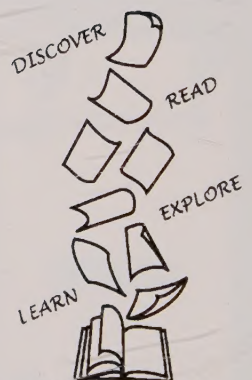




# ROCKINGHAM SPEEDWAY



rick houston and  
bryan hallman



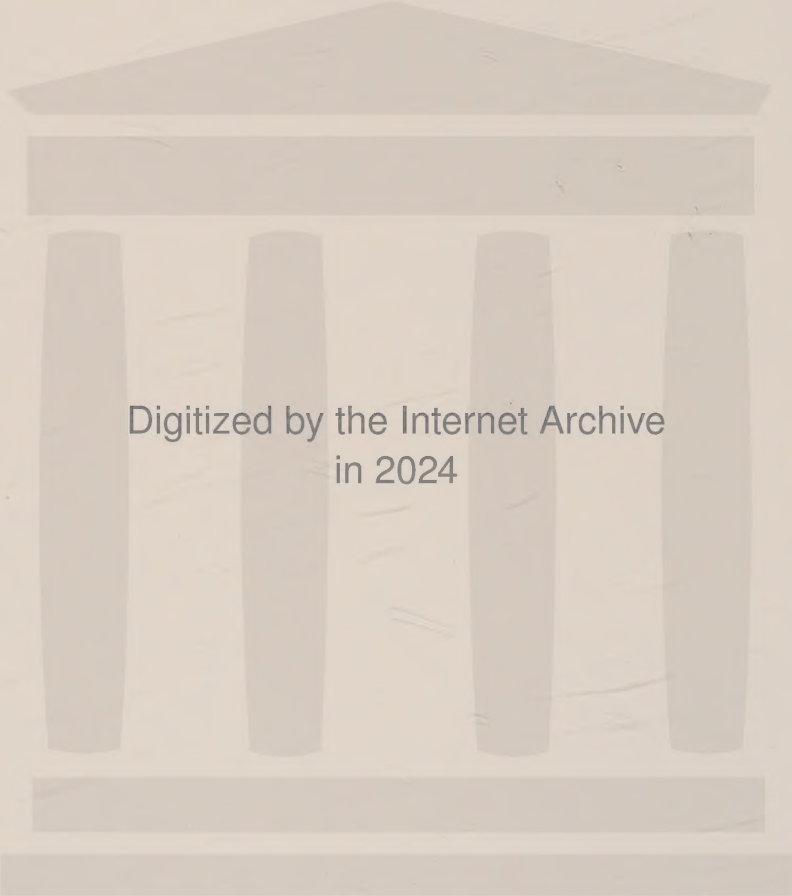
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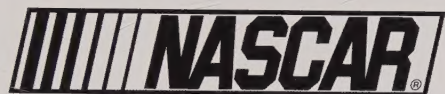
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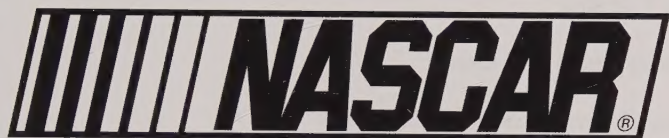


# ROCKINGHAM SPEEDWAY



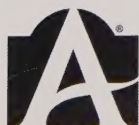
Andy Hillenburg would probably balk at the compliment, but he can certainly be considered the savior of Rockingham Speedway after purchasing the track at auction on October 2, 1997. Within hours, Hillenburg was working the phones to line up races. “The Rock” has been many things to many people ever since—a race track, testing facility, and classroom. (Courtesy of David Griffin.)

**ON THE COVER:** This was the moment when all seemed right with the world again, thanks to the determined efforts of track owner Andy Hillenburg. NASCAR was back at Rockingham Speedway after an absence of more than eight years, this time for the April 15, 2012, NASCAR Camping World Truck Series Good Sam Roadside Assistance 200 event. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)



# ROCKINGHAM SPEEDWAY

Rick Houston and Bryan Hallman



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*To Andy Hillenburg, who gave new life to Rockingham Speedway*



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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The first tip of my hat goes to my old *Winston Cup Scene* cohort Bryan Hallman. Bryan is a veteran photographer who loves the history of the sport, which makes us perfect partners in crime on this project. Have an Oreo cookie on me, my friend.

Then there is Andy Hillenburg, one of my earliest friends in the sport. There may be a handful of people in the garage who are as nice as Andy, but one thing is for sure: there is no one nicer, and I could not possibly pick someone I would rather see make a success of Rockingham than him. Now, Andy, about that next Fast Track session . . .

Several people have helped round out this book with generous contributions from their own archives. Nancy DeWitt Daugherty, daughter of former president L.G. DeWitt, was an invaluable contact. Tex Powell also provided vital photographs.

Harold Brasington III, grandson of the man who conceived what is known as Rockingham Speedway, provided track construction images. Diane Green was a proud momma who provided photographs of her son Austin and her husband, David, who was at once one of the most liked and most envied people in NASCAR.

Chris Hussey is a longtime crew chief in the sport and the absolute, undisputed, heavyweight champion of all things NASCAR trivia. My thanks also go to Arcadia Publishing's Katie McAlpin.

My love for NASCAR stems directly from my best friend Joe Estep and his mom, Sandi.

I am a writer. It is what I do, but my reasons for being are my wife, Jeanie, and my sons Richard, Jesse, and Adam. They are my heart.

Finally, all credit goes to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Without Him, I am nothing.

—Rick Houston

I want to thank my wife, Bonnie, and my daughter, Aubrey, for the time they allowed me away from them to do this. I love you both.

Thank you to the men and women who took the skinny, long-haired kid in at the race track all those years ago and accepted me into their world. I try to return the favor every chance I get.

Thanks to Mom and Dad for letting me be what I wanted to be.

Rick, this is our second project together, I look forward to the next one. Thanks for giving me a call.

—Bryan Hallman

# INTRODUCTION

To Harold Brasington III, his grandfather was just that: a grandfather.

The elder Brasington did not talk much about his legacy in stock car racing. As a youngster, Harold III never knew that his grandad had played a part in bringing NASCAR out of the dusty bullrings that had been carved out of cow pastures, giving drivers bigger and better places to race.

As far as Harold III knew, though, every town had a track. Somewhere, somehow, he realized that his grandfather had helped build Darlington Raceway but only vaguely. Darlington was one thing, but he also began construction on other race tracks as well, including most notably North Carolina Motor Speedway (now Rockingham Speedway) in Rockingham.

That knowledge would not come until he was a teenager, when it finally began to sink in just what the old man had once accomplished. No, Harold III's fondest memories of his grandad were of the times they spent tooling around Darlington in Brasington Sand and Gravel's dump trucks.

"One of my biggest regrets now that I'm a little bit older is that he talked very little about it around me," Harold Brasington III said. "I didn't even know he built other race tracks. It wasn't until I was a teenager and heard my father share some stories about my grandad that I realized what a long and interesting career he had."

Harold Brasington first conceived of building a large track in the South when he attended the Indianapolis 500 in the 1930s. There was no reason Darlington could not have a place like that. His dreams were stalled first by the Great Depression and then World War II, but by the late 1940s, they were finally coming to fruition. Darlington Raceway debuted on September 4, 1950, with the inaugural Southern 500, a race won by Johnny Mantz not so much on speed as simple survival.

As financial burdens increased, however, Brasington sold his interest in Darlington in the mid-1950s.

"He did not have the disposition to really be an aggressive businessperson," Brasington said of his grandfather. "His accounting was to put receipts in a cigar box and hand it off to a bookkeeper to make sense of it."

Disappointed with the way things turned out with his hometown race track, Brasington went in search of another project. He got in on the ground floor of what would become Charlotte Motor Speedway, but when his involvement in that effort fell through, Brasington kept looking.

Like Charlotte, Brasington conceived of planting a race track near the border between North and South Carolina. Finally, he settled on a tract just outside Rockingham owned by Bill Land. The two struck up a partnership that was uneasy at times, but a partnership nonetheless. Construction began, but it was not long until it became painfully obvious that help was going to be needed.

"Rockingham was several years in the making," Harold III said. "His intention was that he was going to build it and run it, but kind of a pattern that developed with him, he went into the thing underfunded and didn't spend enough money on lawyers. It quickly got away from him. I think he was in a really tenuous situation when the first race started. I think he'd already got out



of it." If Brasington was not already completely disassociated with Rockingham by the time its first race was held on October 31, 1965, it appeared well on the way to being so. Local attorney and businessman J. Elsie Webb had been named chairman of the board, while Brasington was still officially president for the time being.

After Brasington departed, Webb was named track president and served until his passing in 1970. When asked how he would like for his grandfather to be remembered, Harold III paused. "I've been thinking a lot about that," he answered, then stopped to consider his answer a moment. He talked of how his grandfather had been a baseball fan, so much so that he even considered putting a diamond in the middle of Darlington Raceway so the complex could be used year-round.

"The thing that was the overarching theme in his life was providing venues and forums for communities to come together and enjoy competition," Brasington said. "He never stopped striving to make that kind of thing happen. That's his contribution. NASCAR stock car racing was just one small facet of what interested him. I think that would be a good legacy to be known by."

As construction of North Carolina Motor Speedway grew more costly, local leaders got involved and purchased shares of stock to help resuscitate the project.

The going was rough at times. As important as personal interests were, however, the town's businessmen and dignitaries were confident in what a track could do for the local economy.

L.G. DeWitt owned a trucking company based in nearby Ellerbe and was one of the largest fruit growers around. Although he had never been involved in motorsports before (he once bristled over his drivers stopping in Darlington to watch the races there), DeWitt was community minded to the core.

North Carolina Motor Speedway not only brought attention to Rockingham over the years, it did so to the point that it became a part of the town's heart and soul.

"The track is a tremendous part of the town," said Nancy DeWitt Daugherty, L.G. DeWitt's daughter. "So many people would take their week vacation to work at the race track twice a year. They made very good money there, and they enjoyed it. It just brought the community together. Everybody was proud and wanted to work the hardest to make everything go right. The extra money was just wonderful for them."

DeWitt eventually became president of North Carolina Motor Speedway. Though he had been new to the sport when he first invested in the track, the racing bug bit DeWitt hard.

"To my daddy, working was his hobby," Daugherty continued. "He didn't fish. He didn't hunt. He loved to work, and he was serious about it. But let me tell you. When he got involved in getting people to buy stock to build the speedway, racing became his hobby. He loved it."

DeWitt's tendency at times was to get a business started, whatever it might be, and then turn it over to someone else. That was not the case with North Carolina Motor Speedway. He found it to be way too much fun.

"When he got the race track, he just made time for it," Daugherty said. "I kid you not. You almost couldn't wipe the grin off his face at the race track. He was just so happy there. I think there were a lot of challenges and decisions to be made, but when it came to meeting people, he loved that, and especially the racers."

The venerable DeWitt headed North Carolina Motor Speedway until his death in 1990, at which point, Frank Wilson, who owned a funeral home in Ellerbe, took over. When Wilson suffered a stroke in 1994, the post went to Jo DeWitt Wilson (no relation to Frank), DeWitt's daughter and Daugherty's sister. Jo DeWitt Wilson stayed at the helm until 2002.

The winds of change in the sport had already started during Jo DeWitt Wilson's tenure. NASCAR's explosive popularity led to expansion across the country, but there were only so many race dates to go around. North Wilkesboro Speedway in the foothills of North Carolina was closed after the 1996 season, and its events moved to tracks in Texas and New Hampshire.

Was Rockingham far behind North Wilkesboro? The track had hosted two races a year since 1966, but that changed when one race went to Auto Club Speedway in 2004. When the checkered flag fell on the track's lone remaining race date in 2004, hopes about its future were fading and fading fast. The other shoe dropped later that year when the date was shipped off to Texas.



It appeared that The Rock was no more.

Andy Hillenburg has been providing fans that very opportunity to climb behind the wheel of a race car and tool around a race track since the early 1990s through his Fast Track High Performance Driving School. Not long after he started, Hillenburg began contemplating the possibility of buying a race track at which to base the school. It would be his track and his school, so he could offer classes all day, every day.

Hillenburg kept right on racing when none of the tracks he explored buying seemed the right fit, and he became the 1995 champion of the ARCA Re/Max Series in the process. He is also one of a select few who have run both the Daytona 500 and the Indianapolis 500.

Then, on October 2, 1997, he attended an auction at which North Carolina Motor Speedway was going to be up for grabs.

Although this was not just another race track—this was The Rock, for crying out loud—Hillenburg did not go into the sale with a no-holds-barred, win-at-all-costs attitude. He could not afford to. He was hammered the winner with a total bid of \$4.4 million. He now had a race track, but what exactly was he going to do with it?

“It’s scarier once you’re in than when you’re on your way in,” Hillenburg admitted. “It was only afterward that I probably realized all the ramifications of just what we had done. I knew there would be a lot of surprises, but really had no idea how many.”

After all, the upkeep on a complex the size of Rockingham costs money, even when there is nothing taking place on the track. The maintenance and utility expenses do not stop, and that is why Hillenburg has done everything he can to make sure something is taking place as much as possible at the track he renamed Rockingham Speedway.

Since taking over, Hillenburg has had it all at The Rock—races for a number of divisions, including the Legends and Bandoleros starter leagues. Teams test at both The Rock and “Little Rock,” a half-mile track Hillenburg built behind the backstretch of the bigger track. Fast Track still offers fans the experience of a lifetime on one of the sport’s most famous tracks.

Hillenburg also brought NASCAR back into the fold with the debut of the NASCAR Camping World Truck Series at Rockingham on April 15, 2012. An important step was the addition of SAFER barrier “soft walls” in late 2011. The return of NASCAR means the world to the track’s owner.

“I can’t even describe the emotions,” he said. “I do love the sport with all my heart. It’s what I’ve wanted to do ever since I can remember. It’s what I want to be doing the day I leave this earth. The chances of doing what we did were next to zero. To be able to get the local community and the racing community to rally behind that, and to help orchestrate it and put it together, was a really, really special feeling.”

The track has been a part of Nancy DeWitt Daugherty’s life since her childhood. It hurt to see the track lay dormant the way it did for so long, but now that Hillenburg is in charge, she could not be happier to see The Rock back up and running.

“Honey, I am just so thrilled,” said Daugherty, who worked in one of the track’s concession stands during the 2012 NASCAR Camping World Truck Series event. “I told Andy recently, ‘Everybody in this county wants you to succeed.’ We do.”

Before anybody starts calling Hillenburg “the Savior of Rockingham,” however, he is quick to point out that he still has a lot of work to do to ensure that Rockingham continues to grow.

“A lot of people have helped make Rockingham Speedway successful over the years,” Hillenburg said. “You’re just so doggone tired at times, and you think you can’t go on. When you hear compliments about improvements you’ve made, and how appreciative they are for what you’re trying to continue, it gives you the energy to get the job done. When I hear those nice comments, it’s what gives me energy when we’re out there at 11:30 at night fixing a plumbing leak or when we’re out cleaning up trash between practices.”

It is those moments and more that keep Hillenburg going. It is a rare thing for him to venture out into the community—whether it is a local hardware store, restaurant, gas station or wherever—and not be thanked for what he is trying to accomplish at Rockingham Speedway. Yet it is not just Hillenburg. He has a whole team behind him.

"I do get a lot of credit, but it's truly a team effort between all the people who work with us, the people of our community, all the sponsors, and every race fan who has bought a ticket or just sent a kind word," he began, shifting focus away from himself. "It's everyone. I might be helping spearhead that, but I want to deflect the credit to a lot of the people who are behind the scenes and all the race fans who are supporting us."

From Harold Brasington to L.G. DeWitt, from Frank Wilson to Jo DeWitt Wilson, and from the countless NASCAR legends who have raced at Rockingham, Andy Hillenburg is doing everything he can to build on their legacy at Rockingham Speedway.

# One

## IN THE BEGINNING



After scouting several locations on the border between North and South Carolina for a new superspeedway, Harold Brasington eventually settled on a tract of land in Mars Creek, North Carolina, just outside of Rockingham on US Highway 1. Ground for what would become North Carolina Motor Speedway (now Rockingham Speedway) was broken in 1963. At the time, Brasington was best known for building Darlington Raceway, NASCAR's first superspeedway. (Courtesy of Harold Brasington III.)



According to his grandson, Harold Brasington hired an engineer from the North Carolina Highway Department to help with grading the racing surface. Brasington also assigned Claude Siner, a mechanic and driver at his trucking company, to work on the project. Often working alone at the facility, Siner was paid a total of \$4,900 for his efforts in 1964—an average of about \$1.30 an hour. (Courtesy of Harold Brasington III.)



Originally designed as a flat, one-mile oval, North Carolina Motor Speedway was reconfigured in 1969 to its present layout: a high-banked, D-shaped course that measures 1.017 miles in length. Competitors have always approached the track with a healthy dose of respect due to its abrasive surface.



What appears to be the road that would lead through the turn-four tunnel was one of many loose ends that needed to be tied up as construction of North Carolina Motor Speedway continued. Several local leaders understood the impact the track would have on the community and took the project up as their own as Harold Brasington continued to struggle. (Courtesy of Harold Brasington III.)



The concrete grandstands were simple enough, which stood in stark contrast to the track's complicated roots. Scrambling to raise funds, Brasington brought in investors. The first was Bill Land of Rockingham, who owned the land upon which the facility was built. Then came Bernie Locklear of Darlington, who contributed steel and an undetermined amount of cash to the project. Eventually, stock was sold. (Courtesy of Harold Brasington III.)

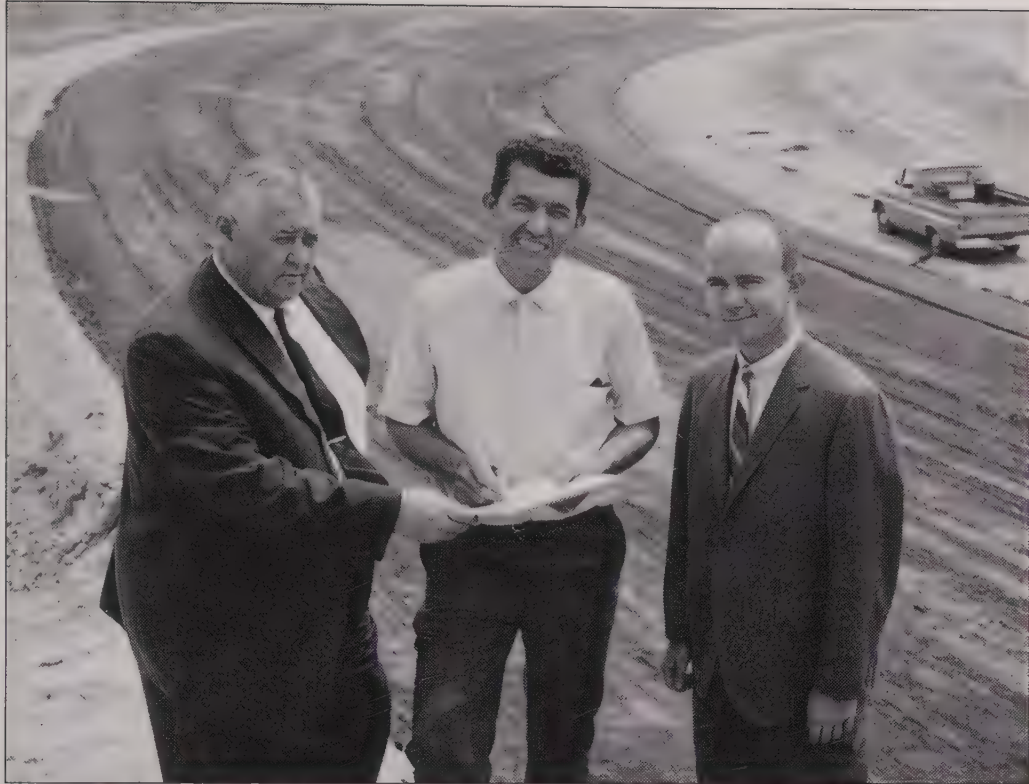


The tunnel under turn four was one of the first recognizable features to come together. Matters between stockholders were in such disarray that litigation took place with the North and South Carolina Departments of Revenue over the sale of interstate securities. (Courtesy of Harold Brasington III.)



There had been plenty of scrambling well before any race car ever appeared at the North Carolina Motor Speedway. According to Dr. George Galloway, an early investor in the track, at least one loan was taken to help cover the paving of the facility's racing surface. When that money was spent, however, paving still had not been completed. (Courtesy of Nancy DeWitt Daugherty.)





As North Carolina Motor Speedway's debut approached, J. Elsie Webb (left) and Dr. George Galloway (right) watched as driver Richard Petty signed his entry form. Webb, a lawyer and area businessman, had been named chairman of the board during its management upheaval. Although Harold Brasington was listed president and Galloway vice president at the time, Brasington's involvement with the track was all but over. (Courtesy of Harold Brasington III.)

Richard Petty gets in some track time during the paving process at Rockingham. Although the machine was not quite as fast as the famous No. 43 Plymouth Petty drove at the time, the extra practice must have helped. Petty sat on the pole for the October 31, 1965, American 500—North Carolina Motor Speedway's inaugural event. He went on to finish 36th. (Courtesy of Nancy DeWitt Daugherty.)

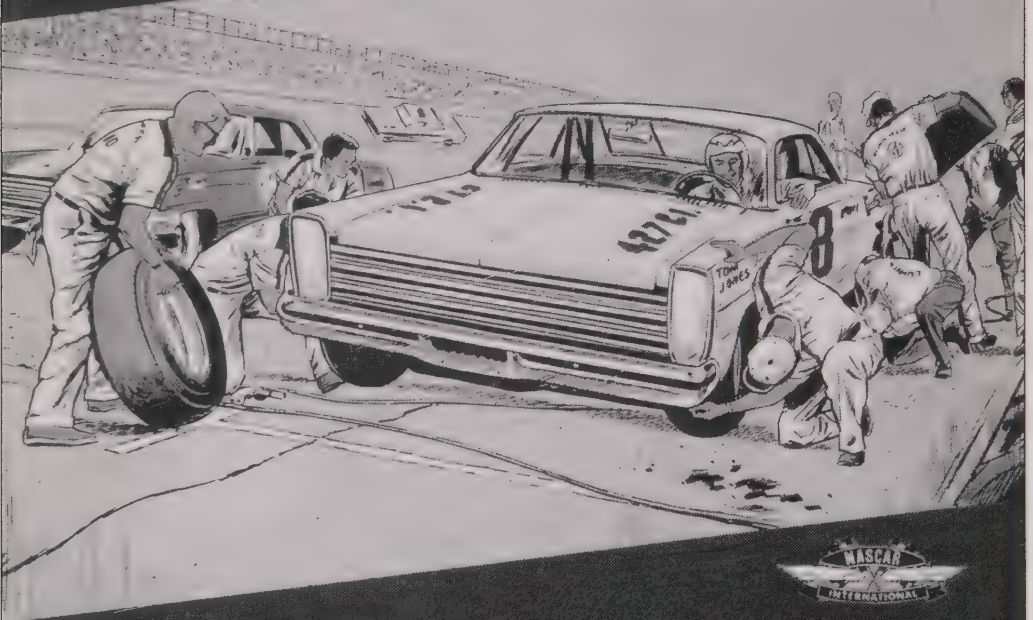


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# AMERICAN 500

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Curtis Turner drove a Wood Brothers Racing Ford to victory in The Rock's racing debut, and this is the program for that historic event. (Courtesy of Nancy DeWitt Daugherty.)



# NORTH CAROLINA MOTOR SPEEDWAY

## Starting Lineup For The 1st Annual "AMERICAN 500"

### OCTOBER 31, 1965

	Car No.	Driver and Home	Type Car	Qualifying Speed	Finish Position
Row 1	43	Richard Petty, Randleman, N. C.	65 Plymouth	116.260	X
	26	Robert "Junior" Johnson, Ronda, N. C.	65 Ford	115.792	X B.E.
Row 2	6	David Pearson, Spartanburg, S. C.	65 Dodge	115.393	X
	41	Curtis Turner, Charlotte, N. C.	65 Ford	115.273	X
Row 3	21	Marvin Panch, Daytona Beach, Fla.	65 Ford	114.841	3
	28	Fred Lorenzen, Elmhurst, Ill.	65 Ford	114.759	X B.E.
Row 4	27	Cale Yarborough, Timmonsville, S. C.	65 Ford	114.595	5
	29	Dick Hutcherson, Keokuk, Iowa	65 Ford	114.240	9
Row 5	42	Jim Paschal, High Point, N. C.	65 Plymouth	115.329	5
	35	Bobby Isaac, Catawba, N. C.	65 Plymouth	115.153	X
Row 6	24	Sam McQuagg, Columbus, Ga.	65 Ford	114.394	X
	11	Ned Jarrett, Camden, S. C.	65 Ford	113.780	X
Row 7	19	J. T. Putney, Arden, N. C.	65 Chevrolet	112.315	
	86	Buddy Baker, Charlotte, N. C.	65 Plymouth	110.595	X
Row 8	64	Elmo Langley, Landover, Md.	64 Ford	110.531	
	17	Junior Spencer, Hamlin, W. Va.	64 Ford	110.454	X
Row 9	49	G. C. Spencer, Inman, S. C.	64 Ford	113.136	49
	7	Bobby Johns, Miami, Fla.	64 Pontiac	109.256	
Row 10	25	Jabe Thomas, Christiansburg, Va.	64 Ford	109.057	
	18	Gene "Stick" Elliott, Shelby, N. C.	65 Chevrolet	108.441	X
Row 11	44	Larry Hess, Salisbury, N. C.	64 Ford	107.954	
	57	Lionel Johnson, Unionville, Va.	64 Ford	107.921	X
Row 12	48	John Sears, Ellerbe, N. C.	65 Ford	106.949	X
	56	Paul Lewis, Johnson City, Tenn.	63 Ford	106.951	
Row 13	87	Buck Baker, Charlotte, N. C.	65 Chevrolet	110.113	1
	59	Tom Pistone, Chicago, Ill.	64 Ford	108.876	X
Row 14	46	Roy Mayne, Bolling AFB, Wash., D. C.	65 Chevrolet	107.792	X
	75	Gene Black, Arden, N. C.	64 Ford	107.873	X
Row 15	79	Frank Warren, Augusta, Ga.	63 Chevrolet	107.711	X
	88	Neil Castles, Charlotte, N. C.	64 Dodge	106.987	2
Row 16	22	Bunkie Blackburn, Daytona Beach, Fla.	65 Chevrolet		X
	10	Darel Dieringer, Charlotte, N. C.	64 Ford		X
Row 17	02	Doug Cooper, Gastonia, N. C.	65 Chevrolet		X
	63	Don Hume, Belvidere, N. J.	63 Ford		X
Row 18	34	Wendell Scott, Danville, Va.	63 Ford		
	97	Henley Gray, Rome, Ga.	64 Ford		
Row 19	38	Wayne Smith, Advance, N. C.	65 Chevrolet		
	52	E. J. Trivette, Deep Gap, N. C.	63 Chevrolet		X
Row 20	68	Bob Derrington, Houston, Texas	63 Ford		
	1	Rene Charland, Agawam, Mass.	64 Ford		X
Row 21	89	Darrell Bryant, Thomasville, N. C.	65 Oldsmobile		X
	83	Worth McMillon, Amelia, Va.	65 Pontiac		
Row 22	9	Roy Tyner, Mullins, S. C.	65 Chevrolet		0 X
	67	Buddy Arrington, Martinsville, Va.	64 Dodge		X

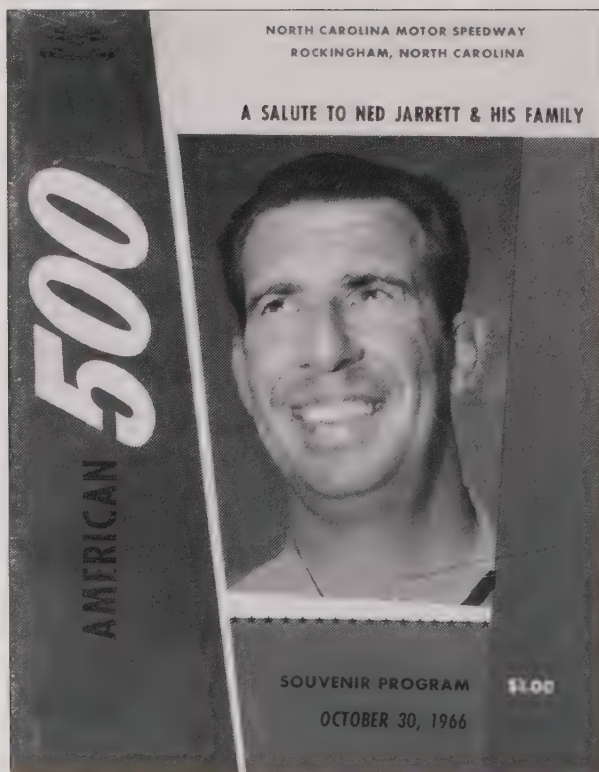
Starting Positions for Rows 16 thru 22 Determined by 25-Mile Qualifying Race, Saturday, October 30.

