

Dirt-track racer Reutimann recounts son's win

Buzzie talks to Motor Racing Fan Club about Coca-Cola 600 victory

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By Steve Day

Dirt racer Emil "Buzzie" Reutimann had already been scheduled to attend The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club meeting Wednesday at Colony Cottage Recreation Center, but what happened Monday made his visit even more special.

You see, Buzzie's son David won the rain-shortened Coca-Cola 600 at Lowe's Motor Speedway following a huge gamble to stay on the track during a caution period. It was David's first Sprint Cup victory – which came at age 39 – after 75 starts.



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Buzzie Reutimann smiles as Wendy Touchette holds up a poster in honor of Buzzie's son David Reutimann, who won the Coca-Cola 600 on Monday. The older Reutimann spoke at The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club meeting Wednesday at Colony Cottage Recreation Center.

"We were working on sponsoring him (Buzzie) in a race at Ocala," the club's president and founder Glen Carter said. "All of a sudden his son wins the race and it makes his visit a lot better."

Buzzie not only is the father of a racer, he is also the son of a racer – making David a third-generation racer.

"David told people he always wanted to drive and make a living at it like his dad. We always wanted to make enough money to make the next race," Buzzie said. "Neither of us thought he would make it where he is now. David said, 'Things like this don't happen to guys like me.' He praises the Lord every day. It has been a long road for him."

Both of the Reutimanns live in Zephyrhills.

Buzzie was in the pit box when his son won his first Sprint Cup race. He has been there for his son's two other wins in NASCAR – one in the truck series and one in what is now the Nationwide circuit

"David had been second and started going back

through the field. He was hollering that his car was too tight," Buzzie said. "My nephew – Shawn Reutimann – is his spotter and he asked David if it was raining in the second corner. He had 11 laps of fuel left and they went five laps under caution. David was coasting in the straight-away to save fuel. At the last moment, his crew chief Rodney Childers told him to stay out."

If the race had not been called off at that point, Reutimann would have finished far back in the pack.

"If it goes back green, it would have killed us," Buzzie said. "The 13 cars in front of him came in. David needed tires and plenty of major changes. It would have been a slow pit stop. He would have been about 27th."

During the race, Tony Stewart berated David on a national telecast about an incident on the track. He also described "his bald-headed crew person" as "Billy Bad Butt."

"I don't know what his problem was, but it aggravated me," Buzzie said. "David was going back through the field and Shawn told him Stewart was coming. Tony caught him at the start/finish line. David was giving him the bottom and David was too tight and went in. Next lap around David asked what Tony was so upset about."

At the next stoppage of action Stewart visited David in the pits.

"He asked David why he was holding him up," Buzzie said of Stewart. "He was aggravating David and one of his crew members asked Tony if they were supposed to bow down to him – and he bowed down to him."

Once the race was over, Stewart was offering David congratulations.

"Tony Stewart was the first one to call David," Buzzie said. "He told David to enjoy the moment because they are hard to come by."

Even though his son's win came in a rain-shortened race, Buzzie said a win is a win.

"Fifty years from now, David's name will be right there next to Buck Baker, Earnhardt and Petty," his father said.

According to Buzzie, David's 00 car is the first to win a Cup race bearing that number.

"That number is really very special. This win would have been very special to my dad," Buzzie said. "My dad was the first one to run 00. My dad was working on his car in a field and they were all just hot rods back then. It was in the '40s – it may have been before I was born – and my grandfather said that my father's car was 'the nearest to nothing he had ever seen.' My dad painted two zeros on his car and said it was two times nothing."

While waiting for the race to either continue or be called, Buzzie was watching out for his son.

"He gets pretty tight at races and doesn't eat much," Buzzie said. "I took him a chicken wing and he told me he couldn't eat a greasy chicken wing. I went and found him four little carrot sticks and he ate those."

For Buzzie, who made one NASCAR start, David's win was the crowning point of three generations of racing.

"How do you express something like that," Buzzie asked. "I'm so proud of what my son has done."

The television crew and others gave Buzzie a lot of credit for his son's win, but he said his son is the one who earned it.

"They give me more credit for him getting there than I deserve," Buzzie said. "It's all David ever wanted to do. When I was racing and he was racing, he had to fix his car himself. Racing was the one thing he wanted to do."

Although Buzzie, who drove in his first race at the age of 13 at Winter Haven Speedway, has been at all of his son's NASCAR wins, if David wins this week's race at Dover he won't be there.

"I go as often as I can to his races. I told him once he was going to foul up and win one of these and I'd be upset if I missed it," the 68-year-old Buzzie said. "I don't think I am going to Dover. I think I will be racing at Ocala. I have to have some time to race too."



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Buzzie Reutimann talks about his son, David Reutimann, who recently won the Coca Cola 600 on Monday.