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2011 "Gary Knollinger Memorial Golden Award"

Just over a year ago the FASTRAK Northeast lost a fierce competitor and a great friend when Gary Knollinger tragically lost his life in an automobile accident.

Those of us that knew him and the drivers that had the pleasure of racing with him vowed to never forget him and with the help of his family and friends, the Inaugural "Gary Knollinger Memorial" took place at Sharon Speedway on June 25. The event again will be held this season at Sharon on June 23.

Gary truly represented what we believe FASTRAK is all about; a grass roots racer giving his all each and every night, lap after lap, traveling hundreds of miles throughout the summer just to race.

But beyond that, Gary was a true gentleman both on and off the racetrack. Always smiling, willing to lend a hand at anytime to his fellow competitors, and just simply happy to race with what the FASTRAK Northeast Touring Series has become, to all of us, a second family.

This year we have created a special award The Gary Knollinger "Golden Award" that will be given annually at our awards banquet to a driver that we feel represents himself in the way that we will always remember Gary.

We're honored to have tonight with us Gary's parents Gary, Sr. and Bev along with longtime crew chief John Seyler, who will present this award. (Have them come forward)

The initial recipient of this award carries himself in a very similar fashion as Gary did...He's a fierce competitor, finances his operation pretty much on his own, has the strong support of his family, but more importantly, and to his credit, no matter what situation has presented itself to him on the racetrack, he has always handled himself with class and integrity.

Take as an example, after a tough June and start to Speedweek, he decided it was in his best interest to skip the final two nights of Speedweek, regroup, and come back strong. And boy did he ever stringing together 6 straight top 10s including a win and a pair of runner-ups!

Then fast forward to the first night of the Grand Nationals at Dog Hollow Speedway. While steadily progressing to the front to secure a good finish, which in turn would send him to Bulls Gap with a opportunity to cash in on a great final finish at the series' grand finale, he was suddenly spun from behind by another competitor.

When a FASTRAK official talked to him afterwards expressing that it was a shame what had happened and perhaps the other driver should have been sent to the tail, Joe immediately spoke up and said that "No it was his fault; he had entered the turn differently than previous laps and the other driver was not expecting that, thus resulting in his spin"

How easy it would have been to blame someone else, voice concern that he had been dealt a poor hand, which in essence took away incentive to continue on south. But no, this driver simply stated the facts as he knew them, picked up his money and went home. A perfect example of why tonight's recipient of this special award is so deserving.

Isn't it amazing how in such a short period of time someone can make an impression on us that will last forever.....*we know Gary did.....and we also know that if he was here with us tonight he would be honored and just as proud as we are to present the Inaugural Gary Knollinger "Golden Award" to FASTRAK Northeast's competitor "Joe Martin"*