Toyota Racing’s Antron Brown Is Focused on the Next Generation

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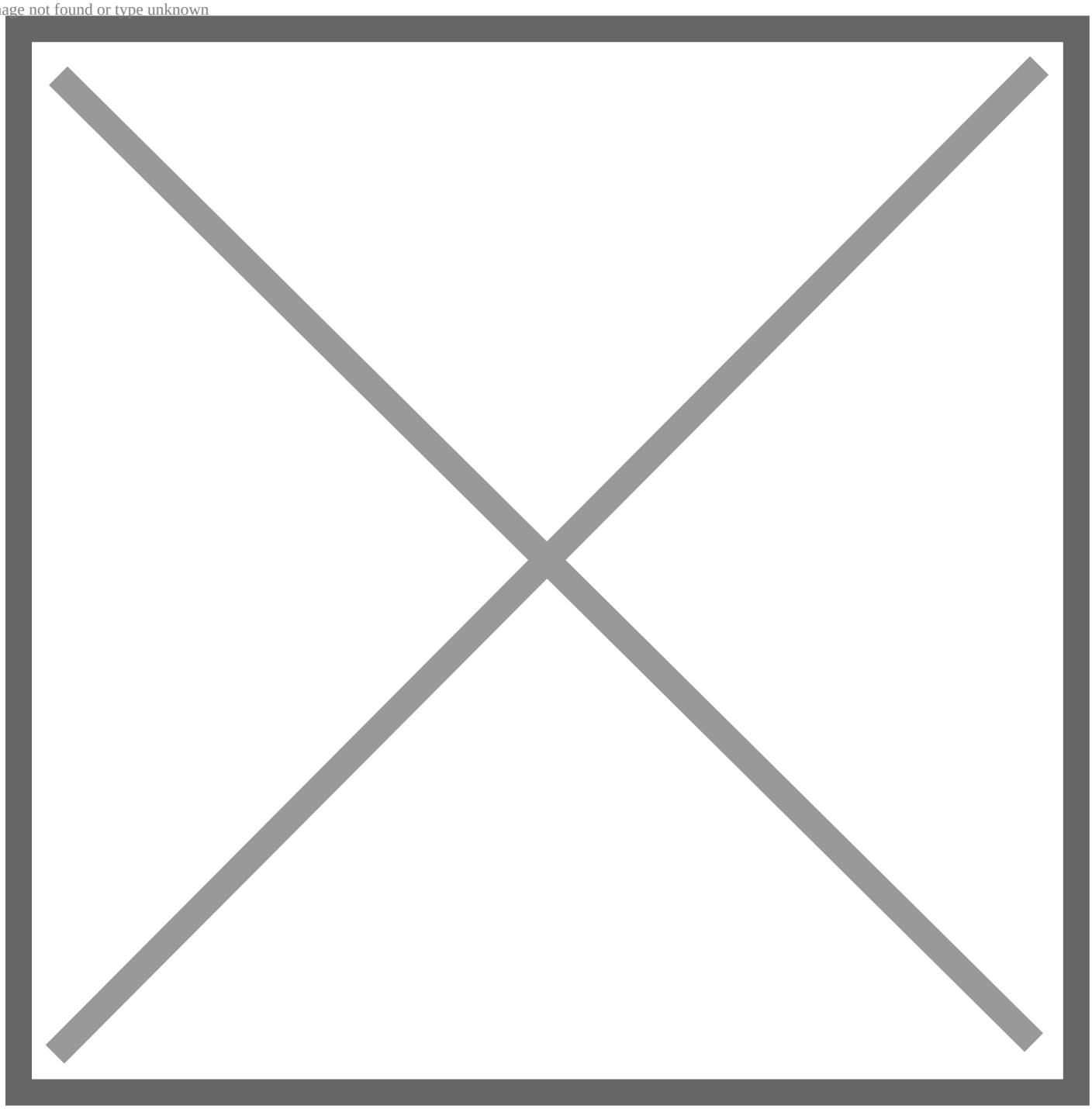


