

Without question, the biggest surprise performance of the 2007 ACT season was that of Randy Potter. For those not familiar with racing history, the bigger surprise is that Randy's "overnight success" has been nearly a quarter century in the making.

Randy Potter started his racing career in the Super Stock division at Riverside Speedway (Groveton) in 1983. He was 16 years old. "I only ran a handful of races that year and was constantly announced as '16 year old Randy Potter'" Randy says. "No one else had ever raced at Riverside before at 16 years old."

Racing a 1972 4-door Chevelle his parents had bought for him, he didn't have much success in his rookie year. Randy was discouraged. "I remember my uncle telling me to get back in the car after I came in from practice and didn't want to go back out." Randy says. "Good thing I followed his advice."

A newer car raced late in the '84 season brought better results, even though it was powered by "...a very tired motor my dad and I got from a local junk yard. It was a little seized but we freed it up and got it in and running and won a heat the first time out."

In 1985 Randy and some of his friends built a new car in the wood shop at Groveton High school "My teacher (Bill Joyce) saw the interest that we had and seized the opportunity to put our passion to work." Randy says. "The car kept us out of trouble and in school every day. We won a race that year only to have the second place driver protest the finish and take the victory away for being 3/16 of an inch too low in frame height. I got mad and ran the car out of the track up the road to a friend's house and sold it the very next day. I took the next year off from racing."

1987 brought a new car and some good sponsorship for a run at the division title. The season was highlighted by seven victories and the championship, but also saw several wrecks including a rollover and an attempt at knocking down a wall in practice. After the championship in '87, though, Randy admits that "1988 was cut short by my immaturity and hot temper. I was out again until 1990."

In 1990 Randy became a late model teammate to Aaron Bennett. "I finished third the first time out in a full field of cars that usually sent two or more home a night." Randy says. "From there I only finished out of the top ten once and qualified for all of the events that year. I finished the year second in points and captured Rookie of the Year honors."

Randy grabbed runner up points spots again in '92, '93 and '96 along with his first late model championship in 1994. He also won the first ever race at White Mountain Motorsports Park at their grand opening in 1993 and finished third in the first ACT Tour race at Riverside behind Brian Hoar(1st) and Steve Miller (2nd).

A shot at ACT racing on a limited budget brought a seventh place in points at the end of the 1995 season. "I took some hard knocks on the tour that season" Randy says, "But I gained some respect from my fellow ACT drivers. They were all much better financed than we were, but we'd show up in a borrowed truck, homemade trailer and just enough money to get to the races, buy tires and get home. Oh, and beer money for the trip back."

Over the next decade Randy's racing was sporadic, highlighted by a 2002 championship with the short-lived NEDA series and a handful of wins here and there. He made only 8 total starts with ACT from 1996 through the end of 2006, but had 2 top 5's and 3 top 10's to show for it.

"We had a strong run with the ACT Tour at White Mountain in 2006" he says "with some equipment that was as good as most of the guys we were racing with. A couple of wrecks put the season to bed early for the crew and me and made me wonder how I would be able to finance a run with ACT in 2007. I made a lot of calls and did a lot of traveling, talking with sponsors and getting things in line while everyone else was still racing and finishing up their year. We ordered a new chassis and had it ready to go when the ACT season-opening race at Oxford came along. Pete Knights (my crew chief) and Dave Smith from Race Basics came up with a great Oxford set up."

Randy won that Oxford race and quickly served notice that he was back on his game. Those who remembered his previous inconsistency instead saw him finish the 2007 season with 1 win, 5 top 5's, 9 top 10's and a 4<sup>th</sup> in the final points race. Ironically, if it hadn't been for a crash at the season-ender in Oxford (where his great season began) he would have probably had a top 3 points finish.

What changed in 2007? "I guess I would have to say that the keys to our successful season were the great equipment that we purchased from Race Basics and the support from them as well as the addition of my crew and crew chief Pete Knights." Randy comments. "Having the new chassis, some decent sponsorship as well as some close friends helping out financially we were able to put together

some very strong runs. If it hadn't been for the people around me, 2007 would not have been possible at all."

"Randy Potter, simply put, is a racer" says race writer Big Bigelow. "Some guys point chase. Not Potter. He chases points by thinking if he passes the guy in front of him he'll earn two more points." No one passed more cars than Randy Potter on the 2007 ACT Tour.

Big recounts an event that perfectly reflects Randy's attitude toward racing. "At Ste. Croix in June of 2007 Randy began the day hating the place. He just couldn't find the fast way around. About half way into the 100 he was one of the fastest guys on the track. A bunch of guys were riding a bit thinking there was going to be a caution at anytime. Not Randy. You could see him gaining on the cars in front of him with each passing lap. My son Nick and I were watching him in the closing 5 or 6 laps. The only car in front of him was the No. 18 of Jamie Fisher. Both Nick and I knew Fisher was a lap down but with each closing lap you could see Potter running him down. With one lap to go Potter came off turn four sideways and dove under Fisher to beat him to the line. After the race I asked Randy if he knew Fisher was down a lap. He perked right up and a big smile came to his face and he poked me in the chest and said, "Yeah, but I beat him to the line didn't I!"

"Racing is pretty much all I've ever done" Randy says. "I have gotten into football and car restoration the past few years but other than that I don't have many hobbies. My wife was asked if it bothered her with all the time I spend either at the track or in the garage and she said that she'd rather have me race, as when I took a year off I drove her crazy."

"I'm a lot more patient now than I was back when I started." Randy says. "I've always had a short fuse but now it takes a lot more to get it lit. I met my wife on Christmas day in 1994. She had a 10 month old daughter. I took one look at her and that was it. We got married and had another girl in 2002. Watching that birth and both of them growing up changed me forever. I guess having kids tends to mellow you out more. You realize that there's more to life than dwelling on a certain race or incident and when you get home it really isn't going to change a thing about your day or the way your children look at you or how you go about your job. It's just another race and there will be more of them. If my racing career ended now, I would like people to remember that I always tried to put on a show whether it was controversial or not. I always tried to pass the next car in front of me and I did what I did with a lot less money than a lot of the other successful

teams. I had fun on and off the track and that's what makes it all worthwhile."