

“If things turn out the way we are planning them to, I see myself one day running in the higher divisions being sanctioned by NASCAR” says Steven Legendre. Many race-watchers up and down the East Coast are saying the same thing about the 18 year old from St. Johnsbury, VT.

By starting the 2010 racing season with 6th place finish at New Smyrna in January and a 3rd place finish in a March PASS South race at Dillon Motor Speedway, it seemed like Legendre had come out of nowhere to appear on the racing radar screen. His path to those finishes, though, had taken up nearly a quarter of his young life and quite a portion of his father’s life as well.

Kendell Legendre, Steven’s father, began attending races in Vermont and New Hampshire in 1970. In the following years he moved from spectator and crew member to racer. With his wife and kids in tow, Kendell hit racetracks throughout New England both behind the wheel of a racecar and on top of a toolbox.

Steven began racing in 2005 in the Kids Truck Division at New Hampshire’s White Mountain Motorsports Park. He was just 13 years old. By the end of 2006 he had 14 wins under his belt and was ready to move up to a higher division at the track.

While Kendell had achieved some success behind the wheel during his racing career, it became clear that his true talent was with a wrench not a steering wheel. As Steven was ready to take the next step in his driving career, his father was ready to call an end to his. The elder Legendre hung up his helmet and changed his focus to being a full time crew chief.

In 2007 Steven raced a Strictly Stock where he won in just his fourth start. Other top finishes meant he was ready to move up from that class as well. 2008 brought a Rookie of the Year season in Late Models with two wins, nine top 10’s and four top 5’s. After years racing at White Mountain Motorsports Park, Steven also took to the road, racing in a handful of ACT events. The experience of running in touring series races taught him about travelling to other tracks and racing with very experienced drivers. It was clear that the time was right for the move to a touring series.

In 2009 Legendre ran the full PASS North Series and finished 11th in points at the end of the year. It was a good showing for a driver who had little experience with a

Pro Stock car and had not previously seen many of the tracks he ended up racing on.

By keeping his eyes and ears open that year, he learned a lot about a Pro Stock versus a Late Model. "A Pro Stock varies a lot from a late model" he says. "For one thing the 10 inch tires improve the handling characteristics of the car tremendously by providing a better feel for the car. Another thing is Pro Stocks have more power than the Late Models so having good traction is a big part of the handling characteristics. Having all the power, though, also requires good throttle control and saving the tires during the long races."

Like he had in previous years, Steven took yet another big step to start the 2010 season. With the backing of Ford Motor Company, Legendre is utilizing the Ford 347SR crate engine in PASS competition, the only driver to do so. But that's not all that Legendre is doing differently. "Down south, everybody runs Hamke chassis and Chevrolet engines, but we've got a Dale Shaw chassis with the Ford motor" says Legendre. "We've had a lot of help from Dale Shaw, Jay Fogleman, and Mike Delahanty from Ford Racing."

Legendre's association with Ford was due in large part to Kendell's role as crew chief for American Canadian Tour and Thunder Road driver Cris Michaud. Michaud's team tested and raced the Ford crate motor in 2009 before it became widely available for 2010. Who better to help develop the Ford crate motor in PASS racing than the very same person who had helped develop it in ACT racing?

Driving in his first full season of PASS South competition, Legendre sits (as of press time) just outside the top 10 in points in PASS South, inside the top 10 in PASS National points and earned a top 10 finish in one start in the North series. Top 5 finishes in both National and Southern points are definitely within reach for the young driver.

Racing down South with racers like Preston Peltier, Ryan Blaney, Andy Loden and Jay Fogleman is not an easy task for any driver, but definitely not for a driver who lives 8 hours and nearly 500 miles north of the Mason-Dixon Line.

While Legendre bases his PASS North Series efforts out of the family shop in St. Johnsbury, his PASS South Series rides are housed at Jay Fogleman Motorsports and Shark Racing Development in Durham, NC.

The association with Fogleman gives Legendre a valuable ally in his southern racing efforts. Being able to draw on Fogleman's ample knowledge and race experience gives the young driver a fair shot against the older and more experienced competitors he races with. "Jay Fogleman is one of the most respected drivers in the south" says Legendre. "Being able to work with him and to get insight on some of the southern tracks has been a lot of help."

So far, Legendre's experiences racing in the South have been positive. Compared to racing in the North, though, he has also noticed some differences. "A big impression for me racing PASS South is the respect that you get from everybody in the pits" says Legendre. "Other competitors treat me and my team very well at every race whether it's on the track or in the pits. People do racing down South as a living or a lifestyle to go by, where up north racing it is usually a hobby. The racers down south are not just ordinary competition but stiff competition. Everybody's equipment is top of the line and well-maintained so getting an edge over the other teams is difficult."

Despite having use of the Fogleman shop in North Carolina, it is still not easy to race in the south and live so far north. "Living away from the southern tracks is sometimes difficult in planning when you're leaving for a track or to test" says Legendre. "But knowing that there are people where you're going that are willing to lend a hand is convenient. I haven't been to most of the tracks we're racing on this year, but we've made it work so far."

Not surprisingly, though, the bulk of Legendre's help comes right from his own family. "Racing is a big family hobby that everyone enjoys" says Legendre. "Usually my family goes to the races either to help out in the pits or to cheer me on during the race. My family is the most important thing to me and my racing because everybody is involved. My father Kendell is Crew Chief and Tire Specialist, my mother Susan is Tire Analyzer and Jack Person and my sister Kari is a Mechanic and Spotter. We might not have the biggest team but we have fun and do everything as a family."

It is Steven's relationship with his dad, though, that drives his passion to race. "My dad is one of the most special people to me" says Steven. "He stands behind me and my racing endeavors through thick and thin. He is a very successful crew chief up north with late models. He is my role model. I couldn't do it without him."

While Legendre's goals for the future are ambitious, his goals for this year are grounded in practicality. "I am hoping that some steps in my career path may be

driving in the K&N East, Camping World, Nationwide, or even Sprint Cup Series” he says about his future. “I know these are steps I would like to reach one day.”

In the meantime, though, there is the rest of the 2010 racing season to complete.

“One thing that will make this season successful would be finishing every race and contending for wins like the equipment I drive deserves” Legendre says. “We always have a top-running car and we work our way to the front but don’t have the luck it takes to finish the deal. If luck turns on our side I think we could contend with the rest like I know we can.”

And if things don’t work out in the big time? Legendre has a plan for that, too. “If these steps don’t come I’ll crew cars for people and help others out with their racing interests” he says. For the racing community, whether Steven Legendre is behind the wheel or on top of a toolbox, it’s a win-win either way.