



the
**Henry
Ford**®



Jessica Brunelli

January 17, 1993 – Present

Nationality: American

Raced: 2005 – Present

Background: Jessica Brunelli was raised in Hayward, California and started racing there at a very early age. Her passion for motor sports grew after her father bought her a go-kart for her tenth birthday and she immediately knew that she wanted to race. While she would have liked to have taken part in high school dances and other activities, her interest in driving steered her in another direction. She focused all of her efforts on motor sports and even stopped running cross-country for her school after missing practices to race cars instead. After four years of competing in go-karts, Brunelli finished with two regional championships in the 2006 International Karting Federation (IKF). She started to gain experience in Formula cars and during the 2007 season participated in the Skip Barber Regional Championship Series. Brunelli was successful, winning at Thunderhill Raceway in Willows, California, and ultimately receiving the “Rookie of the Year” award for the series. Her accomplishments helped her beat out over six hundred applicants that year when she earned a spot in Ron Sutton’s Winner’s Circle driver development program, which helps train drivers for future careers in NASCAR. In 2008, she became the youngest driver to receive a USAC (United States Auto Club) license and she spent the year racing USAC Ford Focus Midgets. She also graduated from Lyn St. James’ Winner in Women’s Circle Academy where she further developed her skills. During the 2009 season, Brunelli competed in the NASCAR Whelen All-American Modified Series at Roseville Speedway in California and she again made history by becoming the youngest driver to receive the series’ “Rookie of the Year” award. These achievements did not go unnoticed and Brunelli was chosen to be one of thirty racers to take part in the NASCAR 2009 Drive for Diversity Combine, NASCAR’s leading development program for female and minority drivers and crew members. In addition to her driving skills, Brunelli was evaluated on her media and sponsor skills and she was chosen as one of ten drivers to make the final cut for the 2010 Drive for Diversity Program. She recently moved from California to North Carolina so that she can prepare for this upcoming season.

Inspiration and Influences: Brunelli’s interest in racing began thanks to her family. Not only did her grandpa help crew on drag racing cars, but her father also competed for three years when she was younger. She grew up around motor sports and even played in her dad’s race car that was parked in their backyard. Her first real experience with racing came at age eight when Brunelli went to watch a quarter-midget competition. After the racing was done she walked onto the track and fell in love with the atmosphere and the sport. Her dad helped get her involved with go-karting just a few years later and Brunelli’s

career grew from there. He has continued to be an influential force in her racing career and Brunelli considers him her best friend and hero. She is also inspired by those racers who have come before her, including Dale Earnhardt and Tony Stewart. Brunelli is determined to continue advancing her racing career in the hopes of participating in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series.

Racing Accomplishments:

- Finished in the Top 3 in three different divisions of the IKF Regional Championship in 2005.
 - Qualified 3rd out of 38 drivers in the IKF Grand Nationals in 2005.
- At age thirteen, she became one of the youngest drivers to receive a Competition Driver's License for Formula Dodge, April 2006.
- Won two IKF Region 11 regional karting championships in 2006.
- Participated in the Skip Barber Driver Shootout in Sebring, Florida in 2007.
- Won her first race in the Skip Barber Race Series at Thunderhill Raceway in Willows, California in 2007.
- Participated in her first Open Modified race in 2007, qualifying in 7th place and ultimately finishing in 5th.
- Beat over 600 racers to earn a spot on Ron Sutton's Winner's Circle team in 2007.
- Became the youngest driver to receive a USAC license, 2008.
- Became the youngest driver to race USAC Ford Focus Midgets, 2008.
- Finished 6th in USAC Ford Focus points in 2008.
- Graduated from Lyn St. James' Women in the Winners Circle Academy in 2008.
- One of 30 drivers to compete in the 2009 NASCAR Drive for Diversity Combine.
 - After the officials narrowed the field to 16 participants, she was chosen as one of the ten finalists for the 2010 Drive for Diversity Program.
- Became the first female and youngest driver to win the NASCAR Whelen All-American Modified Series at Roseville Speedway in 2009.
 - She finished third in the championship, with two second-place finishes and five third-place finishes.

Awards and Recognition:

- Named "Rookie of the Year" in the Skip Barber Race Series in 2007.
- Named "Rookie of the Year" in the NASCAR Whelen All-American Modified Series in 2009, becoming the youngest driver to ever receive the award.

Life off the Track: Brunelli spends the majority of her time working on improving her racing skills. She continues to train both on and off the track with Ron Sutton's Winner's Circle and is currently preparing for the upcoming season. In her spare time, she is restoring a '69 Chevy Camaro SS/RS. She likes Muscle Cars and enjoys dancing.

Personal Website:

<http://www.jessicabrunelli.com/>

Sources Consulted

Newspaper and Online Articles:

- Boland, Marc. "Auto Racing: Who is America's Youngest Race Car Diva?" Bleacher Report. 26 March 2008. <<http://bleacherreport.com/articles/14448-auto-racing-who-is-americas-youngest-race-car-diva>>.
- "Brunelli Impressive in NASCAR Drive for Diversity Combine," Flag World.com. 12 November 2009. <<http://www.flagworld.com/news/?p=27767#more-27767>>.
- Buchanan, Mary Jo. "Paul Harraka and Jessica Brunelli Headline Drive for Diversity Final 10," Bleacher Report. 2009. <<http://bleacherreport.com/articles/278991-paul-harraka-and-jessica-brunelli-headline-drive-for-diversity-final-ten>>.
- "Driver Development," Drive for Diversity. 2009. <<http://drivefordiversity.info/content/>>.
- Holmes, Kevin. "Driven: Jessica Brunelli Story – Promo," Vimeo. 2009. <<http://vimeo.com/1844515>>.
- "Jessica Brunelli," Blakesley Sports Media and Brunelli Racing. 2009. <<http://www.jessicabrunelli.com/>>.
- "Jessica Brunelli's Page," Drive for Diversity. 2010. <<http://www.d4d.tv/profile/JessicaBrunelli>>.
- "Jessica Brunelli Pushes NASCAR's Limits," NBC Bay Area. <<http://www.nbcbayarea.com/enjoy-this/Jessica-Brunellis-Pushes-NASCARs-Limits-65814987.html>>.
- "Jessica Brunelli - The Youngest Ever - NASCAR American Modified Rookie of the Year," K&N Engineering, Inc. 2010. <<http://www.knfilters.com/news/news.aspx?ID=2318>>.

Research and biography written by Hilary Resteck and Casey Schuster, graduate students at Indiana University/Purdue University Public History Department.