

DRIVEN WOMEN

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Kinzie Wilson's Great Race

by Petrol Mum | May 28, 2023



Twenty-one-year-old Kinzie Wilson has been laser focused on a career in motorsports since she first became a teenager – with her current trajectory on course to pursue a potential role with a Formula One team or as a business executive for a European car manufacturer. And at the speed she's traveling, her vision may just come true.

This is a young woman who became hooked on motorsports after buying her first car – a 1996 Corvette – at age 13. While growing up in Texas with a dad who brought her to weekly local drag races, she was more than anxious to take part in the NHRA's then newest category of drag racing for 13- to 16-year-olds, enabling her to get her NHRA Racing License years before getting a 'real' driver's license. When her rookie year earned her *only* a 2nd place finish, she was determined to return the next season where she captured 'Junior Street Champion' stature – never lifting in her dreams to keep moving forward.



Kinzie's favourite hobbies include cheerleading and caring for the 1996 Corvette she bought when she was 13 – she received an Academic and Athletic Scholarship for Belmont Abbey College.

From modifying her own car by cutting the mufflers at age 16, to begin working at NASCAR during high school, her ambitions never wavered – maintaining ongoing roles with Mario Andretti Racing Experience and a full pre-college schedule that included high school cheerleading and racing. Her hard work earned academic and athletic college scholarships allowing her to focus her studies on Motorsport Management at Belmont Abbey College.

"The program was absolutely amazing," said Kinzie. "I was part of the student-led 24 Hours of Lemons team, got to attend racing events such as the Rolex 24 in Daytona, and met professionals in the industry that shared their secrets to success."

Her own success came in the summer of 2022, when Nick Ellis, executive director for the RPM Foundation, an organisation committed to supporting careers in vehicle restoration and preservation through grant funding and apprenticeships, invited Kinzie to take a spot on their all-female Great Race X-Cup team, which later turned into an internship for the Foundation itself.

Senior year in college gave her access to her next internship at Charlotte Motor Speedway, but her biggest win may just be the Global MBA program at the University of Bologna's business school, where she'll be heading later this Summer. The degree program includes a 12-month curriculum located near the hometown of Maserati and Ducati, focusing on Supercars, Superbikes and Motorsports while blending theory with experience. The academic excellence provided comes directly from the exclusive expertise of legendary automotive companies including Alpha Tauri, Dallara, Ferrari, Lamborghini and Marelli.

Kinzie can't suppress her enthusiasm for this new and exciting lifestyle choice, "I am looking forward to living in Italy and learning Italian. While the program is taught in English, Italian classes are offered as a part of tuition. I have seen myself moving there someday for years, never expecting it to be so soon. I have only lived in two small towns and this small-town girl is ready to take on the world!"



Kinzie hopes to become a role model in motorsports for the younger generation.

With a desire to later land a role with a Formula One team, or even a European manufacturer, she additionally has a broader achievement in mind, "I want to be a role model for women and the younger generation interested in motorsports and cars. There are so few women in this male-dominated industry. I want to inspire other women to chase their dreams no matter what.

The younger generation is the future of this industry, and it is imperative that we do our part to encourage and guide young women in their journey. I want to be a role-model for kids everywhere and show them that anything is possible and to dream big!"

The road to those dreams will begin for Kinzie as a second-year participant in the Great Race, this time as a driver on behalf of RPM once again, and for this summer driving in a '65 Corvair. The race begins in St. Augustine, Florida on June 24, 2023, and ends in Colorado on July 2, 2023.

The time, speed, distance rally is geared to vehicles from 1975 or older, following set directions that specify what speeds to go at certain times and for how long. Participants go through multiple checkpoints on route, with a goal is to hit the checkpoint at the exact time one would if followed all directions perfectly. The score is based on how many seconds off from the total time a team is. If you get a perfect score at a checkpoint, you get an Ace!



RPM's 2022 all-female Great Race X-Cup team, including (left to right) Olivia Gadjo, navigator from Skaneateles, NY; Mercedes Lillenthal, mentor driver from Portland, OR; Sabre Cook, racer and mentor driver; and Kinzie Wilson, navigator from Belmont, NC.

Throughout the history of the Great Race, it has been a priority to encourage youth to participate, as a competitor or as part of the staff. Eventually, a special class was created for young automotive enthusiasts who wanted to pilot a vintage car in the Great Race. This division would become known as X- Cup. The X-Cup division allows high school and college-aged student teams to participate, at a discounted rate, with scholarship and grant opportunities from the RPM Foundation.

Follow Kinzie's progress via Instagram @kinziewilsonracing or via her YouTube channel.

Photographs supplied.

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