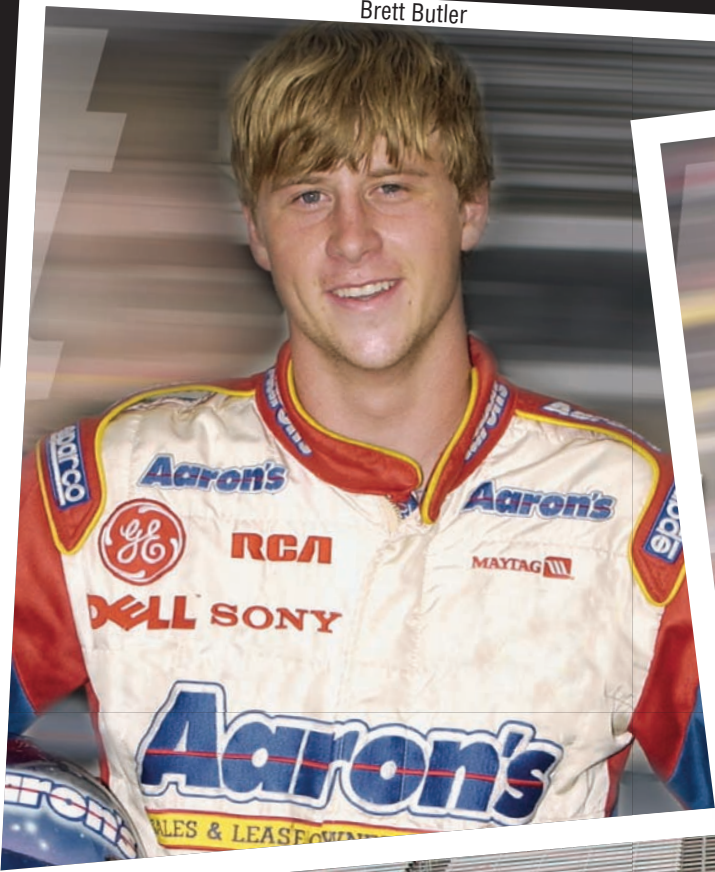
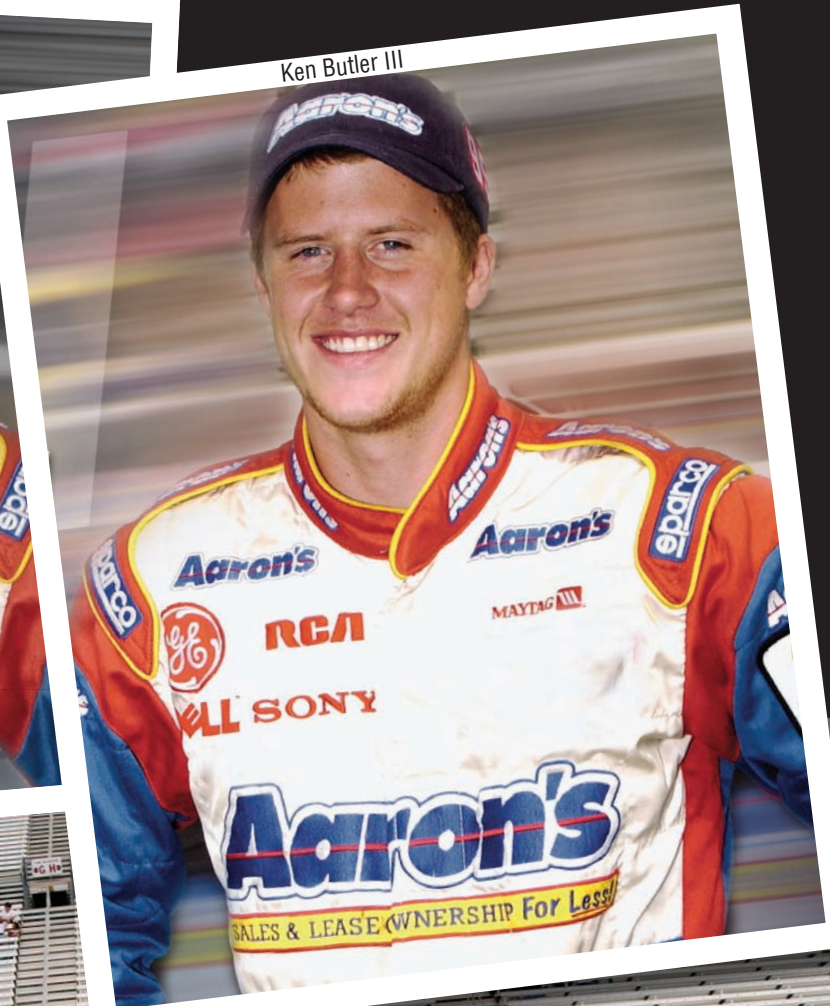


Brett Butler



Ken Butler III





Hey dad

by Michele Vance

can I borrow the car?



