

THE TOP

Five

MOST INFLUENTIAL

DRIVING THE INDUSTRY AND MAKING HISTORY IN THE PROCESS

STORY BY NGUYET LE THOMAS • KRISTA RUDIGER • MARTY FOLKA • PHOTOS BY TIM MANTOANI

Deciding on five people who have influenced the off-road industry in the past year wasn't easy. It's not because *Off-Road Business'* tough criteria for selecting these individuals left few to be considered, although, the standards we set forth did rule many worthy people to the sidelines. Rather, the fact that more people than we could have picked were nominated—and for all justifiable, duly-noted reasons. In the past, some of our choices did cause a bit of controversy. But we like that. See, being “The Authoritative Industry Source” means we're not just a news source, we're a conduit for provoking more thought, debate and discussion.

During our nomination process, our editorial staff first looked at the biggest stories, most interesting trends and notable events throughout 2007. Then we looked at the people at the forefront of making these headlines. We, literally, sat in a big circle and divvied up our lists of favorites. Throughout the process, a few names remained prominent.

Ultimately, we chose five individuals who represent a broad cross section of the overall off-road marketplace. These five gentlemen exemplify key qualities that are synonymous with the off-road industry—leadership, dedication, integrity, vision, entrepreneurialism, passion, team spirit, a sense of fair play and the desire to grow and mainstream the industry to the benefit of every enthusiast who loves off-road.

These are the people we're talking about: Jim Baldwin of Championship Off Road Racing (CORR), Nick Baldwin of TrophyKart, Fred Wiley of the Off-Road Business Association (ORBA), Roy Dehban of ProAm Racing and Clark Campbell of Volkswagen of America (in no particular order, mind you). *Off-Road Business* recognizes these people as standout individuals, helping influence our entire industry for the better.

While readers may have differing opinions about our choices, we hope you agree the five personalities you'll read about embody the true meaning of living, breathing and loving all things off-road.

JIM BALDWIN Owner Championship Off Road Racing (CORR)

You could say Jim Baldwin is a man who seizes the day. When he recognized the potential that CORR had to grow out of its Midwest locale, he seized his opportunity.

Three years after purchasing the series, Mr. Baldwin is finally able to enjoy the fruits of his labor as CORR is on its way to becoming one of the most high-profile racing events to hit the United States. “My overall vision was to take CORR to mainstream America by putting it on national television and developing venues across the country,” Baldwin says. “I thought California had to be the place to start building CORR because of its existing off-road fan base.”

And that's exactly what he's done. The series was already being broadcast on ESPN 2 and the Speed Channel, but with viewership ranging in the hundreds of thousands, CORR received enough publicity and attention to maintain steady growth. It was Baldwin's business panache and his contacts with the right people that

helped the series ink a deal with national network NBC Sports, an agreement which has given CORR viewership numbers that run in the millions.

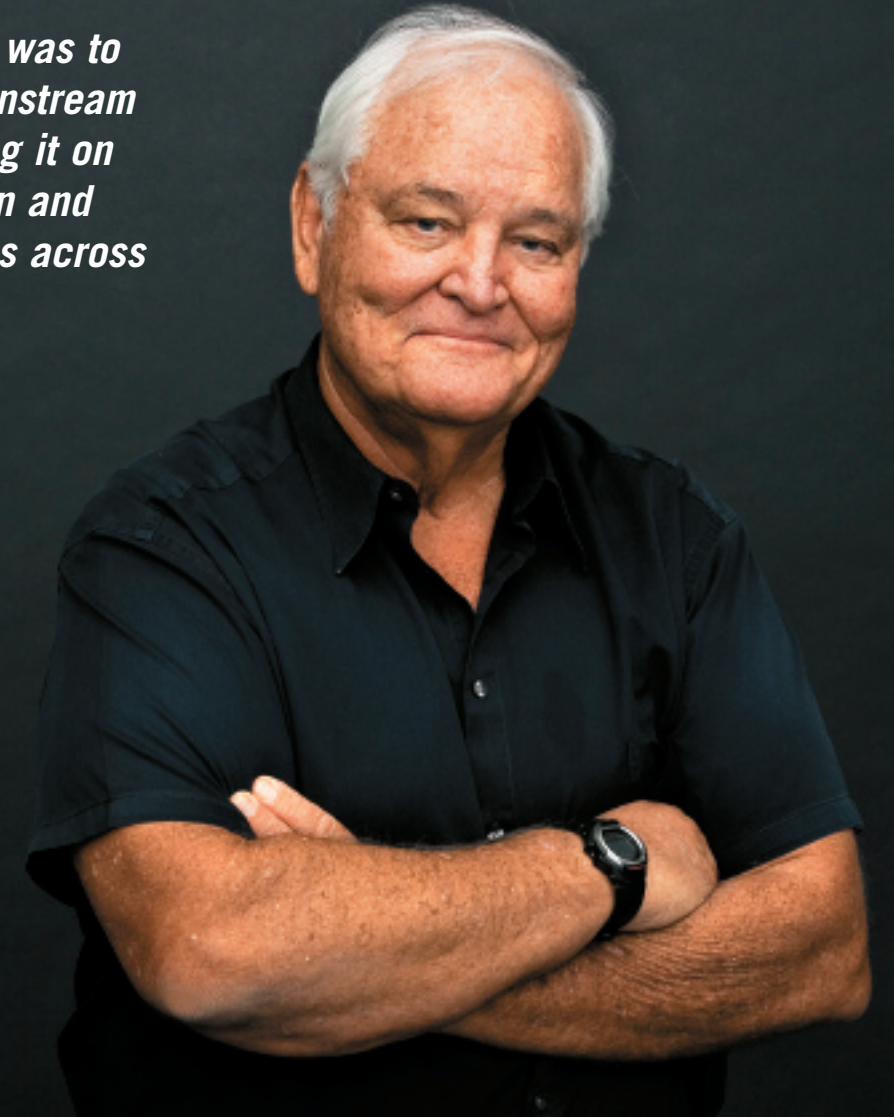
With major sponsorships from Amsoil, Monster Energy Drink, Makita Powertools, Fabtech, KMC Wheels, Bully Dog, Kumho Tires and Skyjacker, CORR's latest deal with NBC Sports will increase race coverage from eight to 12 hours of high-definition programming and to 15 hours on Speed. On top of that, the series will also take its racing live: three shows on NBC and six shows on Speed.

