



X-Cup Division

Throughout the history of the Great Race, it has been a priority to encourage youth to participate, be it as a participant or 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 class would be known as the X-Cup class

Experiences from Former X-Cup Competitors



For Greg Cunningham age 19 was a game changer!

I've been very fortunate to work my way into the vintage automobile industry. I'm now 34 years old and have been restoring cars since I was 16. During my 19 year career with cars, I've participated in numerous Great Races, events, and projects. As I consider all of those experiences, I know the months leading up to and including the 1998 Great Race were the most memorable and impactful.

This was Great Race's first year promoting X-cup competition, which is open institutions who work with students and young adults. My mentor and high school instructor, JD Hanks (who introduced me to restoration) took the initiative to organize an X-cup team and restore a 1930 Model A Ford pickup. I had restored cars with him before, however the camaraderie formed by restoring a vehicle with fellow students and then enjoying the satisfaction of accomplishment with the adventure that came during the Great Race is indescribable. At the time, that hands-on/team-building project was not an option to me through any other avenue of education. The mechanical shop class that I yearned for was no longer offered at my high school. That's where the X-cup program comes in. It fills the void that has been created by schools closing their shop classes all across the country. It has truly been a blessing in my life to have been able to participate in the rally during my formative years.

I call those years "formative" because that's what the Great Race helped to do. It helped to form my future in both my career and personal life. You see, in X-Cup you meet a lot of great car guys and girls. Those are friends and contacts that may stay with you for a lifetime. After my first GR in '98, I went on to work with my X-Cup leader JD, in our own restoration shop. Many of our customers over the next 10 years came from participating in the GR. Then in 2008, while looking for some life changes, I moved to Tennessee to work for Corky Coker. I had met Corky during my years on the rally. Heck, I even met my future wife Casey, while on the race in the summer of 2004! 10 years later, we have a family of car-boys, who are sure to have the amazing experiences of the Great Race in their life.

My point is this; you can never know or expect what may happen in your future. So, you might as well direct it towards particular interests in your life. If vintage and classic cars are on that list, you might not find a more fun way to get into the hobby or industry than through the X-cup program. And, do it while you're young! In the least, it's fun...and at the most, it can be a life changer.

Greg Cunningham



At age 15, X-Cup changed everything for Chad Nelson!

I never would have thought that a simple conversation when I was 15 would have this much effect on me then and still today.

The summer before becoming a sophomore at Astronaut High while on the way to local short track to race a mini stock, my automotive teacher discussed the idea of the class building a Great Race racecar to compete as a group in the 1996 Great Race. Sure I say, sounds cool! Little did I know, we became the first ever high school team to compete and become the modern day X-Cup. We built a Model A Speedster from a frame that had a tree growing through the center of it that was found on farmland in the area. We built everything ourselves, and if we didn't have it, we made it. Not only did we finish the car, but also raised enough money to compete, travel and return back home. Our first year, 1996 was a huge success. We finished every leg of the race, and were also the first ever rookie and high school team to be awarded the Spirit of the Event Award. Running in the race, makes you think how could I ever be able to do this again. It also makes you think, how do I not. Our first race took us from Tacoma, Washington to Toronto, Canada. Sometimes there are not words that can do justice for describing the sights and sounds of crossing America in an antique vehicle. Some of my fondest memories still today is the way the rocky mountains, badlands of South Dakota, farmlands in the heartland, and grand canyon look just beyond the hood of the Model A. Plus there was always the way things looked in the reflection of that chrome Model A headlight as well. Simply breathtaking.

We went on to compete another 2 years as a group. 1998 was officially the start of the x-cup program when another high school entered from Granbury, Texas. Sadly, I graduated from the program which the school board also shut down after my senior year. X-Cup had also started a scholarship program which I used to start my education for an engineering degree. I

was able to run a few races on an off over the next 8 years as a navigator when someone needed a navigator and even one year I was a driver.

