

Racer attracts local sponsors

By GRACE R. DOVE
Post Staff

BACK MOUNTAIN—Many race cars sport advertisements and endorsements from well-known large companies, but only one has the distinction of wearing the logos of three Back Mountain businesses—J & J Deli, Competition Plus Motor Sports and the Penn State Wilkes-Barre campus's athletic department.

A sleek 1992 Chevrolet Camaro owned by Dallas resident David Beccaris has been making the rounds of endurance races sponsored by SCCA (Sports Car Club of America). Beccaris has driven the slightly modified car in races lasting between three and eight hours at Watkins Glen, Pocono and other nearby tracks.

Janice Wertman of J & J Deli in Dallas had seen NASCAR races on television and heard her co-workers discuss it, but had never attended a race until she went to Watkins Glen several weeks ago.

"It was very exciting, seeing our car on the track," she said. "It's relaxing to get away from the deli for awhile, and fun to meet so many different people at the track."

Spotter Don Cox, father of one of J & J employee Scott Cox, explained everything to Janice and Susan Pietracchini, who went with her. Cox told them when Beccaris's car would pass their vantage point, so they wouldn't miss him.

"The racing people were all very nice," Wertman said. "They're all there simply for the love of the sport and get along well together."

Janice and Susan took a large tray of J & J's famous homogenous hoagies for an impromptu after-race celebration.

"There will definitely be a place on the new car for J&J and Penn State, along with national sponsors."

David Beccaris
Race car owner/driver

"The hoagies won—they didn't finish them," she said laughing. She hopes to attend at least one more race this season.

Beccaris had parked his Camaro in front of J & J for a day, which prompted the regular customers to ask Wertman questions about it.

"I was surprised to find many race fans here in the Back Mountain," Wertman said. "One 70-year-old lady came in and told us she regularly follows the races."

While J & J Deli feeds Beccaris and his crew, the Penn State athletic department provides a place for Beccaris, a Penn State grad and loyal Nittany Lion fan, to stay in shape.

"People don't realize that drivers must be in excellent physical shape," said athletic director Jack Monick. "Dave works out here three or four times a week. He must be tough to withstand the heat in the car and the weight of his asbestos protective clothing."

Stroud

(continued from page 9)

ing ability has gotten better, so I like to pass just as much as I like to hit."

Stroud particularly enjoyed Lehman's trip to districts last year. The Lady Knights eliminated Pittston before losing the district championship to Tunkhannock. Nonetheless, they gave the Tigerettes a battle by playing some of their best volleyball of the season. This year Stroud hopes that Lehman continues to improve week by week and perhaps take the Wyoming Valley Conference and District 2 crowns away from Tunkhannock.

From an individual standpoint she'd like to spend some time at the outside hitter position.

"I'm kind of tired of playing in the middle," Stroud said. "I wish (Coach Rogers) would let me hit some outside and get some power in. There's not much power in the middle, it seems like our sets are off the net this year. We've been having a hard time keeping our middle in."

"It's relaxing to get away from the deli for awhile, and fun to meet so many different people at the track."

Jan Wertman

J & J Deli, race car sponsor

Placing the Penn State logo on the Camaro started out as a joke which gradually became serious, Monick said. He's done "lots of crazy things" to help promote Penn State's athletics departments.

"I saw a race car in Connecticut with a college name on it, and found out it had helped the college recruit between 200 and 300 new students," he said. "It seemed like a very creative idea to promote Penn State."

The Penn State logo attracted immediate attention when it made its debut at the Giant's Despair Hill Climb, Monick said. "A student saw it on television and stopped by to tell me about it 10 minutes later."

Bill Zukosky of Competition Plus in the Fern Brook section of Dallas Township is responsible for preparing the Camaro for races, making sure it's in top shape in both performance and safety.

Working with race cars is a hobby which became Zukosky's main profession about six years ago.

Assisted by Nanticoke resident Lee Wysocki, Zukosky sets up the suspension, steering, electrical and other systems before each race and works with the pit crew at the track when Beccaris races.

Zukosky also preps race cars for Back Mountain residents John Halbing, Will Dannert, Charles Baylor and Bill Knecht and is building a race car for Dr. Alan Boonin.

Owner and driver Beccaris, also a Dallas resident ("I'm here for life"), has been racing for 15 years with the SCCA, which he joined right out of college. His first love is road racing, which he enjoys every phase of.

"I feel like a fish out of water in track racing," he said. "On a track, it's the same curves and straightaways every lap. Road racing is more complex and involves different skills. No corner is the same every lap. You have many right and left-hand turns, hills and many different variables. It's the same set of roads, but they're different every lap. No two laps are the same. There's more going on—braking and handling are very critical."

This season he has raced at SCCA regional races, mainly to perfect his skills and prepare for next year's races.

"You really need to practice or go out regularly," he said. "You lose your edge against the clock if you skip a few weeks. It's all in the track time."

Beccaris stays in shape by training with weights, stairs, the stationary bicycle and the treadmill at Penn State.