“Our TV exposure has been expanding at a rapid rate,” Baldwin says, noting that since he purchased the series, the number of racers have tripled and the amount of spectators have grown—to approximately 24,000 attendees per weekend—both at the Fairplex in Pomona, near Los Angeles, and Chula Vista International Raceway, in San Diego.

Tenacity, drive and commitment to results have made Jim Baldwin successful, first in his land development enterprise and, now, as the visionary for Championship Off Road Racing. In all, looks like vision accomplished.

—Nguyet Le Thomas

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NICK BALDWIN
Partner
TrophyKart

Juxtaposed against the more polished corporate characters comprising *Off-Road Business*' rather diverse Top Five Most Influential list for 2007, Nick Baldwin—at least from

a distance—just doesn't seem to fit. To most, his unique persona resembles that of a cartoon character come to life—a distinctive blend of pro wrestler, street-wise hustler and self-made embodiment of the American dream.

Honestly, this charismatic and big-hearted curmudgeon is openly bewil-

dered by having made our prestigious list in the first place: "I have no idea how all this happened, man," explains the intensely private Baldwin. "I love being part of this whole industry, but my real motivation in helping support the TrophyKart concept was to make sure kids everywhere could be part of our sport's future."

Shortly after cashing out his portion of a large resort timeshare, Baldwin's path crossed that of the young and enthusiastic inventor, Nestor Berardi. Berardi's miniature truck-bodied off-road kart provided an innovative and fun way to pass the baton from one generation to another; however, an unexpectedly strong demand by the marketplace early on quickly made it obvious to Berardi that realizing TrophyKart's ultimate potential would require additional resources and investment. Enter Nick Baldwin.

