

Chitwood Entertains The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club

Former president of Daytona International Speedway talks about role he played in Daytona Rising.

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By Tyler Breaman

For members of The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club, Wednesday night was an opportunity to experience a blast from the past at Colony Cottage Recreation Center.

Joie Chitwood III, formerly of the “Joie Chitwood Thrill Show” and now the executive vice president and chief operating officer of International Speedway Corporation, entertained the club with stories about his 20 years in show business, recounting some of the daredevil-like stunts he and his grandfather, Joie Chitwood, and father Joie Chitwood Jr., did during the decades-long show.

Joe Ging, of the Village of Hillsborough, had the opportunity to see the show for himself during the 1950s in Reading, Pennsylvania.

“The Joie Chitwood Thrill Show used to come there,” Ging said. “It was a quarter-mile dirt track, and the show would drive there. I never saw Joie drive as a stunt, but I’ve seen his grandfather and his dad – which is cool.”

Member Tina Ivey could relate.

“I was just telling (Chitwood III), I saw him 43 years ago in the Chicagoland area,” said Ivey, of the Village of Polo Ridge. “He would have been a kid, but I saw his family. So, I’ve known of the Chitwoods for 43 years.”

Chitwood III, the former president of Daytona International Speedway, also went into extensive detail about Daytona Rising, a \$400 million project he oversaw that transformed the speedway into the world’s first motorsports stadium. Chitwood not only explained the amount of technology used in the renovation process, which lasted more than two years, but showed a then-and-now view of the facility via photos.

“I wanted to show them where we’ve taken Daytona because I think that’s just monumental. But then, I tried to have fun with my background, and most of the folks have seen the stunt show,” Chitwood said. “It was just a fun spin on where I grew up, how I grew up and why that’s relative today.”

Chitwood ended his presentation by taking questions from club members about his background and career, as well as current events in NASCAR. Including Daytona International Speedway, the ISC is made up of 13 different race tracks from around the country.

“If I have a chance to talk about how important motor sports is, whether it’s The Villages or whether I drive to Tampa – you name it – I’m going to always take that opportunity,” Chitwood said. “For me, to speak to a club that’s focused on racing, is even more important than going to a chamber dinner or somewhere else where I’ve got to kind of convince the crowd. So, this was an easy crowd to work, but it was fun to talk about because these people care about racing. Why wouldn’t I come down here to talk about it? These are the people that we should be talking to.”

Ivey said she appreciated that Chitwood made time to speak to the club Wednesday.

“He was like an inspiration,” Ivey said of Chitwood, who credited his success to hard work. “It was an inspirational speech, and I liked it.”



Michael Johnson / Daily Sun
Joie Chitwood III, executive vice president and chief operating officer of International Speedway Corporation, speaks with members of The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club during Wednesday's meeting at Colony Cottage.