



Neil's Retirement Announcement – The "Speedzone Undeleted Version"

Memo To: All TPS Drivers, Members, Officials Sponsors and Best Friends - January 4, 2011

With the completion of the 35th consecutive Texas Pro Sedans racing season, I am hereby notifying all concerned of my full retirement from working in behalf of TPS. For more than 53 years, I've been involved in all levels of auto racing. I tried to retire after the 1997 TIDA season, but returned when I felt it was essential to assure the continuance of TPS. In 2009, I announced at the TPS Awards Dinner that I was stepping down from the position of TPS Race & Administrative Director, but would continue during the 2010 season as the TPS Administrative Director in the interest of organizational continuity, which I did. (My retirement announcement was first stated verbally on October 30 at the 2010 TPS Awards Dinner).

The recent decision and announcement by Thunderhill Raceway Lessee Mary Ann Naumann of her decision to eliminate 100% of TPS pit payments which constituted the TPS purses at THR was unfair and the most unpleasant issue to ever face TPS in 35 years. It has become professionally painful and personally hurtful for me to see THR payments to TPS continually reduced over the years. She was unwilling to negotiate this important issue with me in behalf of TPS. A vote was taken on October 30 regarding future TPS racing at Thunderhill Raceway. The "YES – NO" issue simply stated was, "is TPS willing or un-willing to race at THR for a 100% purse cut"? An 18-0 majority voted NOT to accept a zero purse at THR. I was proud of the members to reject THR's very unequal business decision. TPS Officials did not cast a vote. Mary Ann's Lone Star Speedzone.com posts failed to mention that she alone made the decision to eliminate TPS payments. She only posted that she suggested TPS could pay their own purses with their sponsor money. Her LSS posts were allowed unrestricted and unedited. My professionally worded Business Meeting report post was deleted by the LSS Moderator and called a "rant". It is understood that she wants all TPS pit pass money to pay her new NASCAR 10% of each purse sanction fee and increased NASCAR insurance premiums and therefore avoid reducing any of her own THR purses. We all thought we had a long time friend at THR. Regretfully, we now know that we didn't. Mary Ann's greedy business decision has broken many TPS hearts.

CC Speedway owner Dan Monroe and David Mackey have negotiated a schedule in principle for several race dates. David has sent a contract to Dan Monroe. TPS racing at CCS depends upon prompt contract agreement signing by Dan. TPS car owners should wait for David's notification of the signing before spending money on their cars. Approval of a 2011 TPS race schedule at CCS rests with Dan Monroe and is TPS's only chance for a 2011 racing season solely at CCS.

I have worked tirelessly to solicit sponsors to supplement and increase TPS race purses. I worked hard to promote, arrange and pay the repair of TPS purses due to THR reduced pit gate payments during the past several seasons. Inactivity by some non-participating TPS members who apparently don't appreciate these efforts in their behalf was counterproductive to the remainder of the active TPS driver membership and does not justify my future efforts. To insure my fiduciary responsibility and legal management of the TPS Treasury, I refunded all 2011 dues payments. I'll continue TPS work until the 2010 TPS IRS return is completed. Then, do no future TPS work.

I sincerely hope, but seriously doubt that local racing can recover and exist as it once did. It distresses me to see car owners and drivers having to pay more, travel more to tracks to race at and then compete for pitiful purses made only from a percentage of their own pit pass purchases or worse, no percentage at all as was recently decided by THR. Racing veterans can remember a time when local tracks actually promoted and advertised the sale of admission tickets and compensated racers for providing the attraction and show from part of their ticket and concession sales. I do understand that tracks face economic problems, but so do TPS race teams. Perhaps the public is no longer a willing customer to buy admission tickets to fund local track operations. It has become easier for some tracks to exist by simply selling expensive pit passes than by working, promoting and advertising to increase their spectator sales base. Today's racing reminds me of buying an amusement park ticket and then having to bring your own carnival ride. The THR Operator has frequently and publicly identified her facility as a "playground for racers to bring their toys". Her statement fortifies a warped concept of today's racing scene and proves my point. Her statement also demeans needed image improvement of our sport.

In parting TPS, here is some past reality and difficulty I had with tracks which led to reduced or eliminated TPS races ie: Houston Speedway breaching three 2003 contracted races, Red River Speedway announcing it would charge a \$150 RRS registration fee for each TPS car at each race in addition to the \$25 pit pass fee, San Antonio Speedway closing in 2007 with five TPS contracted races remaining and Longhorn Speedway, Twin Cities Speedway and TWS closing to pro racing, Shelma Walton reneging on \$400 worth of signed sponsor contracts and a former CC Speedway lessee writing to TPS "I don't give a squat about the Texas Pro Sedans and I don't owe them anything" and lastly, Mary Ann Naumann in her first communication announcing that her zero payback "final offer" was "non-negotiable". It has been a tough TPS business world out there in trying to represent TPS member best interest.

When TIDA-LM's and Pro Sedans ceased operations thirteen years ago, I wrote too many of you that "we have witnessed the gradual degradation of our sport, at the local level. We have seen local tracks closing or losing their fan base, car counts and profit potential. Minor league local racing simply cannot compete with Saturday night FREE televised NASCAR races. It's not even a fair fight. Most local tracks just go dark on NASCAR nights. Some local tracks even naively send 10% of their purses as a sanction fee to NASCAR. The big dog continues to eat even more of its own puppies".

The proudest thing I have done in sports has been to dedicate more than 53 years of my life to the sport of auto racing. I very much appreciate all of the fine people who either worked with or for me. They know who they are. I am thankful for the support of the loyal members of Texas and TIDA Pro Sedans, the TIDA Late Model Series and Texas World Speedway's Texas Race of Champions and Texas Grand Prix participants and to all of our generous, but hard to attract sponsors. I sincerely thank all of the fine people from my driving days. I thank all of my co-owners, co-drivers, crew people and sponsors who helped me own and drive several great race cars for more than 20 years and be the two times TIDA Pro Sedan Champion.

As I have been doing for the past eleven years, I will continue to work in San Antonio high school football as PA Announcer at Heroes Stadium and the Alamodome.

My racing career is over. It has been quite a ride. I have enjoyed almost every mile of it. I won't see you around the tracks in the future. If you have time in your race through life, please stay in touch with me, say hello and remember this "old racer", who I sincerely believe, worked hard for the good of the sport of Texas professional auto racing - and also for you.

Thanks to all of you - Neil Upchurch

**Founder, Driver, Race Director, Administrative Director - Texas Pro Sedans & TIDA Pro Sedans, TIDA-LM's & TROC @ TWS
c/o 3222 Leyte Drive, San Antonio, TX.78217-4018, 210/ 655-3222 Phone & Fax, 210/ 365-3221 Cell Phone, neilupchurch@sbcglobal.net**