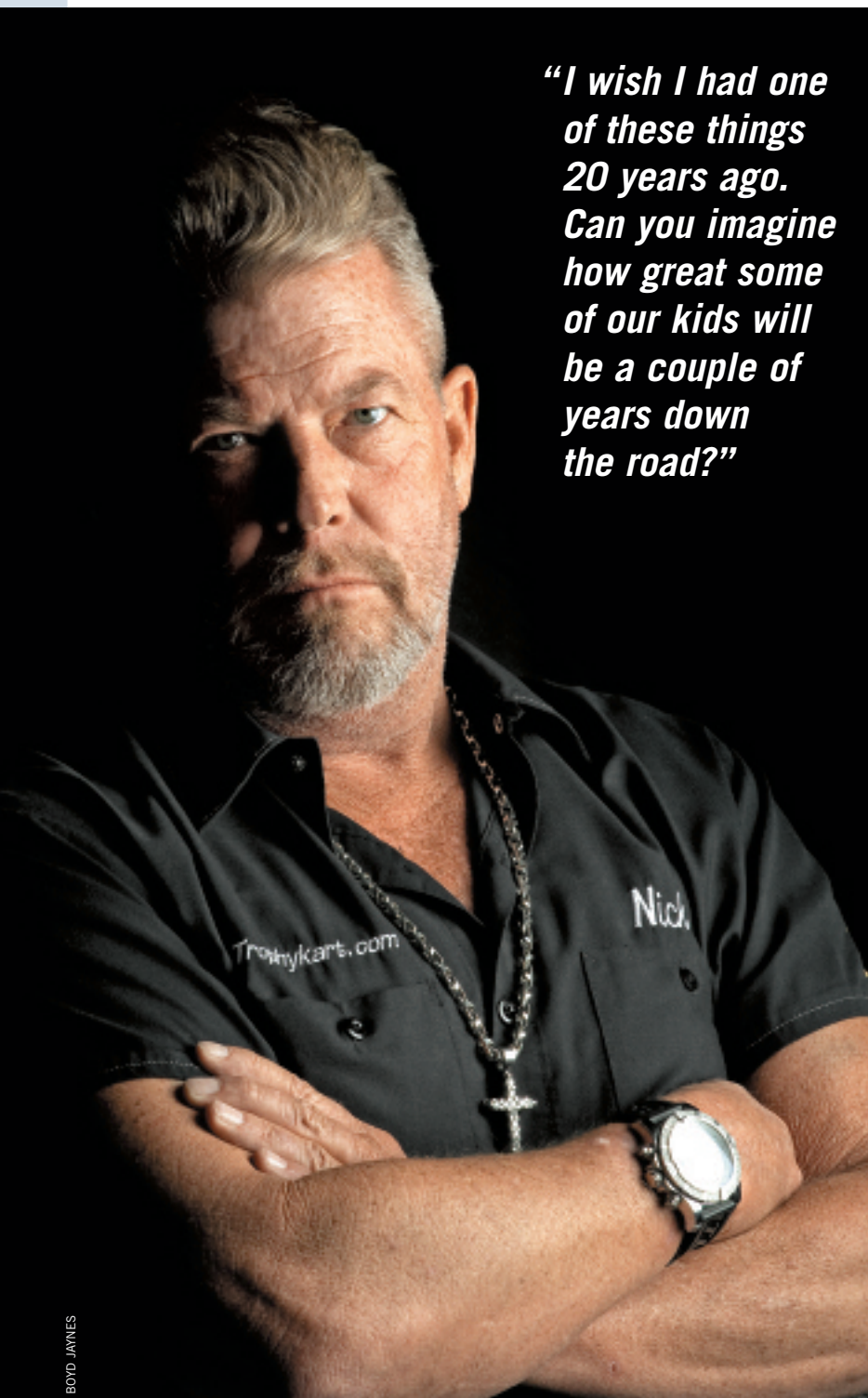
Motivated by the pure joy so clearly etched on the faces of any youngster lucky enough to take the wheel of Berardi's invention, Baldwin stepped in with vision and capital to help make TrophyKart a viable business entity.

Bolstered by Baldwin's backing, TrophyKart moved into a larger facility, increased its production capacity to meet consumer demands and quickly leveraged an obvious family-based popularity to become the largest field of competitors at Jim Baldwin's Championship Off Road Racing series.

Simply put, Baldwin's well-deserved place on this year's list boils down to the fact that he boosted a great idea in just the (pardon the pun) nick of time. To him, the dream lies in countless numbers of kids across the country and around the world that can now—thanks to TrophyKart—feel what it's like to slide around a dirt corner or fly like a bird over a huge earthen jump. "This company is on the brink of becoming something big," he concludes with a proud grin. "I wish I had one of these things 20 years ago, it would've been a dream come true. Can you imagine how great some of our kids will be a couple of years down the road?"

—Marty Fiolka

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FRED WILEY
Executive Director
Off-Road Business
Association (ORBA)

Fred Wiley knows his work isn't glamorous. He doesn't charge through Baja silt beds, career over sand dunes or skillfully maneuver over rocks. He definitely doesn't have crowds greeting him at the end of the day asking for autographs. But that's okay. The job Wiley does—and does well—enables anyone ready and willing to take their vehicle off-road. Which is why he's secured a place on our Top Five Most Influential list.

As the executive director of ORBA, Wiley has been instrumental in finding common ground with both the political big wigs and environmental organizations that would rather see groups like ORBA, and the off-highway activities for which ORBA advocates, disappear. In essence, Wiley is the negotiator, the communicator, the peace maker.

His skills were seriously put to the test when former President Bill Clinton wanted to enact a national monument in the Sequoia National Forest—on the land that Wiley's family had owned for more than 50 years. For three years, Wiley fought to have a say in how the entire process went through, from the size of the monument to how the build would be handled. Ultimately, he secured a deal that ensured the land would remain in his family's possession, not the government's.

