

Sometimes, even in racing, nice guys do finish first. Sometimes they even finish first a lot. Consider the case of Jean-Paul Cyr, multi-time ACT champion, race winner and all-around nice guy.

In the often rough-and-tumble world of the American Canadian Tour, you'd think that the racer who claims the crown at the end of the year would be the one who "storms" to the front.

Anyone who has ever been to Thunder Road, Airborne, or any ACT race knows that the competition is stiff and the sheet metal often not stiff enough. ACT's system of handicapping high-point drivers puts the fast cars in the back and the action on the track. Unlike time-trials in other series, making it to the front in ACT racing means racing there, not being placed there due to a lap or two by yourself on the track. Through heats, B-mains and consi's the only way to get into the show is to earn your way in.

Bumping and banging, hot tempers, bruised cars and bonsai moves are par for the course at any ACT event. And yet, in the midst of this carnage there exists a driver who consistently wins races and championships, not by charging to the front but by systematically out-preparing, out-racing and out-smarting his competitors.

They say you can tell a lot about someone by what their peers say about them. Tune your scanner to the driver frequencies before an ACT feature event and you'll hear something like this, which can be heard by numerous crews at numerous ACT races. "Okay, you've got a good car today. Doesn't look like there'll be much passing on the outside, but Jean-Paul was making it work in his heat. He's ten spots behind you and you know he's going to be coming on the outside just like he always does. When he gets to you let him go and fall in behind him. He's going to find the holes and you can follow him to the front."

When Cyr wins, whether it be a championship or a race, there are no burnouts to be witnessed. He doesn't make reverse laps on the track, nor stand on his roof, nor wave the checkers, nor scream and holler. Instead, Jean-Paul Cyr emerges from his car with a wave to the fans and quietly assumes his place for photos and interviews. He is gracious to the fans, thankful to his sponsors and respectful of his competitors. There is no bad-mouthing other drivers, no blaming the track surface or the management and certainly no slips of vulgarity.

Be it behind the wheel, in front of the cameras or center stage at the ACT banquet, Jean- Paul Cyr represents not only what is good about racers and racing, but what is good about people in general.