

Jack Beckman shares wisdom as a racer who cares

Words by Susan Wade Photos by Ron Lewis 1/11/2008

It's fun to stay at the Y-M-C-A . . . And it was even more fun to be at the YMCA at Santa Monica, California, one Friday afternoon past November.

That was the day National Hot Rod Association Funny Car driver "Fast Jack" Beckman visited to share his "Quick Tips on Winning" with YMCA After Schoolers in cooperation with the Greater Los Angeles community outreach Racer Who Care.

The Don Schumacher Racing fan favorite exercised the same teaching skills he uses every day as chief instructor at Frank Hawley Drag Racing School at Pomona to share that the best advice he ever received were these two thoughts:

Treat others as you want to be treated.

Stick to your goals and maintain a positive outlook.

Beckman's group of students certainly understood the first concept -- along with his theory that "It's nice to be important, but it's important to be nice." But they might have been too young to worry about goals and frustrations in reaching them.

"Oh my gosh! Those six-year-olds are tough!" Beckman said with a laugh after the encounter with the children who ranged in age from 4 to 8.

He said he was glad he brought his helmet, firesuit, and hero cards with him, for sometimes their attention spans don't tolerate a lot of talking. "A seven-year-old doesn't understand cause and action and consequences as much as, say, an 11- or 15-year-old. So the message is different," he said following his first Racers Who Care assignment.



"With older kids, I can talk about bad choices and good choices. Seven-year-olds don't care about that -- they want to try on the Beckman said that because of his teaching position, his work with the U.S. Army Y.E.S. program, and various folks he gets to c part of a Funny Car driver and a DSR representative to boot, he's comfortable speaking with persons of all ages. And he said h the reminder that little tykes have completely different perspectives -- and joked that he was thrilled to survive the session.

The always positive Beckman said. "If I go to San Quentin next, I'll be ready!"

How could students not have been impressed with the fact that when Beckman drives his DSR-owned Mail Terminal Services I Charger that he computes fuel in gallons per mile? How could their eyes not have grown to the size of clutch plates when they l he has driven 333.33 miles an hour or that he has taught nearly 6,500 racing students or that he was NHRA's 2003 Super Com champion or that he has overcome cancer?

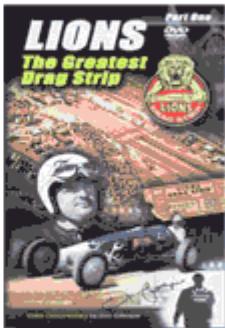
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