

First Time

TOLEDO TEEN'S SPIN-OUT SUMMER

Dylan Ide's job at a go-kart track makes him the envy of his friends

Originally published in *The Blade* on Sunday, June 5, 2005

This is the sixth in a year-long series offering a look at various "firsts" for people around the region.

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Trouble got in line before the sun was ready to set.

It arrived as seven gregarious high school guys, laughing and joking as they waited to ride the go-karts. Dylan Ide spied them right away.

"I can almost bet \$5 there's gonna be a spin-out with one of these cars," he said.

Dylan, 17, has dreams of a career in law enforcement, but for the summer he'll settle for being an assistant at Alexis Go-Karts, where it's his job to unspin those who spin out, many of them on purpose.

Rules are rules - "No bumping!" - and he takes them seriously, warning a couple of riders when they predictably spin out and need his help. But he's also a high school kid. He knows what these kids are thinking.

"To be honest, I've done that stuff while I work here," he said. "I've spun out a car. I know how to do it without hurting the car."

This is Dylan's first steady summer job. It's a change from summers past that filled up with a few odd jobs, and he couldn't be happier. The pay is decent at \$6.50 an hour and it's full of important secrets of the adult world - like which cars are the fastest. (Answer: It's always changing, but at one point it was No. 3, the Blue Devil. "I used to go out and tear it up," he said.)

Not surprisingly, his eloquent teenage friends are pretty psyched too.

"They're like, 'Awww sweet!' " Dylan said.

Many of them are not as lucky. They don't have jobs that let them work outside and actually require riding go-karts for a lap or two to make sure they're in proper working order.

Many of them work fast-food places like Taco Bell, where Dylan picked up a burrito and soft taco for dinner on the way to work and which he later ate on a table littered with go-kart engine parts.

"I honestly don't think I could do it," Dylan said of the possibility of ever joining his peers in fast food nation. "Just being inside. I get dirty or whatever, but I see them and they just look kind of, like, nasty dirty. The flour and the grease. Food grease is a lot different from car grease. It stinks."

Dylan prefers the car grease that dirties his jeans by the end of each night. A sophomore at Start High School in West Toledo who also attends class at the Frank Dick Natural Science Technology Center, he's happy to be outdoors too, among the constant hum of engines and smell of gasoline.

On one recent day- 6:30 p.m., sunny, 75 degrees - Dylan's mom dropped him off for work under the shadow of a fake giant giraffe standing atop a fake hill at the neighboring putt putt course.



Dylan Ide runs to help a spun-out driver at Alexis Go-Karts. This is his first steady summer job. (THE BLADE/ALYSSA SCHUYKAR)

It was a typical Friday night, and while other high school kids were celebrating the last days of school and searching for some fun, Dylan was just coming in for work. He readily admitted it would be nice to be among his peers instead of preparing to work until after midnight.

"I'd probably call some people right around now," he said. Then he'd take a nap and start hanging out in a couple of hours.



Jon Skiver, left, and Dylan Ide help move Carley Stiles' vehicle away from the guardrail at Alexis Go-Karts. (THE BLADE/ALYSSA SCHUKAR)

Instead, he stood like a red-hooded god, holding a remote control that can make the go-karts stop in their tracks. Most of the time his aim was true, slowing down vehicles as they approached the finish area.

Once or twice, though, it didn't work and a young rider who mistook the gas pedal for the brakes rammed headlong into the tires lining the end of the course — hitting with a jolt but without injury.

He worked with two other men, one of whom assumed control collecting tickets and making sure everyone was strapped into the go-karts. Dylan checked the working order of extra go-karts and gracefully moved about the track to help those who needed him.

It's a good job, but that doesn't mean it was all his idea.

"My mom kind of decided that one for me," he said. "She just said, 'You're gonna need to start working and getting some money. You're going to want a car, to do stuff during the summer.'"

Ironically, this Lord of the Go-Karts doesn't have his license yet. But when he does, he wants to be ready.

And there are other perks, he realizes, to having the structure in his life that a regular job provides.

"I've always had a hard time pulling weight in school," he said. "Work, when I do it right, it's just one more thing that I'm succeeding and doing well at."

It helps that he's no novice at the track, where he helped out a little in the past. For years, his mom worked for the complex's owner, Terry Grady, who has become a family friend.

He doesn't mind working hard, as the sweat under his beige hat attests, but ...

"If I had it my way, I'd be a millionaire," he said. "I wouldn't have to work."

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