

Brendan Gaughan

At some point in our lives we're all rookies at one thing or another. For Brendan Gaughan 2004 has been his rookie season in NASCAR's premier division, the Nextel Cup.

For the twenty-nine year old Las Vegas native, the move upwards hasn't changed much in his life other than his home which he now makes in North Carolina to be near his team.

"I spent four years in college at Georgetown so it's not like moving away from home and I'm homesick," says Brendan. "I love Las Vegas. There is no mystery to the fact that Las Vegas is my family's home and has been since 1948 and is going to be until hopefully 2048. This is a deal I want to be very committed to and this is now where I live."

The 2,000-mile move was made all the easier by the willingness of best friend Johnny "Cheeseburger" Kaufman to join him. Kaufman quit his job to become Brendan's roommate, bus driver and assistant.

"It was a deal we talked about for years from the (Winston) West days. Johnny is there to make sure everything else goes right for us. I don't have to worry about getting somebody into the track. Johnny's there to make sure that happens right for me and he's my best friend. It's just nice to have somebody around."

Brendan's Winston West and off-road racing days were not only spent in mapping his career to the big show. It also gave him the opportunity to race against several of the drivers he now competes with. Jimmie Johnson who races for Hendrick Motorsports has competed with Gaughan since they were both fifteen. Each had a great deal of success in off-road racing with many championships between them.

"Racing's a big circle not just on the racetrack," said Gaughan. "Casey Mears, Robby Gordon, Jimmie Johnson...we've all raced against each other our whole lives. At one point Jimmie Johnson went here and I went there. Then we met back up in the Midwest. You always kept moving around but you were always going for the same goal.

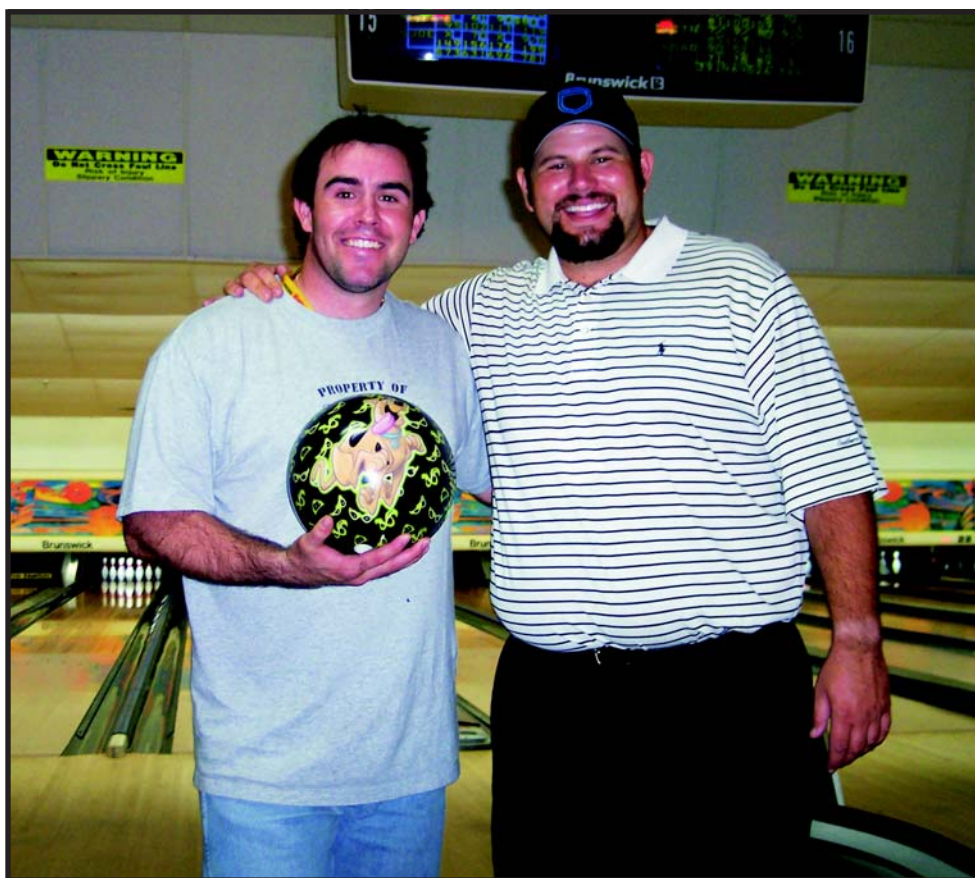
"Robby's the same way. Robby was an off-roader with us then he went open wheel racing all those years. Now we're in the same place."

