

# Life in the Fast Lane

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## Pool Builder Charles Barnes has taken his business and racing career—to new heights.

**By John Miles** The blistering heat of a well-treaded speedway is about as far as you can get from the cool comfort of a backyard pool. But builder Charles Barnes has found home in both worlds. WTF – WTF.

The co-owner of Riverbend Sandler Pools in Plano, Texas, said he became interested in GT (or grand touring) racing at Motor Sports ranches in 2003, driving his high-performance Dodge Viper. He and his friend John practiced racing until Barnes was ready to compete.



"We had fun, but you could only pass at certain spots. So we decided to race what we call 'wheel to wheel,' to pass anywhere and rub paint," he said with a chuckle.

With licenses from two Motor Sports organizations, the Sports Club Car of America and the National Auto Sport Association, Barnes started competition racing last summer. He took a number of top finishes with his Panoz, an American-built roadster he purchased in '05. He's scheduled to race at the Texas Motor Speedway in May.

As a pool builder, Barnes is no stranger to the big stage either. When he merged Riverbend Pools with local competitor Sandler Pools in 1999, the resulting company became the third biggest pool builder east of Phoenix. It's also a Pool & Spa News Top Builder.

"We wanted to create some synergy and do most of our own work," Barnes recalled.

It worked. Now Riverbend Sandler does 90 percent of its construction, and uses its own gunite, plaster and excavation rigs.

With the merger also came involvement in the Master Pools' Guild because Sandler Pools' owner, Travis Bain, already was a member. Barnes soon came to appreciate the experience that MPG has to offer.

"I thought I knew it all and had it all," he said. "I didn't realize...how critical it is to talk about issues. You find that everyone is dealing with the same issues."

Barnes finds the same support on the racetrack--even from his own staff. His pit crew includes several employees & his friend Roger. And with accelerated business and top speeds of 170 mph, it's crucial to have people you can trust to keep the engine running.