This was the lineup handed out with programs for the inaugural American 500. It is interesting to note that the last seven rows on the starting grid were determined by a last-chance qualifying race held on October 30, 1965. (Courtesy of Nancy DeWitt Daugherty.)



It took him 10 pit stops to do it, but Paul Goldsmith was able to cruise to a nearly four-second victory over Cale Yarborough in the March 13, 1966, Peach Blossom 500. Goldsmith pitted early to replace a lost gas cap, and his tires wore out quickly while trying to catch back up. Goldsmith and Yarborough were the only cars on the lead lap at the finish. (Courtesy of Nancy DeWitt Daugherty.)

Two-time NASCAR premier series champion Ned Jarrett was honored in ceremonies just before the start of his last race: the October 30, 1966, American 500. While trying to wiggle out the window of his car to clean dirt off his windshield during the event, Jarrett inadvertently triggered the car's fire extinguisher. Despite the problem, Jarrett finished third, four laps down to race winner Fred Lorenzen. (Courtesy of Nancy DeWitt Daugherty.)



Richard Petty captured his first Rockingham victory in the June 18, 1967, Carolina 500. The campaign Petty pieced together that year was one of NASCAR's most dominant ever. The Carolina 500 victory was his 11th of the season. Petty won a total of 27 races in 1967, including 10 in a row at one point. (Courtesy of Nancy DeWitt Daugherty.)



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 Reserved Seats, Sec. .... Rows 0-8 ..... at \$ 8.00  
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 Reserved Seats, Sec. .... Rows 19-10 ..... at \$10.00  
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 Total ..... \$.....

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**FACTS ABOUT NORTH CAROLINA MOTOR SPEEDWAY.**

- It is the only one-mile track on the NASCAR circuit and is the 10th member of that organization's superspeedway circuit.
- It is located the precise distance, with the asphalt surface reaching a peak velocity of 180 mph in the second turn and a minimum of 100 mph along the straightaways. The backstretch is the widest part of the track, dropping eight feet from beginning to end and resulting in speeds that far of 140 mph.
- Its modern facilities are unmatched anywhere in auto racing. Fans, competitors and newsmen have conveniences that no other track offers. It truly is the showcase in stock car racing.
- It is the only track in NASCAR that offers fans superspeedway speeds while retaining the easy visibility associated with half-mile tracks.
- It is the only track that has its own air strip for fans. It is the only track located next to a railroad track where rail fans can walk right from the train to the track and then back to the train after a race.

**NORTH CAROLINA MOTOR SPEEDWAY, INC. • Telephone Hamlet, N. C. • Area Code 919, 582-2361 or 582-2868.**

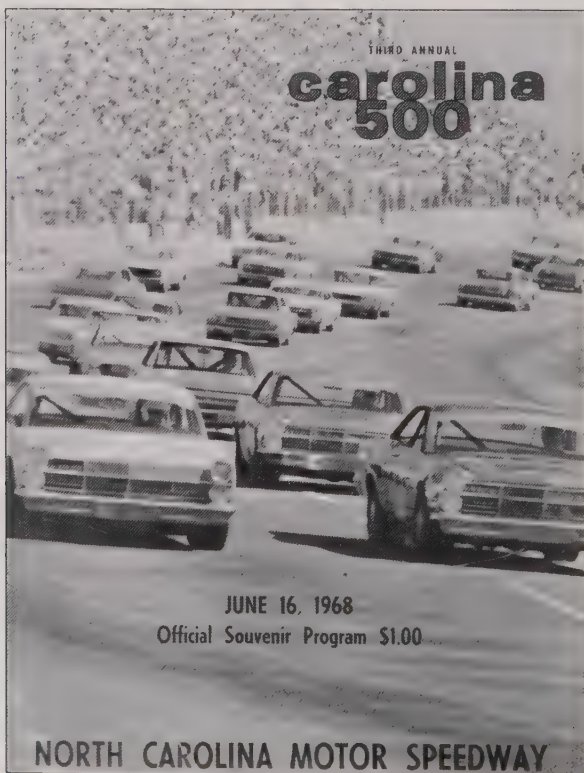
The best seat in the house—enclosed, air conditioned, and overlooking the start-finish line—set ticket buyers back \$25 for the 1968 Carolina 500. As it turned out, shelter was just the ticket as rain forced a postponement on the original race date of March 10. The event, won by Donnie Allison, was run on June 16, 1968. (Courtesy of Nancy DeWitt Daugherty.)



1968 Souvenir Program \$1.00



The rainout of the 1968 Carolina 500 on March 10 created something of a collector's item when a second program cover (below) was created for the make-up date on June 16. The original program (left) featured Richard Petty holding a baby, signifying the debut of the Sandhills 250, the first-ever NASCAR Grand Touring Series event for sports cars. Held on its planned date of March 9, the race was won by Tiny Lund in a Mercury Cougar. Other cars in the race included Chevrolet Camaros, Porsche 911s, Plymouth Barracudas, a Dodge Dart, and an AMC Javelin. (Courtesy of Nancy DeWitt Daugherty.)





# Two

## A DECADE OF LEGENDS



Benny Parsons signs autographs before the October 23, 1977, American 500. Before ending his driving career in the late 1980s, Parsons had already begun a transition into the broadcast booth. There, the gregarious “Ol’ BP” poked fun at both himself and his television partners, while retaining a masterful insider’s knowledge of the sport at the same time. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)



SPRING  
EDITION

SIXTH ANNUAL

# CAROLINA

North Carolina Motor Sp  
Rockingham, North

# 500

SUNDAY, MARCH 14, 1971

SOUVENIR  
MAGAZINE  
\$1.00

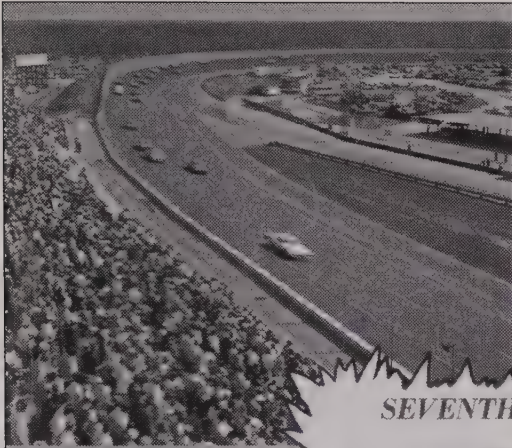
*500 Miles Of Incomparable Grand National Action,  
Competition On The World's Finest Mile Track*

The Superscenic Superspeedway Where You Can See All The  
Action In The Carolinas-Virginia Opener

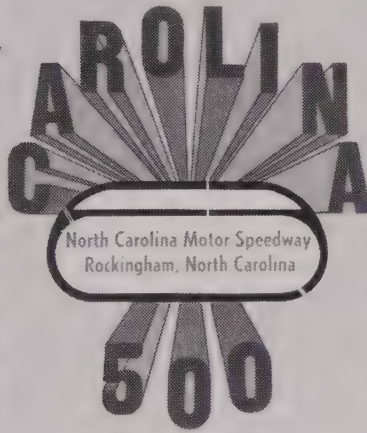
The North Carolina Motor Speedway (now Rockingham Speedway) of 1969 was reconfigured with higher banking in the turns, in hopes of increasing speeds enough to keep up with the new one-mile Dover International Speedway in Delaware. Other prominent features included the manually operated scoreboard located in the middle of the infield as well as the sandy patches (large white areas) that encircled most of the facility. (Courtesy of Nancy DeWitt Daugherty.)

This is the cover for the March 14, 1971, Carolina 500. Petty won the event under caution. (Courtesy of Nancy DeWitt Daugherty.)





SEVENTH ANNUAL



SPRING EDITION

**NCMS Souvenir  
Racing Magazine**

**\$1.50**



**SUNDAY, MARCH 12, 1972**



**Also: Union 76/Rockingham Pit Crew Race on March 11, 1972**

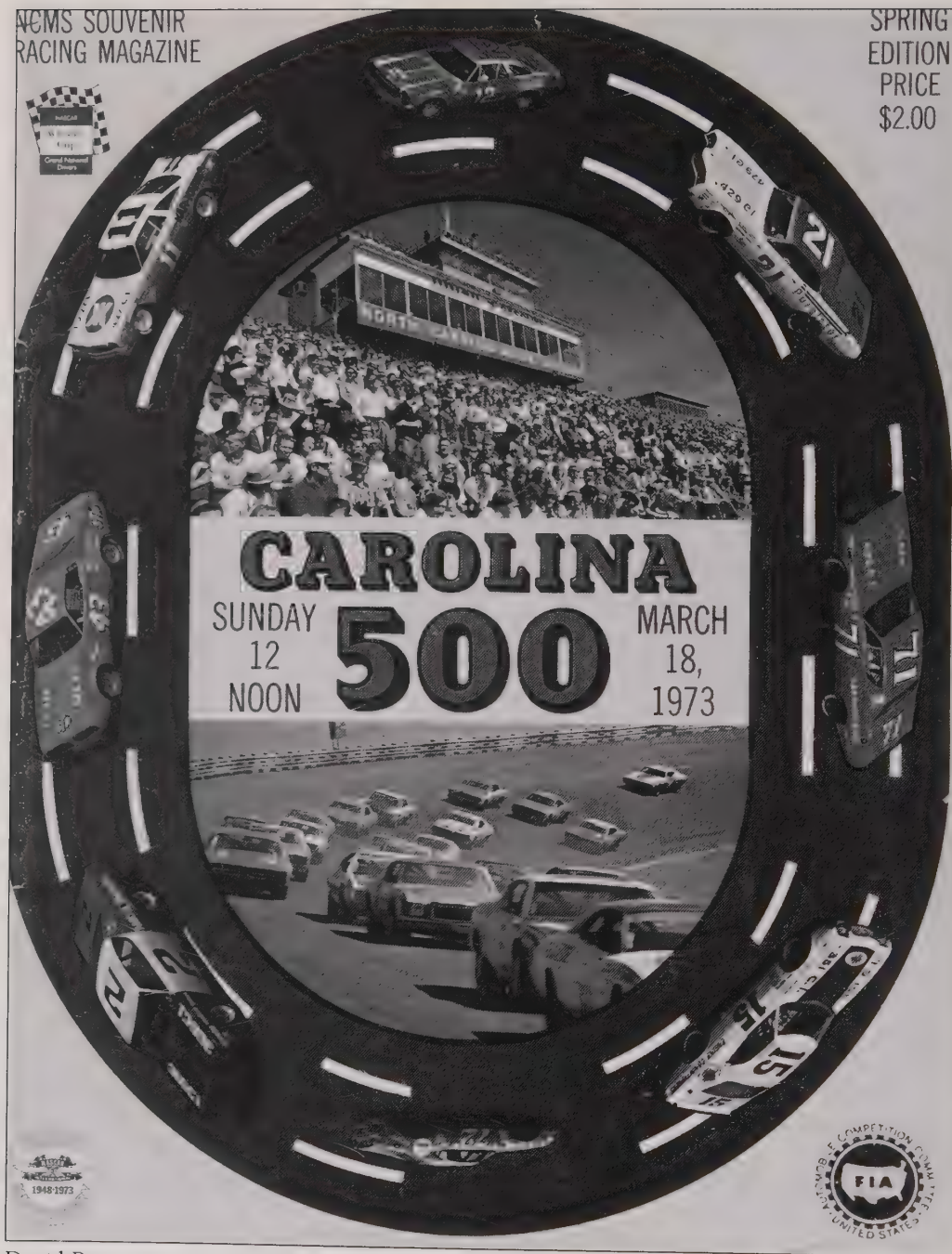
Bobby Allison was dropped from the pole to the back of the starting grid for the March 12, 1972, Carolina 500 after being discovered with left-side tires on the right side of his Chevrolet. Allison, however, lapped the field before a blown engine dropped him out of contention. Bobby Isaac went on to post the 37th and final victory of his career in the event. (Courtesy of Nancy DeWitt Daugherty.)



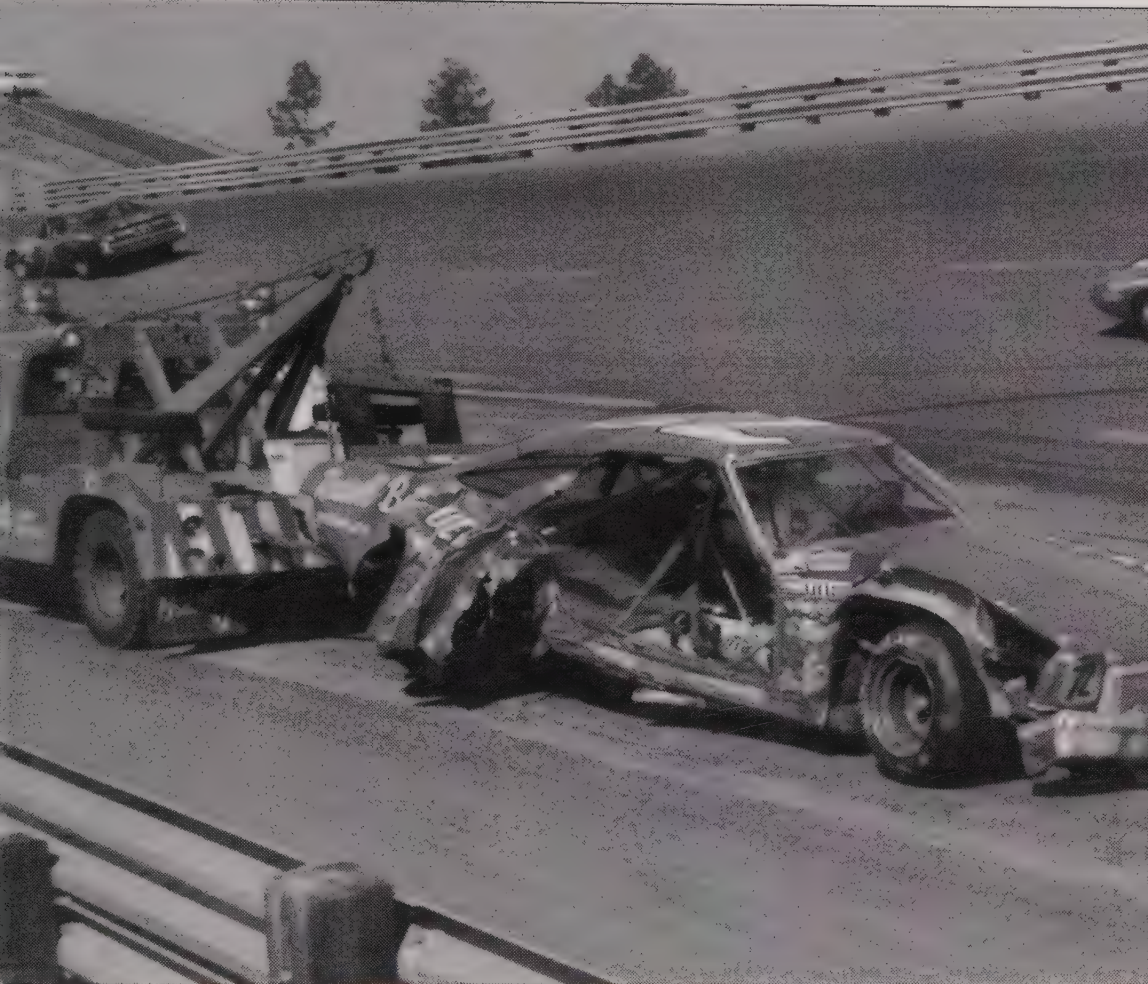
NEMS SOUVENIR  
RACING MAGAZINE



SPRING  
EDITION  
PRICE  
\$2.00



David Pearson ran over an exhaust pipe late in the March 18, 1973, Carolina 500, forcing him to pit with a flat tire. Although the caution allowed Cale Yarborough to rejoin him as the only other car on the lead lap, Pearson rocketed away on the restart with four laps to go. Pearson led all but one lap of the event. (Courtesy of Nancy DeWitt Daugherty.)



Benny Parsons spent most of the 1973 NASCAR season building up a lead in the points standings but very nearly saw it all slip away early in the American 500 season finale. After qualifying fifth, virtually the entire right side of his No. 72 Chevrolet was sheared off in a lap-13 accident with Johnny Barnes. Although he was uninjured in the mishap, Parsons was nevertheless discouraged by the turn of events as he was towed back to the garage. Points were awarded at the time via finishing position and laps completed, so with Parsons almost assuredly out of the race for good, his shot at the championship appeared to be finished. (Courtesy of Tex Powell.)





The damage on Benny Parsons's No. 72 car following his wreck in the 1973 American 500 was far from simply cosmetic. Along with the most obvious damage on the right side of the car, in which even the roll bars were ripped free, the rear axle was very badly bent. In the garage, it was haphazardly thrown to the side as makeshift repairs started. Parsons's team was fielded by L.G. DeWitt, who not only owned a trucking company located in nearby Ellerbe but was also president of the track itself. Both men were well respected, and it was not long before members of several teams pitched in to help repair the damaged machine. (Courtesy of Tex Powell.)





Parts of a roll cage from another car were commandeered, and team members Richie Barsz (foreground, in profile), Tex Powell (middle, wearing welder's helmet), and Jim "Zoomer" Kovalchik (inside the car) race to weld them into place. After his return to the track, Parsons was able to complete nearly 300 more laps. It was more than enough to give him the title over Cale Yarborough. (Courtesy of Tex Powell.)

**NORTH CAROLINA MOTOR SPEEDWAY IS PROUD  
TO SALUTE THE FOLLOWING CIVIC GROUPS OF  
THE SANDHILLS AREA WHO OPERATE THE  
FOOD CONCESSIONS. THEIR EFFORTS SUPPORT  
MANY WORTHWHILE PROJECTS.**

### **MENU**

**COFFEE 25c**

**HOT DOG 50c**

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**MOUNTAIN DEW 25c BARBEQUE 75c**

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**EAST ROCKINGHAM CIVITANS  
HAMLET AMERICAN LEGION**

**The DEMOLAYS Will Sell  
PEANUTS  
Throughout The Grandstand**

Like many race tracks, North Carolina Motor Speedway offered local civic groups the opportunity to raise funds via concession stand sales. This flyer from the October 20, 1974, American 500 featured a relatively small, and inexpensive, menu of items. (Courtesy of Nancy DeWitt Daugherty.)

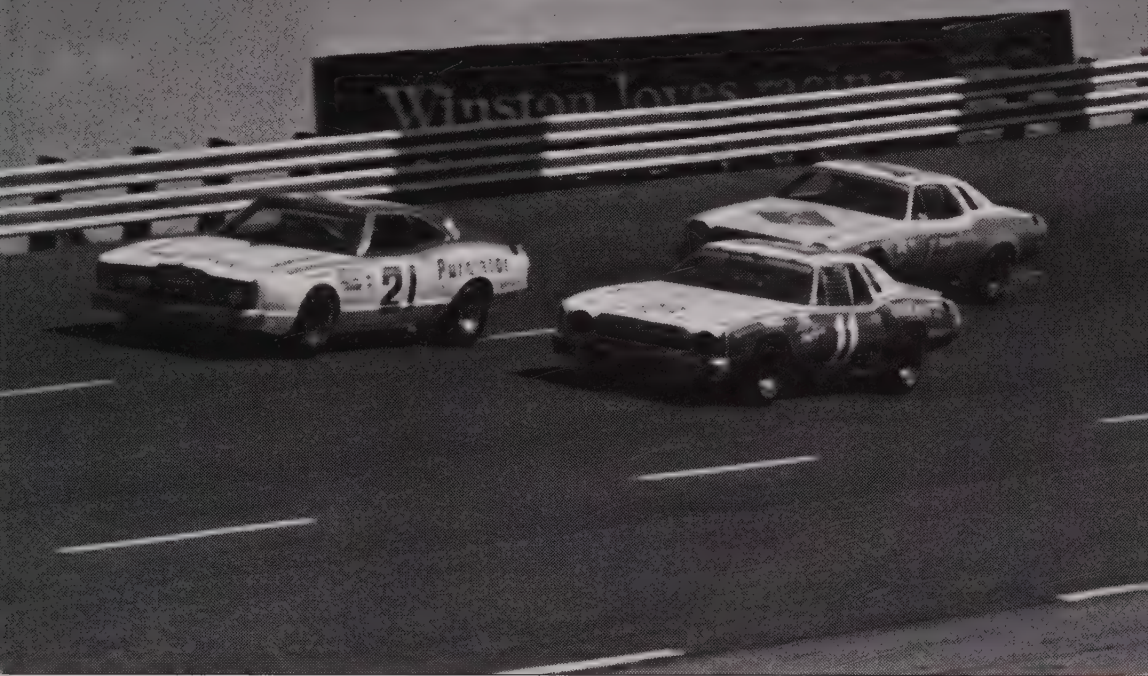


Ricky Rudd had never raced anything on four wheels when he was introduced to the crowd prior to the March 2, 1975, Carolina 500. The Virginia native started 26th in his NASCAR debut, and he stayed out of trouble en route to an 11th-place finish. By the time his career was finished more than 30 years later, Rudd had raced at The Rock 54 times. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)



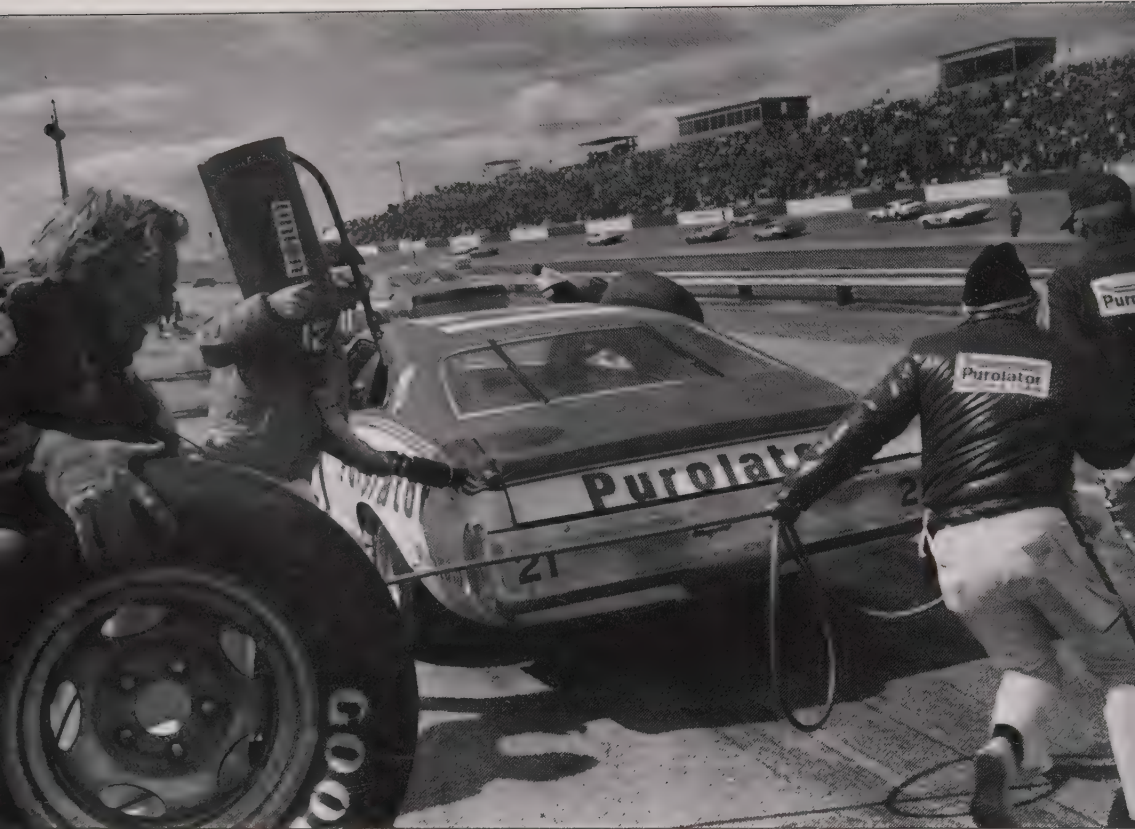
One of Rockingham's most striking features was once its orange, white, and blue press box, overlooking the frontstretch. The current tower, which was put into place between Rockingham's two races in 1996, features suites, a press box, and broadcast booths. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)





