

Rick Paya knows a thing or two about winning championships, but it wasn't always that way.

“When Jean-Paul and I built our first dirt Pro Stock car” says Rick Paya, “neither one of us knew what the heck we were doing. We had heard about this part called the sway bar. We had no idea what it did, so we didn't put one on the car. During our first race at Albany-Saratoga in Malta, NY, Jean-Paul did more donuts in the infield than laps around the track. Let's just say I figured out what the sway bar was used for.”

In the years since, there are a lot of other things Rick has figured out, like how to run a record-setting, championship-winning team. To date the #32 team has seven total ACT championships and five in a row, along with nineteen tour wins. That's a long way from spinning into the infield at a dirt track.

“Rick and I have been friends since high school” says Jean-Paul. “We first raced together at Devils Bowl in the Pro Stock division. When we started we knew *nothing*.” With Jean-Paul driving and Rick turning wrenches, though, they earned the 1990 Pro Stock championship together at Devil's Bowl Speedway in VT.

After that success the pair headed toward asphalt, but not together. Jean-Paul ventured into ACT late models while Rick headed for the Busch North Series. A role as crew chief and car manager for Keith Lamell's Busch North team gave Rick some big-league racing experience. At the same time, Rick was also developing a racing engine business on the side. Eventually, RPM (Rick's Performance Machining) grew to demand Rick's full-time attention. Rick resigned his role with Lamell Motorsports to run his business.

Jean-Paul won the 1995 and 1996 ACT championships without Rick, but the pair reunited near the end of the 2001 season.

“The last race in 2001 was at Airborne” says Jean-Paul. “Rick helped us that race and we rekindled our friendship.” Rick then joined Jean-Paul again for the 2002 season. Together they grabbed five wins that year. Championships followed in 2003, 2004 and 2005.

Near the end of the 2006 season, Jean-Paul sold his racing operation to Rick, putting the #32 under the RPM Motorsports banner. The move

relieved Jean-Paul of the headaches of being a team owner but kept everything else about the team intact.

“My first race as a car owner (the 2006 Milk Bowl) the car went flying off turn 1 and 2 and ended up on its roof” Rick says. “Jean-Paul immediately came over the radio and said ‘Wow, I’m glad I don't own this thing!’”

The string of championships continued through the conclusion of the 2007 season, when Jean-Paul collected his 5th straight and 7th overall championship. For Rick, it was his 5th as a crew chief but first as a car owner.

Shortly after the conclusion of the 2008 season, Jean-Paul announced that he would be giving up a full-time ACT effort in favor of a weekly Thunder Road ride for Joey Laquerre as well as racing his motorcycle in the Baja 500 and 1000.

Enter 5-time ACT champion Brian Hoar, who returned to the ACT ranks in 2007 from the Busch North Series. “I came back to the ACT Tour after racing 6 years in the NASCAR Busch North/Camping World East Series” says Brian. “I didn’t enjoy my 2007 ACT season for many reasons, which is why I skipped all but one race in 2008” Brian says. “I was planning on running 4 to 6 races in 2009. Rick called me and told me Jean-Paul was doing something different in 2009. He wanted to know if I would like to drive for him full-time. The negotiating went along very quickly and we had a solid plan by the end of that week.”

So what would make a driver who has had success with his own team decide to work for someone else instead?

“Rick has great equipment, a great attitude, a great race shop, great people and he has a great plan” Brian says. One thing Rick seems to be very mindful of is chemistry with all the crew and between his drivers. Rick has a well thought out plan and knows how to get things done. Rick knows how to win races and championships! With the goals, experience, equipment, and the positive attitude Rick has, I expect to have fun contending week in and week out for race wins and the championship.”

Away from the track, RPM has now become an award-winning engine business that has grown to provide motors for everything from local street rod builders to top-running Camping World East teams and every conceivable form of

motorsports in between. What began as an after-work venture has turned into a premier engine business that also houses a premier racing operation.

Not one to brag about himself, the analysis of Rick's success comes instead from his wife, Michelle. "Rick has very high standards and he works extremely hard to meet those standards" she says. "He has an amazing intuition and he thoroughly examines all angles before acting on an idea. Whether the endeavor is successful or not, something positive always comes from it. There is never a time when Rick is not going in 10 different directions and it amazes me how thorough he is on everything. Trust me, he does not forget anything! He does what he loves and it shows with how successful he has become. It has taken a lot of work and determination for Rick to be where he is today. We haven't even seen half of what he is capable of doing"

"Our championships were definitely a team effort" says Jean-Paul-Paul Cyr "but Rick played a large role in those championships. "I am certain that Rick and RPM will win many more championships in the years to come."

Starting with the 2009 ACT season, Rick Paya and Brian Hoar are hoping to make that lofty prediction come true.