Emig Memorial. Below photo: Montgomery works the inside line at Hagerstown Speedway last season.



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a lot to his parents, Jeff and Jill. Besides the financial aspect, Jeff is right there for his son on a daily basis. "My dad helps me work in the shop and gives me driving tips and other things," he said.

Jeff Montgomery was also a racer for a handful of years, running a Pure Stock and a Semi-Late Model at Allegany County Speedway in Cumberland, Maryland; Hagerstown Speedway in Hagerstown, Maryland; and Winchester Speedway in Winchester, Virginia. The elder Montgomery hung up his helmet when Ryan was born. He also got out of the seat because he was beginning a brand new business, T.J. Contracting. For 15 years, T.J. Contracting has been involved in building new homes within a 35-mile radius of Morgantown, West Virginia. Jeff Montgomery esti-

 An advertisement for Landrum Performance Springs. The background is blue with several gold-colored coil springs. The Landrum logo is at the top center. Below it, the text reads "Higher Performing Coil Springs For A Better Win Rate". A small image of a blue and yellow racing suit is on the left. The main text describes the benefits of their springs and provides contact information.

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'Flyin' Ryan Montgomery in action at Lemerville Speedway.

mates they build 30-35 new homes a year. He also employs a full-time paint crew, yard crew and service crew. When he's not involved with his racing, Ryan helps out his dad by painting doors and windows.

A driver that Montgomery calls his mentor is Late Model racer, Doug Horton of Morgantown.

"He's helped me and my dad on car set-ups and helps us tune the car at the race track," he said. Horton, who owns High Gear Speed Shop in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, sold the Montgomery's their first Crate Late Model a few years back.

"I needed a crew chief and we knew we needed help, and he (Horton) totally committed to us and comes to about 95% of my races," said Montgomery.

Horton, who used to drive for Bobby Lake Racing, now travels to Florida to race in a handful of races throughout the year.

"He'll come over to our shop if we need the timing set on the motor, but we usually go over to his shop," allowed Montgomery.

Two other crew members for Montgomery's team were also brought on board because of their association with Horton. The two are known simply as Slavic and Kevin.

"They do a lot for me like helping with set-ups, fixing the body and doing just about anything else," said a very appreciative Montgomery.

Roaring Knob, a track that is about an hour away from his home, is considered by Montgomery to be his home track.

"I'm more of a straight, don't get sideways kind of a driver, which comes from my Go-Kart days," said Montgomery. "The track gets slick on the top and in the middle, so I run the bottom and hug the inside wall."

Jeff and Ryan aren't the only Montgomery's to get behind the wheel and race. Ten-year-old Leah Montgomery ran a Go-Kart race as well.

"She ran one race at Fairmont and won and then quit because she said now she has the best record at the track," said her older brother.

Mom, Jill, comes to the races fairly regularly, but stays at home at times to babysit the family dog and cat.

Financially, Jeff Montgomery backs the team. "Business has been good," said Jeff. "I make every race that he's in. Usually it's pretty much him and me. We do the Crate deal, hoping that something comes along that we can move onto the Super Late Models. I would like him to make this racing thing something he could do for a living."

Jeff knows that Ryan needs another year or so before any move is to be made.

"We've worked our way up to

where we are now," said Jeff. "He still has some things that he has to learn. I wasn't a fraction of the talented driver that Ryan is."

Montgomery also said that his son has the talent to know what to say about the race car and the set up. "He learned from the guys he raced with," he said. "They were impressed that at the age of 13, he could tell us what was wrong with the car and if it was tight or needed some forward bite."

Montgomery, who runs a Warrior Chassis, would like to one day move on to the World of Outlaws or the Lucas Oil Series. He also likes his nickname of Flyin' Ryan, one that he has had since he was little.

"It's awesome, but I'm only called that by my family and the track announcer for the RUSH Series," he said.

As far as racing goes, Montgomery said that if he weren't racing he would probably just be going to a race track to be a spectator.

"My hobby is racing; I eat and sleep racing," he said.

"We've been waiting for someone to come along and notice Ryan to make the next move," said Jeff. "We could do it, but it would be a little tight. I have open spots on my race car if anyone would like to sponsor," Montgomery said in conclusion.