



BOBBY HOGGE TO THE FOURTH

BY MIKE ADASKAVEG

THE HOGGES CONTINUE A SIX-DECADE TRADITION OF RACING—
BUT NOT FOR THE ‘POT OF GOLD’ ANYMORE.



It's not your typical Friday night at Ocean Speedway in Watsonville, Calif. The IMCA Western Modified Tour is in town and there's a flurry of activity around the red-and-white No. 2, which doesn't want to start.

Bobby Hogge IV walks circles around the car at a pace that would win a marathon. Bobby Hogge III shakes his head as he clutches a carburetor with his gas-soaked hands. Bobby Hogge Jr. runs for parts.

It gets more frenetic. Hogge IV gets into a discussion with another driver. His mom, Janet, doesn't like what she sees and runs interference. A moment later, Hogge III and IV have a father-son moment, where the father sets his son straight in less time than it takes to qualify for the pole. Three minutes later,

Hogge Jr. performs a hand-off to Hogge III that could land him in the NFL Pro Bowl despite his 70 years of age. Before anyone can yell “time up,” Hogge IV is fired up and on his way.

Meet the Hogge (pronounced Hoeg) family. There's been a Bobby Hogge on a short track for six decades. Add in Janet Hogge's dad and Bobby IV's grandfather, “Jumpin” Joe Bailey, and you've got more race knowledge than a library could hold.

The first racing Hogge, Hogge Jr., entered the sport with a 1940 Ford that his brother-in-law wrecked on the street and was then converted into a stock car for the NASCAR \$99 claimer division.

“Racing became my passion,” Hogge Jr. says.

While he raced, he also worked and supported a family with four kids. Hogge III fondly remembers sitting in the grandstands with his mother and watching his father race, but one occasion stands out in particular.

“I was a little guy in the stands,” says Hogge III, “and

Mom was screaming her head off. Dad turned the car over eight to 10 times—it was horrifying.”

Despite that experience, Hogge III still loved cars and going fast.

“I had a 1960 Dodge pickup that I thought was street rod when I was 16,” Hogge III says. “That resulted in me getting a lot of court time, if you know what I mean.”

To help quench Hogge III's need for speed, Hogge Jr. got racing uncle “Wild” Bill Orr to give the kid an engine and Aunt Geri to donate her '63 Thunderbird for his first stock car.

During his teenage years, he met his wife, Janet, who came from a similar pedigree. Her dad, “Jumpin” Joe Bailey, was the man to beat at Watsonville back in the day. He and Ernie Irvan's dad, Vic, had fans polarized as they battled week after week.

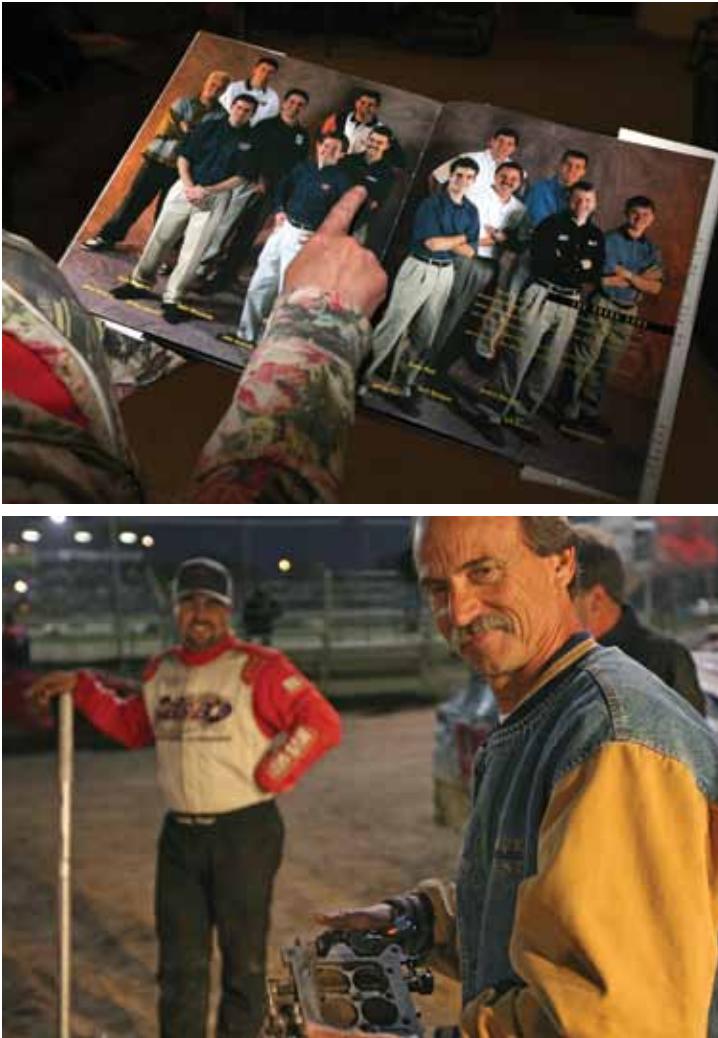
It wasn't long before Hogge III traded another street rod