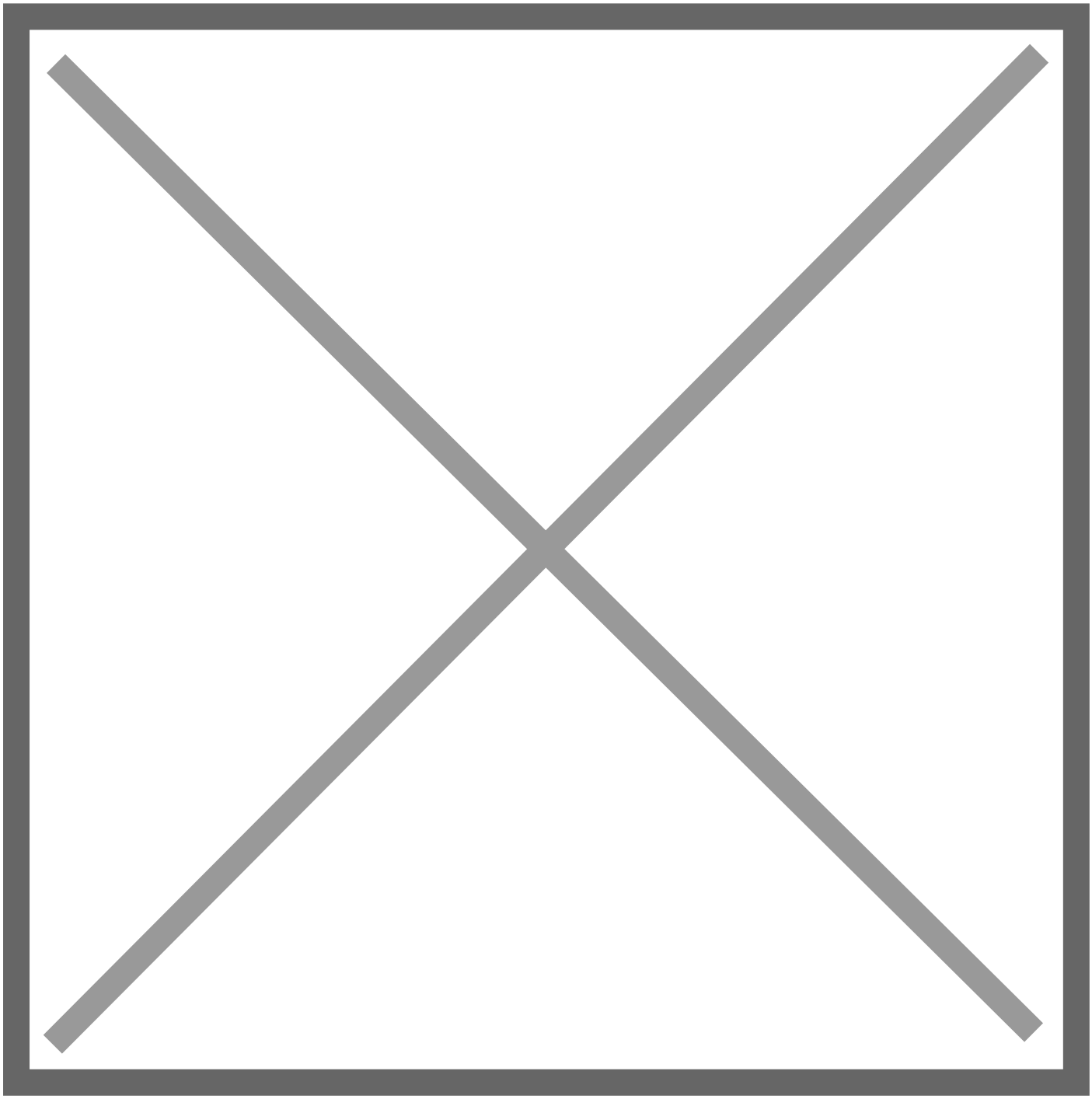
Team Toyota motorsports driver Antron Brown is one of the most well-known names on the track. Now Brown, who races in the National Hot Rod Association (NHRA), is fulfilling his dream of racing under his own name: Antron Brown Motorsports.