Brendan Gaughan's career path to the Cup circuit took a dramatically different route than most of his fellow competitors'. In 1994, he began attending Georgetown University while

continuing his racing career during the summer. He graduated in 1997 with a BSBA in Human Resource Management.

One motorsports journalist made the mistake of asking whether or not he wasted those four years of his life by going to college.

"I ended up going to Georgetown University which is arguably one of the highest standards of education in the country. I played college football and was All-Conference (as a placekicker). I played college basketball and made it to three NCAA tournaments, one final eight and two sweet sixteens. You're never going to be able to top that again in my life.



Above: Brendan with best friend, John "Cheeseburger" Kaufman who quit his job as a golf pro to join Brendan in North Carolina. Photo courtesy Brendan Gaughan. Opposite: WRJ Photo - Dave Massengale.

"If you're a kid and you can play a sport, try to play it. Use that to get you into college. But use your head. Get to school."

Brendan's strong stance on receiving a good education was affirmed by his Hoya's basketball coach, the legendary John Thompson whose four-year players achieved a ninety-seven percent graduation rate. As a means of encouragement, Thompson employed the visual aid of a deflated basketball.

"Know what that basketball stands for? 'Do you really want to base your life on six pounds of air?' Look at Alonzo Mourning. Here's a young man who's one of the greatest basketball players of the day and all of a sudden the air got taken out of that basketball."

Gaughan is referring to the NBA star who retired in the first year of a four-year, \$22 million contract with the New Jersey Nets in 2003 because of focal glomerulosclerosis, a kidney disorder. Mourning received a kidney transplant in December of 2003 and on October 21 of this year returned to his first full-contact practice with his team.

"I'm not too worried about where he's going to land. Alonzo's one of the smartest men you'll ever meet. You always have to look at those things because you can't rely on the sport forever. You have to rely on what you can do and the best thing to do is get your butt to school.

"Get your education and make sure that afterwards, no matter what you want to do. If you want to play basketball, race a car...at least you can go and do something with your life without being stuck, bankrupt going 'uh-oh'."

As with all professional athletes, Brendan is a role model whether he intends to be or not.

"I don't have children. I don't plan to have children in the near future. I love children. They are the world to me. But I'm not a parent so I don't say I want to tell you how to raise your kids.

"When I talk to little kids I ask them what do they want to be when they grow up. You get kids that sill say astronauts, firemen and policemen. I always tell them that if one of you guys can become an engineer...somebody developed that 'soft' wall technology. Somebody developed the roof flap. Somebody developed the inner liner on the Goodyear tire.

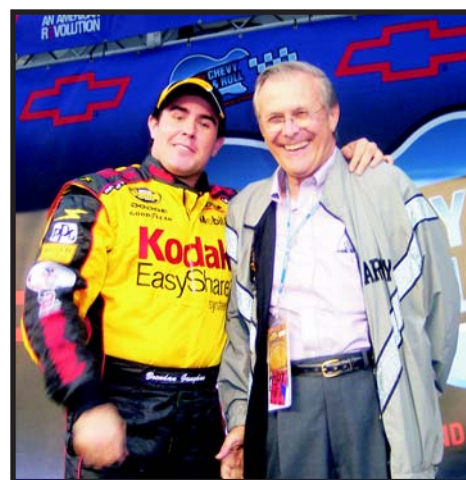
"Those are the three greatest single safety inventions of racing in the last 50 years and look at how simple they are. Somebody was smart enough to build



