

ON THE RACEWAY



Mike Vogt / IPT

Vallivue High graduate Nick Gibson climbs into his car as he prepares to qualify for the NAPA 125 on Saturday evening at Chaparral Speedway. Gibson finished 11th in the Rocky Mountain Challenge Series event.

Gibson enjoys success on track

▼ **RACING:** Eighteen-year-old gets chance to drive in Rocky Mountain Challenge car after several wins in mini stocks

By **Mike Stetson**
Idaho Press-Tribune

STAR — Like any parent might be, Mike Gibson admits he's a bit concerned with his son's new passion.

That's because 18-year-old Nick Gibson's new passion is driving a race car in the Rocky Mountain Challenge Series.

"It's pretty scary, pretty scary," the elder Gibson said, "but we've got a lot of good guys involved.

"A couple of friends decided they wanted to see him race and they gave

him a car to drive and the rest he kinda took over from there."

A recent Vallivue High grad, Nick got his start working in the pits as a tire man, but midway through last season he got his big chance.

"Scott Durbin wanted me to drive one of his mini stocks and I jumped in it and I liked it and so I ended up buying the car," said Nick, who won five races and finished sixth in the point standings in the 4-cylinder race-car class.

And impressed Mike Brown, who owns the No. 31 RMSC car.

"Mike said, 'Hey, I want you to drive my late model.' and I said, 'Hey dude, I'll jump in it.'"

Of course, it's been a learning experience so far for the Nampa teenager, as Saturday at Chaparral Speedway was his

fourth race, the NAPA 125, and he finished 11th, two laps down in the 125-lap event after spinning out twice in the early going.

John Dillon won the race, passing Bryan Warf on lap 118 after Warf had led 76 consecutive laps beginning on lap 42.

"We'd love to see a top five," said Nick's dad. "We've been having just lots of bad luck so far, but if we can get through that, I think we can get him up there."

As for Nick, well, he was just excited to run.

"It's gonna be sweet man," he said. "Last year in my mini-stock, the most laps we ran was 35 laps. Now I'm running the big 75 laps and we're probably doing 40, 50 mph faster."

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"We're gonna see what it's like, I've never run anything this fast before," Nick said.

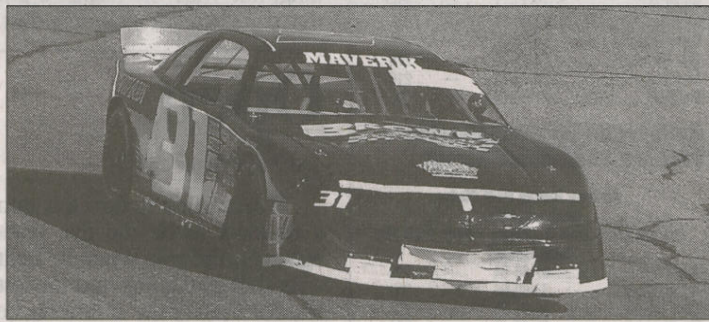
Or as far as in his previous RMCS races, a couple of 75-lappers with a 15th-place finish at Chaparral on June 18 and a 16th in Twin Falls on May 21.

Results that will probably improve — evident Saturday at Chaparral — as Gibson begins working his way up the learning curve, and his car gets better, too.

"It's definitely tough 'cause a lot of these guys have got a lot of seat time and right now I'm just trying to learn and run with these guys," Nick said. "We just need a little more seat time than I think we can run right with them."

"We're trying to work out all the bugs on the car, it takes a little while to do that."

Nick's dad admits the move to RMCS racing in the late models is a very big step up from the mini



Mike Vogt / IPT

Nick Gibson makes his qualifying run at Idaho Motor Speedway for the Rocky Mountain Challenge Series' Napa 125 on Saturday.

stocks.

"This is a huge jump, it's a little bit too much," Mike said, "but for his first year he's doing awesome."

And who knows what might come down the road for Nick, who will attend Boise State part time while he continues to race.

"It all depends on how well I pick it up," he said, looking towards the future and a possible stock-car racing career. "Maybe in a couple years it'd be fun to run the Northwest Tour or go back east or something if I can find somebody to pick me up. It all depends on how well we adapt to this."

"This is pretty much a learning curve," he added. "Next year it'd be nice to have a top five car when we go out."

There were more than just Gibson and his fellow RMCS drivers racing at Chaparral on Saturday, as the Thunder Stock, Mr. Gas Pro Trucks, Super Hornets and Street Stocks all had their turns on the track.

In the Thunder Stock main event, the win went to R.J. Lewis of Nampa, who fended off Meridian's Roy Cleaver in the final lap of the 20-lap race, which is unique in the fact a driver can not

lead two consecutive laps.

It was a nice win for the 67-year-old driver, who got his start in 1979 in the hobby stock class, but then took some time off.

"It feels great after 25 years," Lewis said, "it's kinda fun to get back out here."

Also racing into the winner's circle on Saturday was Twin Falls driver Dick Capps in the Mr. Gas Pro Trucks main event.

In a class that travels and races at events with the RMCS field, near the midway mark of the 30-lap race Capps closed the gap on Jerome's Kerry Vanderham, then after dueling with Vanderham for a lap, passed the Jerome driver with six laps left and held on for the win.

"It's nice," said Capps of the victory, "this is the second one here for us."

"I had a couple guys ahead of me who had a good lead on me, but the caution helped tonight to reel 'em in."

Results from the Super Hornets and the Street Stocks were not available at press time.