The 47-year-old has been driving for Team Toyota for 16 years. In 2012, Brown became the first African-American driver to win a major U.S. auto racing championship after earning the 2012 NHRA Top Fuel series title. After spending several years with Don Schumacher Racing, Brown took a leap to form his own team, AB Motorsports, in 2022.

“It’s been great for me to be part of Don Schumacher Racing for all these years,” he says. “We won a lot of races, championships, but going forward I’m looking at, ‘Ok, what does AB want to do next?’ We’re trying to build something tight-knit, something special.”

Last year, Brown won the 68th running of the NHRA U.S. Nationals. It was his fourth Indianapolis win and first as a driver-owner. AB Motorsports made a strong debut, finishing with a second-place ranking for its rookie season.

“It’s unbelievable,” says Brown. “Thank the God above. All of the prayers, all of the hard work, we are making it happen. We have been working so hard for this and I’m super proud of my team. They did an incredible job. We did it. We brought it home.”



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The Value of Hard Work

Brown credits his work ethic to his family. He’s watched them run a family-owned septic business for as long as he can remember.

“My grandpop instilled something into all of us, that he would give us whatever we needed as long as we worked for it,” Brown says.

When Brown wanted to race in motocross, his grandfather agreed to buy him the dirt bike he wanted, but only at the end of a summer spent working at the family business. Brown spent the summer digging trenches, putting in lines and pumping septic tanks to earn the bike.

While Brown got his start on minibikes, he was born into drag racing legacy. Brown’s father, Albert, and uncle, Andre, are avid NHRA Sportsman racers, following the lead of their grandfather, who began drag racing in the 1960s. Brown, however, was uninterested in drag racing. In fact, he was adamantly against it.

“I despised drag racing at first,” he says. “My dad and uncle would be up all night long working on stuff — I thought all you do is take engines out, put engines in, change the tires, whatever, just to get eight seconds of race time.”

That’s why Brown turned to motocross, where participants spend more time actually riding and less time doing mechanical work on the bike. In drag racing, drivers and their teams spend more time tweaking the vehicles than zipping down the track. Of course, his perception started to change as he got older and could do more driving.

“I felt more of a love for it then, because I saw how you start making these little changes and decisions, and how that affects what the car does on the racetrack,” he says. “You saw it right away on the time slip. I got more understanding and respect for drag racing.”

Shaping the Future of Drag Racing

Brown is excited to keep up the development of AB Motorsports, which is setting a foundation for the day when he steps away from driving himself — not that that’s happening any time soon. The fourth-generation drag racer is heavily invested in bringing fresh talent and new energy into the sport.

“I want to be the next one to actually help the sport continue on and give people the opportunity to come in and do the thing I love,” he says. “Through ABM, I want to build a team that looks for new talent and to be able to give some new kid a shot.”

Brown introduced the sport to his own kids through the NHRA Jr. Drag Racing series, where children as young as five years old drive half-scale dragsters. According to Brown, they race in a highly competitive series called the Midwest Junior Super Series. Though it’s a Midwest series, the championship racer says kids come to compete from all over the country, including Georgia, Tennessee and Texas, to drive against the best of the best.

“Those drivers are impressing me at an early age because they know the game at 12 years old,” he says. “When they get to 16 or 17, they jump in the big cars and start taking out the big names that have won championships like it’s nothing.”

According to Brown, the motorsports industry needs to cultivate more racers earlier in order to bring the sport to the next level. The next great drivers are out there — they just need a team to take a chance on them.

“It really gets me pumped up when I can see somebody that has passion and that want-to,” Brown says. “That’s something you can’t instill in people. And I see it every day in those junior dragster ranks.”