

Spotlight: Morgan Lucas

GEICO Top Fuel professional Morgan Lucas remembers the exact moment he choose his career path. He was just 10 years old, riding shotgun with his father Forrest in the family car, when they pulled through the gates of historic Pomona Raceway for the NHRA Finals.

"I hear this roar, this thunder, and it shook my body," Lucas said. "And we were still in the parking lot. We ran up to the stands and I saw a Top Fuel dragster go by and I was instantly hooked. It was like -- that's what I want to do."

The following year, Lucas and his hot rod-loving father came back to Pomona, where Morgan met an up-and-coming driver named Darrell Russell. It was another defining moment in his life.

"I was getting Darrell's autograph and he was so nice to me," Lucas said. "He went in his trailer and got this front wheel he had bent up at another race and asked me if I wanted it. I was blown away. He made such an impression on me. I got him to sign it and then I spent the rest of the week-end getting all the other drivers to sign it. To this day it's my most prized possession. I've been offered me a lot of money for that wheel but I would never sell it."

Lucas started seriously formulating a path to the professional ranks that day, and soon began racing Junior Dragsters. As soon as he turned 16 he graduated to Super Comp dragsters, and a few years later to Top Alcohol Dragsters.

Perhaps by fate, Morgan's final move to Top Fuel once again involved Russell. The rising star had lost his life in a racing accident and after regrouping, Russell's team decided to soldier on. They needed a driver and Morgan's unqualified success in the developmental ranks had caught their



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Photo courtesy of Morgan Lucas Racing

attention.

"We were racing up in Woodburn, Oregon, when (Russell's crew chief) Wayne Dupuy called," Morgan said. "He said they wanted to keep racing and they wanted me to drive Darrell's Top Fuel car. It was one of those phone calls you never forget."

Lucas has remained in Top Fuel ever since, becoming one of the top drivers in the sport. His first half dozen years have been dotted with impressive performances and a handful of trips to the winner's circle. Looking forward, Lucas expects even bigger and better things, especially since adding two-time champion crew chief Dickie Venables to his team late in the 2010 season.

Venables brings a sparkling resume to his the post, including two Funny Car world championships, one as crew chief for Tony Pedregon's Funny Car team and another as assistant crew chief under John Medlen when Pedregon raced at John Force Racing.

"Dickie came on board it was like a light switch being turned on," Lucas said. "We have as talented a group as we've ever had. I'm pumped, the team is pumped, our sponsors are pumped, Dickie is pumped. I know nothing in this sport comes easy, but we're on the right track for sure, and 2011 should be a career season.

"It's hard to believe it's been more than 17 years since that first race," Lucas said. "That left such an impression on me, the speed, the people in the sport. I hope I can keep that legacy going."

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