



HIGH VELOCITY

BY BEKAH WRIGHT

PARTNERS ON THE PIRELLI WORLD
CHAMPIONSHIP CIRCUIT—DRIVER ALECUDELL
AND HIS SPONSOR, TECH ENTREPRENEUR
JOHN WISE—RELAY A LIFE LESSON: THERE ARE
ENDLESS STARTING LINES, AND MANY FINISH
LINES LEFT TO CROSS.



It's in their blood. Talk to Alec Udell and John Wise and both feel the same way about auto racing. Not just racing, but the elements that go into motorsports, from cars to engineering.



Forgive the pun, but even as children, Alec Udell and John Wise were driven individuals. Udell vividly remembers Christmas when he was 18 months old. That's when Santa delivered a Barbie Corvette to his sister, which he promptly commandeered and voraciously drove around in the basement. "I think I always knew I wanted to go down this path," he says of racing. "Luckily for me, my parents fostered this natural drive."

Following in the tire tracks of his grandfather and father, Udell began go-kart racing at the age of 5 in his hometown of The Woodlands, Texas. A string of accomplishments ensued: winning the 2008 Rotax North American National Points Championship, driving for Team USA in the 2009 Rotax World Finals held in Egypt, and becoming a Rock Island Double Champion by winning the Rotax Jr. and Tag Jr. classes in 2010, the same year he competed regionally in the NASA Spec Miata class and attended the 2010 Skip Barber Karting Shootout.

By age 15, Udell entered professional racing, becoming, in 2011, the youngest, licensed race driver in the history of the Pirelli World Challenge (PWC). Over the next few seasons, taking the podium for top five finishes became as familiar for Udell as being behind the wheel.

When not racing, Udell helped out at his family's racing shop, where he found himself gravitating toward the engineers. "They had huge technical knowledge I could learn from," he recalls. "It was around this time I knew I wanted to design and build cars." When college rolled around, Udell declared an engineering major at Clemson University. Juggling classes and racing competitions became de rigueur.

ALEC UDELL



Similarly, an interest in street racing grabbed Wise at a very young age. By 12, he had the ultimate goal of Formula 1 (F1) racing. By the time he was 14, Wise was working as a mechanic at the local tracks of Bethesda, Maryland. When a driver flippantly asked the teen if he could do anything about his Porsche lagging behind the others, he gave it some thought. “I took out the driver’s headlight, found some aluminum foil tape and made ram air duct for air intake,” Wise remembers. It worked. Suddenly, the driver requested Wise accompany him to every race. “I cut my teeth by building his car,” he says. “Over the course of a year, many late nights and weekends in my mom’s driveway, I turned his semi-street car into a full-blown racecar.” A racecar with the capacity to win.

By the following season, 16-year-old Wise was solely running a three-car team in the BMW Car Club of America racing circuit. The year concluded with the team winning SCCA, BMW CCA and NASA championships. The next season, 2001, the team went pro. “We won a championship right out of the gate,” Wise says. A string of championship wins commenced for Wise, who was supporting some of America’s top racing teams as a mechanic, crew chief, data engineer and team manager. “I didn’t have any context of how hard it was to win championships because I’d never not won until about 2010.”

Along the way, Wise accomplished his goal of engineering for F1 races. He calls the class a Cinderella story. “In Formula 1, the mechanics are at such a high level, they’re deemed engineers by the Society of Automotive Engineers. You’re one of the best engineers in the world.” Territory that appealed to Wise. “A mechanic asks what you do and how you do it,” he explains. “An engineer doesn’t. They ask why something was done the way it was, then respond, ‘Okay, I’ll figure it out from here.’ I’ve always focused on the why.”

Retirement followed. Twice. Once after Wise fell from a race trailer, breaking both legs, ending his ability to do pit stops. He’d also realized his dream. “I felt I’d achieved as high a level as I was ever going to,” he says. “And I’m not motivated by the idea of winning championship after championship.” Additionally, several businesses launched by the entrepreneurial-minded Wise were requiring more of his attention, so he bid racing goodbye.

The track continued singing its siren song to Wise, only in a different way. “Amazing technologies were coming to fruition in racing, but out of competitive advantage, there was never any tech transfer,” he says. “I thought it was a shame none of that wisdom was being passed on.” So Wise created LOCI, a global

system for buying and selling intellectual properties on the blockchain—a platform for mining and licensing, allowing inventors to make their creations accessible to potential investors. “An idea is intrinsically valuable, and LOCI makes sure of this.”

As LOCI was getting up and running, Wise signed on with James Sofronas to mechanic with Global Motorsports Group (GMG) for PWC’s 2015 season. Wise was paired with Udell in 2016. That year, Udell won his first career overall PWC podium at the Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course, as well as the “Hard Charger” Award for the most positions advanced throughout the season.

Excited about his win in Ohio, Udell asked Wise if he was also pumped. “It was just a Sunday for me,” Wise responded, in what he says amounted to a verbal shrug. But Udell was intrigued and inspired, and he recalls Wise’s next words: “John said, ‘Driving is great, but at some point you’re going to have to transition into helping make something more of the sport, or the automobile in general.’” In other words, “It’s good to have people pushing you to achieve your goals, but it’s also good to have people who push you further towards what you can do for the world.”

Wise made Udell a promise. When his new company, LOCI, hits it big, he’ll sponsor Udell. The opportunity arrived in 2018, with Udell driving the No. 41 LOCI Porsche 911 GT3 R prepared by GMG.

Beyond racing results, what’s next for Wise? “For me, as an entrepreneur, it’s about recognizing opportunities and pushing toward those,” says the 33 year-old. “Only time will tell where that will lead next.”

As for Udell, graduating from Clemson in December 2018 is a huge milestone. The 22-year-old’s aspirations post-college are already in motion. He is working with his family to develop their current business, Houston Karting Complex, into a Texas-based motorsports headquarters. Udell’s personal goal is “to run Le Mans and win.” He adds, “My dream job is developing, engineering, test driving cars and racing for the same manufacturer.”

You can almost hear these veteran racers’ engines revving as they speed toward their next finish lines.

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