These same negotiating skills were exactly what was needed at ORBA, an organization that's often seen as an in-your-face, right-wing radical group. But Wiley doesn't work that way. "My work is behind the scenes, making sure everyone works together," he says.

That's an understatement. In the two years since coming on board, Wiley has been instrumental in reworking legislative bills such as the McKeon Wilderness Bill, which aimed to ban snowmobiling in some of the most pristine lands in Northern California, as well as Senate Bill 742, which ensures the proper allocation of money paid by OHV users. "When ORBA was starting up, they needed to be 'in your

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face.' That was the only way to get heard, to be noticed," Wiley notes. "But everything evolves, and now, we do a lot more behind-the-scenes work to get the same results."

His goal, he says, is to "protect [my] rights and everyone else's right to do what they love to do [off-roading] and to ensure that the restrictions placed on these rights make sense."

Wiley is a man who walks the walk and talks the talk, but he does it without aggression or pretension. He won't hoot and holler but he won't back down from an important fight, either. With the ever-changing political landscape, the off-road community is indeed glad someone like Fred Wiley is on our side.

—Nguyet Le Thomas

ROY DEHBAN
President/CEO
ProAm Racing Products

When Roy Dehban says he's "never satisfied," he means it.

Known as a perfectionist, Dehban, president and CEO of ProAm Racing Products, insists his products are top-of-the-line and says, quite simply, that he will never allow anything to be second. And it is just this kind of determination and tenacity from Dehban that has raised the bar in the off-road industry.

Indian-born Dehban began his courtship with off-roaders back in 1983, when he and two partners created KarTek, originally a VW repair shop. Later, outsourcing many of the parts for sand-car brakes and hubs, Dehban decided there was a way to do things better. It was then that he decided to create ProAm Racing, where he could do all his own manufacturing.

Running 20 hours a day, five days a week, ProAm does not produce "new" products, but rather, expands on what's out there, improving the quality of off-road racing brake and hub assemblies, axles, spindles and steering components. Through ProAm, Dehban has created a way to deliver race-quality products at a higher-capacity level.

An off-road enthusiast himself, Dehban says the company doesn't have an R&D budget. "There is no cost in mind when we make a product," he says. "It has to be the best. I don't operate like others and think like others. There's a huge gap in quality between ProAm and the rest. We challenge ourselves; the only ones challenging us is us. Our products are the best, bar none. Ask anyone," adds the stickler for quality.

And it's this passion—this drive—that sets Dehban and the products he engineers apart from the rest. There are more than a few members of the Off-Road Nation who will attest to the fact that ProAm's mastermind will work day and night to help one racer, if need be. But also important is his commitment to realizing the big picture of our sport—making sure legislation

isn't allowed to curtail off-road recreation areas. Dehban is constantly working with the Off-Road Business Association (ORBA) and does what he can to be involved in the political aspects that affect off-roaders.

What all this means for the Off-Road

Nation is peace of mind, knowing that Dehban is someone who continues to push the levels of excellence, keeping our racers happy and manufacturers striving to make the best products they can.

—Krista Rudiger

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CLARK CAMPBELL
Motorsport Manager
Volkswagen of America Inc.

When you first speak to Clark Campbell, his excitement for getting dirty is instantly palatable. The force who got behind Volkswagen more than two years ago to help push the company through the off-road birthing canal, Campbell will humbly tell you he couldn't have "done it without his team." But we know better.

Campbell began his career with VW Canada in 1992 working on various VW, Porsche and Audi motorsport efforts, later transitioning to Volkswagen of America, where he worked in different positions, finally settling into VW's public relations area in 2005. Responsible for leading all motorsport activities for the Volkswagen brand, Campbell worked tirelessly to bring huge name recognition to the sport of desert racing. No small feat.

"We didn't want to come in like some mega-corporation and turn [the industry] upside down," notes Campbell. "We wanted to come in friendly and play fair in the sandbox."

And although Campbell has made sure VW paced its new programs gradually, he has still managed to do a staggering amount of branding in a fairly short amount of time. This mover and shaker has been paramount in directing two of VW's factory Dakar Race Touareg 2s (which set the fastest time ever for a diesel-powered vehicle) at the 2006 running of the Tecate SCORE Baja 500; posting a six-figure contingency program with SCORE International for its 2008 season; and, of course, the much-anticipated arrival of the company's turbodiesel Trophy-Truck, to be unveiled at this year's Baja 1000.

Nowhere near slowing down, both Campbell and VW want to take this ride one baby step at a time. "Don't ask me why VW wasn't involved [in off-road] for the last 20 years... But now that we've found out about it, we've put our foot in the sand and want to have a good long run in off-road racing, for sure," Campbell says, and adds, "We're loving it so far, I can tell you that!" **ORB**

—Krista Rudiger

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