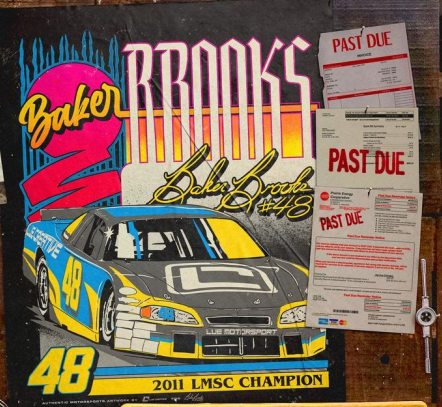


PATRICK
LOGAN

JOSEPH
GRAY

AUSTIN
VALLI

KIM
SANDWICH



*under*FUNDED

A FILM BY TOMMY JOE MARTINS

MESSY BUN PRODUCTIONS A ASSOCIATION WITH ALPHA PRIME RACING PRESENTS "UNDERFUNDED" WRITTEN BY TOMMY JOE MARTINS
PRODUCED BY CAESAR BACARCELLA DIRECTED BY SKYLAR SCHOCK EDITED BY COREY FROST EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS CURT BRADEN AND CHRIS TORRILIA



AN ORIGINAL SHORT FILM BY NASCAR DRIVER AND TEAM OWNER

Tommy Joe Martins



OFFICIAL SELECTION
Moonless
International Film
Festival
2025



UNDERFUNDED

Run Time: 24:01

Directed By: Tommy Joe Martins

Written By: Tommy Joe Martins

Produced By: Skylar Schock

Production Company: Messy Bun Productions

Executive Producer: Caesar Bacarella

Edited By: Corey Frost

Cinematography: Diego Torroija

Sound Design: Dylan Rosser

LOGLINE

Two rookie drivers start their careers on different terms while a former champion and a team owner confront the financial realities of racing.



Racing team owner Eric Benning puts his champion driver Baker Brooks on coach duty for two young drivers: heralded prospect Lacy Summers & unknown JD Marshall. Things turn hostile when Baker realizes the young duo could be his replacements. JD struggles with the intensity of the car and financial liabilities if he makes a mistake. After encouragement from Lacy, JD improves, only to face a major financial decision. Eric forces Baker into a final choice about his future with the team.

SYNOPSIS

DIRECTORS STATEMENT

Despite years of racing on national television, I've often felt invisible in my sport. In 2016, I wrote a blog called "The Problem" that went viral, and got me reprimanded by NASCAR leadership. It also proved that my story—and those like mine—weren't going to be told on a broadcast.

Underfunded is a film born out of my love and frustration with racing, and my desire to confront its biggest challenge: talent vs. money. I used my experiences to write characters who reflect real people I've met and been, who face vastly different paths & challenges, despite having similar skills.



I wanted to capture not just what happens inside the racecar, but the weight and consequences of the business decisions happening off the track. Drivers in the same cars can be faced with dramatically different circumstances.

I love the style and intensity of Tony Scott's *Days of Thunder* and the underdog honesty of *Moneyball*. I hope *Underfunded* is both entertaining and introspective. For me, feeling irrelevant was just the beginning of a story worth telling.

TOMMY JOE MARTINS

CHARACTERS





JD Marshall is a talented, smart but naive prospective race car driver. While he entered the sport later than his peers, it quickly becomes obvious to him, his father, and others that he has a unique natural ability behind the wheel. JD wants to have a career as a professional race car driver and earn the respect of the garage despite being a fish out of water in the environment. He struggles with self worth and his identity as both a driver and a young man plus he carries the weight of the financial consequences of his family, who have made extreme sacrifices to give him an opportunity to pursue his dream. He feels a tremendous responsibility to live up to his own high expectations and prove that it was all worth it.



Lacy Summers is the daughter of Hall of Fame dirt racer Sammy Summers. She's the total package - young, humble, pretty, and *fast*. She's comfortable at a racetrack - she's been around the industry her whole life. Destined to become the next big star of the sport, Lacy wants to live up to her father's legacy and the expectations for her to become a national series champion. But, as her star power grows, so does her ego.

Over the series Lacy becomes more jaded and frustrated with her spotlight, and she'll deal with the scrutiny, adversity, and double standards of being one of the only female drivers in the sport.