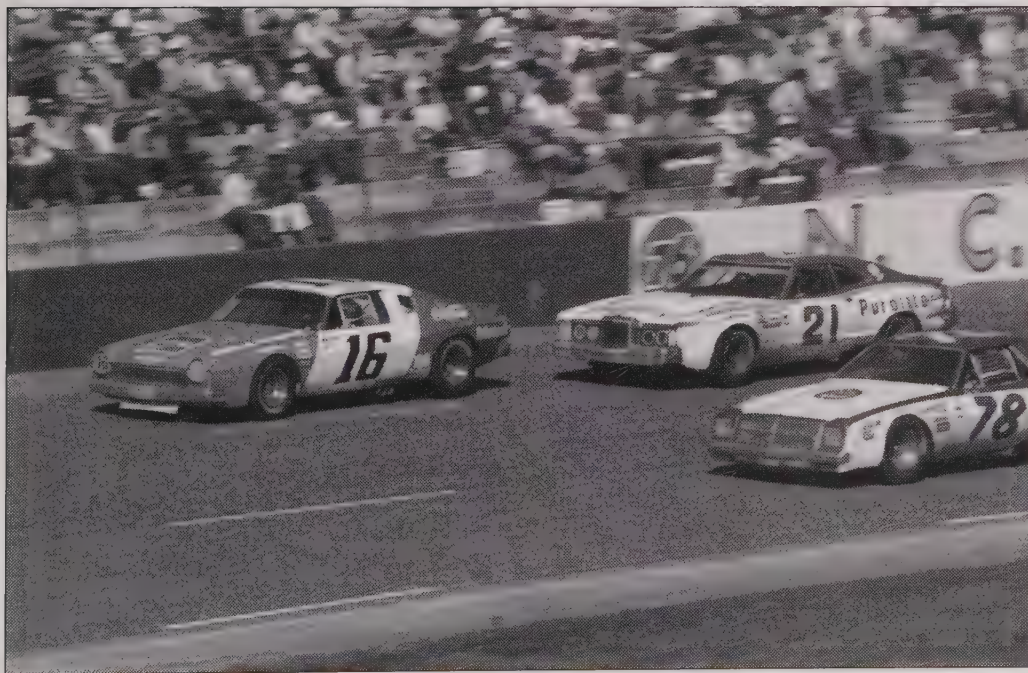
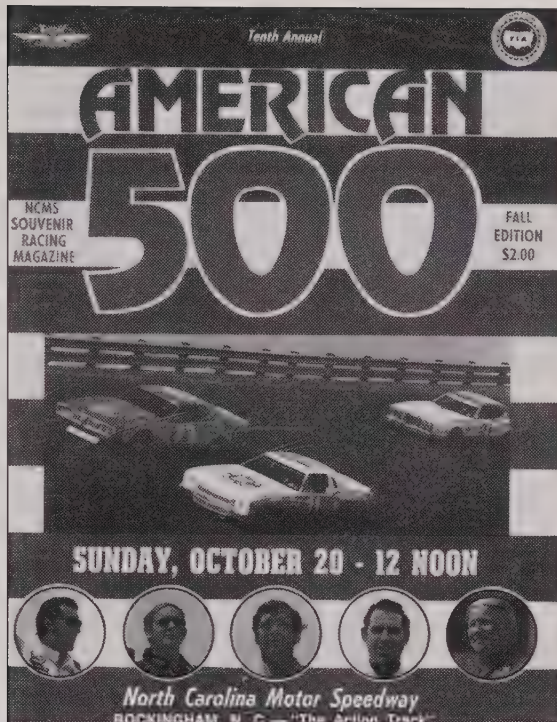
David Pearson (No. 21) tries to keep a fender in front of Cale Yarborough (No. 11) and Darrell Waltrip (No. 17) during the 1975 Carolina 500. Yarborough passed Pearson for the lead with 30 laps to go and went on to capture his first victory of the young season. Waltrip, meanwhile, led early but was taken out of contention by an accident. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)





The Wood Brothers Racing pit crew works on David Pearson's famous No. 21 Mercury during the 1975 Carolina 500. The driver and team formed the perfect combination for most of the 1970s with both Pearson and the pit crew among the best in the history of NASCAR. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)

There was a misprint on the cover of the program for the October 19, 1975, American 500; October 20 was actually the next day, a Monday, and only one of the drivers featured finished inside the top 20. Cale Yarborough (at right in the row of circles at bottom) won, but various mechanical issues dropped Richard Petty, Benny Parsons, Buddy Baker, and David Pearson out of contention. (Courtesy of Nancy DeWitt Daugherty.)

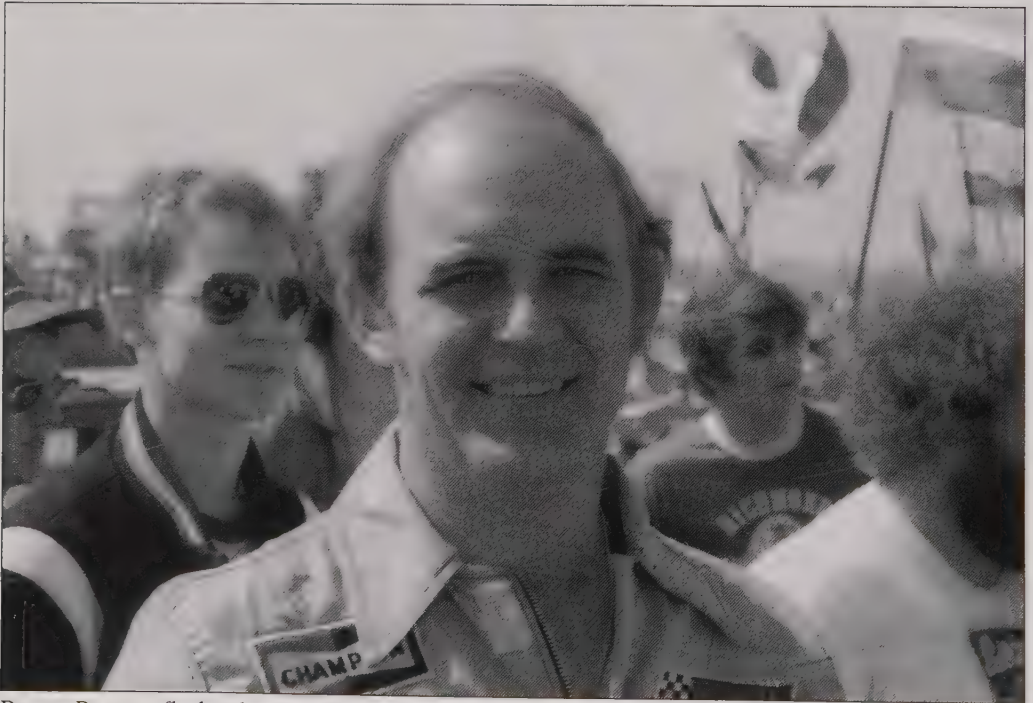


Bobby Allison (No. 16) leads David Pearson (No. 21) past the lapped No. 78 car driven by Dick Skillen during the 1975 American 500. Both Pearson and Skillen fell out of the event early, but Allison was most definitely around at the end. Cale Yarborough won after brushing the wall on the last lap while trying to fend off Allison's furious charge. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)





Politicians making campaign stops at race tracks is a long-standing tradition in NASCAR, and James B. Hunt Jr. (left) was not about to buck the trend. He visited North Carolina Motor Speedway and track president L.G. DeWitt during his run for governor in 1976. The longest-serving governor in the state's history, Hunt was elected to terms in 1976, 1980, 1992, and 1996. (Courtesy of Nancy DeWitt Daugherty.)



Benny Parsons flashes his familiar smile on pit road just before the start of the February 29, 1976, Carolina 500. Although he was 15 laps down by the time the checkered flag fell that afternoon, Parsons was nevertheless able to eke out a fifth-place finish in the event. The showing allowed him to go atop the points standings after just the third race of the season. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)



Two of Richard Petty's three wins in 1976 came at North Carolina Motor Speedway. A bearded Petty lifts the trophy in Victory Lane after beating Darrell Waltrip to the finish line by two full laps in the Carolina 500 (right). It was the 180th win of Petty's incomparable career. After the October 24, 1976, American 500, Richard Petty is joined in Victory Lane by his 16-year-old son Kyle (right) and Pattie Huffman (center), pictured below. Kyle and Pattie were married less than three years later on February 4, 1979. Enduring what was for him a substandard season, the good-natured Petty introduced himself to reporters in the press box following the American 500. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)



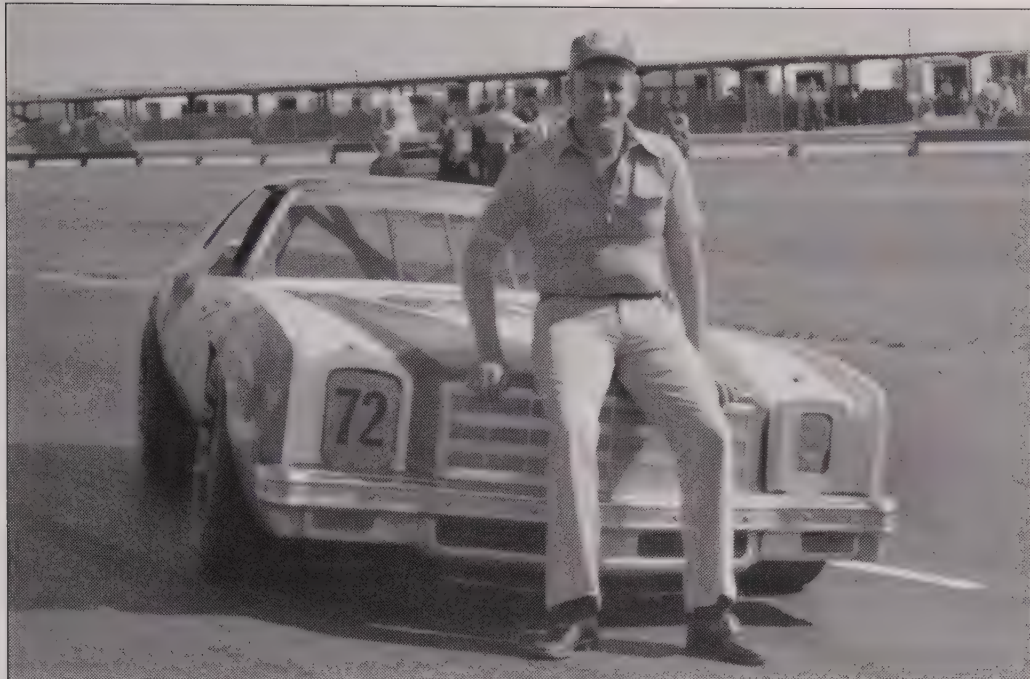


Neil Bonnett relaxes a few moments before climbing aboard his Nord Krauskopf–owned No. 71 Dodge for the March 13, 1977, Carolina 500, in which he finished fifth. A member of the famed “Alabama Gang,” Bonnett was a popular figure in the garage area. He later parlayed his likable personality into a successful career as a NASCAR broadcaster. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)

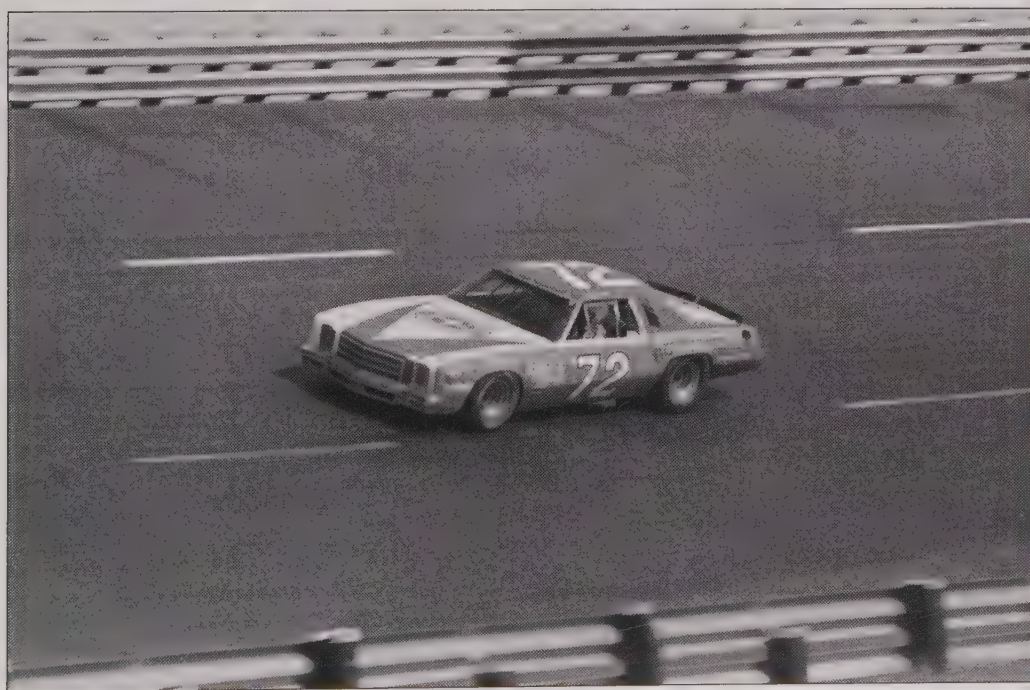


Bobby Allison was smiling before the start of the 1977 American 500. He finished sixth in the event. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)





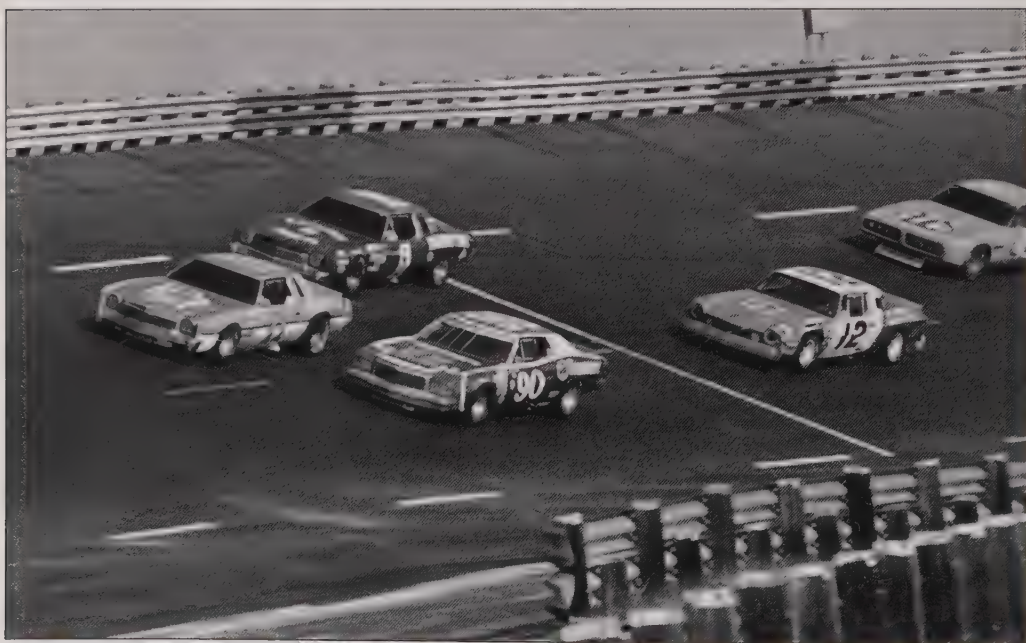
Benny Parsons (No. 72) had a lot going for him at Rockingham. He lived in nearby Ellerbe, North Carolina, which was also home to L.G. DeWitt's trucking company. DeWitt not only owned the car that Parsons drove to the 1973 championship and a win in the 1975 Daytona 500, he also served as president of the track. Parsons finished seventh in the 1977 American 500, ten laps down. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)







It was a good day for both Donnie Allison (No. 1) and Cale Yarborough (No. 11) in the 1977 American 500. Although he fell a lap down at one point, Allison came back to dominate and win the event. Meanwhile, Yarborough clinched his second straight NASCAR premier series championship with a fourth-place finish. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)



Five of the top-six finishers in the 1977 American 500 look for running room early in the race. Cale Yarborough (No. 11) finished fourth, Dick Brooks (No. 90) was fifth, Donnie Allison (No. 1) won, Bobby Allison (No. 12) placed sixth, and Richard Petty (No. 43) ended up second. Only Darrell Waltrip, who finished third, is missing. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)

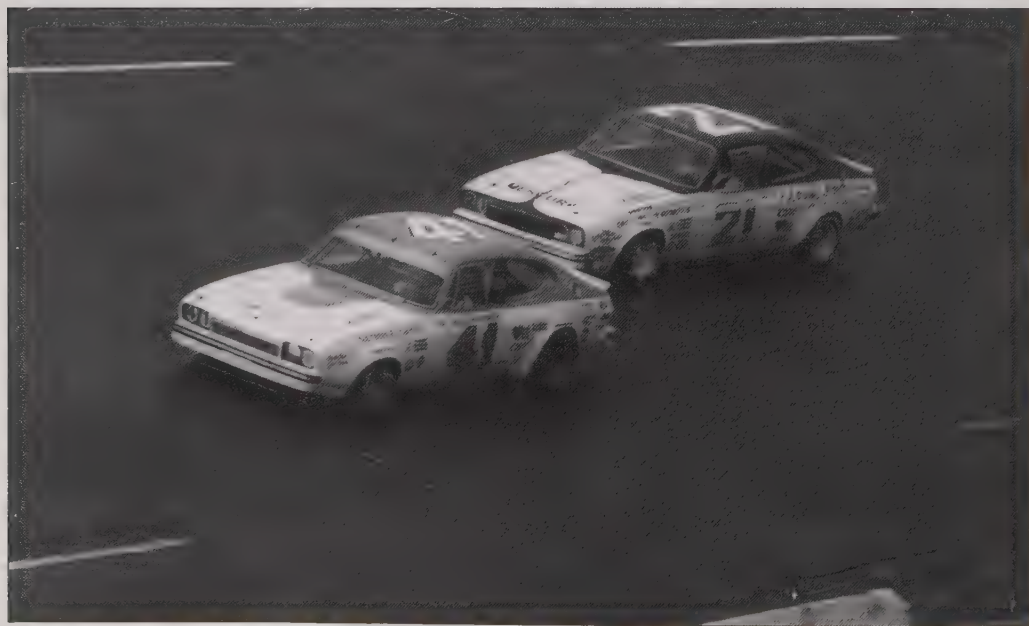


Car owner Hoss Ellington (second row, third from right) and his team join winner Donnie Allison (second row, third from left) in Victory Lane following the 1977 American 500. Allison and Ellington enjoyed some of their greatest successes together. Allison won his final four races in Ellington's cars, while Ellington won only one other event, with David Pearson in 1980. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)





Brothers Bobby and Donnie Allison scuffled with Cale Yarborough following the 1979 Daytona 500. The season's next event was held on March 4 at Rockingham. While Donnie Allison and Yarborough were involved in yet another accident, Bobby Allison (second from right) dodged the mishap and won the race. Frank Wilson, who would later become track president, is third from left. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)



Nelson Gusler (No. 41) and Larry Pearson (No. 21) race each other for position during this late 1970s Baby Grand event at The Rock. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)

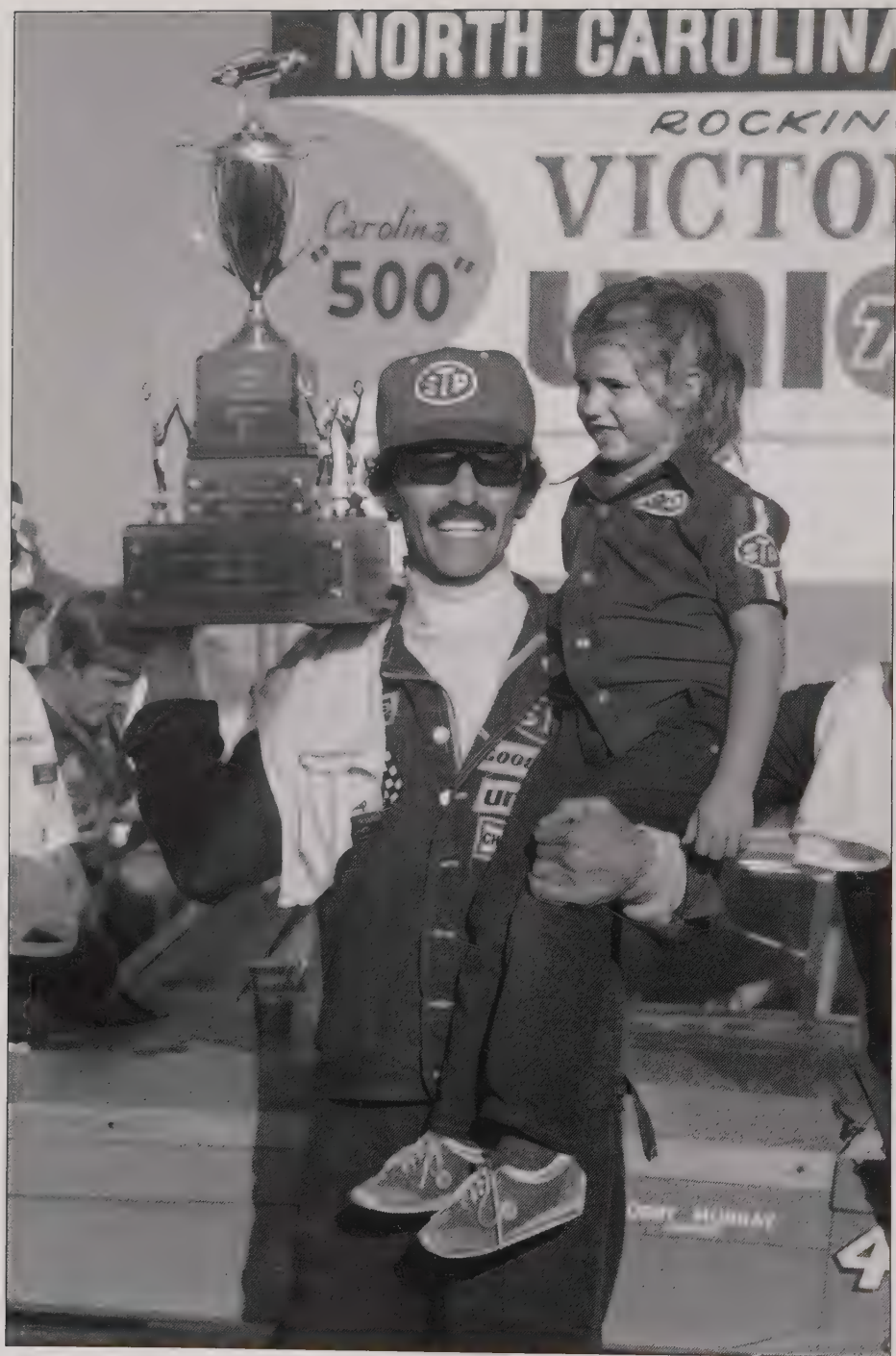


Celebrities have always been an important promotional tool for NASCAR tracks, and VIPs certainly never got any bigger than Andre the Giant. The professional wrestler and actor was seven-feet, four-inches tall and weighed in at 500 pounds and proved more than equal to the task of lifting these Union 76 Racestoppers during an appearance prior to the October 21, 1979, American 500. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)



Andre the Giant had plenty of photo opportunities before the 1979 American 500, as he also posed with track president L.G. DeWitt's race team. Crew members include, from left to right, an unidentified team member, Donnie Hudson (standing behind the car), Thomas Craven, Tex Powell (wearing headset), Bobby Hudson, L.G. DeWitt, Andre the Giant, Jeff Troxler, Wayne Price, Richard Bostick, and Edward DeWitt. (Courtesy of Nancy DeWitt Daugherty.)



