

When I'm at the races, I always see past students and I often take the opportunity to stop by the pit areas of former graduates and visit. A few years ago while I was at the Gatornationals I made a visit to a former student on Saturday. It was midday and the alcohol cars had made their last qualifying run in the morning and were preparing for their first round Saturday afternoon.

When I arrived at his pit I could sense a little panic. The crew still had the car up on PRO jacks, body panels were off, tools were spread around and they were feverishly working on the car. The driver sat nearby on the tailgate of his truck watching. I took a seat beside him and asked how it was going. "Not too good" he answered. It was only a half hour before first round, he was qualified and we both knew that at this point the car should be ready, on the ground and the crew should be relaxing for a few minutes, maybe sipping on a little POWERade. However I saw no relaxing... just thrashing. "What's wrong?" I asked. He then proceeded to relive aloud his last qualifying run. Apparently

he had missed the 1-2 shift, drove on the limiter for a while, over-revving the engine and causing some major damage. It looked like it was back together and almost ready to go so I asked if the crew had been able to make the proper repairs. He nodded affirmatively. Then what was the big thrash we were witnessing? It was then he shared the bad news with me.

When the crew asked why he never shifted he told them the shift light never came on and that's why he was late on the shift. So I asked if the shift light was able to be fixed and he said they didn't need to fix it because it wasn't broken. I was confused for a moment, then I got it.

The shift light actually worked, he just missed it, however rather than admitting to his error he instantly wanted to move the blame from himself and onto someone else or something else. So he blamed the car. Now faced with only this bad information the crew was trying to diagnose and fix a problem that wasn't a problem. They had repaired the damaged parts and now were trying to find the

source of a non-existing electrical problem. What was the driver to do at this point? Should he tell them he lied or let them continue to work?

This was not an enviable position to be in.

My point here is not so simple as “do not tell lies” but more an issue of personal responsibility. I believe in today’s society we are moving increasingly away from personal responsibility. It seems that everywhere, everyone is explaining away poor performance and bad behavior with stories about things that have happened in their past that are supposed to excuse their performance and behavior now. I’ll admit that things happen in our lives that can shape or modify our outlook and may in some way influence our choices but you must remember one important point. It’s still “your behavior and your performance” and you are accountable.

Should you make a mistake it’s still a mistake you made and for whatever reason you made it, it absolutely does not change in any way the mistake. Many people

believe that somehow the mistake isn't quite as bad if they can give you a little background as to why they made it. However, what is really important is fixing the damage done, determining how not to repeat the error and moving on.

The idea of admitting your mistakes as soon as you notice them, taking full responsibility for them and asking for a little advice on how to avoid the problem next time is not a new concept. High achievers and winners do this with regularity. At first you may find it a bit difficult to speak out about your own mistakes or incompetence but the more you do it the better you get. You may feel that others will judge you, pick on you or talk behind your back. If this happens it won't happen for long because the courage you display by taking responsibility when things go wrong will be admired and in a short while I'll predict others in your group will do the same. Then you'll see what happens when everybody is accountable and no one is pointing fingers. It's like everything else, the more you do it the better you get at it.

If there's anything in your racing life that you'd like some help with, give us a call... we'd love to talk with you.