Baker Brooks is a rough around the edges, no nonsense, veteran racer. He is a former champion that came up during an era when talent mattered more than social media followers and sponsors were plentiful at the peak of the sport. Baker's best friend (and rival) is Sammy Summers, and he acts as a mentor and uncle figure to Lacy. He has driven the majority of his career for team owner Eric Benning, and fractures relationships when Eric looks to Lacy as his replacement. Baker wants things to be like they were when he was on top of the sport, and doesn't understand why everything around him is changing - for the worse.



Eric Benning is a former that took over a team and created a legacy of winning with his star driver Baker Brooks.

He is a cunning, calculated, strategic mind whose goal is to win every transaction, on and off the track. Baker's recent struggles in and out of the car have become a hindrance to the team's growth - and the company finances - which Eric won't sustain. Eric is constantly evaluating what drivers are the most marketable and advantageous to his financial and competition goals. His personal relationship with Baker becomes strained as he eyes Lacy and young, funded racers like JD as his replacement.

SERIES OVERVIEW



SERIES OVERVIEW

Underfunded is a character driven drama set in the high pressure world of professional stock car racing in the U.S. The series will explore the disparity in finances, lifestyles, and expectations for the drivers and crew that live on both ends of the grid. The story follows **JD MARSHALL**, a talented young driver with no racing lineage or connections, as his family is put at a financial crossroads in order to further his career. JD and his family go on an emotional roller coaster ride as they attempt to answer the question, what are you willing to do or lose to give your loved one a chance, and can you face the reality if it doesn't work out? JD will befriend **LACY SUMMERS**, the daughter of a Hall of Fame driver who is positioned to be the next star of the sport. JD will be both mentored and antagonized by **BAKER BROOKS**, a former champion who faces the pressures of staying with a top team as his skills decline from his years of hard living. **ERIC BENNING**, the team owner and manager of one of the best teams on the grid, home to Baker Brooks, must balance the health of the team against his loyalty to and desires of his aging star. **MIKE HOWARD**, the owner, crew chief, and mechanic for the smallest team on the grid lives week to week, paycheck to paycheck as he struggles to qualify for each event. Tonally, the show will be a gritty character drama that lives somewhere between Yellowstone and The Bear.

The series will constantly explore JD's struggle to find his place in the world of motorsports as each obstacle he faces will leave him wondering if all the sacrifices to him and his family are worth it in the end, especially if he never gets the recognition he deserves. From having to work on his own race cars, terrifying wrecks, mistakes meaning the end of the team, pressure to qualify in an underperforming car, finding sponsors, his family losing their home, to being looked down on from the media and other drivers, JD is consistently having to face the reality that speaks to most people...what if I am irrelevant?

WHY THIS? WHY NOW?



NASCAR is still one of the most popular spectator sports in America, but has struggled for an identity in recent years. It desperately needs an opportunity to reconnect with a majority blue collar fan base. Underfunded will tell grounded, true stories of the people that make up the field, and relate to a loyal fan base looking for something to draw them back. In 2025, most Americans are intimately familiar with the realities of privilege and financial disparity. Underfunded explores these concepts through the two polar opposite sides of the garage - the privileged and the grinders. Lacy struggles with perception and expectations of a female in a male dominated industry as well as the pressures of legacy from a famous father. Baker speaks to the fears of an aging population worried about becoming obsolete. JD's family risks everything on his talent - what happens when a dream comes *close* to realization?

Tommy Joe Martins is a professional race car driver and team owner whose passion for storytelling began long before his days on the track. A journalism graduate from the University of Mississippi, Tommy spent over a decade competing in NASCAR where he experienced the highs and lows of life in professional racing firsthand. His transition into filmmaking is fueled by a desire to tell grounded, character-driven stories rooted in authenticity. Underfunded, his directorial debut, draws from his own experience in the sport to explore themes of struggle, determination, and identity in a world where talent is secondary to funding.



WHY TOMMY JOE?

LINKS, PRESS, AWARDS



[News Topic News - Film Crew Shoots at Tri-County](#)

Best Director - Moonless International Film Festival

Official Selection - Moonless International Film Festival