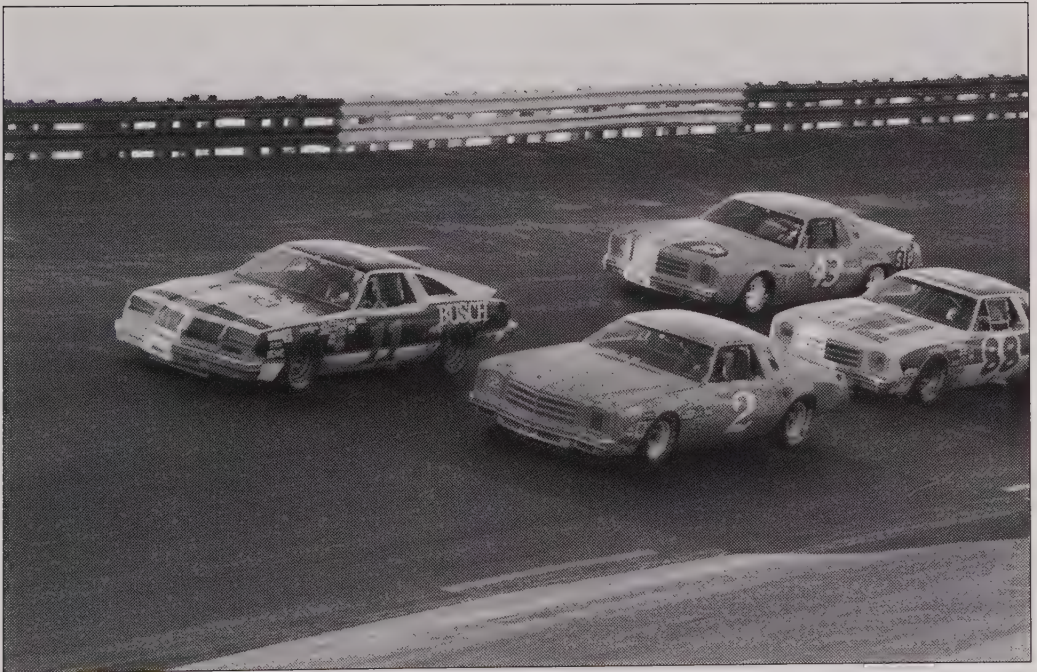


It was better late than never for Richard Petty after his win in the October 21, 1979, American 500 put him atop the points standings for the first time that year. After the race, he hoists the trophy and daughter Rebecca in Victory Lane. Two races later, Petty was crowned champion for the seventh and final time in his storied career. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)



# Three

## THE GREAT EIGHTIES



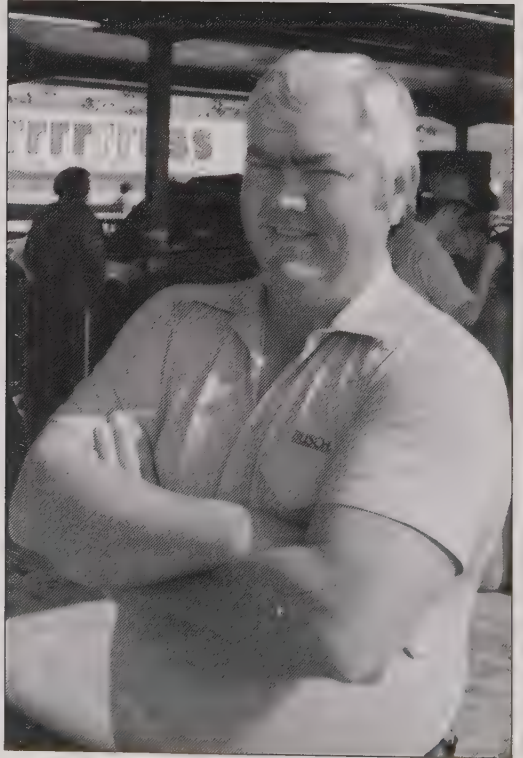
An incredible 20 NASCAR premier series championships are represented in this shot from the March 9, 1980, Carolina 500. Sophomore driver Dale Earnhardt (No. 2) collected his first title in 1980, and the seven he eventually won duplicated the total of Richard Petty (No. 43). Cale Yarborough (No. 11) and Darrell Waltrip (No. 88) posted three NASCAR crowns each. The legends swept the top-four spots in the race. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)





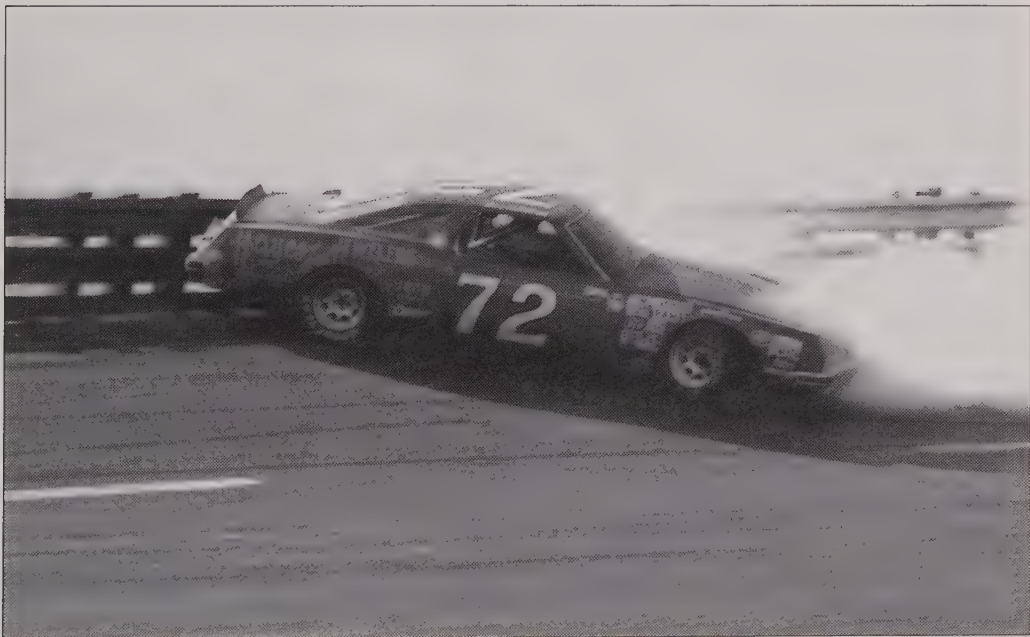
Kyle Petty made his first Rockingham NASCAR premier series start in the 1980 Carolina 500, and while he would come to dominate competition at the track a decade later, his debut there was not very spectacular. He was credited with a 31st-place finish after completing just 125 laps due to an engine failure in his Petty Enterprises Chevrolet. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)

Junior Johnson holds court in the garage during preparations for the March 9, 1980, Carolina 500, a race won by Cale Yarborough in a Johnson-owned Oldsmobile. As an owner, Johnson posted 13 victories, 34 top-five finishes, and 43 top 10s in 74 starts at Rockingham. Johnson's winning drivers at the track included Yarborough, LeeRoy Yarbrough, Darrell Waltrip, Bill Elliott, and Neil Bonnett. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)





Rockingham has always been a tough track to negotiate, and the 1980 Carolina 500 was no different. The race was slowed 12 different times for a total of 93 laps. Bill Elswick lost control of his No. 75 RahMoc Enterprises Chevrolet, but he somehow managed to finish out the race in 23rd place. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)

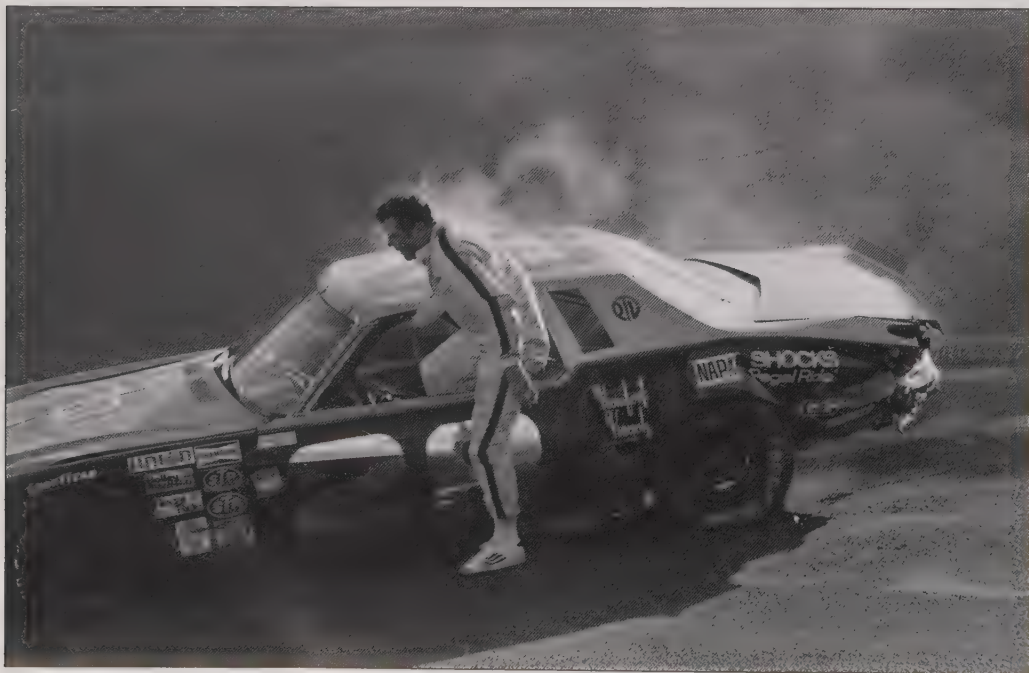


Joe Millikan (No. 72) qualified second for the 1980 Carolina 500, but his day turned sour after an engine failure caused this spin into the outside guardrail. Although Millikan was behind the wheel of the L.G. DeWitt-owned entry made famous by Benny Parsons, he was credited with a disappointing 28th-place finish. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)





Buddy Baker accomplished a goal that had eluded him since the beginning of his career when he won the 1980 Daytona 500. After skipping a short-track race in Richmond, Virginia, the following week, Baker returned to competition in Rockingham's Carolina 500. Afterward, however, Baker might very well have wished that he and his Ranier Racing team had stayed home following a late-race accident (above). Although his No. 28 Oldsmobile was damaged too severely to continue, an uninjured Baker was able to climb out of the car without assistance (below). After qualifying third for the race, Baker finished 15th. (Both, photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy BRH Racing Archives.)

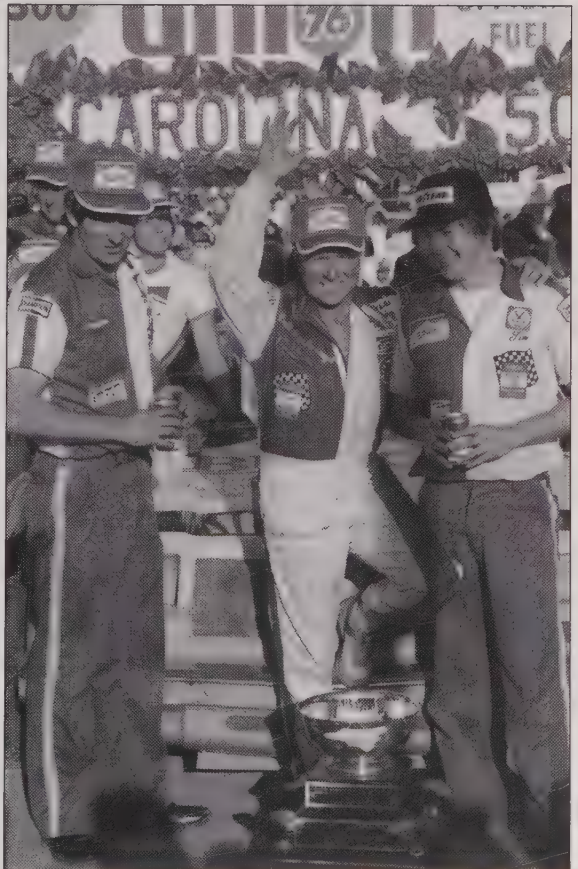






In just one of the countless duels they had over the years, Richard Petty (No. 43) goes after Cale Yarborough (No. 11) during the 1980 Carolina 500. A caution took out several front-runners, leaving Yarborough and Petty the only two drivers remaining on the lead lap. For all his effort, though, Petty fell three seconds short of Yarborough at the finish. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)

Cale Yarborough (center) endured a couple of problems en route to Victory Lane in the 1980 Carolina 500. The race was postponed a week due to a winter storm, and then he crashed his primary car during practice. Undeterred, Yarborough's Junior Johnson-owned team won with its backup machine. Travis Carter (left) and Tim Brewer (right) joined Yarborough in Victory Lane. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)



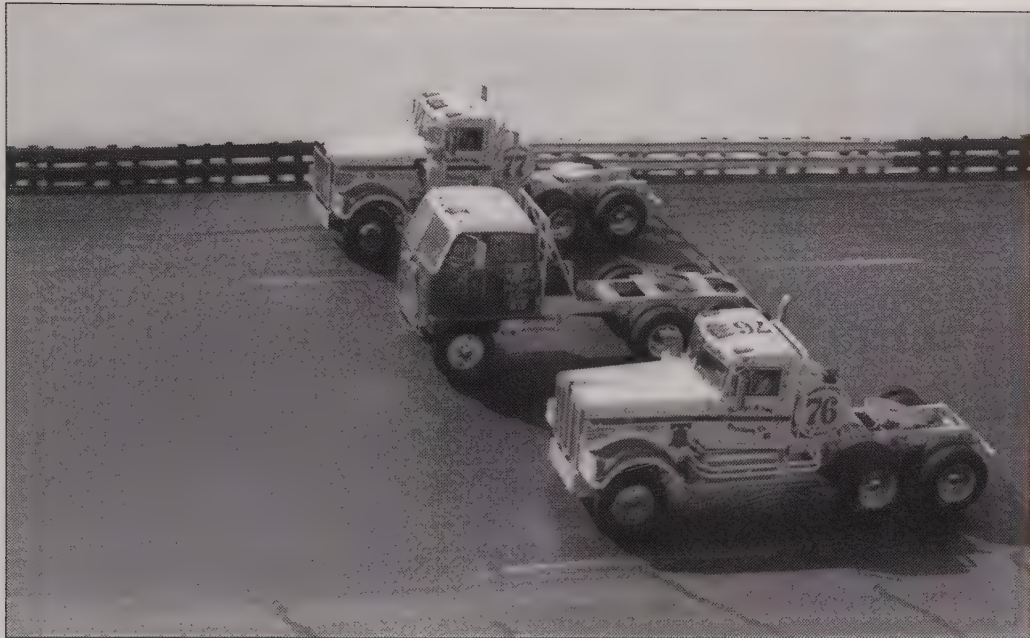
Full Color  
Race Poster Inside

# AMERICAN TRUCK RACER



Of all the races ever held at Rockingham, almost certainly the most unusual were the Great American Truck Racing (GATR) events held there in the early 1980s. Popularized in the movie *Smokey and the Bandit II*, the machines were commonly referred to as “bobtails.” Two GATR events were held at Rockingham in 1980, with one race taking place each year from 1981 to 1984. (Courtesy Nancy DeWitt Daugherty.)





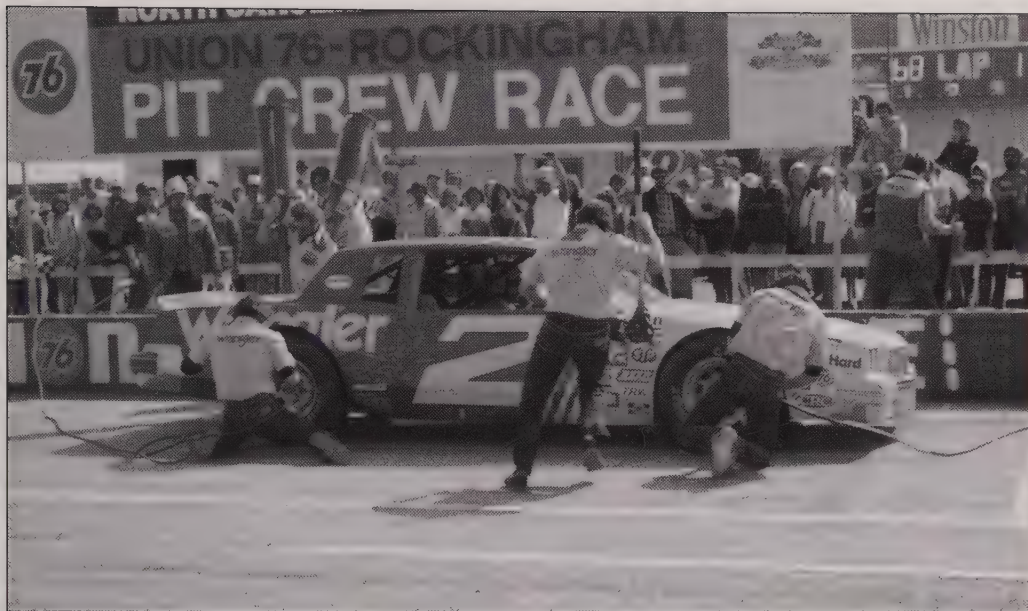
Charlie Baker sat on the pole for the August 30, 1980, Great American Truck Racing event held at Rockingham, while Doyle Montgomery captured the victory. During the event, Ron Pennick (No. 11) found himself sandwiched between Steve Slaybaugh (No. 77) and James Bickel (No. 76, above). Also, Lowell Ford (No. 33) tried to fend off the advances of Slaybaugh, Bickel, and E.C. Cravens (behind Slaybaugh and Bickel, below). Other Rockingham GATR winners over the years included Baker, Mike Adams, Randy Johnson, and Jeff Salmon. The huge machines and high speeds proved to be very tough on Rockingham's banked racing surface. (Both, photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy BRH Racing Archives.)



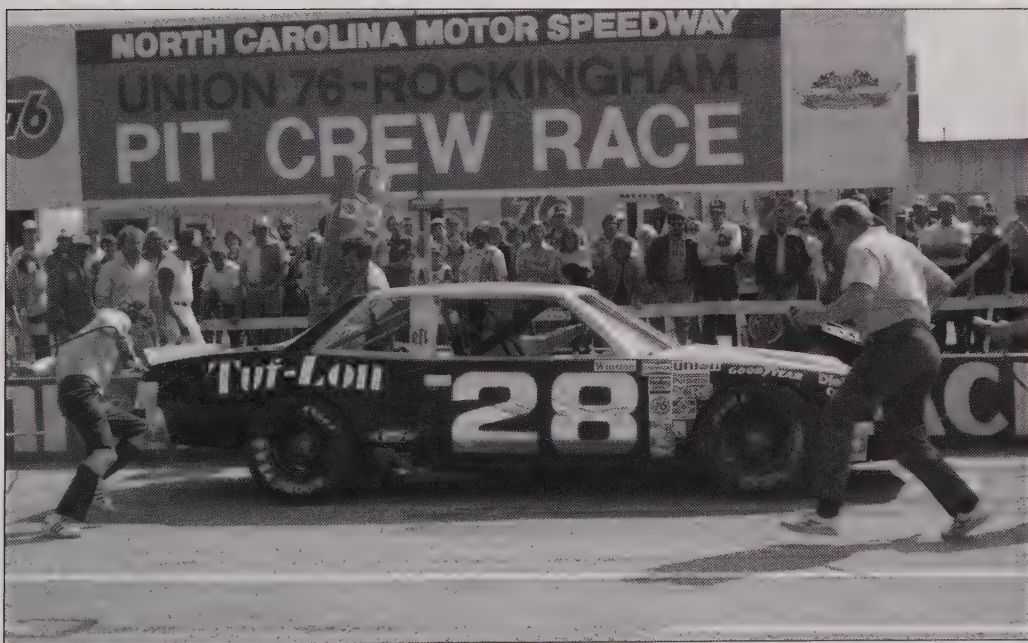




Dick Brooks (No. 41) always seemed to run well at Rockingham—he collected seven top-five and 11 top-10 finishes in 28 starts—but he was not so fortunate during the October 19, 1980, American 500. He completed just 50 of the race's 492 circuits after an early accident dropped him to a 31st-place finish in the 36-car field. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)



The 1981 edition of the Union 76/Rockingham Pit Crew Championship was held on February 28, the day before the Carolina 500. Dale Earnhardt's No. 2 Osterlund Racing crew hustled through its stop in the competition, but it was not quite good enough to top Neil Bonnett's Wood Brothers Racing team, which changed right-side tires and added 14 gallons of fuel in 17.622 seconds. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)

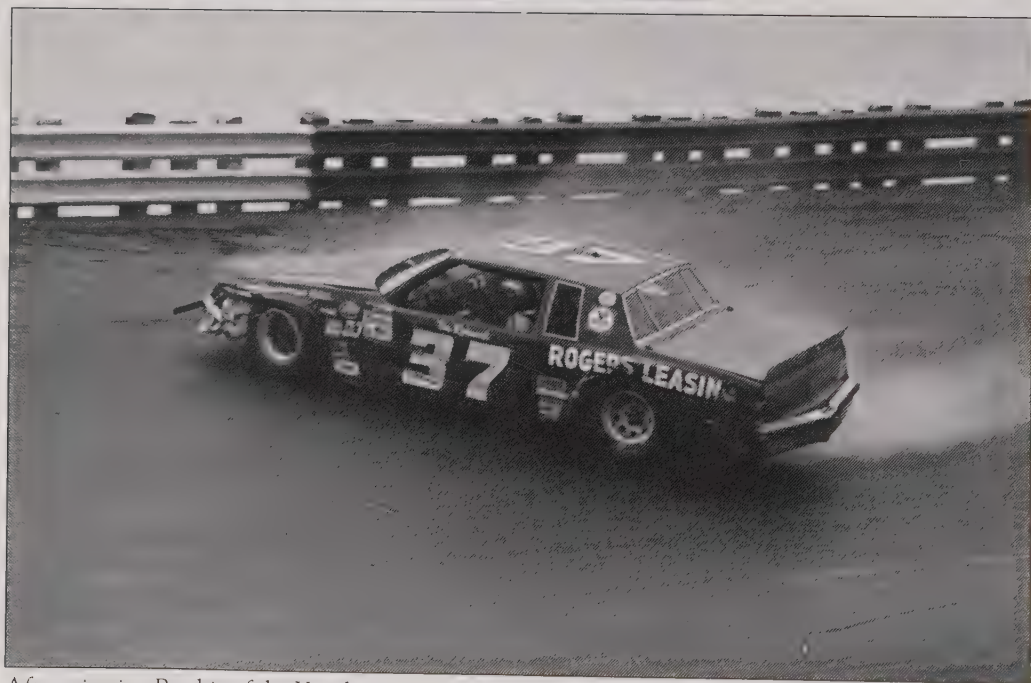


Two weeks after the disappointment of losing the 1981 Daytona 500 on pit strategy, Bobby Allison's No. 28 Ranier Racing team goes to work during the 1981 Union 76/Rockingham Pit Crew Championship. The Petty Enterprises crew of seven-time champion Richard Petty was the fastest in the competition, but the team was penalized three seconds for leaving three liters of fuel in its gas can. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)





After replacing Cale Yarborough at Junior Johnson & Associates during the offseason, Darrell Waltrip won two of his first three races in 1981. The second of those victories came in the Carolina 500 by going 108 laps on a single tank of fuel. Afterward, Waltrip shared the moment with Johnson's wife at the time, Flossie. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)

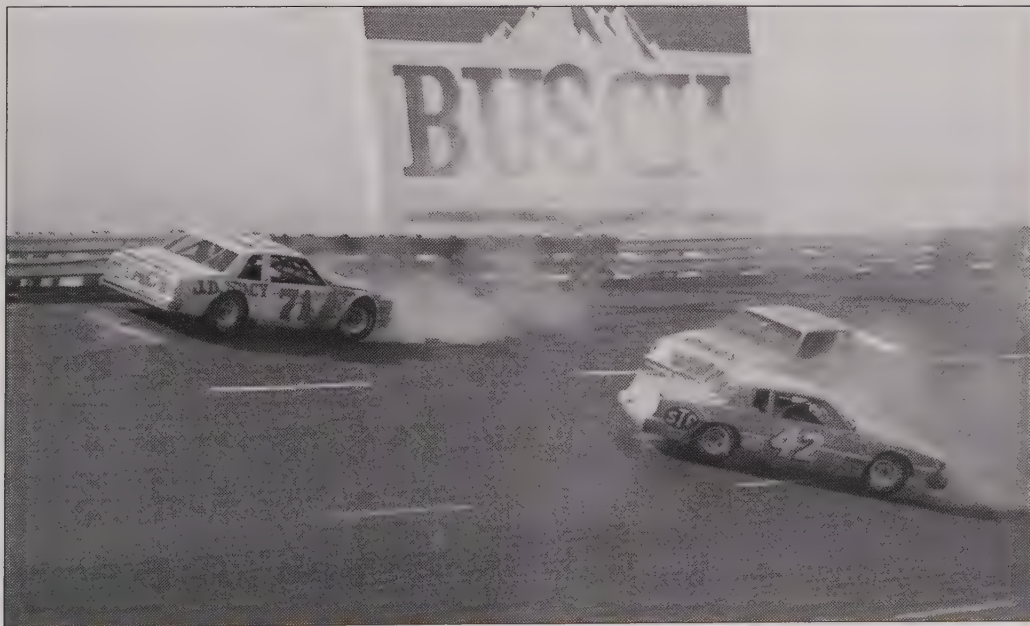


After winning Rookie of the Year honors in the 1980 Indianapolis 500, Tim Richmond (No. 37) made the jump to NASCAR. Although the going was rough at times, as evidenced by this spin during the November 1, 1981, American 500, he became one of the sport's brightest and most controversial stars in the mid-1980s. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)





Darrell Waltrip's first year with Junior Johnson was the stuff of legend. Not only did Waltrip sweep both Rockingham races, his victory in the November 1 American 500 was his fourth in a row as the campaign wound down. Waltrip won 12 times in 31 starts, good enough to edge rival Bobby Allison for the championship. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)



After two rainouts, the 1982 edition of the Warner W. Hodgdon Carolina 500 finally got under way on March 28. As always, the event was a wild one. Dave Marcis (No. 71) and Kyle Petty (No. 42) spun to bring out one of the day's nine cautions, a mishap that Ron Bouchard (No. 47) tried desperately to avoid. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)

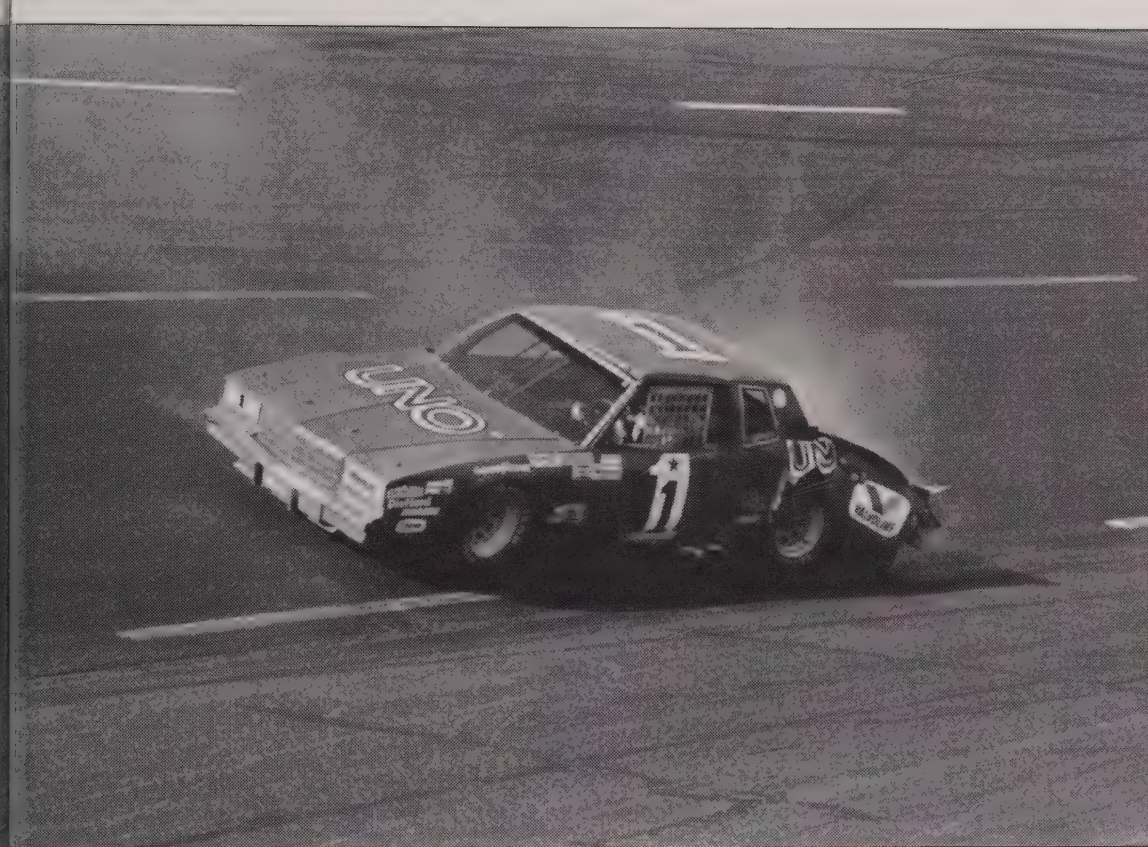


Darrell Waltrip (No. 11) was a factor during the 1982 Warner W. Hodgdon Carolina 500 until he was caught up in a turn-one accident on lap 444. The mishap was triggered by a broken water hose on Gary Balough's car, and when the smoke had cleared, Terry Labonte (No. 44), Ron Bouchard (No. 47), Benny Parsons, and Buddy Baker were also involved. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)