for a stock car. With that car and hand-me-down parts from Bailey, he built a '65 Chevelle stock car. His success mounted. With Bailey running late models (narrow-body sportsman), it was only time before he would find a car for Hogge III to join him. On his first night out, he was finished second and the next week he won.

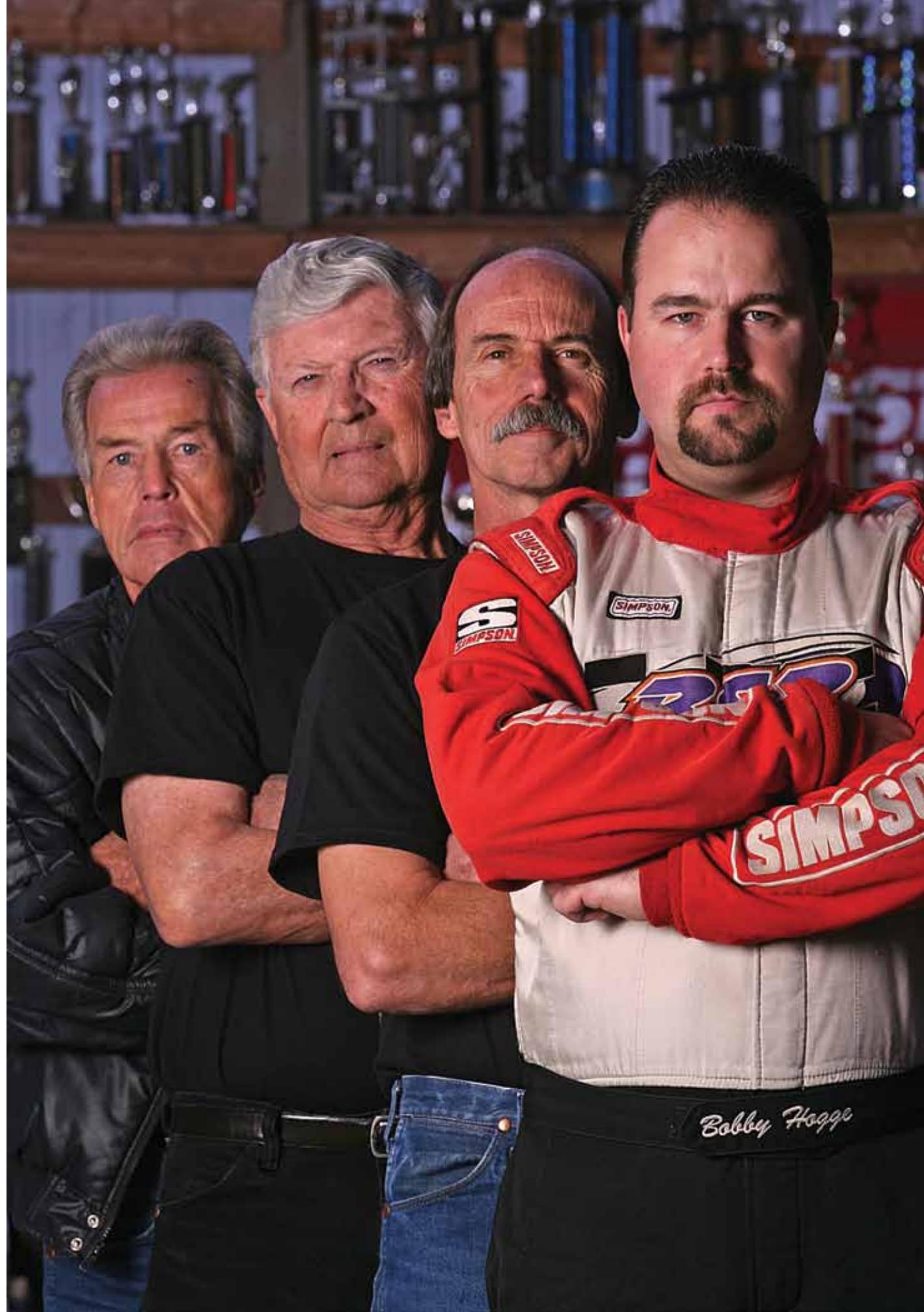
But, in between, there was a brief foray into sprint cars.