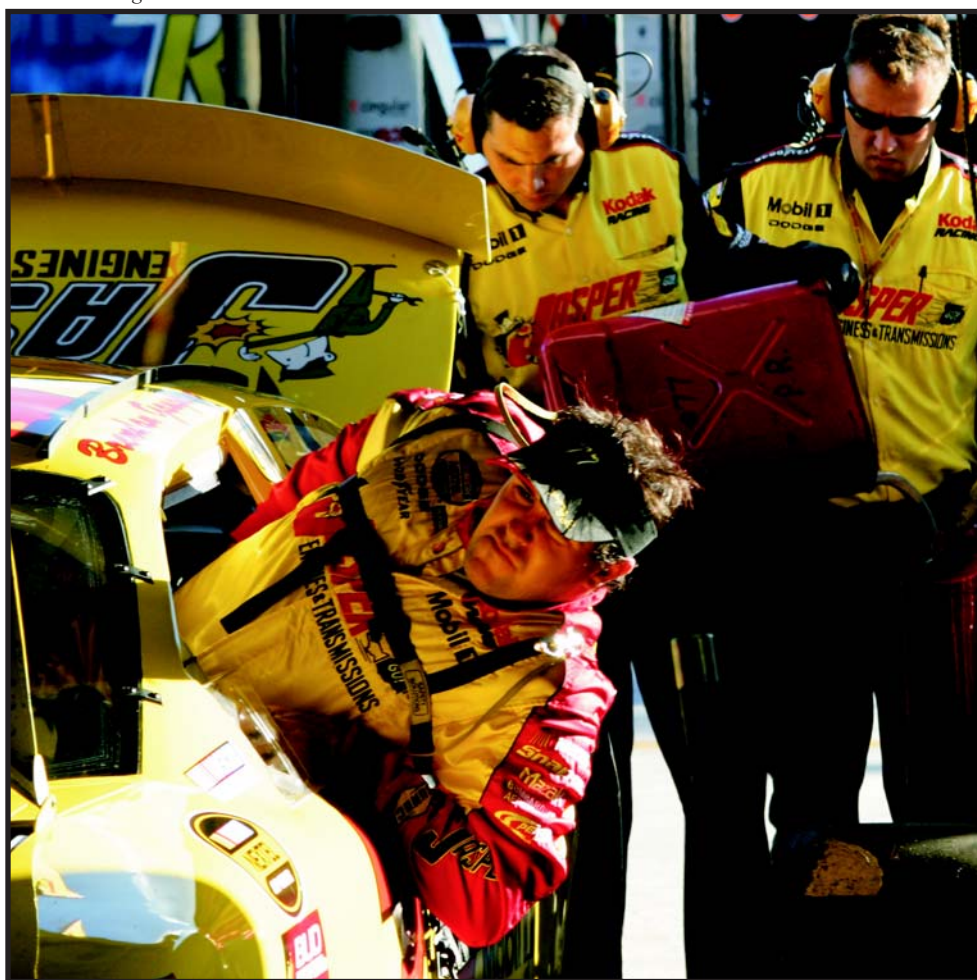
Brendan's heroes: His father Michael and his grandfather, Jackie - one of the true Las Vegas gambling industry pioneers. Photo courtesy Brendan Gaughan.

those. Who was it? I don't know, but I guarantee each one had a college degree, some sort of an engineering degree, and had some sort of practical knowledge and application of what they're trying to do.

"There's a four-year-old, five-year-old, seven-year-old boy, girl, little



Brendan with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. Photo by Jimmy Spencer courtesy Brendan Gaughan.



Brendan climbs out of his car following a practice session at Lowe's Motor Speedway for the UAW-GM Quality 500. Women's Racing Journal photo: Dave Massengale.

somebody sitting there somewhere that wants to be an astronaut right now that may create the next simple thing. It's a five-year-old little girl right now waiting to do that. She's not going to be able to do that if her parents don't point her in the right direction of going to school.

