

How does a teenager make a career in Championship Drag Racing?

This could be a guide to having a successful drag racing career. The sooner that you decide which direction you want your life to go the sooner you can get started on the correct direction.

It is never too late it is just the sooner you decide the easier and more successful you will be. When I was young no one could tell me what to do to become a professional drag racer since at that moment in history no one was a professional in this business. I was lucky that I learned in school what I did partially because my parents made sure that I got good grades and some of it was a natural interest in some of the things that are involved in drag racing such as geometry and science. That was so long ago we didn't even have Auto Shop in school. Later when the local school started an Auto Shop course they hired one of my mates to teach it.

If you are still in school stay there and get a good education this will be the foundation for the rest of your successful life. You need to be well rounded in knowledge as a successful drag racer must be able to do a lot of things and do them well. Driving a race car is one of them but only one. A good background in science, mathematics, computers, grammar and writing and typing as well as communications and public speaking.

Remember if you are successful you will have to accept awards and say thanks to you sponsors and crew in front of cameras and auditoriums full of people.

Some one might ever ask you to write an article or two. Does this all sound very hard well it is not easy that is why to be successful you must work very hard. While you are finishing your basic education at school subscribe to trade magazines such as Dragster Australia, National Drag Racer and the American "National Dragster" you must read these cover to cover and understand what is going on in your drag racing business.

A very good driver wins championships and to win championships you must

perform at you best at all times. You must be physically fit not necessarily strong just fit. A driver does a better job of driving, more precise and more in control when they are fit. A tired driver gets sloppy and makes mistakes even just small ones. Even a crew chief or tuner makes better, clearer decisions when he is physically fit. Just imagine two weeks of long hard work days of 12-15 hours or more each day to get a car ready to race the long trip to the race track in another state. Now you have to start qualifying the car find the best tune up on the day and the conditions then you qualify pretty well you still have the race to get through.

A person who is fit performs better under stress. Champions win races, winning makes money, money pays the bills. Keep fit and show me the money.

Pick a professional class to aspire to, your selections in Australia are Top Fuel, Top Alcohol, Pro Stock. You should probably decide on a class that is international in structure so you can

take your knowledge and skill to the best paid market when you are ready. The top of the heap is TOP FUEL and if you want to make a good living in drag racing this is where you need to be at the end. How do you get there from where you are now?

The days of lucking into a good "ride" is almost gone. A good crew chief or car owner wants a known combination in the engine and in the driver's seat.

He can tinker with the engine combination and if he goes astray he can go back to his standard tune up. He must have a driver who can perform every time. He doesn't put cheap spark plugs in the engine and he doesn't put a cheap driver in the seat.

Probably the best place to start today is to build a Modified dragster. This is "Dial You Own" class and as such costs considerably less to build and race allowing you to concentrate on your driving skills.

You will be driving a car that is a very similar configuration to the Top Fuel cars that you aspire to. You will probably have to finance this one on you own, as you need to prove yourself to get a paying ride. In all fairness you can make a little money out of this type of racing today which will help you support the car. In America DYO racing has grown so much that there are people who make a good living just racing this type of car. Big money races are starting to happen in Australia right now and there will be more as the demand grows. You will find them at the smaller tracks since the large tracks such as Willowbank can draw big crowds at several major meets every year. You can assemble one of these type of cars for about what a new V8 car would cost today which makes for a real inexpensive race car.

The engine in this type of car must make enough horsepower and be very reliable. Since it is reliable the engine maintenance costs are low. If you can do well in this type of car and win a few championships you have a very real shot of getting a professional ride in a faster car. Since you have won a lot with this car and are now moving up the car is a "winner" and as such is worth more on the resale market. So you get your money back when you sell it the difference is all it cost you you could even make some money on this situation. You keep progressing up the scale towards Top Fuel.

Most crew chiefs can make the car run and make power but one of the hardest parts for a crew chief is when a driver cannot drive the car as instructed.

Another frustrating part for a crew chief is when the car sets low ET and loses the race because the driver didn't leave the starting line on time. A hired driver lives or dies by the reaction time and DYO racing is a perfect training ground for your reaction time in a car.

I have seen plenty of people who could cut a good reaction time on a reaction tester or trainer but who could not do it in the car. When the car is running, the pressure of possible failure is there, and this is real one shot situation and the pressure is on. Now you have to leave perfectly on time, make the gear changes perfectly on time, keep the car in the absolute centre of the track in the "groove", stop the car at the end and do this over and over. This separates the people who talk about it and the people who do it.

There are other jobs available in drag racing besides being a driver. Although these are less high profile since the driver is the focal point of all the press.

In drag racing we need photographers, journalists, welders, machinist, race car builders, Fiberglass panel makers, "tin" men, engine builders, painters, and others. Just pick the one that you want do and be the best at it and if you work hard you will be successful. I know you have heard this from your teachers and parents but it is true. As a general rule almost

everybody gets smarter as they get older (there are exceptions) so you don't have to make the same mistakes the older people have made if you can learn from them. An old guy once asked to me when I had made a mistake, "How much did these brains cost you?" He was right, everytime you make a mistake it costs you. Getting an education in school is the cheapest "brains" you can every buy. You cannot learn everything in school but you can learn the basics and the basics are the foundation of any future learning.

You still need "hands on" field experience and nothing beats working with a successful person in you field. If you want to be a drag racing journalist find an "angle" on a racer or someone in the racing business, start writing stories and taking pictures and submit them to the magazines. If you want to build engines find someone in the business that needs and wants help and get started. What ever you want to do get in and do it. Don't wait for some one to open the door because if you do there will have already been 22 people in the door before you. Persistence pays off, go after it, don't talk about it do it. If you want to be a track announcer take a public speaking course, learn everything you can about the racers and offer your services to the local track...no charge at first let them see what you can do. If you are good and you should be if you work hard at this, they will pay you.

If you want to be a painter, take art classes and buy some spray guns and offer you service for the cost of the paint. If you are good they will pay you. No one is born into a job all the successful people created their own niche. Go and create yours.

Just remember the harder you work the luckier you get. A smart racer once said "Luck is where preparation and opportunity meet". You must have the confidence to make it all happen. A smart car builder once said, "Whether you think you can or whether you think you can't, you are probably right."

If you want to be successful associate yourself with successful people, it does rub off.