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AUTO RACING

Nephew honors late uncle Terry Gibson with race victory

BY MIKE BRUDENELL • FREE PRESS COLUMNIST • JULY 22, 2008

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Zach Gibson faced an agonizing choice Friday night: Pack up and go home or race.

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Gibson's father, Larry, had informed Zach that his favorite uncle, Terry Gibson, had been killed in a super-modified racing accident at Toledo Speedway.

Zach, 18, sat for five minutes in his hauler at Kil-Kare Speedway in Xenia, Ohio, at first crying with his father and then pulling on his race suit. With the decision made, he went out in his winged sprint car and

ran away with the feature by more than half a lap -- the best way he knew to honor Terry's memory.

"My wife wanted Zach and me to come home, but I left that up to him," said Larry, a former open-wheel racer, Monday. "I told him, 'If you race, I'll fill up the gas tank.' "

Zach also ran in Columbus, Ohio, on Saturday night, finishing second in a feature there.

"That's what Terry would have wanted," Larry Gibson said. "Zach took off like a rocket at Kil-Kare. He was on it and gone."

Terry Gibson, 46, will be buried in LaRue, Ohio, on Wednesday. His father, Todd Gibson, was a legendary super-modified competitor around the Midwest in the '60s and '70s, racing his "Flintstone Flyer" and driving in USAC Champ Car and



Special to the Free Press

Terry Gibson of LaRue, Ohio, enjoyed his time racing super-modified cars. He was killed Friday night at Toledo Speedway.

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THIRD TRAGEDY

Terry Gibson, 46, right, is the third driver with southeastern Michigan ties to die on the track in the past month. Gibson was killed Friday at nearby Toledo Speedway. The others:

Scott Kalitta, 46, from Mt. Clemens, died June 21 in a crash at Englishtown, N.J.

Dino Crescentini, 60, from Rochester Hills, died June 22 in a crash near Bowmanville, Ontario.

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ARCA events.

"Dad was tough," Larry said. "My brothers Terry, Jeff and Gene Lee followed in his footsteps. We grew up around racing. We didn't know anything else."

Terry died on Lap 7 of the first heat of the visiting MSA (Midwest Supermodified Association) series event at Toledo following a four-vehicle wreck, in which he spun and hit the wall. He was wearing a head-and-neck restraint, track officials said.

It was the first death at Toledo in eight years. Scott Baker of Holland, Mich., was killed June 23, 2000, during an ARCA race.

Gene Lee Gibson was at Toledo on Friday and decided -- despite the tragedy -- to run the super-modified feature, finishing 11th.

"Terry loved to race; it was his passion -- that and his family and church," Larry said. "God has a final destination and agenda for all of us. Gene Lee and Zach understood this."

Terry Gibson was a respected member of the LaRue community.

"He was the go-to guy," Larry said. "He would fix your hot water tank if you couldn't afford the repairs. He was active in the LaRue Baptist Church. He'd be there every Wednesday night helping out."

Toledo Speedway spokesman Scott Schultz said, "Todd was a legend, and Terry and his brothers raced here.

"Everything was done as it should for Terry -- the MSA and the safety crews. But sometimes it's not enough."

Larry Gibson will continue to support Zach as he drives toward a full-time racing career, perhaps in NASCAR. It's in the genes.

"Zach is probably handling this situation better than any of us right now," Larry said. "He's a quiet individual, with no letup. He drove with a passion for his uncle. He's a lot like him."

Contact **MIKE BRUDENELL** at 313-222-2115 or mbrudenell@freepress.com.

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pmcnamara wrote:

I want to preface this by saying the Gibson family has all my sympathies and I hope your family with find the strength to make it through your loss.. That being said.. Brudenell.. why is it someone has to die at a Michigan Short Track to get you to talk about Short Track Racing ?? There are many wonderful and vibrant short tracks in Michigan, and the Detroit Free Press is circulated STATE WIDE, so you don't feel your limited to just Flat Rock. Auto City, Dixie, Springport, Spartan, Kalamazoo, Galesburg, Berlin, Owosso, M-40 and Whittemore on the tar.. Butler, Crystal, Ionia, Hartland, Merritt, Evergreen, Thunderbird, Winston and Mt. Pleasant on the dirt. You and your upper crust, wine sipping and cheese eating habits need to start writing about what local folks want to read about.. Short Track Racing. If I want NASCAR news.. I'll get it from ESPN. Same for IRL or F1.. Why isn't our LOCAL paper covering our LOCAL tracks ? Are you too good for us ??

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School closings
Columnists

Nation/World

Top stories
Lotteries
Election 2008
Nation/World
Business

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Red Wings
Tigers
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Movies
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