"To the kids out there, I remember high school. I didn't like it. I had a great time, but I didn't like the school part. But it isn't that tough, trust us. I sound like my parents, 'trust us'. You won't get far in the 21st century if you don't have at least a high school degree. No matter where you go, no matter what you want to do, there is always someone else trying for that job."

Between Coach Thompson and auto racing legends Walker Evans and Parnelli Jones, Brendan has learned from some of the best. He is continuing his education through his spotter, Buddy Baker.

Baker is the winner of the 1980 Daytona 500 whose average speed of 177.602 mph is still the race record. He was inducted into the International Motorsports Association Hall of Fame in 1997 and named one of NASCAR's 50 Greatest Drivers.

"Now I've got the NASCAR legend. Baker is as funny as he seems in television or

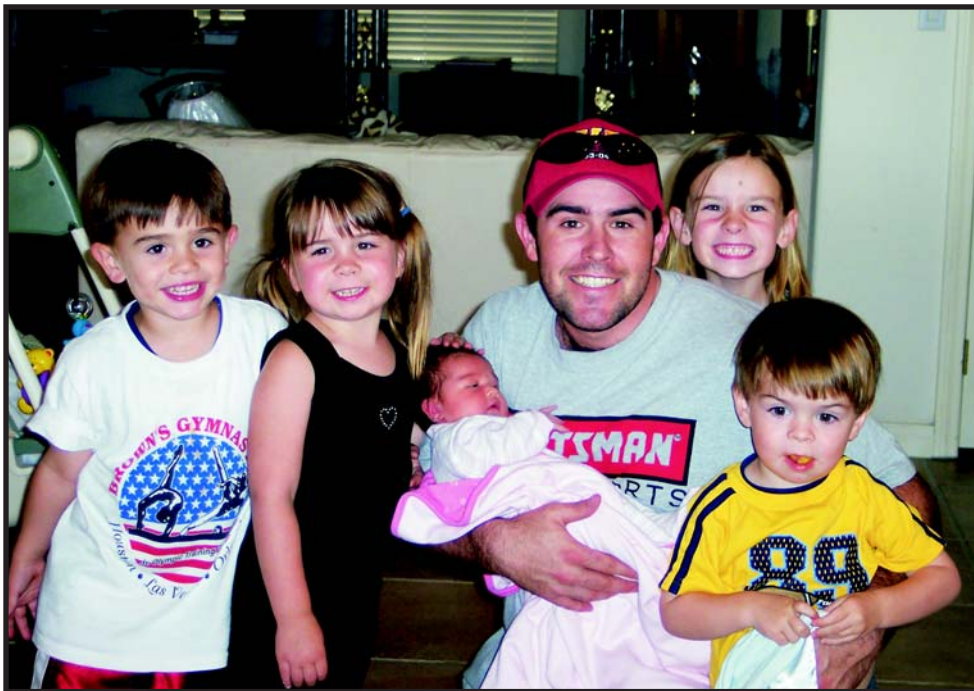
however you've seen Buddy Baker. Whatever your image is, he is all that and more.

"If anybody has ever come to a racetrack they know you have to listen on a scanner. If you come to a track and don't listen, you're sitting there watching cars do circles. You've got to put a headset on and listen. You have to listen to Baker and me. He is absolutely hilarious and has really helped me a ton. He's got some of the best one-liners.

