

Lunch with Joey Logano

Three-time champ by age 10 and major NASCAR contender at age 20

One of NASCAR's rising stars—and its youngest Rookie of the Year (in 2010)—Joey Logano visited with a select group of fans at Alice Cooperstown in downtown Phoenix on February 2 for a luncheon, sponsored by Coca-Cola, designed to promote the upcoming SUBWAY Fresh Fit 500 running on February 27 at Phoenix International Raceway. The event included radio and television interviews in front of about 40 fans, selected to attend through a social media promotion. These fans also had the opportunity to partic-

ipate in a Q&A session with Logano.

We arrived to find Logano in Alice Cooper's Dungeon below the restaurant, conducting private media interviews while autographing diecast #20 Home Depot Toyota Camrys—and at the same time eating a burger and fries from a basket atop the pool table. He said he's quite used to eating on the run—and rated the Cooperstown burger "great."

Still wearing his jacket, he commented "I almost didn't bring this, coming to Phoenix. It was 50 degrees when I left Charlotte this morning." The

temperature would only reach 44 that day—a record low/high for Phoenix in February. We were sure Joey would be bringing a jacket (and gloves) when he returned in two weeks for the race.

Soon it was time for his first trip upstairs, to meet the fans and do a radio interview with Big Shoe Stew of KMLE Camel Country radio, which involved a fair amount of discussion as to why he doesn't have a NASCAR accent just yet. Logano was born in Connecticut and started his racing career at age 6 in Quarter-Midgets (yes, that's a 14-



Story and photos by Randall Bohl



year career for a 20-year-old), then spent the first four years of his racing career winning Eastern Grand National Championships at three different levels of Quarter-Midget competition (yes, that's three Championships by the age of 10).

Back down to Alice's Dungeon for more interviews and a few now cold french fries, while the fans have a relaxed lunch.

There are also a couple of special fans, invited to the Dungeon for a photo-op with Joey. One young lady (13) had talked her parents into driving from San Diego to meet him—Joey shows great appreciation for this. And there was a special winner from the social networking promotion: four-year-old (going on five during race week!) Nathan Druszcz who was kind enough to bring his mother Julie along. Nathan got his #20 Home Depot hat and shirt autographed, as well as receiving a diecast car. Joey, not being shy about his own age, said, "So you're turning five—that was only three years ago for me!"

Upstairs, television cameras awaited with Paul Horton, meteorologist from KPHO Channel 5, handling the fan Q&A. Logano's first response to Horton's introduction was, "Wow, I've never been interviewed by the weatherman before." Fan questions centered largely on what Joey thought about the different NASCAR tracks. His favorites? Phoenix, where every turn is different with the dog leg out there; Charlotte; and Daytona, just because it is Daytona. Most challenging (he says, surprising even himself) is Loudon (New Hampshire) Motor Speedway, even though he got his first win there and it's been his home track. He least likes road courses, stating that they become a "traffic jam" as the cars just aren't made for them—naming Sonoma, Watkins Glen and Montreal. His preference is certainly for oval racing.

And as he finishes his lunch we inquire as to his favorite tailgate food. "Burgers on the grill," he says, "because that's all I know how to cook."

On changes to the point system and Sprint Cup Chase this year—there will be a Top Ten plus two wild cards to be determined by "wins"—Logano thinks this is going to create some craziness in the final lap of races as having that "win" on your record could mean getting into the Chase as a wild card if you don't make it on season points. Expect even more havoc than usual on the last lap?

As Joey prepared to fly back to Charlotte, we asked a favorite *Arizona Driver* question, "What's your daily driver" when you get back to the airport tonight? He's ready. With a big grin he said "I just got a new Lexus IS-F." ■