

More Blacks should embrace need for speed

A little more than a century ago, industrialist Henry Ford opened a plant at River Rouge, Michigan, employed a few African-Americans from Alabama, and made millions with the first Ford Model A and Model T automobiles.

Taking Ford's motto, "A car in every garage," the automobile replaced the horse and carriage for not only the wealthy Whites in the nation but the Black employees as well. All were able to navigate their vehicles down the crowded Detroit streets.

Other companies such as Chrysler, General Motors, Studebaker, Chevrolet, Dodge and DeSoto, followed the trend of automobiles as the main mode of transportation making Ford the Nostradamus of the auto industry.

Having a mechanism that could outrun stage coaches and horses, men became naturally curious about just who could invent an auto that could cover distances the fastest. So, as early as 1903, auto

maker Alexander Winton set a land speed record of 68 miles an hour and the race to have the fastest time in an auto was on.

There were other time trials in Utah and Florida with the National Association of Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR) being formed in 1947 as the leading racing event for automobiles.

The Indianapolis 500 held its first race in 1911 around the two and a half mile track in Indiana and was usually considered the world's greatest auto race, but it was for specially built race cars.

Stock cars are regular autos with upgraded normal equipment according to the association's specifications and have yet to reach the velocity of the Indianapolis Race Cars.

Although the Bethune Cookman College Marching Band and Vanessa Williams' singing added some color to the running of a more recent event, when the immortal words, "Gentlemen start your engines," were uttered, there



SPORTS PACE

By Huel Washington

wasn't a single African-American driver among the 43 competitors in the 54th running of the Daytona 500 won by Jeff Gordon last weekend.

In his third career win at Daytona, Gordon covered the distance in 3 hours, 45 minutes and 16 seconds which earned him nearly \$1.5 million for first place. Kurt Busch, last year's Nextel champion earned nearly \$1.1 million for second place. Bobby Labonte, the 43rd car which finished only 14 laps received a check of \$254,856. His engine failed causing him to drop out.

There has never been an African-American driver in the Daytona 500, and NASCAR's founder Bill France has appointed Earvin "Magic" Johnson to head a

minority committee to see what can be done about the absence of African-Americans, especially drivers, on the NASCAR circuit. It will also help attendance to include Blacks.

Bill Lester, an Oakland, California, resident, the only African-American driver on the NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series, driving a Toyota, completed 63 laps of the 100 lap race on Friday and earned \$12,440. Lester has been on the truck circuit for several years and drives for Bobby Hamilton's team. Lester even led for a couple of laps, before having an ac-

cident during the race which Hamilton won covering the 250 miles in 2 hours and 4 seconds.

France's selection of Johnson to head a committee about NASCAR's lack of minorities mystified some because of the background of Willy T. Ribbs, who was the first African-American driver to compete in the Indianapolis 500 in 1992. Ribbs has been with racing for years, and although Ribbs has driven the Indy cars at speeds of over 220 miles an hour, he probably could still be at home at the speeds of the NASCAR cars.

Several years ago, Ribbs was at the Las Vegas Speedway and drove in the Winston Cup here. Since he started driving in 1977, he has driven Formula One in Europe, Indy Car, and NASCAR. Ribbs said all he

wants to do is drive and would certainly be a big help to NASCAR's minority program.

The Daytona 500 was the first of the Nextel Circuit's 37 race series which ends on November 20 in Homestead, Florida. Ironically, the Indianapolis Racing League (IRL) begins in Homestead on March 6. The National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) started in Pomona, California on February 13 and will be run in Chandler, Arizona this Sunday.

There must be some young African-Americans out there who are interested in speed — and not just on the city streets. And as you can see, the prize money is very good even if you don't win all of your races.



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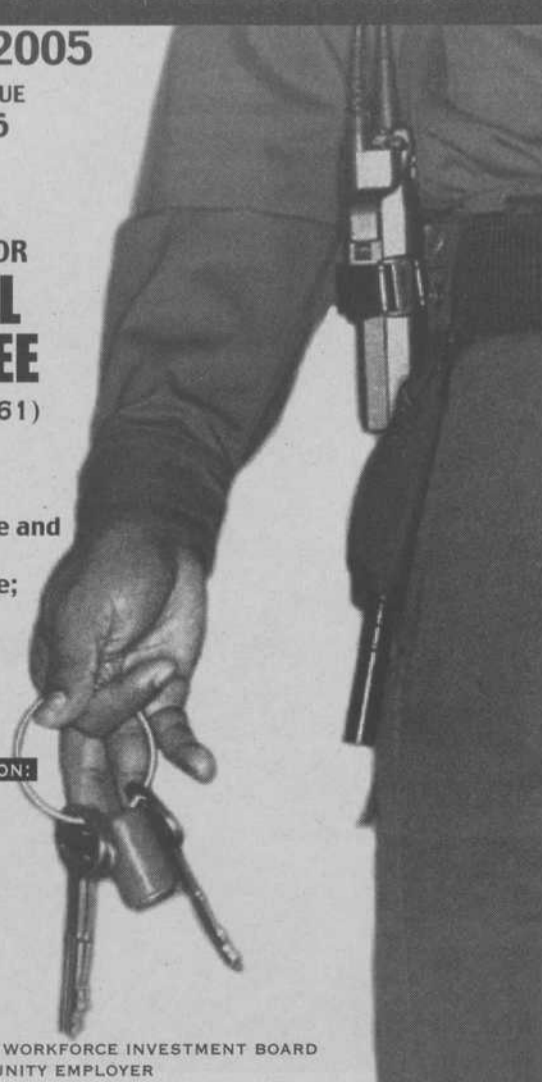
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Salary \$23.11 - \$29.09 hr, DOQ, + xlnl bnfts pkg. Filing Deadline: Immediately. Open till filled.

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Salary: \$18.11 hr, + gen bnfts pkg. Filing Deadline 8 am, Mon, 3/7/05.

• BACKFLOW TECHNICIAN - LIMITED TERM

Limited term position for minimum of 24 mths. LT positions receive same bnfts as reg ees in similar positions. Performs wide variety of skilled, journey-level duties in inspecting, installing, diagnosing & repairing backflow prevention assemblies; identifies & implements effective courses of action to complete assigned work; reads & interprets plans, specs & manuals, & exercises independent judgment & initiative w/in established guidelines. Req's grad HS or GED equiv & 2 yrs maint &/or operations exp in the wtr wks fld; or equiv combo T&E. Also req's valid NV drivers lic.

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• GRAPHIC ARTIST

Performs advanced graphics design, desktop publishing & publications dvlpmnt & production support duties associated with District/SNWA public affairs, community outreach & media relations progs & activities. Expected to exercise artistic skill in conceptualizing, designing & laying out visually appealing graphics materials. Req's grad HS or GED equiv, tech sch or voclt sch, supplemented by course work in graphic/commercial art, technical illustration or related field; & 3-yr prog resp exp in graphics design or illustration using computers & graphics software pkgs; or equiv comb T&E.

Salary \$18.99 - \$23.90 hr, DOQ + gen bnfts pkg. Filing Deadline: Immediately. Open till filled.



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