

Algonquin's O'Neill gains fame in fishing, NASCAR

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Mark O'Neill is a resident of McHenry County who is making a contribution to two popular sports simultaneously. He is a well-respected fishing educator and he is a mechanical engineer who has impacted NASCAR by revolutionizing stock car transmissions.

The 52-year old O'Neill lives in Algonquin with his wife, Laura. An avid fisherman, O'Neill has become a pro staff member for Lund Boats and Optima batteries. His burgeoning fame stems from his professional relationships with Lowrance electronics, Navionics mapping and Bruce "Doc" Samson's "Doctor Sonar" enterprise.

O'Neill is one of the country's top authorities on the subject of marine electronics. He is in demand to stage technical seminars on the subject all over the Midwest.

"You think you know electronics? Well, you don't in comparison to O'Neill," Ken Abraham of the Lake Geneva Fishing Club said, "The guy knows everything there is to know. And on top of that, he's one heck of a fisherman."

The world of electronics has gone wild, looking nothing like the days when Lowrance debuted their legendary green box depth finder. Now, you can mark locations, find depths, read speed, determine the composition of the bottom, locate fish and even see the bottom in virtual 3-D color pictures through the use of Lowrance's SideScan and StructureScan technologies.

In addition to classroom instruction, O'Neill offers on-water lessons in the proper use of marine electronics.

"It's amazing how little some people know about equipment they have paid a lot of money for," said O'Neill. "A small investment in education to learn how to properly



Photo provided

Mark O'Neill of Algonquin hoists a hefty 20 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch Lake Geneva largemouth bass.

use your equipment can quickly make you a much more successful fisherman. You can even learn how to custom make your own maps."

O'Neill was able to correct an error he found on all of the existing maps of Lake Geneva. Every map manufacturer always showed a certain section of the lake as a deep flat area with no character. Through superior electronics ability, O'Neill discovered that the area was the site of a large shallow hump rising from deep water, a prime fishing area. He has had the error corrected.

To put it simply, buying an electronic device and trying to use it without help is like buying a plane and attempting to fly it without taking pilot lessons. To check O'Neill's seminar schedule or to learn more about an on-water session, go to structure-fishing.com.

As far as his other career, Mark O'Neill is the son of a man who ran a gear shop in Chicago. Mark's dad began to delve into the world of auto racing when he began to do work on transmissions for Indy cars.

O'Neill built a career as a mechanical engineer and was hired by Andrews Products in 1999. They learned about his knowledge of racing transmissions and by the next year became involved in that aspect of the business. It seems that stock car transmissions were historically unreliable.

It didn't take O'Neill long to design a transmission that was nearly flawless. Andrews quickly became the leading manufacturer of NASCAR transmissions. The other companies then improved their products to try to stay in the game. O'Neill's involvement provided the entire industry with a totally improved product that had become less problematic.

Six of the past seven NASCAR championship cars were vehicles that O'Neill had an important hand in designing. The Andrews product is used by all of the game's big guns, including the Penske, Hendrick and Roush-Fenway racing teams. O'Neill has gotten to know most of the stars and principals, including the late Dale Earnhardt, Sr. and Jeff Gordon.