"The key is endurance," he said. "A race takes a lot out of you— you

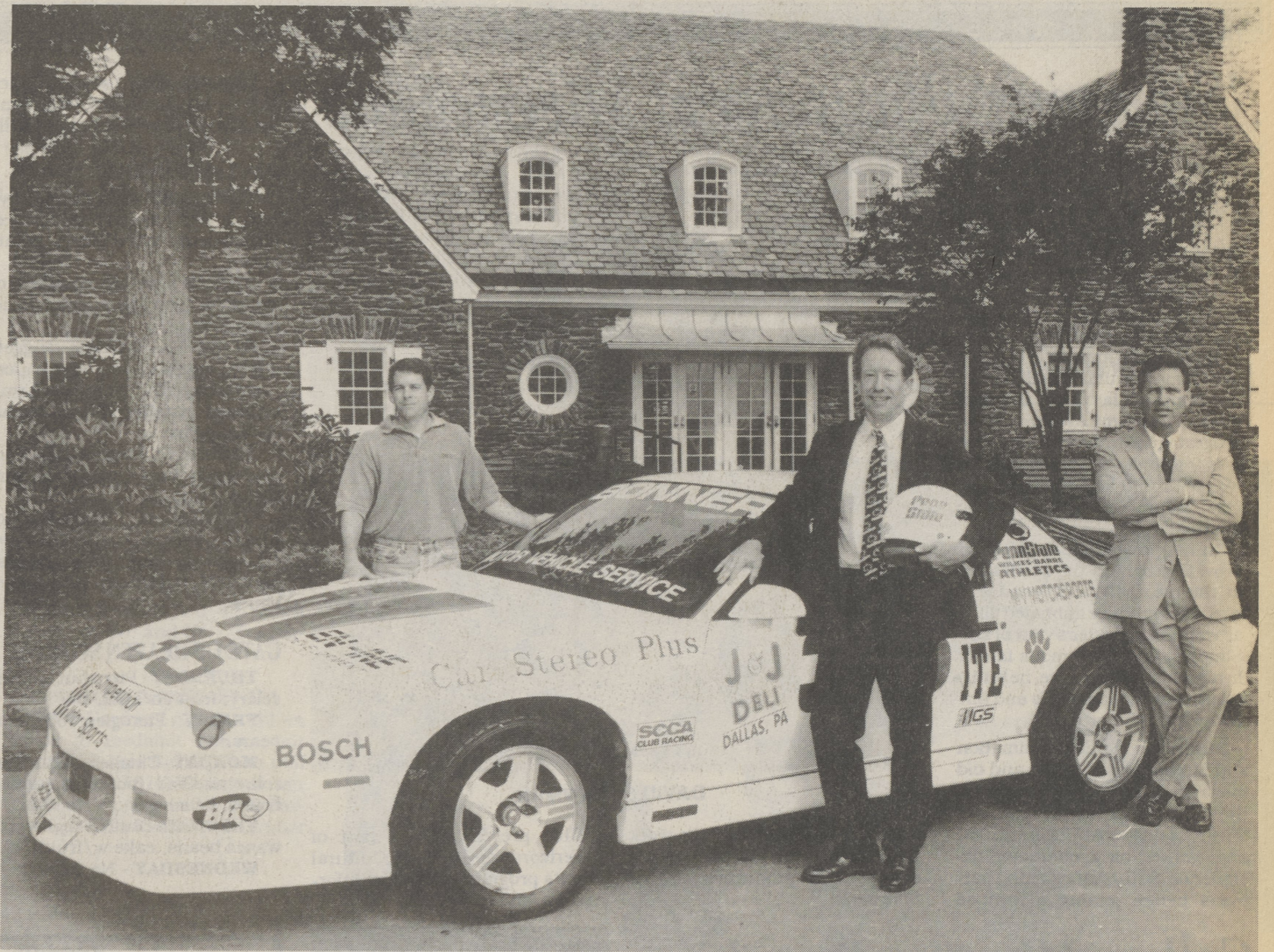
"I hope all of my freshman look at her and say, someday I want to play volleyball like that."

Bob Rogers

Lake-Lehman volleyball coach

Cara plans to attend college next year and begin her pursuit of a degree in mathematics or one of the sciences. She's inquired about playing volleyball at Juniata and a few other schools. Although they haven't discussed it yet, coach Rogers feels she can definitely play at the Division III level and probably even help out a few Division II programs.

"Because she is a complete, all around player," explained Rogers. "Cara is an outstanding vertical jumper, she likes the game and she's a very good student. We'll look for what she needs academically and begin to look at schools from there."



Race care owner Dave Beccaris, Penn State Wilkes-Barre campus acting CEO Tom Winter, PhD, and Penn State Wilkes-

Barre athletic director Jack Monick show off Beccaris's sleek 1992 Camaro, which sports the logos of three area businesses.

can easily lose several pounds in sweat. You have to drink lots of water and sports drinks before the race. It takes a lot out of you, both physically and mentally."

His heavy, fire-resistant asbestos suit and full-face helmet, combined with the heat in the car, are necessary discomforts. "There's no breeze in the car when you're doing 150," he said. "The

air flows around the car, not through it."

Next season he plans to sell the Camaro, which is worth about \$13,000, and invest in a new car, which he expects to set him back about \$30,000.

While many owner-drivers are backed by large corporations, Beccaris has used his own money to buy and maintain his car.

"Talent doesn't mean a lot if you don't have money," he said. With no large financial backers, he supports himself, the Camaro and Bud the cat by buying and selling cars and fleets wholesale between dealers.

"There will definitely be a place on the new car for J&J and Penn State, along with national sponsors," he said.

Beccaris has found that race people tend to become attached to the atmosphere, the location and the friendships which they form.

"It's neat to see how people from completely different worlds—a big state university like Penn State and a small family business like J & J—become involved and find they have something in common," he said.

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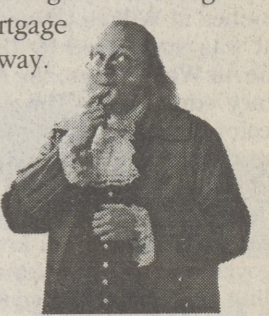
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