“It was a bad thing for us to do—mentally and financially,” Hogge III says. “I flipped badly at the old Baylands track. After that, I needed a bead-lock wheel—\$350. That was the straw that broke the camel's back. We had to get out.”

Afterwards, he went on to drive a stock car to second place in the NASCAR regional points and won the state championship in '85. He won the regional championship in '87 and '89. All in all, Hogge III went to NASCAR banquet 10 times.



Hogge III (foreground) is meticulous about maintenance, giving Hogge IV (background) no excuses for not winning.



ABOVE: The hands of Bailey (left) show his narrow-bodied sportsman, complete with wing, while the hands of Hogge Jr. (right) show his early stock cars. LEFT: From left to right — Grandpas “Jumpin” Joe Bailey and Bobby Hogge, Jr. followed by Bobby Hogge III and Bobby Hogge IV.

Following in his father's footsteps, Hogge IV took the regional championship in 1996–97. NASCAR sanctioned both asphalt and dirt at the time, and the Hoggies ran both—and never stopped winning.

“Things were good,” says Hogge III. “My goal was to go Cup racing.”

“Same here,” Hogge IV says.

In a NASCAR coffee-table book from the around the turn of last decade, Hogge IV was billed as a future star. It was time to leave dirt behind.

Hogge IV made the transition to asphalt. In 2006, things were going well at Mesa Marin. He led more than 40 laps, but he failed to take tires on his last pit stop and crashed late in the race.

Unfortunately, he wouldn't get another chance—NASCAR did away with their Southwest late model tour.

“[The next season], we're back at the top in what we do best—racing modifieds and late models on dirt,” says Hogge III. “In '08, we were leading the UMP points. Then the UMP point fund disappeared.”

That's when things changed.

“There's no more pot of gold at the end of the rainbow,” Hogge III says. “It's a new era—you don't set out unless you can win.”

“We gave up running for the championship to go to Oregon and run a big show. We came back with \$10,000. It was time to look at the here and now, not that pot of gold at the end of the season.”

Two seasons ago, the Hoggies took delivery on a new GRT car. Hogge IV “tested” it at Southern Oregon Speedway's \$10,000-to-win show in Medford. He finished second and got \$5,000. The following week a second at Thunderbowl Speedway in Tulare, Calif. netted him \$10,000. Then the car won shows

at King Speedway in Hanford, Calif. and Bakersfield (Calif.) Speedway, boosting the coffers by another \$22,000.

“We have no big-money sponsors,” Hogge III says. “Just family and close friends. Our family likes to win. We win to keep racing.”

At Boone (Iowa) Speedway's IMCA Super Nationals, the Hoggies wanted to measure their abilities against the dirt-modified racing's best.

Hogge IV won the heat, a qualifying main, and his feature performance earned him a trip to the tech tent, where he talked with guys he only read about previously.