Bret and KB3 out for a Sunday drive at Bristol



It's been said that the Butler family has drive. Ken Butler, President of Aaron's Sales & Lease Ownership, is well-known to readers of this magazine for his 31-year career with Aaron Rents, Inc. But perhaps lesser-known is the more literal drive demonstrated by his two sons, Ken Butler III (known as KBIII) and his brother, Brett. Together, the Butler Brothers might be the next big thing in motorsports. And Dad couldn't be more proud.

While Ken's sons had enjoyed success in the sports world before, as players on the high school state championship football team (KBIII) and state championship wrestling team (Brett), motorsports was something different. Before, the boys' relatively small stature made professional careers in their choice of sports a non-option. However, their small but athletic physical make-up combined with an intense love for racing, made them the perfect candidates to pursue motorsports as a career.

Just five years ago the boys began racing Go-Karts, encouraged by their high school football coach and racing enthusiast, Cecil Flowe. Another family friend, Bobby Keys, provided inspiration to the boys as well. But what began as a hobby quickly turned into much more. According to Ken,

"Within three days of seeing our first Go-Kart race, we were in business. It was clear from the beginning that those boys loved everything about it. They took to racing like ducks take to water. I'd never seen such energy and passion from them as when they're in that racing element. It was clear Go-Karts were just the start," said dad Ken Butler.

However, despite the innocent-sounding name, Go-Kart racing can be extremely dangerous. At one race, Ken and his sons witnessed a horrifying accident where a fellow Go-Kart driver was carried off the track on a gurney. "Those cars have no roll cages or even seat belts," said Ken. "I told them right then and there they were done racing Go-Karts. But I knew they were far from done with racing itself. We immediately began to search for another option."

continued on page 10

The family was considering purchasing a Legends car when another solution sprang up in the most unusual of places. While on one of his numerous field visits to Aaron's stores, in early 2001, Ken spotted a brochure a store manager had posted advertising a Pro Challenge Car for sale (Pro Challenge Cars are 3/4-scale models of the exact type of cars that race in NASCAR's fabled Nextel Cup competition). Convinced the Pro Challenge cars posed a safer alternative to the open-air Go-Karts his boys had raced, Ken bought that Pro Challenge vehicle. Before long, the boys were a fixture on the Pro Challenge Series, where they would alternate racing the car at 1/2-mile oval tracks throughout the Southeast.

As KBIII and Brett were gaining experience behind the wheel, an interesting parallel was taking place within Aaron's. Aaron's Spokesperson and NASCAR driver Michael Waltrip had become a larger part of the Company's marketing efforts. Aaron's success as a motorsports marketer was becoming apparent and the relationship with Michael Waltrip blossomed. Business boomed.

Before long, Michael Waltrip took an interest in the Butler Brothers. He had the Butlers' race reports sent to him each week. Waltrip presented KBIII and Brett each with their first "real" helmet and later their first official NASCAR toolbox for Christmas. Then, he quietly followed their careers. Dad helped, too, investing in a second Pro Challenge car so the boys no longer had to share. For the first time on the Pro Challenge circuit the brothers were able to participate in every race, racing against the clock - and each

other. At the end of that first year, KBIII finished 2nd in points, and Brett placed 4th.

The Butler Brothers became an official racing entity in 2004, and they continued to impress Michael Waltrip and others with their improvements in the Pro Challenge Series. Inspired by the young men's talent and drive (and, yes, their time trials in a "big" car), Michael Waltrip made the decision to form his own driver development team. There were two drivers Michael Waltrip wanted immediately - KBIII and Brett Butler. So just last Fall, the Butler Brothers drivers moved to Michael Waltrip's training complex in Sherrill's Ford, NC for intensive training.

Now you might wonder exactly what's involved in a driver training program like Michael Waltrip's (and for those non-race fans, it's a bit more than just "drive fast, veer left, repeat"). During the work week, KBIII and Brett learn about the cars they race and how to build them, repair them and make them perform faster. They train their bodies for the rigors of racing. They learn



strategies for winning races. Then, come the weekend, they get to put it all to the test.

For Brett that means driving late model cars in the Dodge NASCAR Weekly Series in Hickory, NC under Michael Waltrip's tutelage. But KBIII has found himself in a situation unparalleled within the world of motorsports. KBIII drives not just any car. He, like Michael Waltrip himself, has earned the right to be the proud driver of an Aaron's Dream Machine in the Pro Challenge Series and in the USAR Hooters Cup Series. So what's it like to drive - in a sense - Dad's company car?

"I grew up with Aaron's, so you can definitely say I'm very proud. I know that every racing fan knows about the Michael Waltrip Number 99 Aaron's Dream Machine and now that I'm following in his footsteps and driving an Aaron's car, there's pressure, but it's good pressure," said KBIII.