Frank Wilson (right) presents Cale Yarborough with the winner's trophy following the 1982 Warner W. Hodgdon Carolina 500. Wilson, who served at the time as executive vice president of the track, was an undertaker in nearby Hamlet, North Carolina. Early in the track's existence, he provided ambulances for use at the facility. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)





Benny Parsons's race in the October 31, 1982, Warner W. Hodgdon American 500 was almost over before it began when he backed into the turn-one wall on lap 68. In 30 career starts at Rockingham, Parsons (No. 1) tallied one pole position, five top-five finishes, and 11 top-10s. His best finish there was second in the 1979 American 500. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)

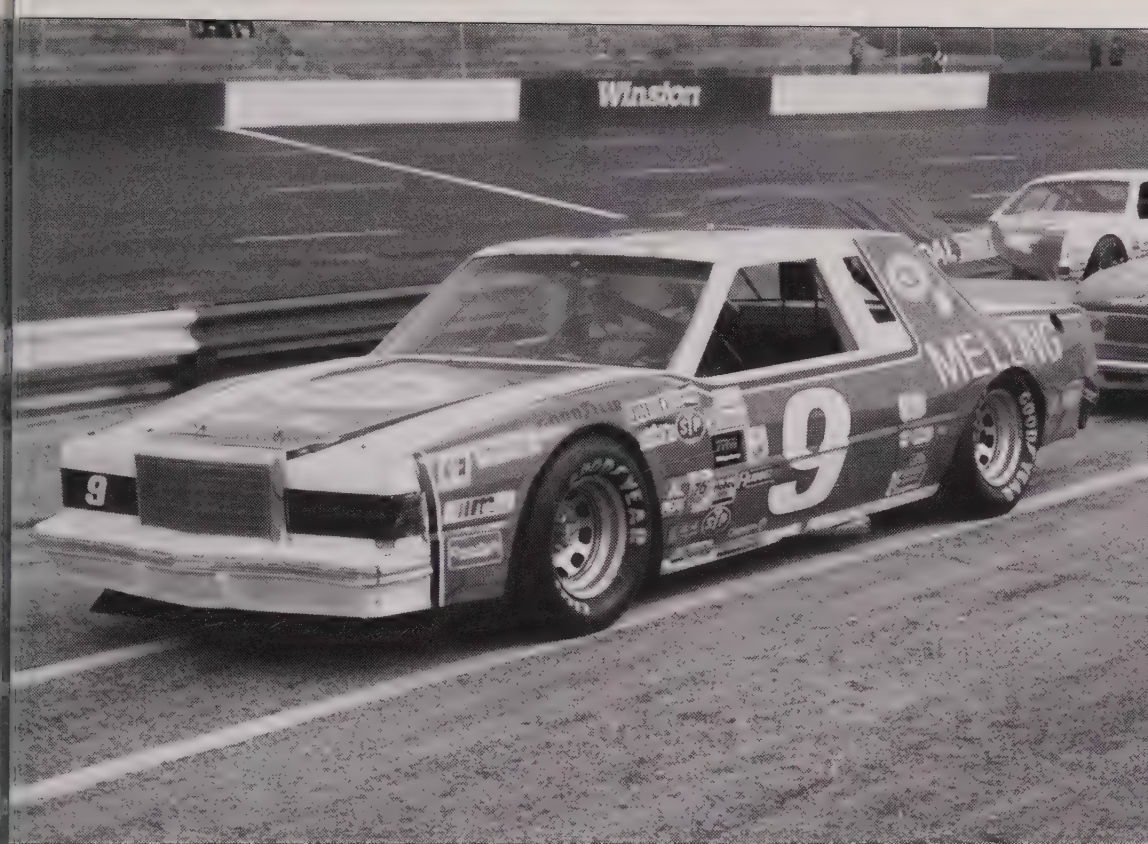




Richard Petty celebrates in Victory Lane with daughters Lisa (left) and Rebecca (center) and wife Lynda (right) after winning the 1983 Warner W. Hodgdon Carolina 500. Holding Bill Elliott off by half a car length on the last lap, the victory was the 196th of Petty's career and broke a dry spell that matched his car number: 43 races. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)



From left to right, driver Terry Labonte, team manager Wayne King, and owner Billy Hagan talk before the March 13, 1983, Warner W. Hodgdon Carolina 500. The race did not go well, as Labonte fell out early with engine problems. Labonte fared much better in the season's second visit to The Rock—he won after a stirring late-race duel with Tim Richmond. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)



Bill Elliott's No. 9 Ford sits quietly just before the 1983 Warner W. Hodgdon American 500 got under way. Although Elliott finished just short of beating Richard Petty in the season's first race at Rockingham, he managed only a 21st-place finish in the Warner W. Hodgdon American 500. He posted his first victory just two races later in the 1983 season finale in Riverside, California. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)



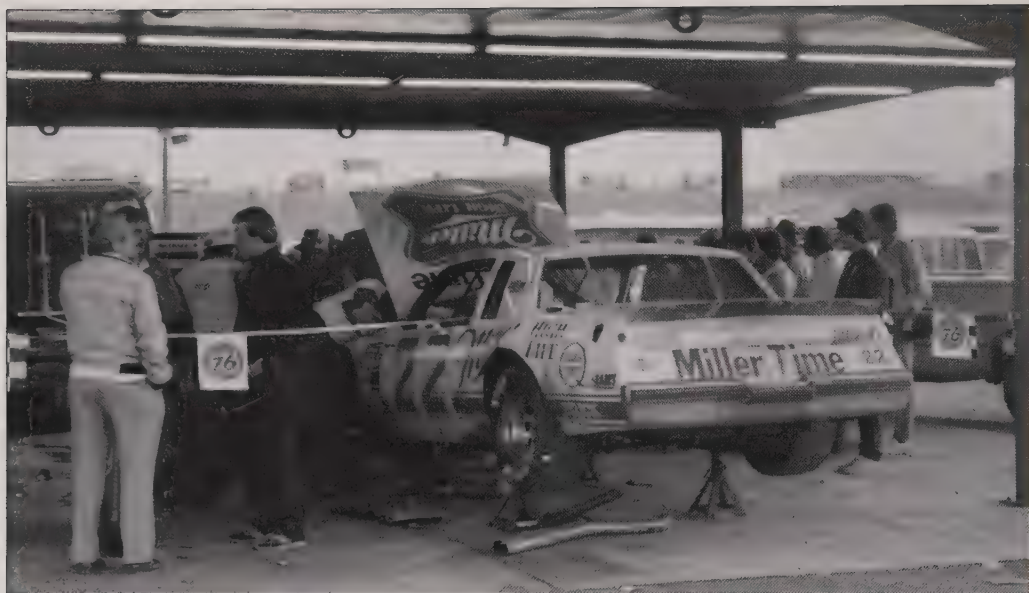


NASCAR has always been a family affair, and Rockingham's Victory Lane was no different following Terry Labonte's win in the 1983 Warner W. Hodgdon American 500. Labonte (center) is joined by younger brother Bobby (left), mother Martha (second from left) and wife Kim (right), who is holding their son Justin. The win was the second of Labonte's career and the first since the 1980 Southern 500. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)

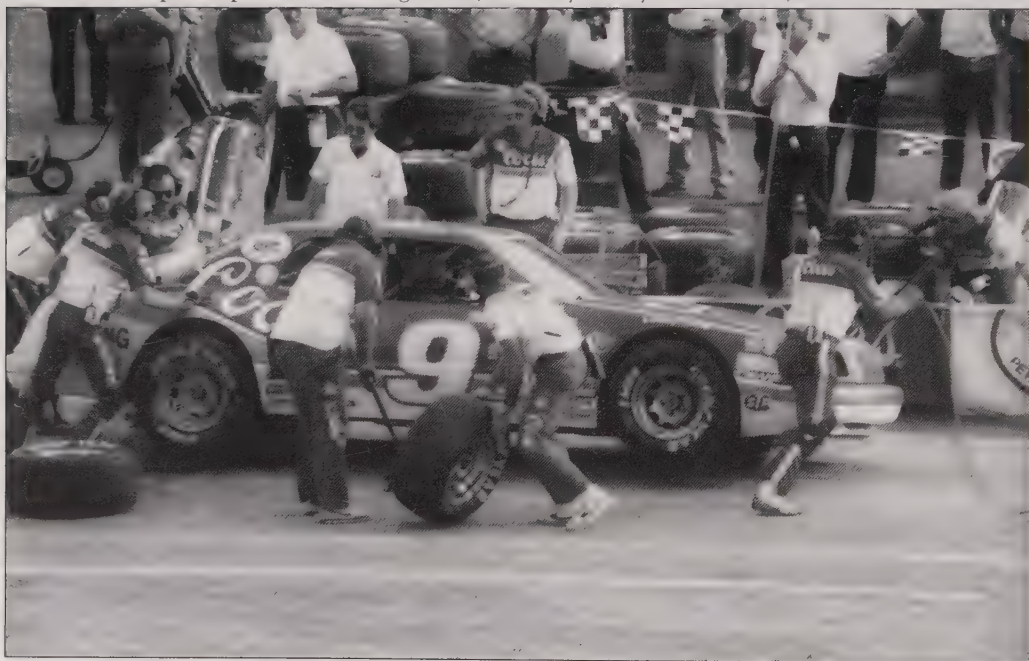


That is Dale Earnhardt's No. 3 Richard Childress Racing Chevrolet against the outside retaining wall during the 1984 Warner W. Hodgdon Carolina 500, but it is not Earnhardt behind the wheel. Earnhardt had to be relieved early in the race due to queasiness, leaving the team to put longtime NASCAR journeyman Connie Saylor behind the wheel. Also involved in the mishap was Lennie Pond (No. 4). (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)

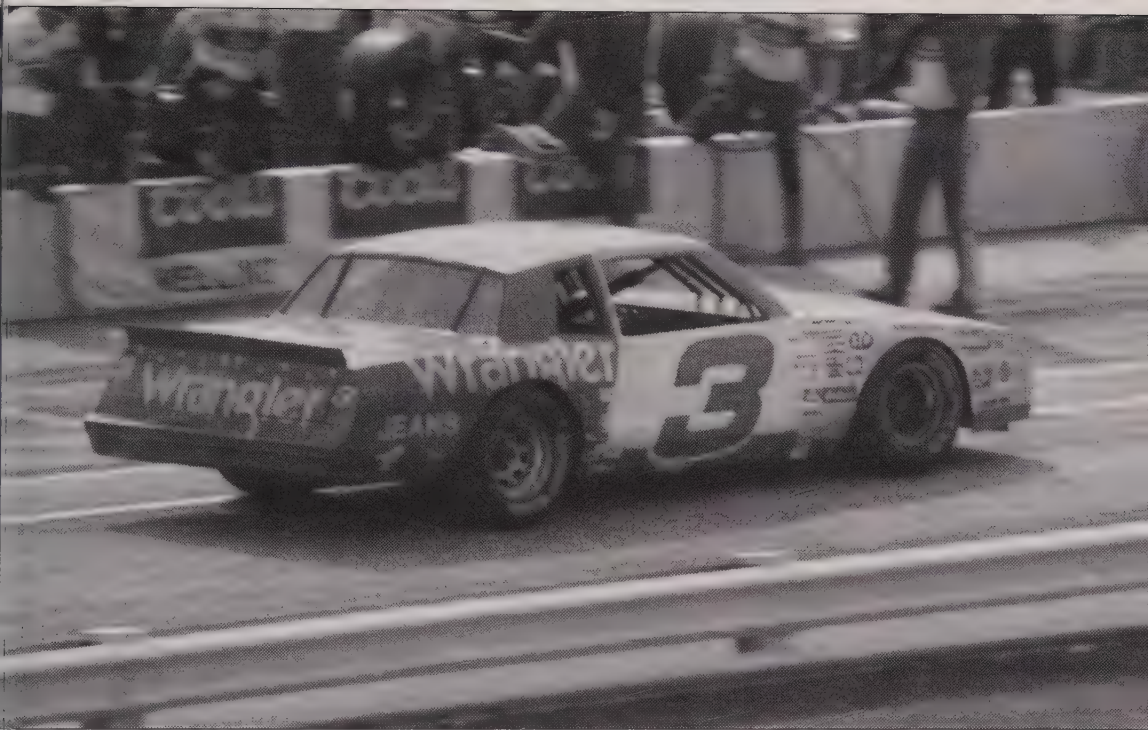




Bobby Allison's No. 22 DiGard Racing team waits out the postrace inspection process following their victory in the 1984 Warner W. Hodgdon Carolina 500. After winning the championship the year before, Allison had struggled in the first two races of the new season—finishing 34th at Daytona and 30th in Richmond, Virginia, both due to engine woes. Nothing seemed wrong with Allison's power plant at Rockingham. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

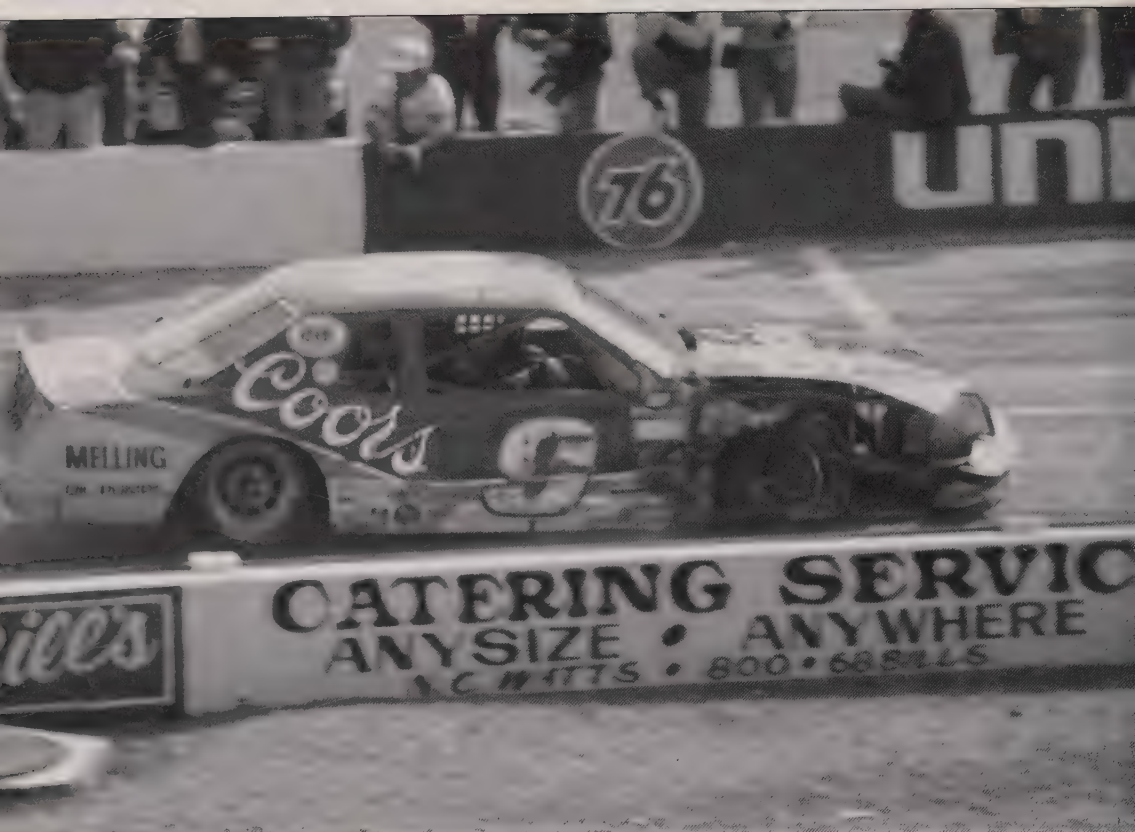


Bill Elliott (No. 9) wowed the crowd during the October 21, 1984, Warner W. Hodgdon American 500 when he passed Harry Gant for the win coming off turn four on the last lap. Officially, Elliott's victory was listed as one foot. Author Greg Fielden called it "the most exciting finish in the 20 year history" of the track in *Forty Years of Stock Car Racing: The Modern Era 1972–1989*. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

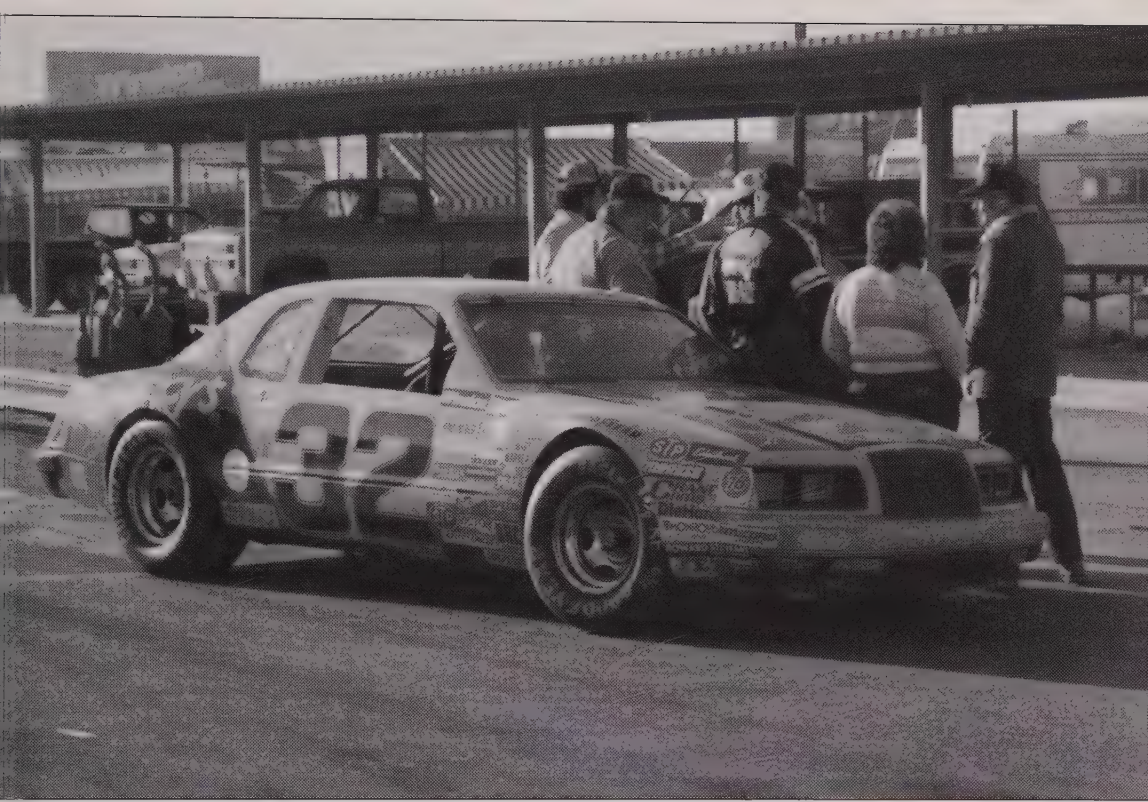


A year after Dale Earnhardt (No. 3) returned to Richard Childress Racing, multiple engine failures prompted the team owner to offer Earnhardt the freedom to look elsewhere, which he promptly declined. Together, they achieved some of the greatest heights the sport has ever known. Earnhardt finished a decent, if unspectacular, ninth in the 1985 Carolina 500. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



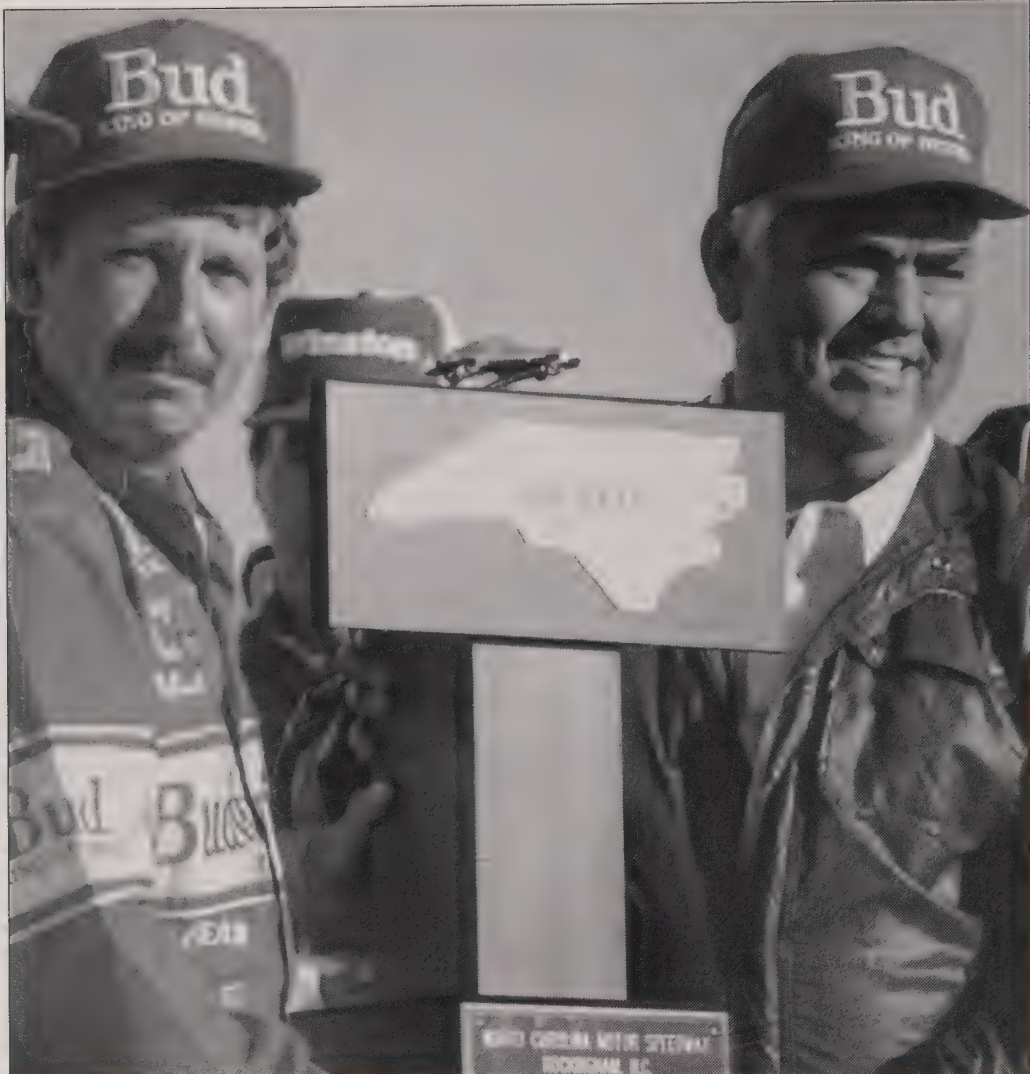


Although Bill Elliott (No. 9) suffered a broken leg when his Ford hit the wall during the 1985 Carolina 500, he actually drove the car back to the garage; the injury did little to impact his season. He won at Atlanta, the next race on the schedule, two weeks later. Then, after victories in the Daytona 500, Winston 500 at Talladega, and Darlington's Southern 500, he collected a \$1-million bonus from series sponsor R.J. Reynolds. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

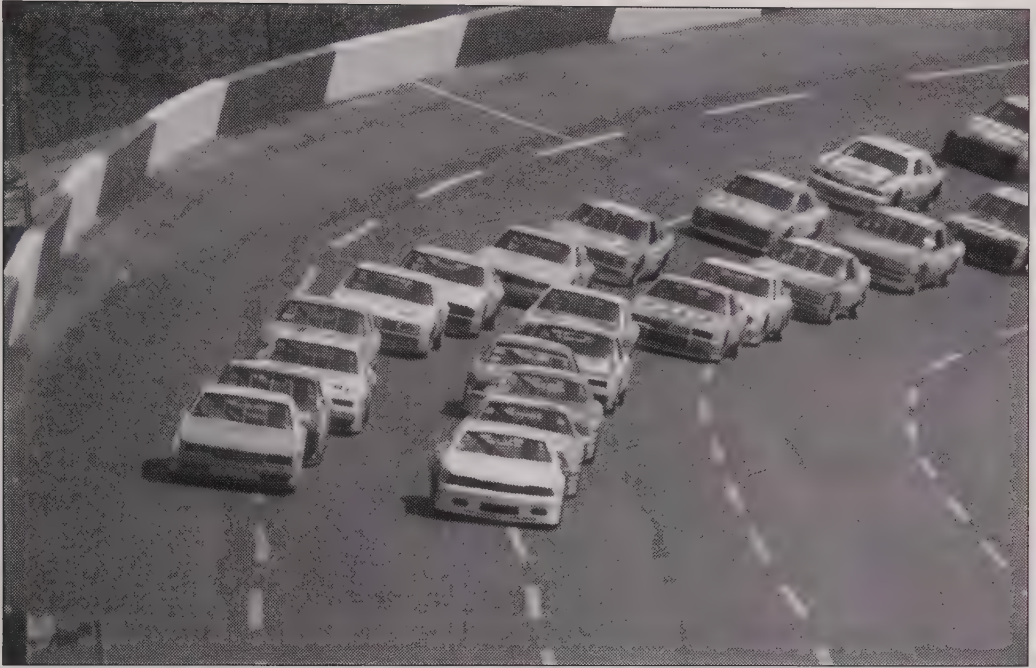


Alan Kulwicki's (No. 32) 1986 Rookie of the Year campaign started at Rockingham. After failing to qualify for either of the season's first two races, the Wisconsin transplant made his 1986 debut during the March 2 Goodwrench 500 at Rockingham. He started 27th and finished 15th, nine laps down. From such humble beginnings sprouted the career of a future NASCAR champion. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

