

Clay Egan

ROCK CRAWLING'S "HANDS-ON" COMPETITOR

It wasn't a position Clay Egan ever imagined being in, nor was it something he ever wanted. Or so he thought 11 years ago. Egan is a motorsports competitor; rock crawling to be specific. But unlike every other rock crawler in the UROC series who can jump out of his rig at the finish line, Egan thrusts himself from the cockpit to a waiting wheelchair settled nearby. He doesn't fret much about this fact. Since being paralyzed in a motorcycle accident in 1994, Egan has learned the power of determination. In the UROC series, Egan runs in the modified class. His right hand runs the gas and brake, while his left hand shifts and steers. His immobile legs are strapped to the floor. To him, the biggest worry is "the thing catching on fire, but that has only happened once."

Egan began rock crawling in 2003, competing in just one event. The following season he took on the full series, finishing seventh in the standings. This year, with a new car and some "new car bugs," he finished 11th, but says, "next year will be a lot better."

This is the sort of confidence Egan has displayed since the accident that left him paralyzed from the neck down. Spending three months in the hospital, Egan learned to regain the use of his arms, left hand and, partially, his right hand.

In 2002, Egan met UROC promoters Mark and Mike Patey. During their inevitable conversation about rock crawling, Egan grew enthusiastic. It seemed the perfect way for a former quad racer like himself to compete again. His excitement inspired the Patey brothers who offered to set up their Jeep with hand controls. He gave it a try and finished his first competition in the middle of the pack.

"The part that grabbed me was that I got to compete in a motorsport again," he recalls. Although Egan feels he's at somewhat of a disadvantage when he drives, he says, "I don't focus on that. It just means I have to try harder, and I'm fine with that."

Egan admits he's a relatively cautious driver. "I don't have as much room for error," he says. "[But] I'm definitely not afraid of getting hurt. My motto has always been, what I can't feel won't hurt, and I can't feel from my armpits down."

In 2006 Egan will begin making a full-length movie about his life. His goal, he says, is to become "the biggest name in rock crawling." There's every reason to bet on his success. **ts**