



Freehold Ford's racing team: (from left) Crew member Mike Farrell, driver/shop foreman Ted Kszepka, owner/driver Bill Keith, crew chief/parts Herv Gardner (behind car) and driver/service manager Perry Hutter with the checkered flag after their Watkins Glen, N.Y., racing victory. (PHOTO: SPECIAL TO THE PRESS)

SPEED RACERS

Freehold Ford-based racing team driven by the thirst to go fast

By **DANA LEVINE**
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All it took was one ride at the Richard Petty Driving Experience in Tampa, Fla., where even an Average Joe can step into a race car and drive around the track on the bumper of the former NASCAR great, before Jackson's Mike Farrell was hooked.

"It was wild," Farrell said. "I got out there and zipped around, it was a ball, an absolute ball."

So Farrell spent a weekend last March at Summit Point, W.Va., taking the first step to receiving his license. In a SpecRacer Ford, Farrell was taught how to drive.

The time there only confirmed what he suspected in Tampa, the exhilaration of racing was for him. "I told my brother-in-law I think something's broken. I can't feel my heartbeat," Farrell said.

What Farrell is hoping for, once he



is certified in March, is to drive for his boss' racing team in an Enduro race. As of now, Farrell is resigned to supporting from the pit.

Bill Keith, the owner of Freehold Ford, along with Perry Hutter, Ted Kszepka and Farrell, race a Mustang on the

Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) circuit. The team, which took home a best-in-class victory at Watkins Glen (N.Y.) International, almost didn't get off the starting line.

Drawing the seventh spot, the team had a good starting position but that's when the troubles started. After taking a qualifying lap, the car stalled. By the time the problem was fixed, the car, which was supposed to go off near the top, began from the back of the pack.

But Keith was able to make up ground quickly, going from 66th to sec-

ond in 45 minutes. But again there were problems. There was a fuel smell coming from the car. When the car pulled into the pit it was more of the same.

The team was penalized for committing two safety violations, one on the driver and one on Farrell when he had his face shield up. In all, the team was penalized eight minutes, sending them from second place to the middle of the pack.

Despite all of these setbacks, the drivers were able to make up the ground and take the checkered flag, but according to Farrell, it shouldn't have been that close.

"Without all the penalties, we could have blown everyone away," Farrell said.

In addition to being a crew member for the Freehold Ford team, Farrell (in the driver's seat at right) uses his free weekends to drive a SpecRacer Ford competitively.