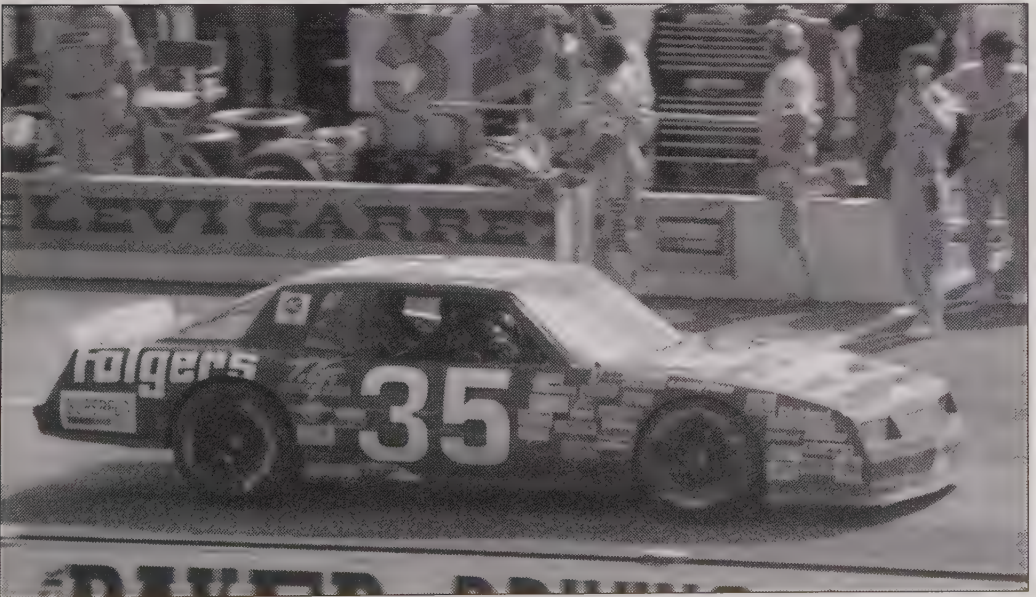




A victory by Neil Bonnett (left) in the October 19, 1986, Nationwide 500 was his first in more than 17 months for team owner Junior Johnson (right). Bonnett, whose plans to leave the team at the end of the year had already been announced, thanked Johnson for sticking with him as long as he had. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)



Rookie Davey Allison, son of NASCAR legend Bobby Allison, won the first pole position of his NASCAR Sprint Cup career during qualifying for the March 1, 1987, Goodwrench 500. Although he led the first 29 laps, he did not fare quite so well the rest of the afternoon and finished ninth, two laps off the pace of race winner Dale Earnhardt. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)



Smoke trailing from his No. 35 Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet, Benny Parsons limped down pit road after suffering an engine failure early in the 1987 Goodwrench 500. Called "B.P." by friends, family, and fans alike, Parsons had qualified fourth for the event. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



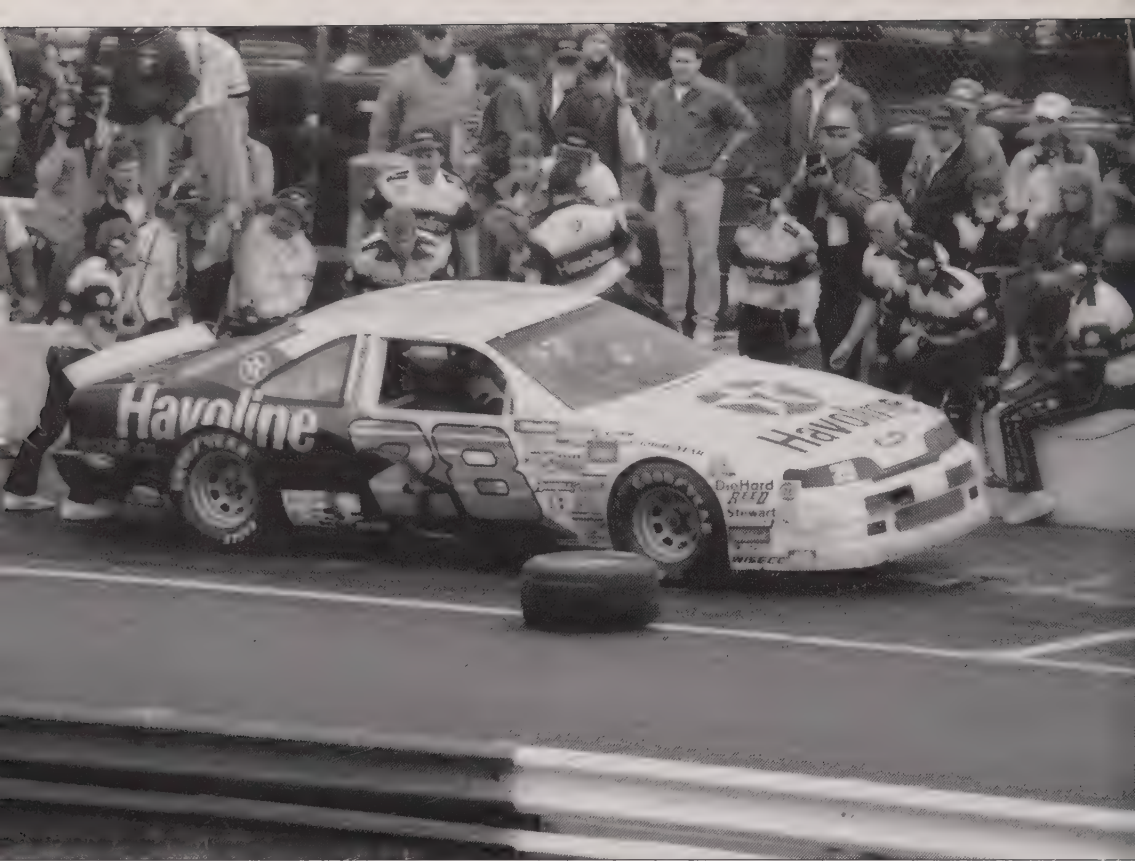


Although he had spun out earlier in the 1987 AC Delco 500, Dale Earnhardt recovered nicely. He finished second, which was more than enough for him to clinch his third NASCAR championship. Team owner Richard Childress (left), wife Teresa, and 13-year-old son Dale Earnhardt Jr. join "The Intimidator" in Victory Lane following the event. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)



Rusty Wallace had a wild afternoon during the October 23, 1988, AC Delco 500. Two pit stops for flat tires and another to replace missing lug nuts dropped the Missouri native nearly three laps down, but he came roaring back to beat Ricky Rudd to the finish line by more than 13 seconds. It was Wallace's third victory in as many races. (Photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)





Davey Allison (No. 28) had a decent day during the 1989 Goodwrench 500, leading several laps midway through the event before settling for a sixth-place finish. Allison was the last car on the lead lap behind race winner Rusty Wallace. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

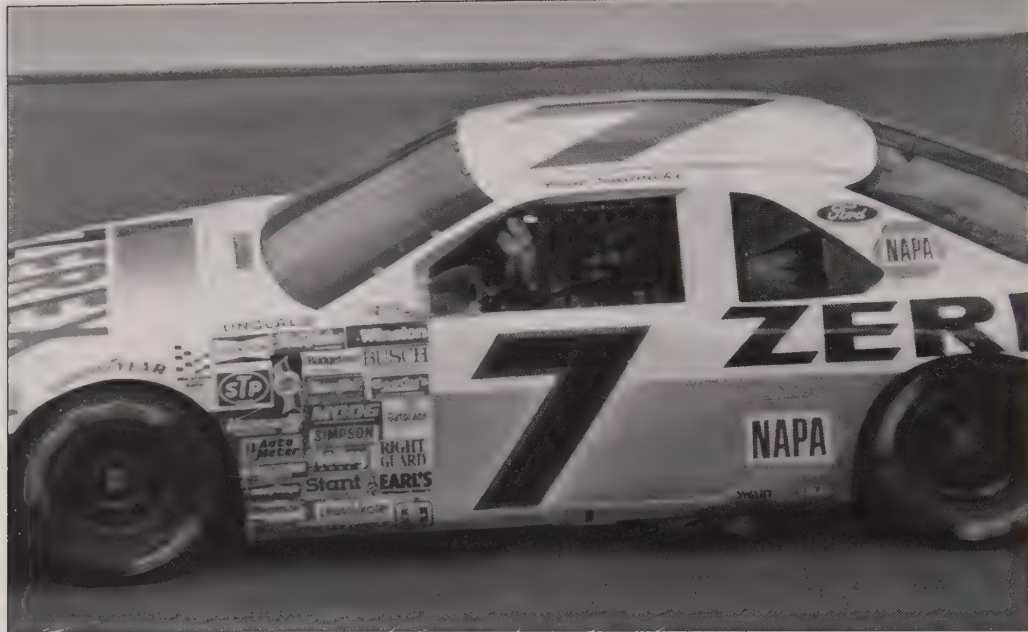
# Four

## TRANSITION



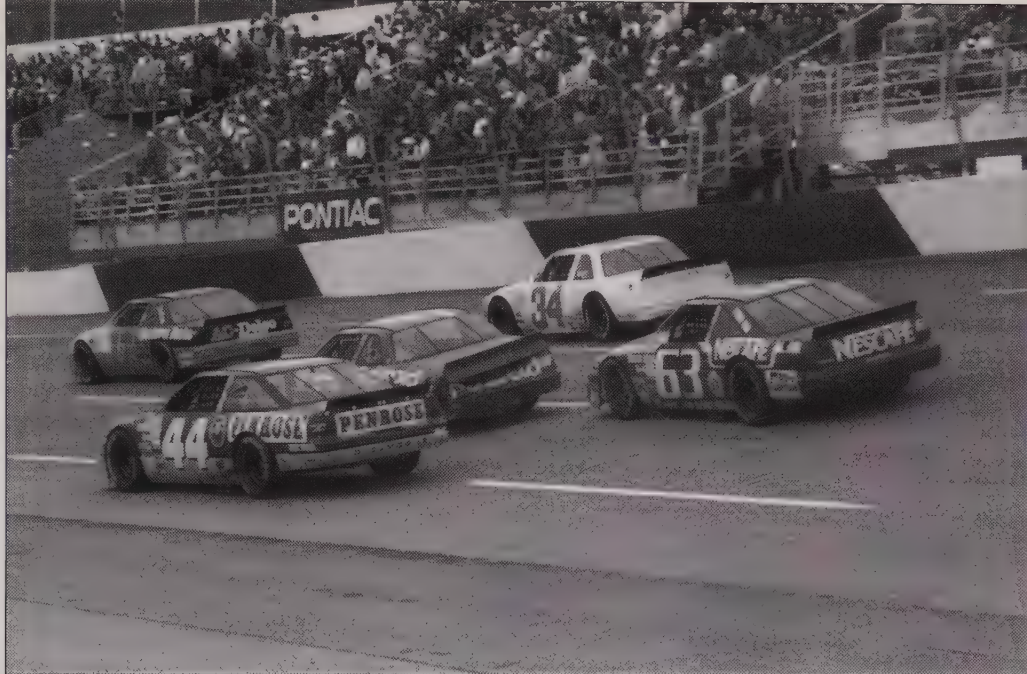
Kyle Petty won the March 4, 1990 GM Goodwrench 500 from the pole. (Photograph by Bill Nivens, courtesy of BRH Racing Archives.)



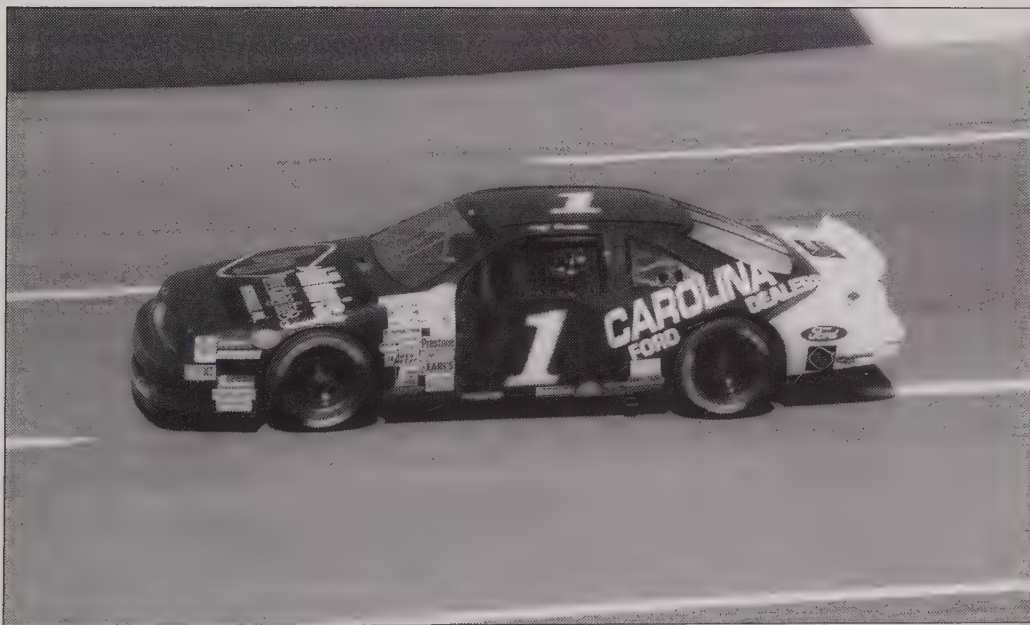


Although owner and driver Alan Kulwicki (No. 7) was faced with losing his primary sponsorship at the end of the 1990 campaign, that did not stop the Wisconsin native from finishing strong. Kyle Petty again had the Rockingham field in check for most of the first half of the October 21 AC Delco 500, but his engine woes allowed Kulwicki to take control in the late stages. Kulwicki won the event, which ended under caution when Darrell Waltrip lost control of his Chevrolet. It was the second victory of Kulwicki's career and the first since November 1988 at Phoenix. Petty limped to a 20th-place finish, seven laps down. (Both, photograph by Bill Niven; courtesy BRH Racing Archives.)





Darrell Waltrip (No. 17) leads Bobby Labonte (No. 44), Tommy Ellis (No. 56), Todd Bodine (No. 34), and Chuck Bown (No. 63) off turn four during the March 2, 1991, NASCAR Busch (now Nationwide) Series Goodwrench 200. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

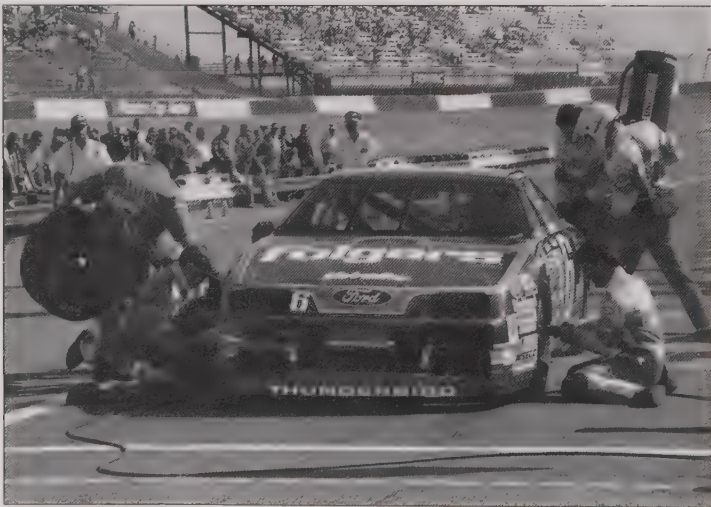


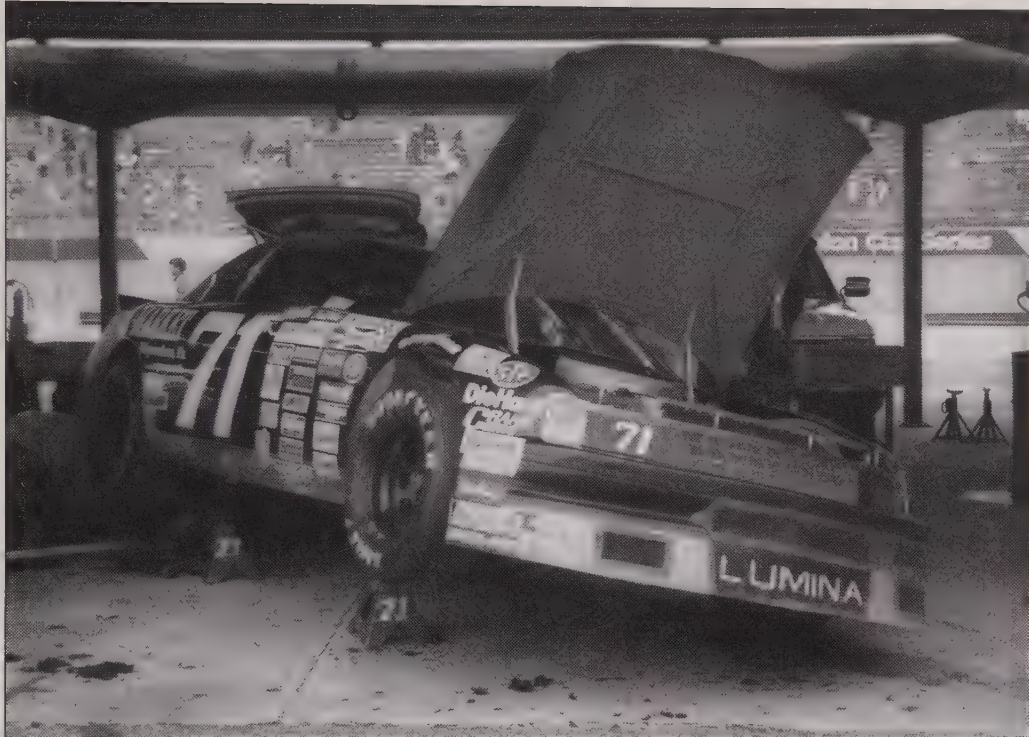
Jeff Gordon (No. 14) might have won Rookie of the Year honors in the NASCAR Busch (now Nationwide) Series in 1991, but Rockingham was not kind to the 20-year-old driver that season. After finishing 24th in March, Gordon fared even worse during the October 19 AC Delco 200. He started 41st and finished 37th due to a wreck just 54 laps into the event. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



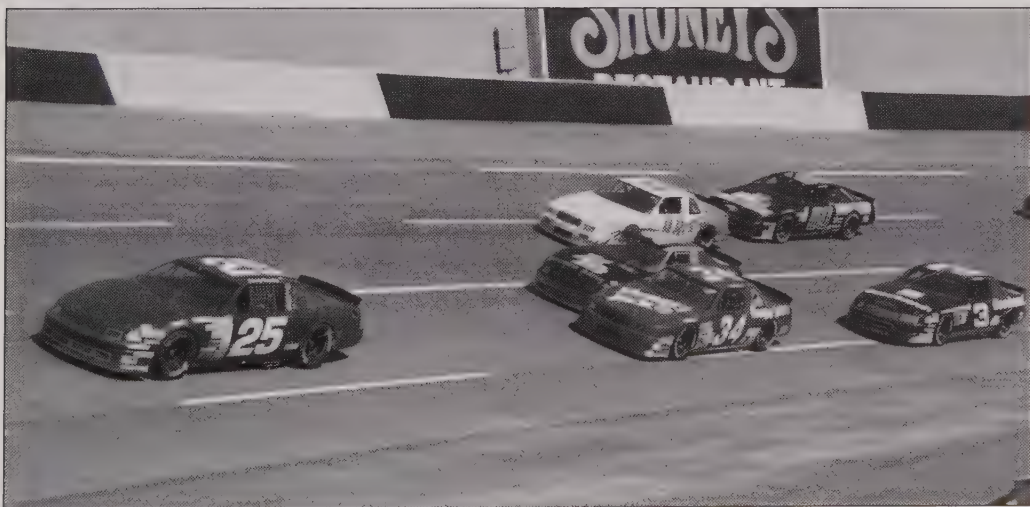


Team owner Jack Roush (above, right) chats with his father, Charlie Roush, prior to the start of the October 20, 1991, AC Delco 500. After entering the sport as a full-time owner with driver Mark Martin in 1988, the younger Roush steadily built his team into what it is today—one of the sport's top powerhouse operations. As successful as Martin and Roush were becoming, however, the No. 6 team did not fare so well during Rockingham's annual pit crew competition. Four loose lug nuts resulted in a 12-second penalty, which dropped the team to 22nd amongst the 28 teams that participated. Robin Pemberton, who changes a front tire on the left side of the photograph below, would later go on to become the vice president of competition and racing development for NASCAR. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



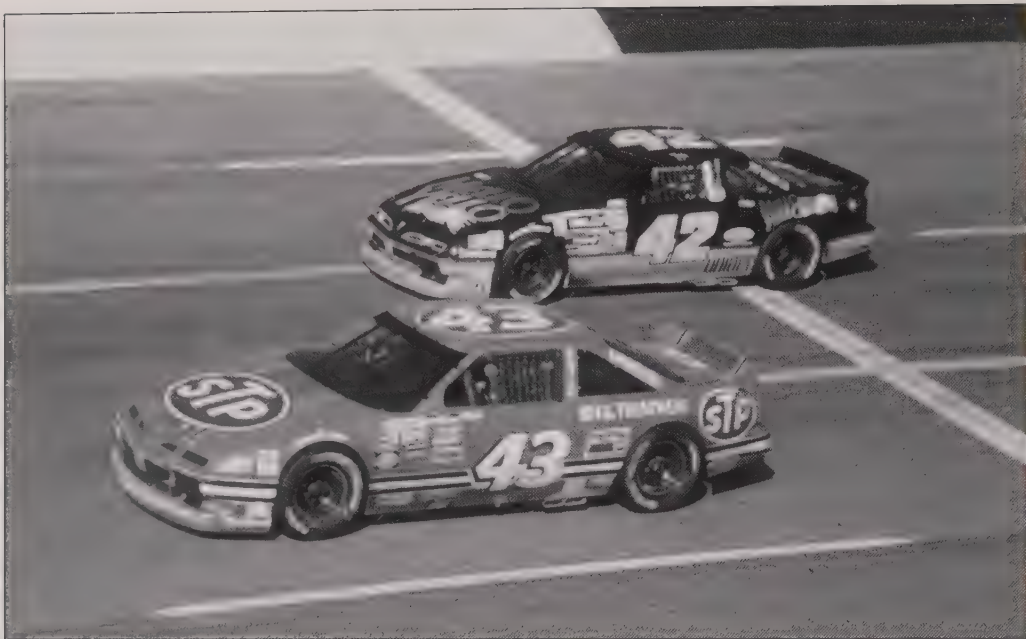


Dave Marcis had friends in high places during the 1991 AC Delco 500. The Wisconsin native often helped test various cars and components for driver Dale Earnhardt and fellow team owner Richard Childress, once a struggling independent like Marcis himself. When Marcis was caught without a car ready for the race, Childress loaned him the one Earnhardt drove in that season's all-star event. Marcis qualified a surprising seventh. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

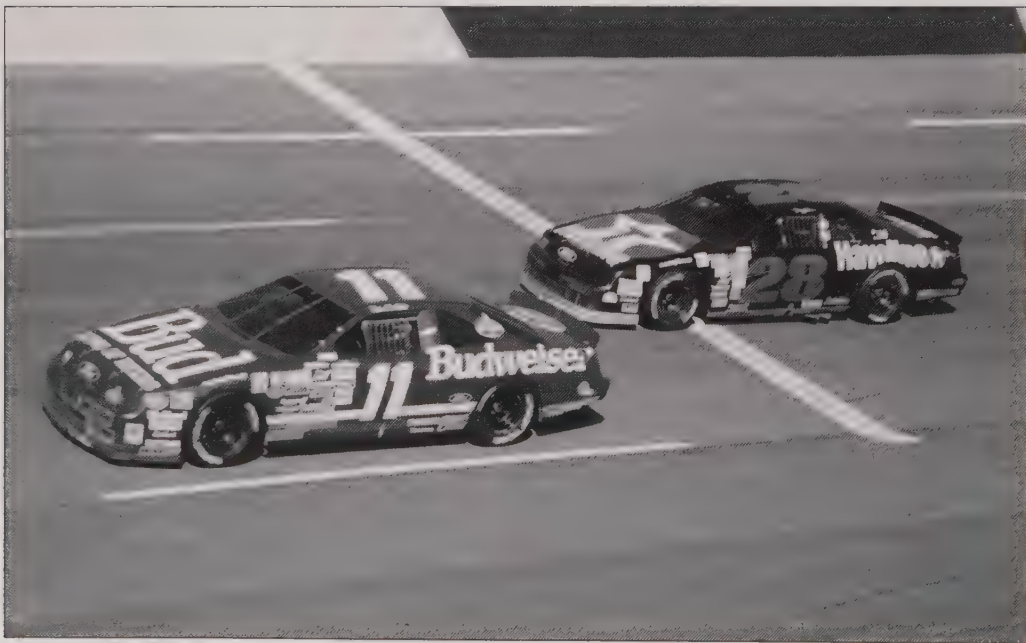


Jimmy Hensley (No. 25) tries to stay ahead of a furious battle for position during the February 29, 1992, NASCAR Busch (now Nationwide) Series Goodwrench 200. Todd Bodine (No. 34) and Jim Bown (No. 98) sandwiched Mike Wallace (No. 20) as Dale Earnhardt (No. 3) and Mark Martin (No. 60) try to find running room just behind them. Martin finished second behind series regular Ward Burton, while Earnhardt placed fourth. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)





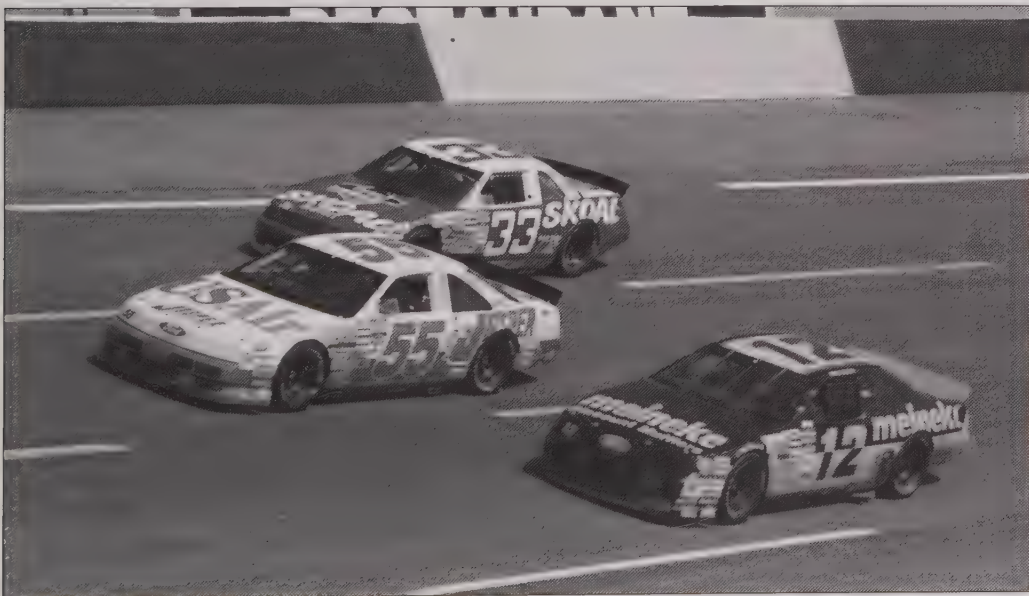
Richard Petty (No. 43) was in his final year as a driver when he raced son Kyle (No. 42) during the March 1, 1992 GM Goodwrench 500. Over the course of his storied career, Richard Petty won 11 times in 54 starts at The Rock. No other driver had more than Cale Yarborough's seven victories there. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



