

Joey Dille's Retirement Speech
Given at the 2008 Season Oaklane Banquet

When I say that I race Quarter Midgets, people give me strange looks. This is because my sport is not a well-known one. Because of the name, people tend to assume it is racing those beloved wonders of human anatomy—midgets. Once we get past this (and it may take a while), they ask me what it is like to race. And, frankly, I don't know what to tell them.

Racing is...racing. I know I just used the word in the definition, but it's tough, alright? Even if I could say "racing is this," racing is different for everyone. Honestly, how many of you would put a Junior Novice out on the same track with a World Formula? I didn't think so.

In regards to my ten years of racing here, I would say that it's been fun, but that's wouldn't exactly be correct. Awesome would be closer to the truth. Perhaps unbelievable. Or maybe—ooh—unparalleled (just wanted to throw a big word in there). I wish I had started racing when I was five instead of six—*that's* how much fun I had. Now it is time to tear myself away from this place, but all of the memories have made Oaklane a place that is almost impossible to leave.

I remember Junior Novice. I remember showing up on cold, Sunday afternoons to learn the ropes from the club leaders at Novice School. I raced out of the back of my dad's Dodge Dakota. The car was just a little too long to fit in the trunk, so we left the back open and tied it down really well. On the way over, we'd go over these two bridges with steep humps in them and we'd hear the car jump. We'd check back to see if it was still there.

When you're a Novice, the parents push you around the track at first with a disengaged engine, and you are yelling, "Faster, faster!" This is the first time these parents will experience what pushing a car feels like. It won't be the last and it will only get harder. But—this is an excellent exercise regimen for the handlers—don't you think?

So, after becoming comfortable with being pushed around the track, the kids get to "go fast." This means that they go under power and are told to idle around until their parent gives them the "go fast" signal. The kid punches the gas and feels *it*—the way a Quarter Midget feels, that first burst of acceleration and the whine of the engine around the turns.

It's hard to leave the physical thrill of racing behind. There is something about the feeling of a rushing, shuddering machine that makes it feel like you have a quart of adrenalin in your veins. It is truly amazing. I have recently found that roller coasters no longer excite me. To me, quarter midgets is being able to experience the same powerful rush of acceleration and vibration, but to control it. My feeling towards go-karts, those miserable, governed little pieces of plastic at theme parks, has become pure hatred.

From Novice on up, I started getting in wrecks, spinning out, flipping, taking it through the infield, and generally causing havoc. I remember my first flip. The...I think race director...at the time came over and flipped himself around like this. And then he said, "was that fun, or what?" I was like, "yeah!"

It's hard to leave the comrades behind. Over the years, I've acquired quite a posse of friends. I remember waiting for night to come, and then putting on our brass knuckles and beating the tar out of novices...*just kidding!* But seriously, you guys. I remember you big guys. I hung out in your trailers and played on your Gamecubes and Playstations. I watched you race and then raced against you. We hung out. You know who you are. And the little guys! You are my favorites. I don't think that anywhere on a sports field can you find such a nice group of little

kids. The positive attitudes and sportsmanship of the kids here just goes to show that Oaklane is the perfect environment for someone to grow up in. *I* grew up here, and look at me! Or don't...

I would like to extend my thanks to just about everyone. I'd like to say "thank you" in particular to my family for being there for me. I'd like to say "thank you" to Ziggy for the power that made every single one of my races possible. I'd like to say "thank you" to my friends for giving me people to beat at video games and Uno, shoes to steal, and games of jackpot to play. I'd also like to say "thank you" to all the people who aren't my friends, for being competition on the track. I'd like to say "thank you" to the parents who chose to give their kids a great and meaningful experience. Oh yeah, I'd like to say I'm sorry to the bajillion people my friends and I accidentally hit with a Frisbee. But, most of you threw it back.

I learned a lot of things on the track. I learned that Senior Hondas actually start before the green flag. I learned that sometimes the fastest guy in your race is a girl. I learned that there should always be one foot hovering over the brake, especially when behind a few people that I can name. I learned valve seals are NOT legal...Dad. I learned that it is hard to start a stocker from the inside...and from the outside as well. Those Decos really give you a run for your money. I learned it is almost never too cold to practice...Dad. Driving in the rain is awesome. A World Formula is way more powerful than it needs to be, yet somehow not powerful enough...

I learned things off the track too. First of all, almost everyone will throw a Frisbee with you. Yes, a Frisbee. Some are trying to be funny and stuff, but you all wish you had my skills. Racing is better than videogames. When there's cake, everyone is your friend. Free food tastes the best. Manhunt and jackpot are awesome. Don't fall in a mud puddle...Matt. You can't bend an axle back into shape on a dumpster...Dad. Always go *before* the race, because you never know how long it will take.

What should I tell you all? Perhaps the biggest message is that *it doesn't freakin' matter*. Seriously, guys. Trophies are plastic and rock. That's *it!* They are there to stand for something else: what you've accomplished. The trophy reminds you of that achievement. There is nothing wrong with being proud of your work, but don't be a competitive jerk. If everyone blabbed about how many cars he had and how he placed in each race, Oaklane would be a terrible place. I have something for you parents too. Don't be yelling at your kids for racing badly. Chances are, they know they were boneheads out there. They are already yelling at themselves.

Another piece of wisdom from a weathered sage (that's me): be nice on and off the track. Don't block, brake-check, chop, do the Hokey Pokey, or anything of that sort. Golden rule: do you want that to happen to you? If you get a call, go to the back. If you wreck it, take off your gear and watch the other guys finish. If you start throwing helmets around and screaming at people, take five and, I don't know, punch dance or something. Once you are no longer a candidate for a straightjacket, then you can come back and assess the damage to your car. Also, talk to the other guys; shake hands and stuff. Don't be strangers to perfectly good people. Just because they beat you doesn't mean they aren't going to the same movie tomorrow.

In the words of the great Ah-nold, "I'll be back." Why? I miss all of you already, plus I really don't have anything better to do on Saturdays. Hopefully, I'll be doing all of the things drivers can't do, like flagging, cornerworking, and helping out with my brother's car. Actually, I could do that already...