Fast forward to what maybe I am most proud about is over recent years I was able to put an x-cup team together from my hometown Titusville, Florida. Working with same speedster I originally built as a student, I rebuilt everything and improved the vehicle with a new group of students. We have been on two Great Race's, and three regional rallies. There is something to be said for seeing firsthand the reactions of the student's faces and seeing their experience firsthand, much like what I went through myself. The travels, the people, the sights, and the competition are like nothing else. It can never be duplicated or even compared to any other experience.



2014 Chad Nelson is still running strong!

While the last two years I have not competed with an x-cup entry, I have had a navigator who caught the bug bad enough that he talked me into an entry in the sportsman division. He was one the original students I worked with over the past several years and has since graduated from high school. We challenged ourselves even further to build yet another speedster together and race it. We built it in 9 months and finished everyday once again. While, we did have a flat tire in 2013, we did make an impression with our competitors while being able to still finish 3rd in the division. We decided to enter once again in 2014 and without a flat tire, and no mechanical issues won the Sportsman Division and finished 6th overall. We also took home the Best of Show Award for our car we built in my garage at home.

Having 10 Great Races under my belt now doesn't make any of them any less special from one to the next. If anything, it makes it harder to stay away. Each one has its own experiences of places and people, triumph, and challenges, but I wouldn't have it any other way.

I have never regretted getting involved with the Great Race, but only when I can't be there. When you participate in the Great Race, it not only becomes something you do or have done, but it becomes a part of who you are.

Chad Nelson

X-Cup Action Photos / Video Clips

- Chad Nelson and other Teams in action during [Great Race 2014](#)
- [Alfred State College 2015 X-Cup Team](#)
- Greg Cunningham's X-Cup Photos (below):

- 1) Team members setting the cab on the 1930 Model A Ford Pickup. Without a shop class available in our school system, the restoration was performed in 5 months by our team during hundreds of hours after school and on weekends.



- 2) I'm installing the fender brackets to finalize the restoration of the chassis. It was kept 100% stock.



- 3) I'm painting the cab in a paint booth provided by a local dealership as a sponsorship. Check out the old siphon feed gun. This was right before the conversion to gravity feed HVLP guns in the industry that are now mandated. Dozens of paint jobs later, it's surreal to look back at my 3rd one!



- 4) The four students are goofing-off on the way to the start of the 1998 Great Race from Tacoma, WA to Haverhill, MA. We took pictures of every state sign that wasn't on a bridge! By the time we were done with the restoration and fundraising projects, we were great friends!



- 5) I'm navigating for Steve Herman in and out of Mt. Rainier national park. This was the "Trophy Run" which is the practice day prior to the grand start. 16yrs later, I still remember the sights and smells of driving that old truck up and down the mountain.



- 6) Steve Herman and I work on the truck during the last day of the rally going into Haverhill, MA. We had many mechanical failures that day which happened in record rainfall for that area of the country... talk about being wet!



- 7) Team members, (from l to r) Paul Oblad, Matt Brewer, Robert Scott, JD Hanks, Greg Cunningham, and Steve Herman pose with the exhaust and condenser at the finish of the race. Among other difficulties that last day; the exhaust pipe, actually, fell off about 75miles away from the finish and the condenser went out, leaving us on the shoulder of the interstate during an intense rainstorm. A passer-by stopped to see if he could help. He happened to have had a project in his garage that he stole the condenser out of and brought to us to be able to drive the truck to the finish. It's not uncommon to receive help from a stranger or a competitor who share the love of vintage cars!



- 7) Our team, (from l to r), Steve Herman, Greg Cunningham, Matt Brewer, Paul Oblad, JD Hanks, and Robert Scott, pose with the plaque for 4th place X-Cup and the coveted “Doc Fuson Spirit of the Event” award.



- 8) The 1930 pick up as it looked following the '98 Great Race. It has since completed the Great Race close to a dozen times with no major difficulties.



