

Over the past 20 years we've been operating the Drag Racing School in Florida and in California, we have made many new friends. We encourage our graduates to stay in touch with us, send us photos of their race cars and keep us abreast of their racing activities and accomplishments.

Some of our grads are pretty easy to keep track of because they continue to "pop up" on the front page of National Dragster like, in Houston recently when Brandon Bernstein, Tim Wilkerson, Greg Anderson and Karen Stouffer (all former grads) made a clean sweep in the Pro Categories. Other grad's victories, while every bit as exciting for them may go unnoticed on a national basis. But no matter how big or small the win, we still like to hear from them.

We like to keep ourselves available for ongoing advice on racing related matters. Racers are always welcome to call us with questions and they do, sometimes years after they've attended our course. Although we can't "tune a car" over the telephone and wouldn't try to, the questions are more often related to personal performance as opposed to

car performance. And that is where I think we can be of the most help.

A few days ago I received a call from a driver that took our course back in 1996. Eight years after taking our class, he picked up the phone and called me with a problem. It was a problem I think many people deal with.

This driver had over the past few years done quite well, going rounds and winning races but over the past few months had experienced a great deal of inconsistency in the driving department. One day good, the next day bad. As he spoke I could tell he was sincere in his concern over his performance. He told me a lot about the bad days, the mistakes, the problems and relived many of them in remarkable detail, remembering small distractions, negative comments that were made as well as how he felt before the bad run, during and following it. He talked about how he would go over this with his wife and crew and about his plan to not repeat these mistakes. After just a few minutes of

this I realized the error he was making, one many of us make on a daily basis.

Our driver was trying to improve by fixing or stopping his errors and was doing virtually nothing to enhance or repeat his good performance. The idea of reliving and focusing your thoughts on good performance is a main theme many psychologists use in an effort to improve performance. Some business leaders and sports coaches will spend a great deal of time analyzing their groups poor performance and try desperately to find out why they "failed" or "screwed up", working diligently to avoid those mistakes again. This is an entirely reactive approach to winning and not a proactive approach. Picture this: a company that has been selling widgets for many years just lost one of its largest accounts. There is a meeting. In the meeting the group tries to determine what went wrong, why and how did they lose one of their largest clients and how they can prevent this from happening again. There is some merit to this. If mistakes were made internally they need to

know, if there was a change in the market place they failed to notice or prepare for, they need to know or if there was a lack of awareness on what their largest competitor was doing, they need to know this too. But... as productive as this "way too late" meeting seems to be, I think they are missing a very important aspect of their business. What about the clients they didn't lose? Directly after this "why did we lose" meeting there should be a second meeting. This meeting we'll call the "why do we win" meeting. I'd be interested in taking a look at their happiest customer. Why are they a good customer, who services them and how. I'd want to know every possible reason this client is pleased with them. Then they should duplicate this good performance. Because in the end ... and remember this ..., you win by winning. You don't simply win by not losing! You must have a proactive plan. You must figure out why you're good when you're good. If you can't figure out why you win, or what the winning tune-up is, you will be faced with irregular performance and inconsistency.

Now back to the race track. I truly believe that there are very specific reasons why we perform well and why we perform poorly. You have a personal tune-up just like your car and, just like your car, if you don't know what the fast tune-up is you will not be able to repeat it.

Imagine if you understood nothing about your race car. You knew nothing about how it worked and when you went racing you kept track of nothing, no air measurements, no track temperature, no wind speed, no track notes and you never ever adjusted anything on the car. You might imagine that your performance would be poor but, every once in a while your combination would fit the conditions, if only by chance, and your car would run well. This may sound ridiculous however that's how many people operate personally. They spend no time analyzing their good performances to determine their personal tune-up. In fact some racers following a good performance actually are just relieved they didn't screw up!

I suggested to our former student, that he spend more time thinking about his good races rather than his bad ones, reliving the perfect runs and good performances. He should think about what he had done the day before his best race, the morning of that race, hours before, minutes before and during the best runs. I suggested he start this new method of thinking as he prepares. The goal here is to duplicate your successes, not just stop your failures. Like many things in life this new way of thinking takes a lot of practice but the rewards are great. This is quite an exciting topic and one we have spent a great deal of time researching and studying at our school, so we can better prepare our students for competition on the track... and in the world. If this sounds interesting and you'd like to learn more about this type of thinking, give us a call.