“Johnny Saathoff was looking over my car,” says Hogge IV. “Clint Bowyer was chatting with me.”

“It was impressive to finish with those guys,” says Hogge III, “but they [IMCA] took our engine for \$300. We figured we walked away with \$1,300 after racing expenses—but before hotels and food.”

“Never again—prestige doesn't pay the bills.”

People stare at the Hoggies when they pull into a distant pit. Rumors spread. “Rich artichoke farmers from Salinas,” people say. Janet sets them straight. “We're all working people,” she says. “We all have jobs. We do this on weekends and after work during the week.”

Family is what it is all about for the Hoggies. The late Bobby Hogge's wife, Gearlene, was a frail 92 lbs. when they wheeled her to Antioch (Calif.) Speedway to see her grandson win everything a few days before she passed away.

Hogge IV has a sister, Jo Lynn, who is the team's loudest fan in the stands. She gave up racing to raise a family.



LEFT: When things get heated, Janet Hogge moves in to keep Hogge IV focused on the mission at hand—winning. **RIGHT:** Hogge IV is fast in preparation as he is at making last-minute adjustments for track conditions. **BOTTOM:** Hogge IV runs both a late model and a modified in one day. He (2) ducks under the crowd on a real dry-slick day.



"She cart-wheeled her quarter midget when she was a kid," Hogge III says. "She's hanging upside down in the car, asking 'Dad, can you fix it? Right Away?' If she decided to race with us now, she would be expensive."

Bailey and Hogge Jr. chip in whatever they have to keep the team going. Hogge III puts in long days fixing agriculture refrigeration equipment. Hogge IV works in the field for State Farm Insurance. Janet works full-time as medical assistant to a cardiologist. Hogge IV's wife Jessica runs the MRI machine at the local hospital.

At the races, the "grandpas" work hard to keep the "kids" going; armed with their ever-valuable years of racing (and life) experience that still remains relevant today. Hogge III says, "I'm the banker, Bobby [IV]'s the racer. I'm demanding on myself in preparing his car—there is no margin of error. When he goes out on the track, there's no reason for him not to win."

However, Hogge III continues to race, too, whenever he finds the time, but his son remains his priority, especially since he's usually running both late models and modifieds in the same weekend.

"I've won with both cars in one night, but it is difficult," Hogge IV says. "The majority of the time one car will suffer. Dad's working to keep both running, but, I want him to race his modified, too."

Last season they raced fender-to-fender at Petaluma (Calif.) Speedway's Top Dog Nationals, but it was taking the first two spots in a modified race at Calistoga (Calif.) Speedway that will be most remembered. Hogge IV edged his dad in what Hogge III says was "the most fun" he's had in a long time.

Hogge III calls Janet the "backbone" of the team. One night at Watsonville, some woman was mouthing off about how Hogge IV was racing. The woman made one big mistake—she was within an earshot of Janet, who drenched her criticism with an extra large Coke.

"It is difficult to watch your husband and child race," Janet says. "It is more difficult to hear criticism about your child. I don't take that well. That's why the Coke went flying at that lady."

Helping the Hogges are Keith Brown, Jeff Decker, and Andy Overtello, all who race themselves. Fellow racers frequent the Hogge pits. Everyone helps everybody out, but Janet draws the line there.

"Take care of our own business first, then help anyone who needs help," Janet says.

"We have lots of friends, but the majority of them don't want to be on a crew, they want to drive," says Hogge IV. "So we're back to family. There aren't many secrets in the industry. It's the way this family does things that makes us what we are—one of the most successful teams on the West Coast."

While wildly successful, the Hogges still have their day jobs, but that doesn't stop Hogge IV from thinking of what could be.

"I dream of racing for a living," Hogge IV says. "But, I'm not unhappy. If I had big sponsor, I'd be racing at Eldora and the Lucas Oil [Late Model Dirt] Series. I'd like to be competitive with Moyer, and just be able to race with Bloomquist."

"Right now, there's no pot of gold, so we'll just win everything we can with what we have." **SI**