"This year at Darlington, we were absolutely horrible in that first race and

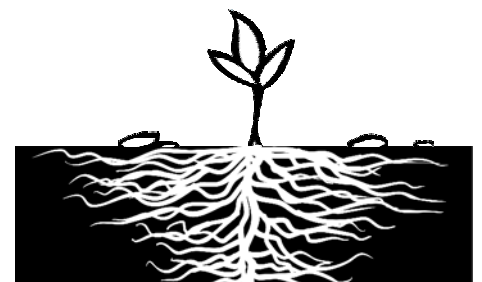


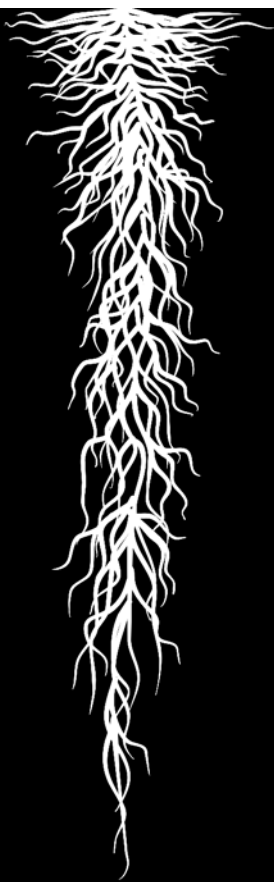
Women's Racing Journal photo: Joni Massengale



"Uncle Breni" with his nieces and nephews at Easter. "They're my world."
Photo courtesy Brendan Gaughan.

WE'VE BROKEN NEW GROUND





WATCH
US
GROW

WOMEN'S
RACING
JOURNAL

I think I hit the wall about thirteen times. In the middle of the race, I had just hit the wall like three laps in a row. Every corner...boom...missed that one. Let me try again. Boom. No that didn't work. Everything I tried didn't work. He called over and said, 'Hey bud.' 'Yeah Baker?' 'Why don't you give that wall a break for a few laps.'

"The best one of the year was at Dover. We were running good; we were up front and something happened. I said, 'I know Baker. I should have believed you.' Baker says, 'If I tell you that a rooster can plow a field, you better stand back and watch the dirt fly.' And this is under green. I am driving down the back straightaway holding my breath

because that's what you do at Dover, and I am laughing. I had to go, 'What did you just say?' and he says it again. I am in tears laughing in a race car holding on for dear life."

Baker's role doesn't stop in the spotters' stand. He tested for the team at Talladega.

"Don't think that he's just a figurehead. If he really gets hot enough, he'll kick you out of the seat and show you how it's done. He can still drive."

Hopefully Brendan's aptitude for learning keeps Baker from having to do that too often.

JMWRJ

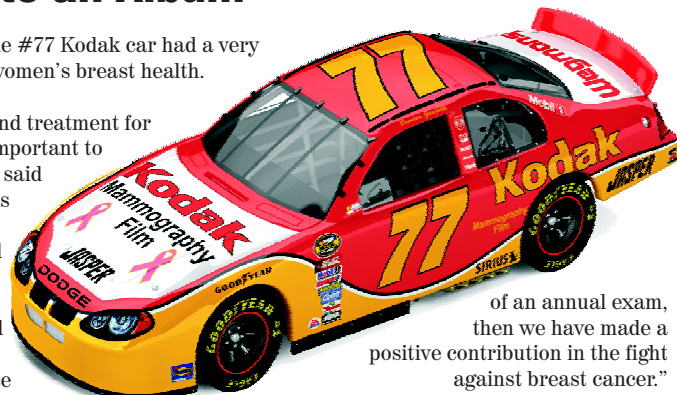


Brendan and Jimmy Spencer at Richmond International Raceway. Jimmy's "in training" to take the photo of Brendan with Donald Rumsfeld. Photo courtesy Brendan Gaughan.

The Most Important Picture of a Woman Doesn't Go into an Album

This year at Watkins Glen, the #77 Kodak car had a very special paint job promoting women's breast health.

"Early detection, diagnosis and treatment for breast cancer is something important to me on a very personal level," said Gaughan. "My grandmother is a breast cancer survivor, thanks to early detection and medical follow up. If women NASCAR fans notice the special design on our car and stop to think - even for just a minute - about the importance



of an annual exam, then we have made a positive contribution in the fight against breast cancer."