

## SPORTS

## Driver turns heads en route to U.S. open wheel series

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James Vance-Lousada had thoughts of giving up on a career in open wheel racing last year.

The 20-year-old Ballantrae resident had done well in karting and even conducted open wheel testing.

But there were no offers.

That was until earlier this year.

These days, he's not about to let go of the steering wheel after making his debut as the lone Canadian driver in the Playboy Mazda MX-5 Cup, a support spec series event of one-hour timed races conducted on a road course. Cars can attain speeds up to 220 km/h.

"I did some open wheel car tests in the past, but the financial responsibility in the sport is a lot," Vance-Lousada said. "At the end of last year I didn't see a future in motor sports. But I got a chance and want to make the most of it."

First racing dirt bikes when he was 11 years old before turning to go karts which he raced for the last nine years, Vance-Lousada's big opportunity arose in early January when he fielded a call from his go kart race team owner asking if he would like to race in West Palm Beach, Fla.

## DIRT BIKES TO KARTS

He finished fifth out of 15 drivers in the first race and started the second race from the back of the pack when he incurred motor problems. Vance-Lousada worked his way up to fourth before his motor blew up.

Upon returning from Florida, Vance-Lousada was contacted by the Speedcraft Racing Development team, who saw him compete in Florida and asked if he wanted to be part of their open-wheel team. Vance-Lousada flew to Dallas to meet up with the team.

Vance-Lousada felt his uncanny ability to

move into contention during that second race caught team officials' eyes.

The team set up a four-day test at Eagles Canyon Raceway near Decatur, Texas.

Vance-Lousada did not disappoint as he eclipsed the track record on three occasions during the third day of testing. On the final day, he reset the mark twice.

"That sold the owners because they were a relatively new team," he said.

## ANTES UP OWN MONEY

The team informed him they did not have a lot of funding, a big necessity in open wheel racing. Vance-Lousada then put down some of his own money to help out.

The bottom line? A racing team was born.

With intentions of making their debut in the first race held in Sebring, Fla., Vance-Lousada said they had to pass on it due to licensing issues.

But they made it to the second event recently staged on the Laguna Seca road course in Monterey, Calif.

Vance-Lousada manoeuvred his vehicle into second place with close to five laps remaining in the 30-competitor field. But adversity struck when a mechanical issue forced him to spin out and not finish.

"I think the team was surprised I was racing near the front of the field. We have a solid foundation of a team," he said.

Vance-Lousada's next event is scheduled to take place at Mid Ohio June 14 to 16.

After that he's looking forward to returning north of the 49th parallel to compete at the Mobil Grand Prix at Mosport Park in Bowmanville July 19 to 21.

"My goal is to see if I can get support to move up into the next series," he said, "because there's not many Canadian drivers that seem to excel. I'd like to jump to that next step."



James Vance-Lousada, 20, of Ballantrae will race at the Mobil Grand Prix at Mosport Park July 19 to 21.

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- sets a positive example for others

### DEADLINE JUNE 9, 2013

Nominations should include nominee's detailed resume and letters of support.

e mail: [jmason@yrmg.com](mailto:jmason@yrmg.com)

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Attention: Jim Mason

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