X-Cup Need to Know

Complete X-Cup requirements can be found at: [Event Regulations](#):

The following are extracts of some particular requirements:

I.E.4. X-Cup teams are qualified high-school/college/youth-group teams. X-Cup competitors are eligible for X-Cup awards only.

The following persons may compete in the X-Cup:

a. X-Cup drivers: Each driver must be either at least 21 years old and less than 25 years old as of Stage 1; or an adult member of the team who is eligible for Sportsman Division (as defined in I.E.3) in Great Race Competition.

b. X-Cup navigators: Each X-Cup navigator must be a member of the high-school/college/youth-group team, and be younger than 22 years old as of Stage 1. [Great Race only]: Each X-Cup team must have 2 or more different navigators, each navigating a maximum of five stages.

Entry is made via the [Registration Page](#), (see FAQ's for special information on current X-Cup entry status).

X-Cup FAQ

Is Great Race fun?

We'll let you decide after you watch highlights from the [2014 Great Race](#)

Is X-Cup safe for younger drivers?

Great Race X-Cup competition is a well organized competition with Safety the primary concern. Speed or aggressive driving is a sure way to lose the competition. As a matter of fact, the route speed is set at 5 MPH under the posted limit. To win it takes teamwork between the Driver and Navigator to follow a precise set of detailed daily driving instructions.

Can there be more than 1 Driver and Navigator on the X-Cup Team?

Yes, maximum team participation is encouraged. As a matter of fact, according to the [Great Race Regulations](#) each X-Cup Team must have a minimum of 2 Navigators.

What are the age requirements for X-Cup?

Drivers must be at least 21 and less than 25 years old at the start of the Race. Navigators must be younger than 22 at the start. There is a provision in the [Great Race Regulations](#) for younger teams to have an adult (often the faculty advisor) as driver.

How can an X-Cup Team get a vehicle?

There are a number of ways to find a car manufactured in 1972 or earlier. Your Team might contact the local [AACA Region](#). AACA is a nationwide organization of vintage and classic car enthusiast, which supports X-Cup in many areas. If you are new to X-Cup [Great Race](#) may

even be able to connect a qualified Team with a 1928 Ford Model A dedicated to the X-Cup Program.

What about expenses?

The level of expenses largely depends on the size of the Team. As the route taken varies from year to year (ie. [Route 66](#) through the American Southwest in 2015), some years may be closer to home than others. Lodging and fuel are key expenses. Food is largely covered, with many meals provided to the Driver and Navigator during the Race. Most X-Cup Teams hold pre-Race fundraisers, and many have hometown sponsors for the competition.

It looks like the Great Race entry roster may be full?

X-Cup Teams have a special reserve capacity for qualified entries. If you are serious about entering an X-Cup Team, contact [Great Race](#) giving your Team information to determine availability.

What about the entry fee?

X-Cup Teams have a reduced \$1500 entry fee. However, your Team may qualify for sponsorship which would cover this fee. Contact [Great Race](#) giving your Team information to determine availability.

What if we break down?

It is important that X-Cup Team members have some degree of mechanical ability. That's why Team members should spend ample time with their vehicles preparing for the Race. This allows them to get real time hands-on experience, as well as work any "bugs" out of the vehicle. It will be up to the Driver and Navigator to make repairs during the day's run. If they are unable to make the needed repairs a sweep truck will take the vehicle to the hotel at the end of the day's run, where the rest of the Team can assist in the repair.

Can the rest of the Team ride in the vehicle during the day's run?

No, only the Driver and Navigator can be in the vehicle during competition.

Can we use GPS?

No, you would be disqualified if you use your cell phone or GPS. The run is to be made using only the daily driving instructions, with a precise clock, stop watch and speedometer.

What do we need to know to prepare the vehicle?

A good place to start is with the video [Prepare Your Car for Rallying](#)