After winning the 1992 Daytona 500, Davey Allison (No. 28) was again stout in the GM Goodwrench 500 at Rockingham, but not stout enough. Bill Elliott (No. 11) passed Allison on lap 280 and led the rest of the way for the first of what would be four consecutive victories. Along with Alan Kulwicki, Allison and Elliott staged one of NASCAR's most thrilling championship battles that season. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

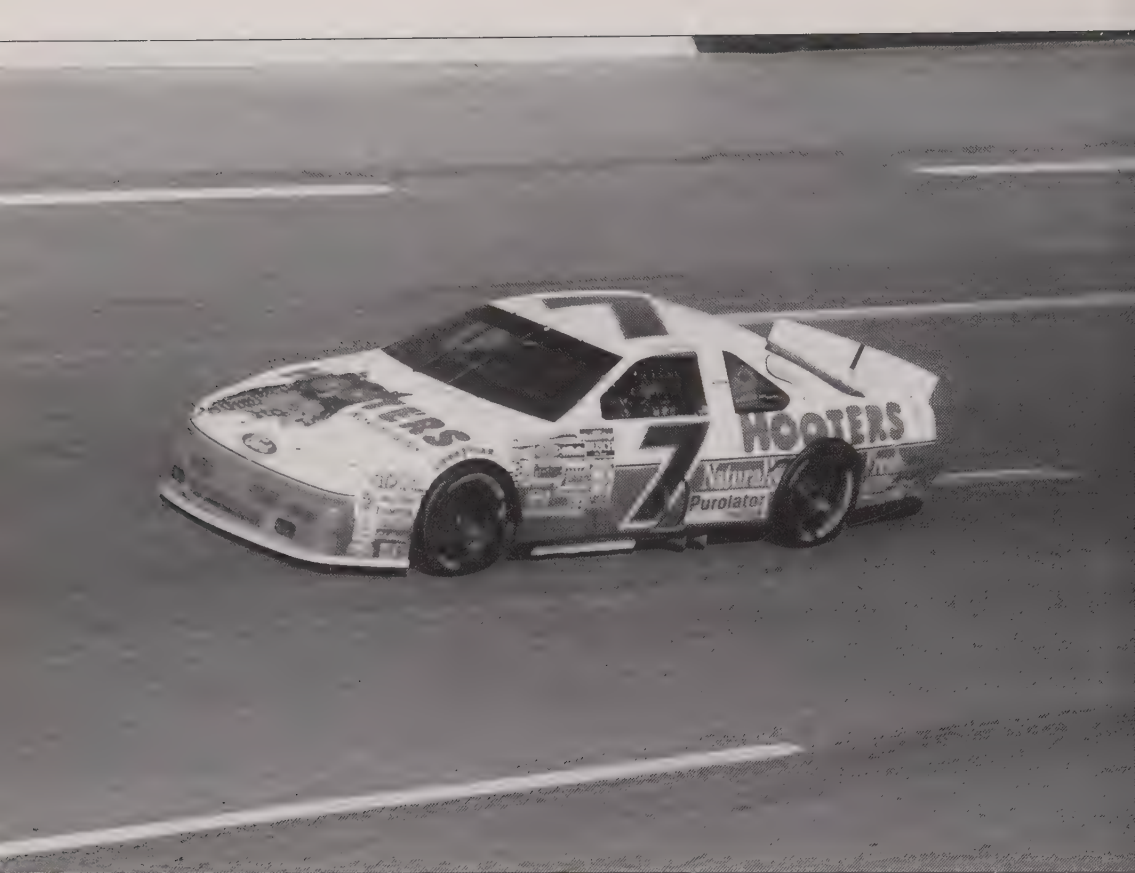


The 1993 season brought momentous changes to Petty Enterprises, the most obvious of which was Richard Petty (left) being replaced by Rick Wilson (right) as driver and the team's number changing from the famous No. 43 to No. 44. Along with crew chief Robbie Loomis (center), Wilson managed a 17th-place finish in the February 28 GM Goodwrench 400. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

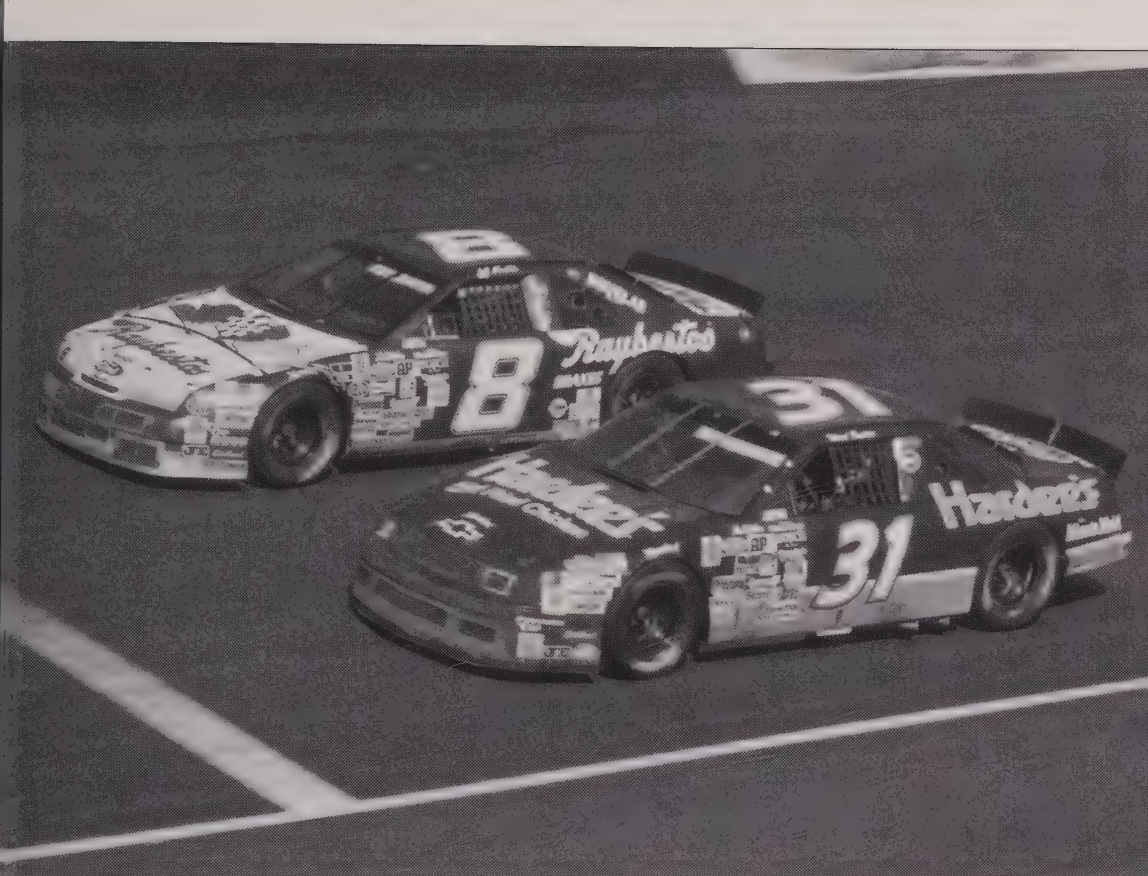


Ted Musgrave (No. 55) tries to hold off Harry "Mr. September" Gant (No. 33) and Jimmy "Mr. Excitement" Spencer (No. 12) during the 1993 GM Goodwrench 500. Musgrave was the best of the three that afternoon, posting a seventh-place finish. Spencer was 16th, three laps down, while Gant fell out due to an oil pump failure. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)





Defending NASCAR premier series champion Alan Kulwicki (No. 7) began the 1993 season with the highest of hopes. Kulwicki finished fourth in the Goodwrench 500 but sadly ran just three more races before he and three others lost their lives in an April 1 plane crash en route to Bristol. By the time the circuit returned to Rockingham in the fall, Kulwicki's team had been sold to fellow driver Geoffrey Bodine. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

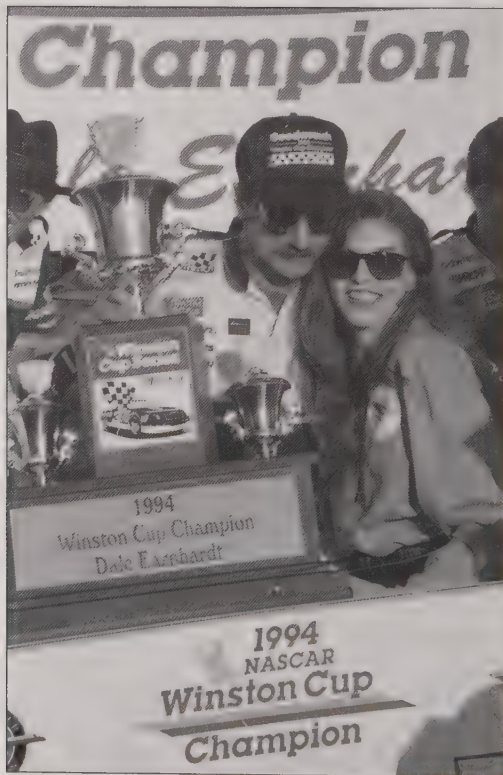


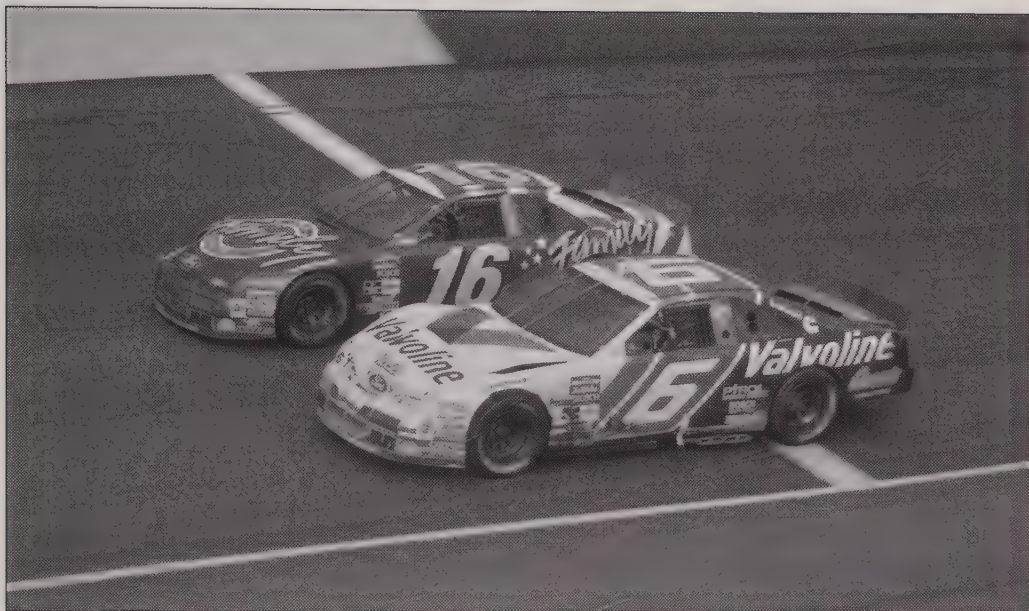
Jeff (No. 8) and Ward (No. 31) Burton were just the latest in a long line of family members who competed at Rockingham when they went up against each other in the October 23, 1994, AC Delco 500. Ward placed ninth, one lap down, while Jeff finished 11th and another circuit behind his older sibling. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)





Dale Earnhardt entered NASCAR's pantheon of über legends when he sealed his seventh championship with a victory in the 1994 AC Delco 500 (left). Only Richard Petty had as many, and no one had more. Celebrating with Earnhardt in Victory Lane following the race was his wife, Teresa (below). (Both, photograph by Mike Horne; courtesy BRH Racing Archives.)





Roush Racing teammates Ted Musgrave (No. 16) and Mark Martin (No. 6) go after each other for position during the 1994 AC Delco 500. When all was said and done, both drivers managed to put together decent, if rather unspectacular, results for the afternoon. Martin took seventh, while Musgrave finished 13th, four laps down. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

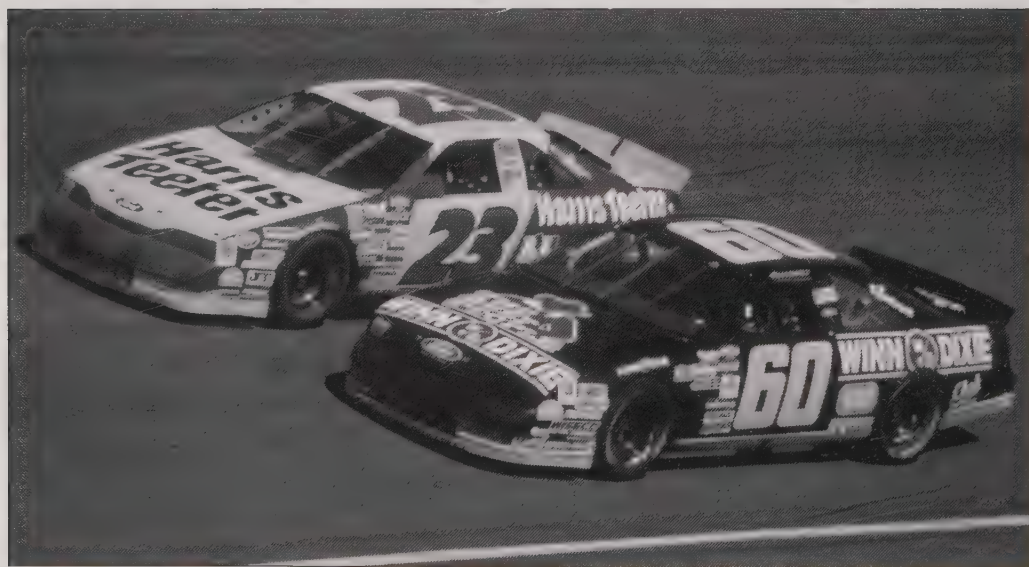


Tad and Jodi Geschickter (at back of car) watch as their No. 47 Chevrolet is prepared for driver Jeff Fuller prior to the February 25, 1995, NASCAR Busch (now Nationwide) Series Goodwrench 200. More than a decade later, the husband-and-wife duo made the transition to the sport's top level, the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series, with driver Marcos Ambrose and later Bobby Labonte. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

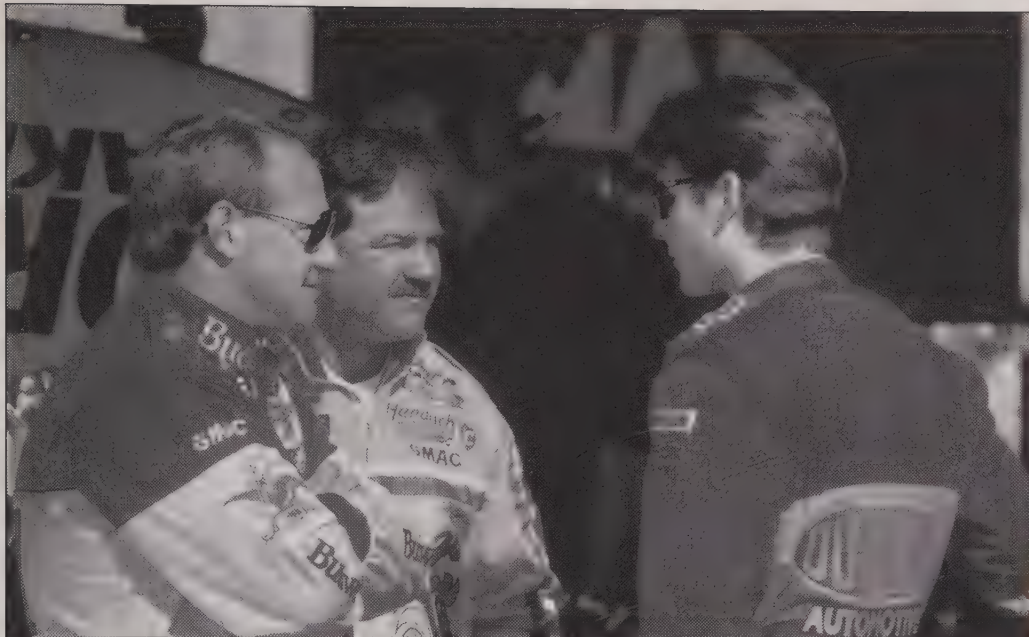




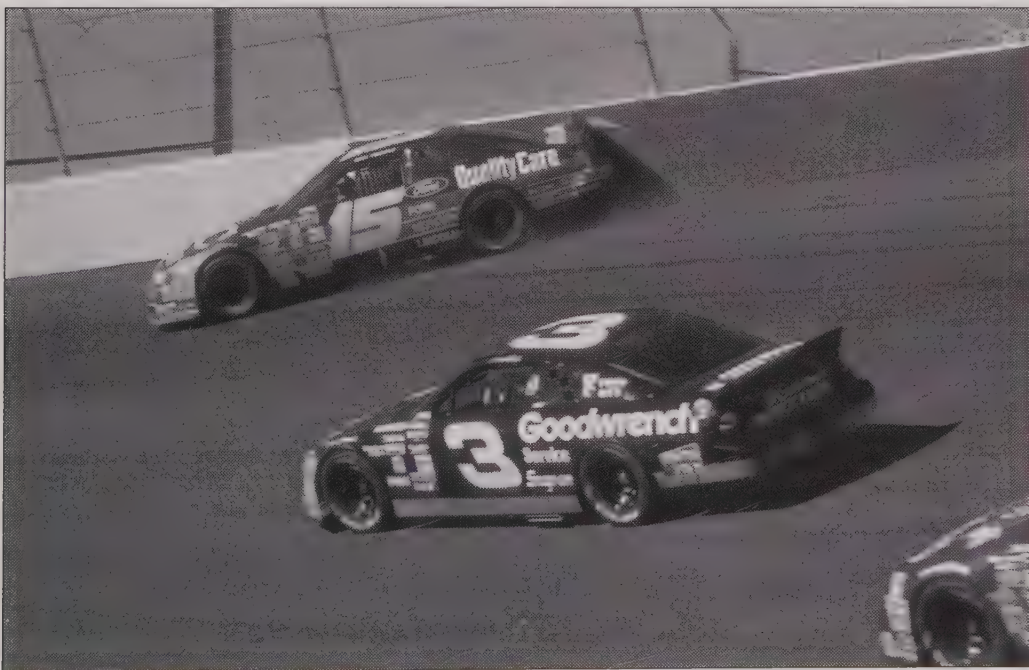
The 1994 Rookie of the Year in what is now known as the NASCAR Nationwide Series, Johnny Benson Jr. entered the following season with high hopes. He was all smiles after a fourth-place finish in the 1995 Goodwrench 200, and while rival Chad Little enjoyed a hugely successful season, Benson and his BACE Motorsports team rode a wave of consistency to the title. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



Chad Little (No. 23) got off to an amazing start in the NASCAR Busch (now Nationwide) Series in 1995. He became the first series regular to win at Daytona and then followed that up with a victory over Mark Martin (No. 60) in the Goodwrench 200. Despite winning four more races that season, Little finished second to Johnny Benson in the championship battle. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

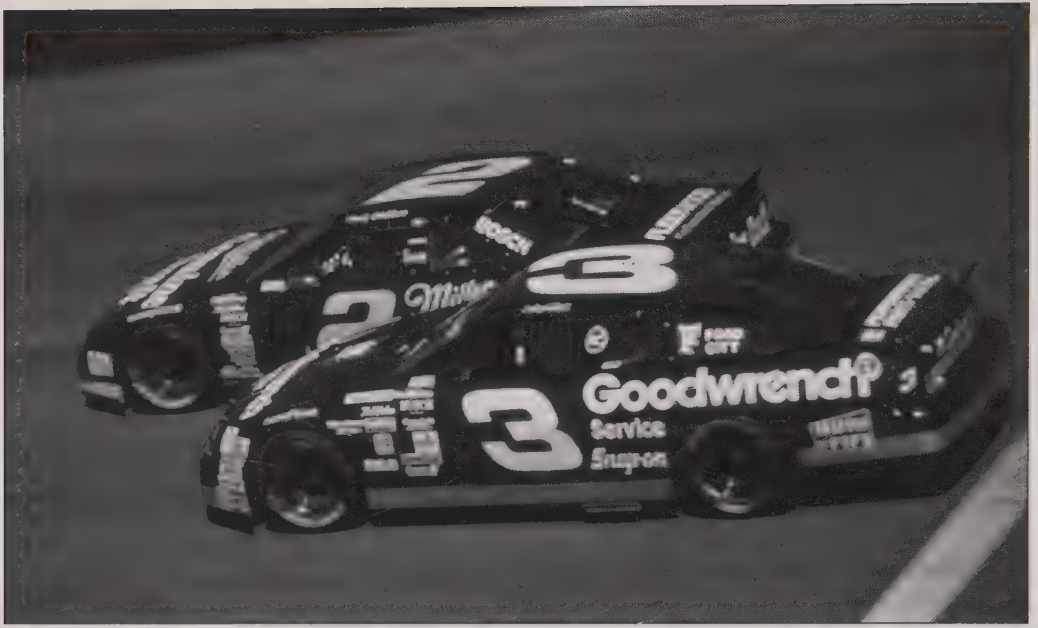


Jeff Gordon (right) talks with Hendrick Motorsports teammates Ken Schrader (left) and Terry Labonte (center) in the garage prior to the February 26, 1995, Goodwrench 500. Poised for a run at the title and dubbed “Wonder Boy” by Dale Earnhardt, Gordon started from the pole and dominated the event, leading eight times for 329 laps. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

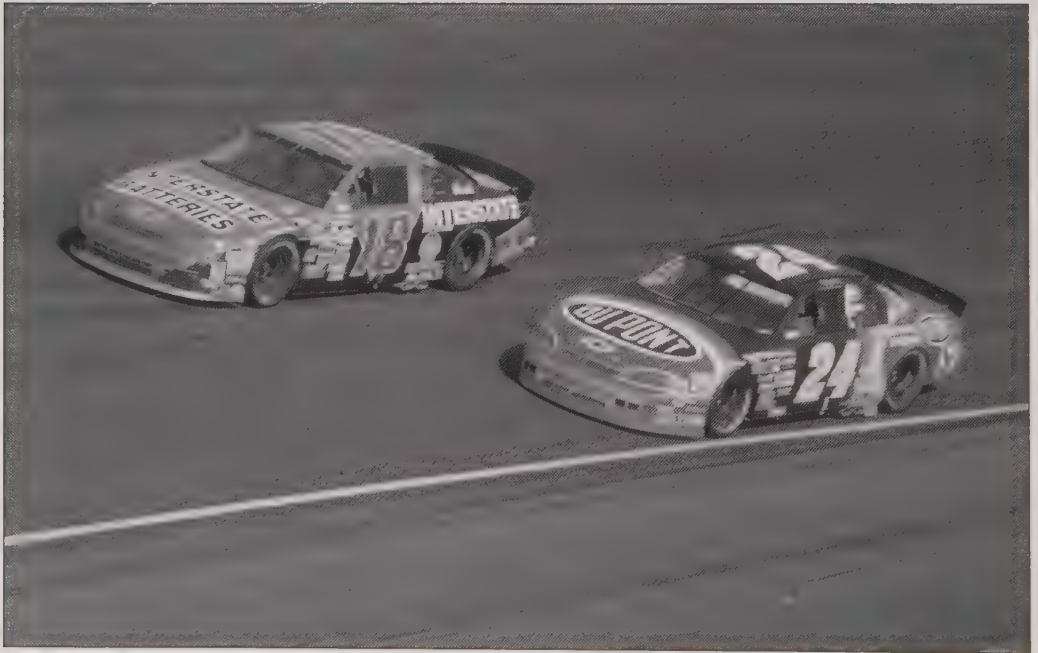


Dale Earnhardt (No. 3) looks for room to escape as Dick Trickle (No. 15) slides into the outside retaining wall to bring out the caution on lap 244 of the 1995 Goodwrench 500. Although he was 21 laps down, Trickle was running at the conclusion of the event in 22nd place. Earnhardt, meanwhile, scored a third-place finish. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)





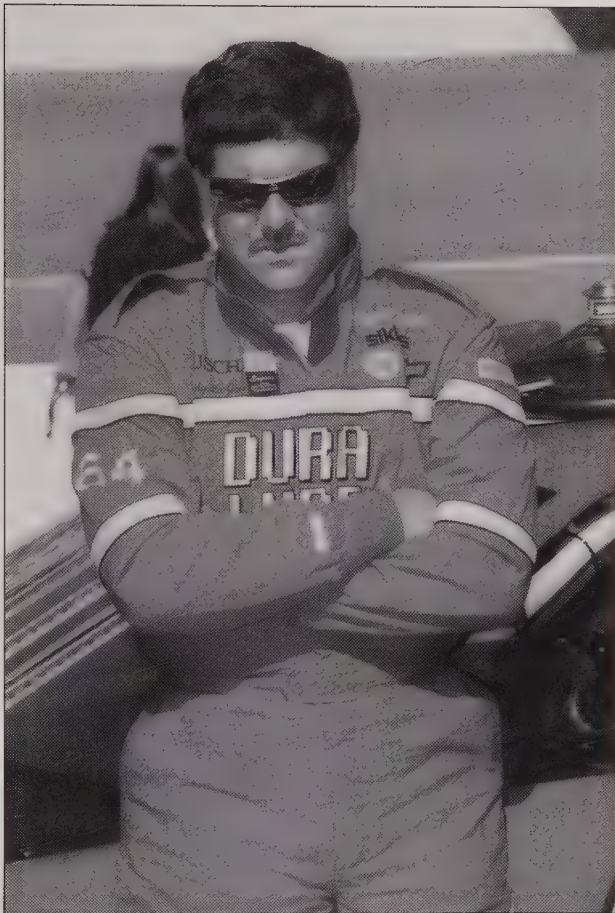
Future NASCAR Hall of Famers Rusty Wallace (No. 2) and Dale Earnhardt (No. 3) square off during the 1995 Goodwrench 500. Earnhardt eventually finished third, while an engine failure dropped Wallace to a disappointing 24th-place showing. Just two races into the season, Earnhardt's effort in his famous black Chevrolet moved him atop the points standings. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