As for those who might think a well-placed father as opposed to well-honed driving skills put KBIII in this position, KBIII emphasizes that he's working hard to earn the respect of his fellow drivers so next year and in the years to come he can go for the Championship. And each season finds him clocking better times and higher places. He just recently experienced his first top 15 finish and KBIII knows he keeps improving.

"Right now, I'm just taking it one race at a time. When I'm behind the wheel, I'm concentrating on passing the next car, and thinking about how I can move forward."

So what exactly does Dad have to say, now that his original desire to keep his sons out of harm's way has morphed into blossoming careers in motorsports? KBIII feels he knows the answer. "Well, I think he'd trade places with me in a heartbeat! He loves watching the races and my dad's so competitive. That same drive would serve him well on the track. My dad's given me some great advice over the years, but the best has been 'Winning isn't everything, but wanting to win is'. I know that philosophy has served him well and it's something I practice every day of my career."

According to Ken, "I know those boys think I'd like to be out there, but what they don't realize is that running Aaron's is just like going 200 miles per hour all
contd. on page 46





Access Granted

continued from page 19

While advertising your stores is great, you've got to have merchandise to rent to those folks when they respond. And Access Rent to Own has managed to stock merchandise from some top-shelf vendors thanks to savvy purchasing and the help of distributors and buying groups like TRIB. "It was surprisingly easy to find merchandise for the stores. We currently carry Zenith, Sony, Crosley, Ashley Furniture and even LCD televisions from Westinghouse. There are about 2,600 pieces of merchandise in the system and so far we're finding that merchandise is staying out on rent for the fairly standard 18 week cycle."

Although low-end electronics, the former staple of RTO stores everywhere, have faded from the line up, Wohler sees promise from technologies like HDTV and even satellite radio.

"Just 13% of televisions in the US have HDTV right now. As of July, manufacturers can not ship televisions with screens larger than 30" without built-in HD tuners. The transition is coming quickly and it plays well into the acquisition mentality of an RTO customer. They want the newest and the best, and we are poised to give it to them at a price they can fit into their budget. We also were just approved as an XM Satellite Radio Dealership. We will stock both the plug and play car system and the home adaptors. We're excited about the promise this new items holds for Access, as well."

Wohler feels the changing trends in home electronics could be the silver bullet the rental industry has needed, "We could be on the verge of another VCR-type boom like we saw in the late 80's and early 90's."

But what about that other boom the RTO industry saw in the 90's - the rush by a few companies to acquire smaller, well-positioned chains like Access Rent to Own?

"I don't want to grow and then sell. I plan to be here to offer ownership opportunities to my original store managers. I am in this to operate a company," said Wohler. "I enjoy the autonomy and the ability to make decisions and then act on them without having to seek out three levels of review and approval. This process has been both scary and exciting at the same time. In my position, there is a haunting finality to the decisions you make each day. I have to own every decision I make."

Hey Dad Can I Borrow The Car?

continued from page 11

the time," said Butler. "When they decided to try racing, I told them I'd put into it as much as they put into it. I actually thought it would be a one-year hobby. I guess it's safe to say that they've called my bluff but I couldn't be more proud."

But how does all of this benefit Aaron's marketing efforts? According to Aaron's Vice President of Marketing Mark Rudnick, "We originally became involved in motorsports because the demographics closely matched those of our customer base. But it has become so much more than just an advertising campaign to us. Today, to have multiple Aaron's drivers running multiple races in circuits all the way up to the NASCAR Nextel Cup, shows

Full Color Postcards
Full Color Door Hangers
Embroidered Hats

Postcards	Door Hangers
5,000 Quantity 4 Color, 2 Sides \$325 \$450 4" x 6" 6" x 9" + Design / Layout \$100 - \$150	5,000 Quantity 4 Color, 2 Sides \$699 4.25" x 11" + Design / Layout \$100 - \$150

10 Years in Business
Total Rentals & Sales
You Are Approved
Pre-Approved. Get It Today!

Electronics from \$8.95 / Week
 Appliances from \$8.95 / Week
 Furniture from \$12.95 / Week
 Computers from \$14.95 / Week

Hats
 Minimum 144
 6 Panel, Cotton
 Velcro Closure **\$3.85**
 Maximum 5,000
 Stitches

INform
Print & Promotions
888-786-3676 **25 Years**
www.rtoforms.com

the public that Aaron's philosophy of making Dreams Come True happens on many different levels. We are proud to be such an integral part of our customers' lives through these events. Frankly, the value of these programs is incalculable."

And for a company whose marketing program is centered around the phrase Do The Math, "incalculable" is some high praise, indeed.

For a schedule of upcoming races or for more information about KB3, the Butler Brothers or Michael Waltrip Racing visit www.shopaaron.com and click on the Aaron's Sports tab.

