From Self-Taught Apprentice to Industry Honoree: The Rise of Marcelo Backaus Ribas in Paintless Dent Repair

Over more than a decade, Marcelo Backaus Ribas built a career in Paintless Dent Repair entirely outside a traditional classroom — and has since earned recognition from both local government and a national trade association in Brazil.



Boca Raton, Florida Nov 16, 2026 (Issuewire.com) - A Craft Learned Outside the Classroom

Marcelo Backaus Ribas is the owner of Backaus Martelinho de Ouro, a Brazilian auto-restoration

business specializing in Paintless Dent Repair (PDR) — known in Brazil as “Martelinho de Ouro,” or “golden hammer.” The technique restores a vehicle’s bodywork after a dent without repainting it, relying on precision tools and manual skill rather than factory-level equipment or body filler.

Ribas never attended a traditional vocational program tied to a large employer. In 2013, while living in the small city of Camaquã in southern Brazil, he commuted to the state capital, Porto Alegre, to complete a 40-hour PDR course at Martelinho Auto Center. Three years later, determined to refine his technique further, he enrolled in an advanced course with Donato Martelinho, a technician with more than 20 years of industry experience. The course was cut short after six weeks when the instructor passed away — but the knowledge Ribas absorbed in that short window became a permanent part of his professional practice, something he says he still draws on daily.

Two Jobs, One Direction

Between late 2016 and 2018, Ribas worked two jobs at once: a position at Porto Alegre International Airport (Salgado Filho), and his growing PDR client base across the metropolitan region. Keeping both jobs simultaneously gave him the financial stability to build a solid client roster before taking the risk of committing to PDR full-time.

In 2018, with demand for his services well established, Ribas left the airport job to dedicate himself exclusively to Paintless Dent Repair — a turning point that set the stage for the most significant phase of his career. The years that followed included the formalization of his business as a registered company in 2021, and a client base that, by his own account, grew steadily even through the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Validation Without a Diploma

Ribas’s professional path has no university degree attached to it — every technical skill he applies today was built through short courses, hands-on practice, and more than a decade of client work on vehicles ranging from compact passenger cars to larger models across multiple brands. His toolkit reflects that hands-on specialization: precision hammers, pry tools and specialized inspection lights used to locate imperfections invisible to the untrained eye, applied without ever touching the vehicle’s original paint.

Over more than ten years of that kind of close, repetitive work, Ribas says he built a track record reflected in consistently positive client feedback and high ratings — the kind of reputation, he notes, that in his trade is earned car by car rather than granted by a certificate.

That self-taught trajectory has nonetheless earned formal recognition from two very different institutions: a Congratulatory Motion from the Cachoeirinha city council in 2024, and, the following year, an Honorary Associate title from ABRAESA, Brazil’s national trade association for excellence in automotive repair — one rooted in local government, the other in his own industry, both pointing to the same body of work.

“Nobody handed me a shortcut. Everything I know came from courses I paid for myself and from years of working on real cars,” Ribas says. “Having that work recognized by a city council and then by a national trade association means a lot, because it’s proof that the self-taught path can still be taken seriously.”

Ribas says his client relationships have been built the same way the recognition was earned — one job at a time, with consistently positive feedback behind each new referral. He is now positioning his business for the U.S. market, presenting his work bilingually in Portuguese and English across his

company’s social media as he considers the next stage of his career. “I’m not looking to start over. I’m looking to bring more than ten years of real, hands-on experience to a market that I know needs it,” he adds.

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