After he wrestled the lead away from Bobby Labonte (No. 18) on lap 410 of the 1995 Goodwrench 500, Jeff Gordon (No. 24) was out front to stay. The victory was the third of Gordon's NASCAR Sprint Cup career in just 64 starts. The 1995 Goodwrench 500 was Rockingham's final 500-mile event. Subsequent races were shortened by 100 miles. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

Randy LaJoie finished out the 1995 season for team owner Dennis Shoemaker in what is now known as the NASCAR Nationwide Series. He then joined team owner Bill Baumgardner at BACE Motorsports the following season. Together, the two men won the 1996 and 1997 series championships. In doing so, Baumgardner became the first owner to win three straight titles on the tour. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

As Johnny Benson (No. 74) and Mike Wallace (No. 90) fought for position coming off turn four on the final lap of the October 21, 1995, NASCAR Busch (now Nationwide) Series AC Delco 200, Todd Bodine (No. 72) charged underneath both of them to score a thrilling victory. The win came in his first start for Parker Racing, which had parted ways with its former driver just two weeks earlier. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



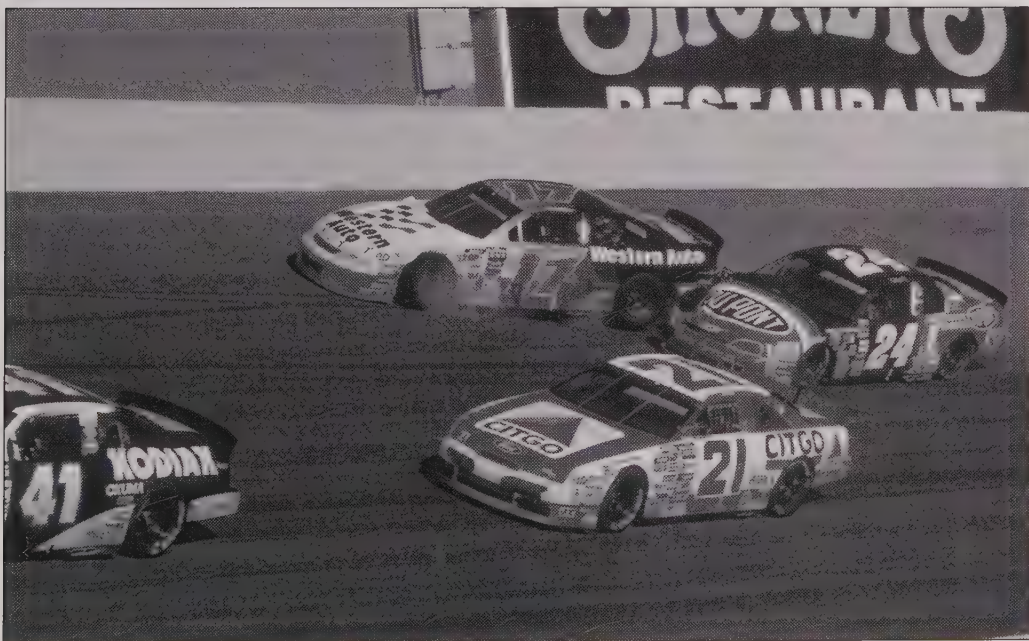




Although he had won at Rockingham the previous February, Jeff Gordon (No. 24) endured a tough day in the October 22, 1995, AC Delco 400. A tap from Greg Sacks (No. 32) sent Gordon spinning off turn four to bring out the caution on lap 156. Gordon soldiered on to finish 20th. Still, with just two races remaining, he held a fairly comfortable 162-point lead in the championship standings. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



After getting caught up in an accident involving Shane Hall (No. 40) on lap 213 of the 1995 AC Delco 400, Michael Waltrip (No. 30) crashes into a water barrel safety barrier at the entrance to pit road. The mishap sent the barrel and water spraying some 40 feet into the air. Although they were done racing for the day, neither driver was injured. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

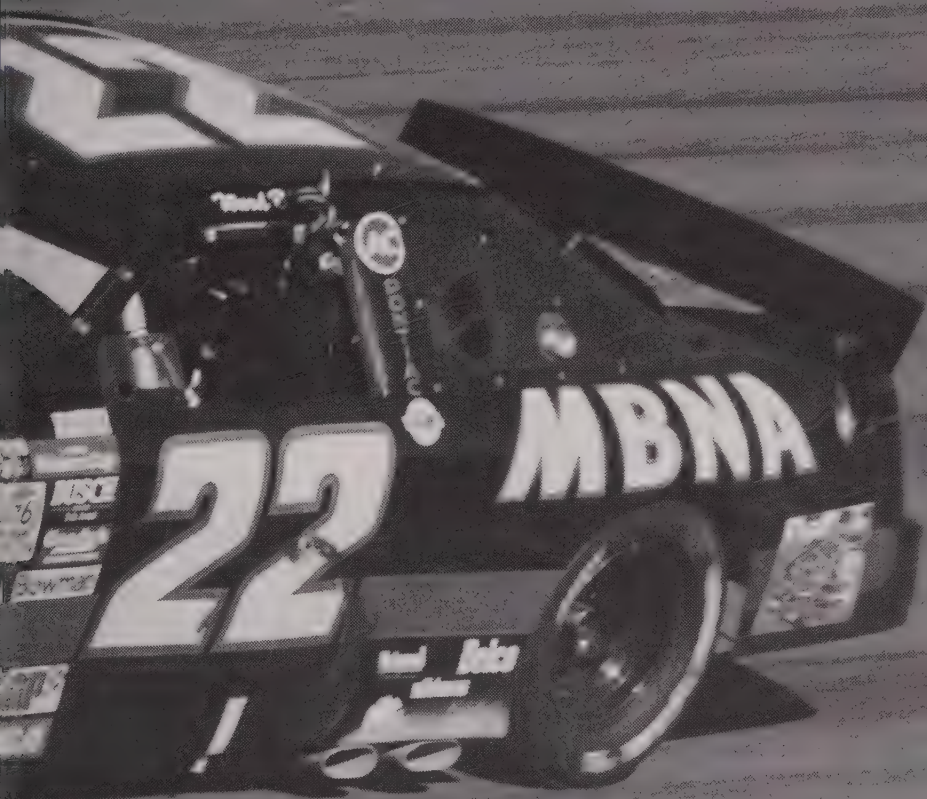


Darrell Waltrip (No. 17) loses control of his Chevrolet on the last lap of the 1995 AC Delco 400 after making contact with Ricky Craven (No. 41). Jeff Gordon (No. 24) was swept up in the melee, while Morgan Shepherd (No. 21) escaped unharmed. A furious Waltrip later blamed the accident on Craven. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



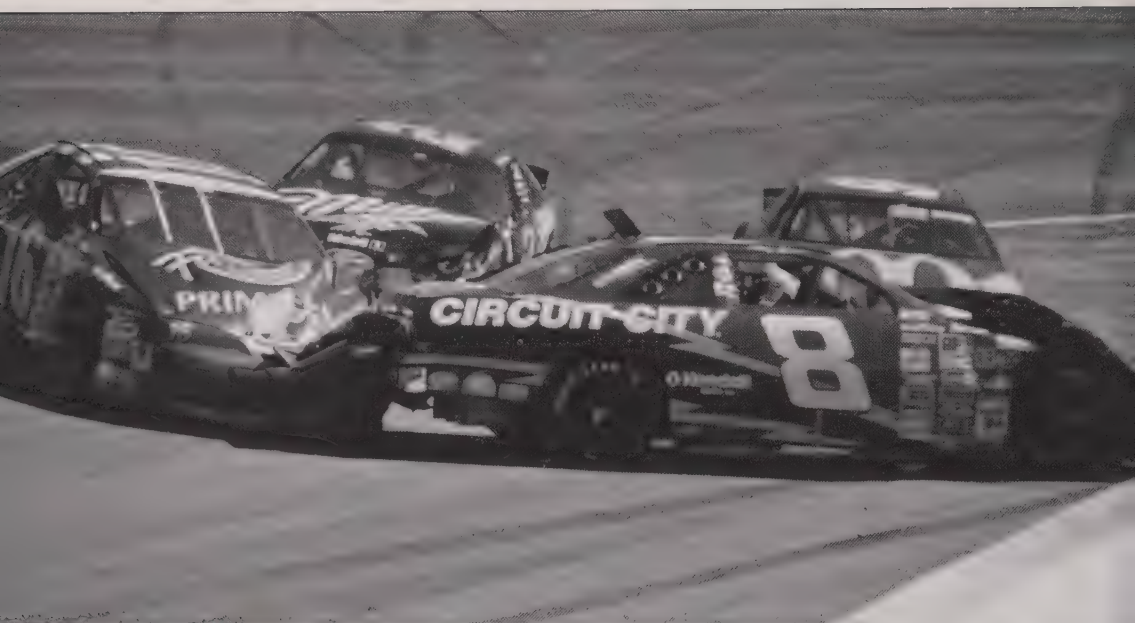


Ward Burton (No. 22) won both his and his team's first NASCAR premier series event in the

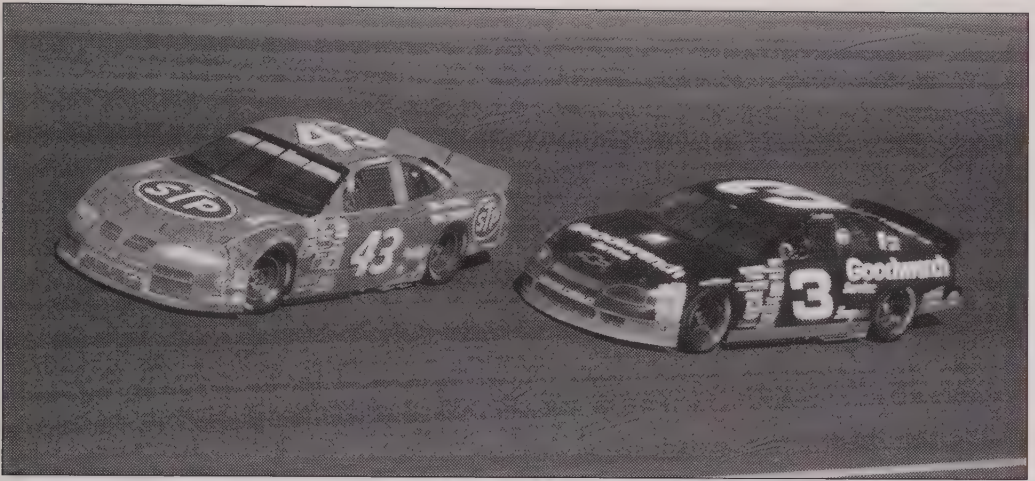


1995 AC Delco 400. (Photograph by Mike Horne; courtesy BRH Racing Archives.)



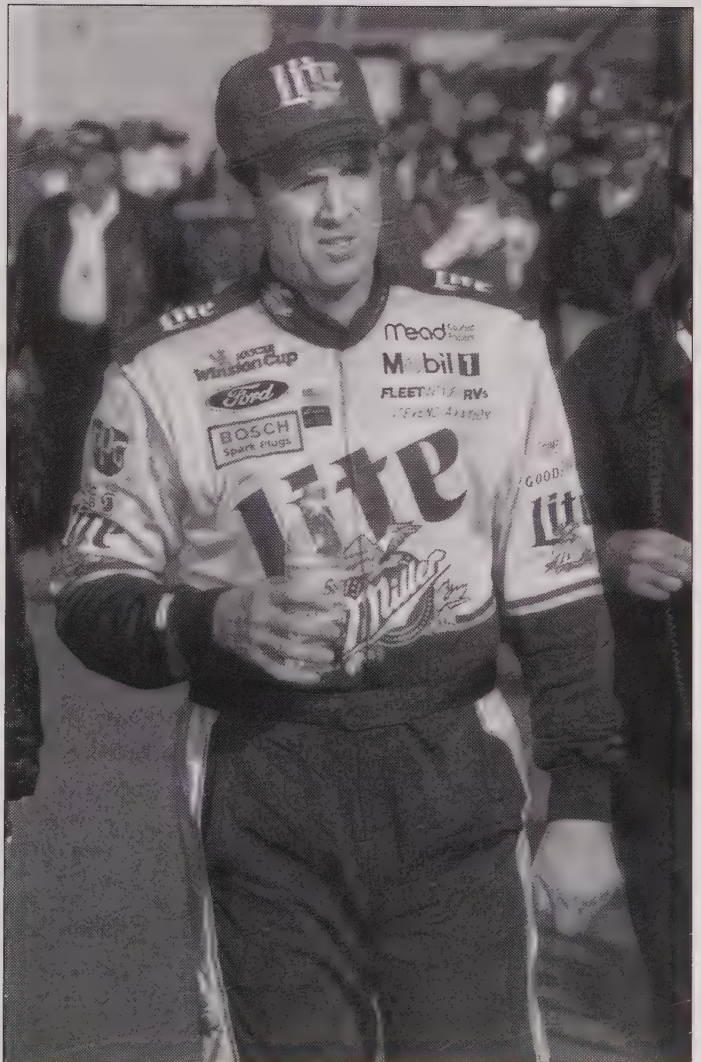


Several cars were swept into a mishap on lap 108 of the February 25, 1996, Goodwrench Service 400, including Ted Musgrave (No. 16), Hut Stricklin (No. 8), Rusty Wallace (No. 2), and Bill Elliott (No. 94). Also involved but not pictured were Steve Grissom, Johnny Benson, and Rick Mast. Grissom was able to salvage a fifth-place finish, while Mast wound up 10th. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

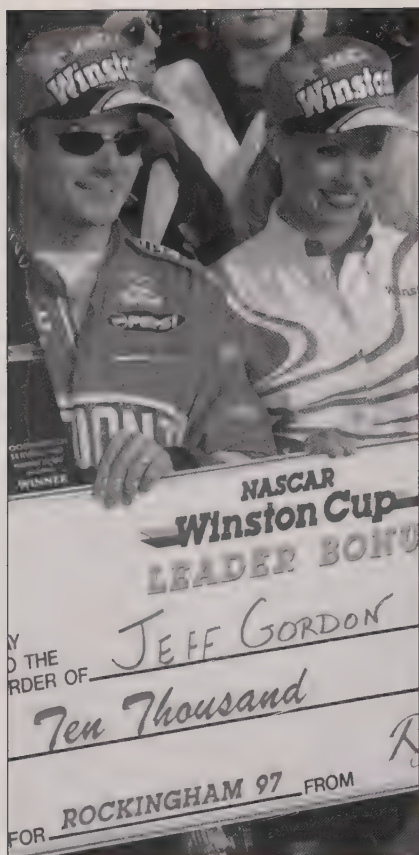


As they raced for the lead, Bobby Hamilton (No. 43) slipped sideways after a tap from Dale Earnhardt (No. 3) on lap 345 of the 1996 Goodwrench Service 400. The incident sent Hamilton into the outside retaining wall in turn four. Earnhardt won, while Hamilton finished 24th, ten laps down, after damage from the brush with Earnhardt led to more contact with the wall later in the race. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

Rusty Wallace got his game face on prior to the February 23, 1997, Goodwrench Service 400, an event in which he finished sixth. Over the course of his storied NASCAR career, Wallace captured five victories (tied with David Pearson) as well as 12 top-five and 22 top-10 finishes in 41 starts at The Rock. Only Richard Petty and Cale Yarborough had more wins at the track. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

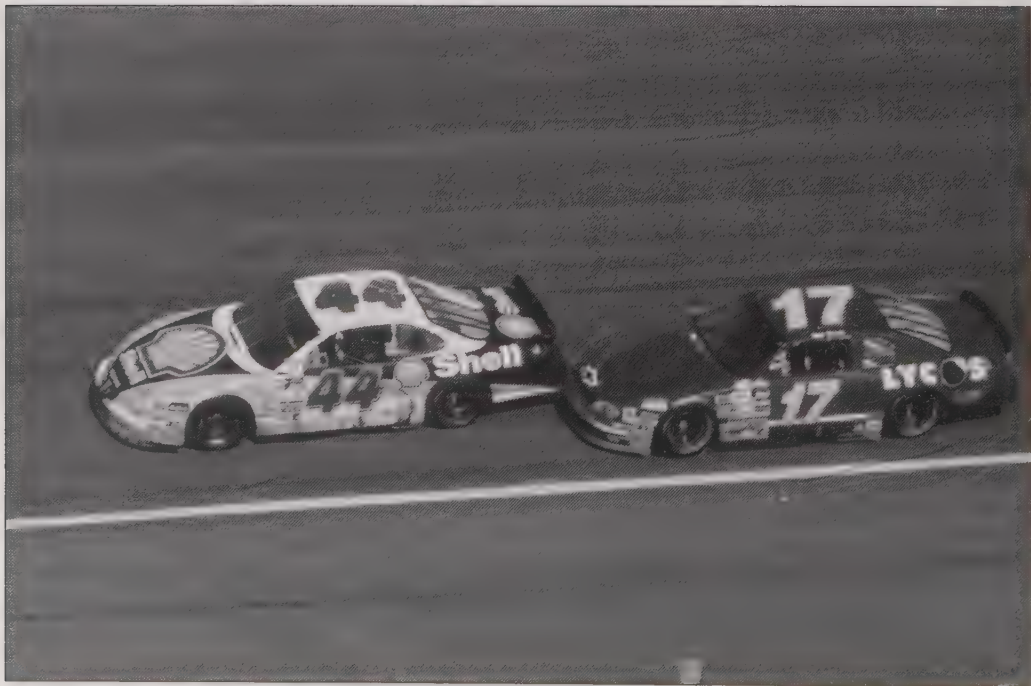


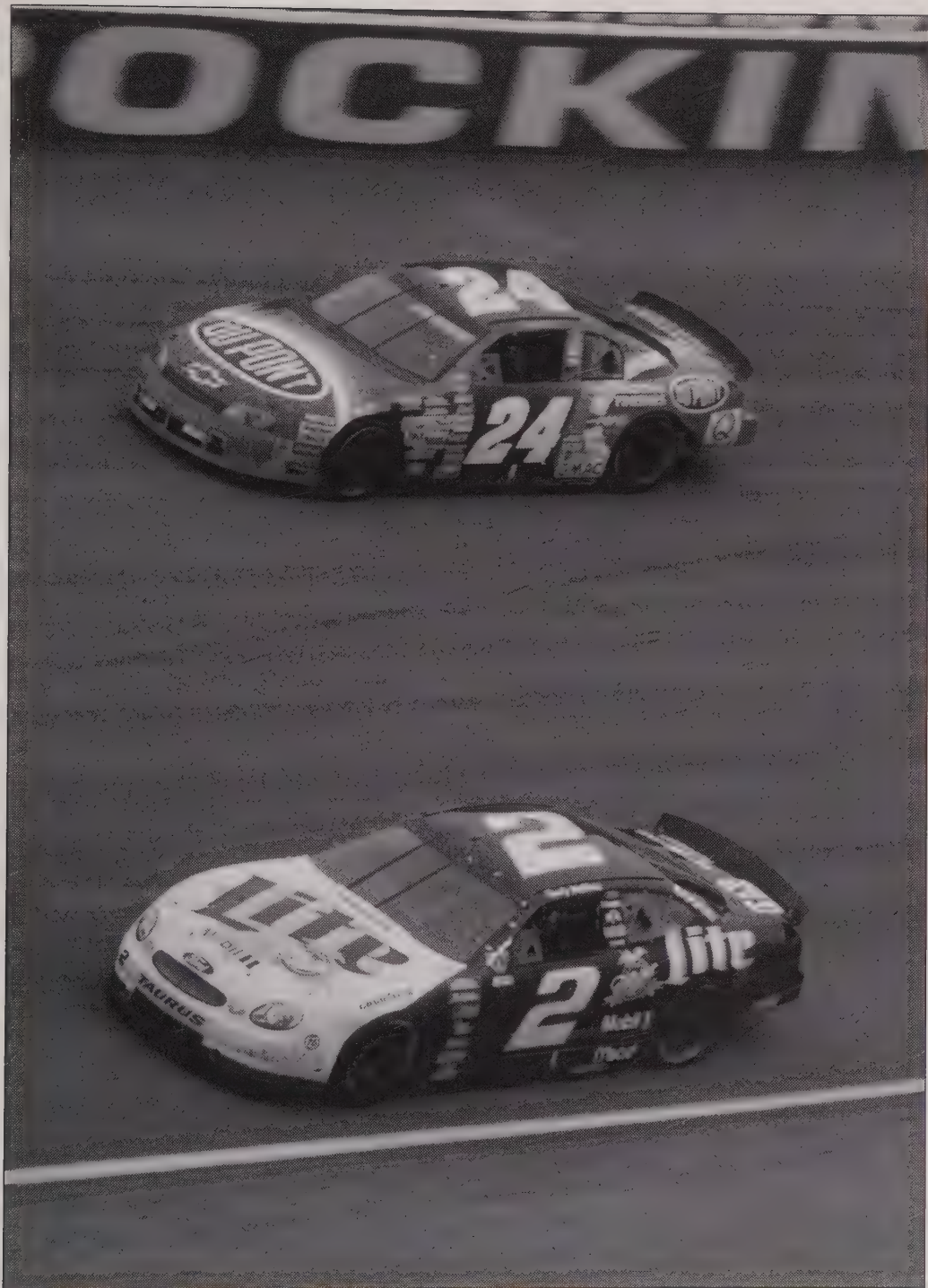




After taking the lead for good on lap 351 of the 1997 Goodwrench Service 400, Jeff Gordon was able to cruise to a convincing 2.692-second victory over runner-up Dale Jarrett. Gordon had started the afternoon in fourth place. The win was the second of four victories Gordon posted at The Rock. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

Coming off turn four on the final lap of the February 21, 1998, NASCAR Busch (now Nationwide) Series GM Goodwrench Service Plus 200, all bets were off. Matt Kenseth (No. 17) nudged Tony Stewart (No. 44) out of the groove and then scooted past to score the first victory of his NASCAR career. It was the only lap Kenseth led all afternoon. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



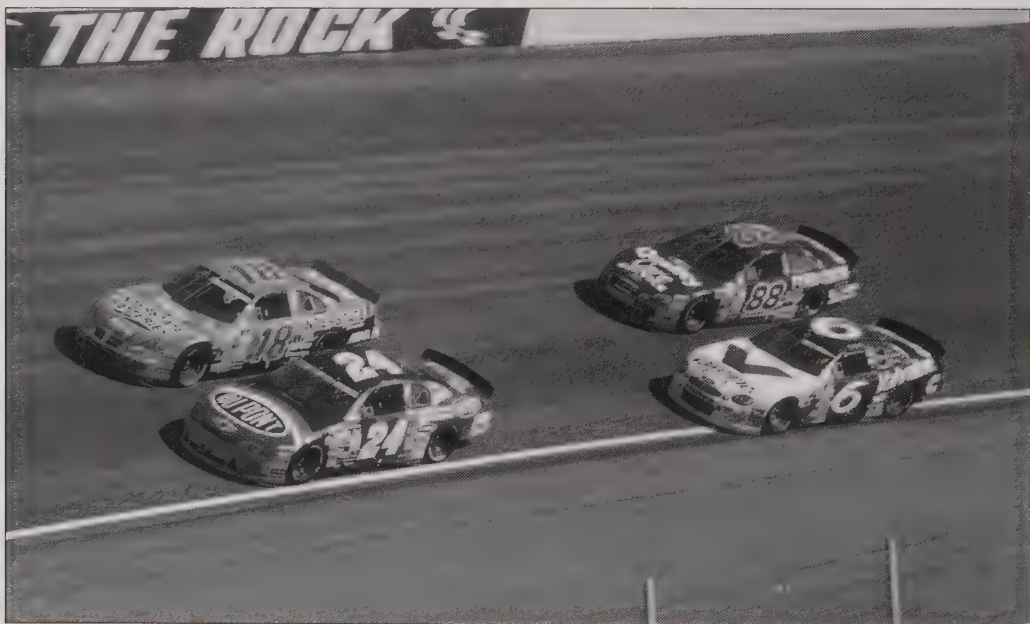


Jeff Gordon (No. 24) and Rusty Wallace (No. 2) both appeared ready to run away with the February 22, 1998, GM Goodwrench Service Plus 400 at one time or another, but Gordon was able to outlast Wallace for the victory. Gordon grabbed the top spot from Wallace on lap 363 and was out front the rest of the way. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)





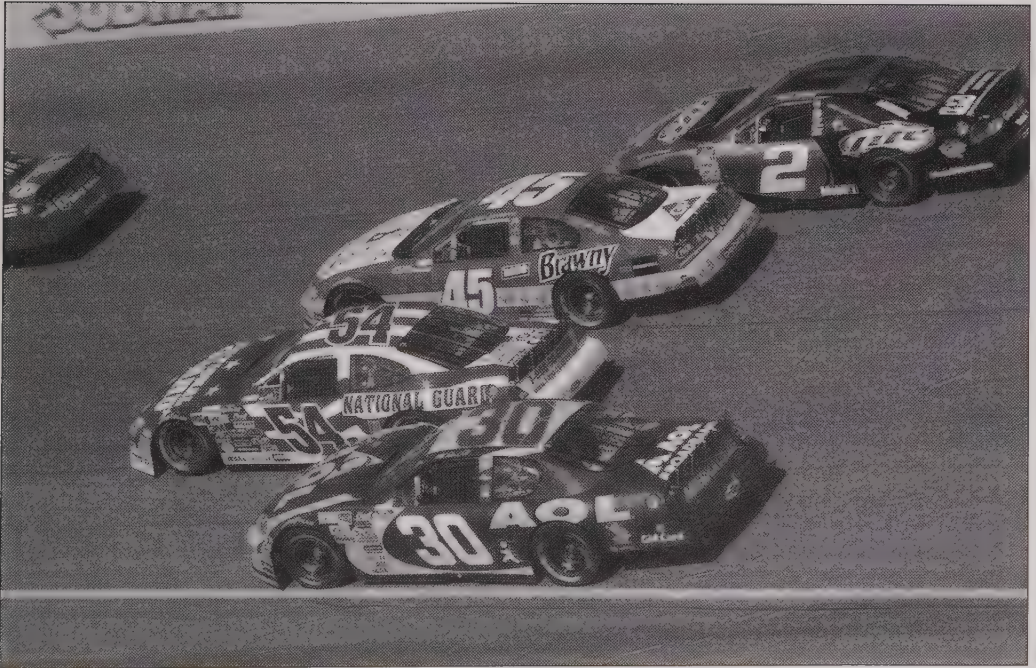
Mike Skinner (No. 31) tries to hustle his way around Rockingham during the November 1, 1998, AC Delco 400, hoping to stay in front of a furious fight for position. Chasing Skinner is Darrell Waltrip (No. 35), Bobby Labonte (No. 18), Bobby Hamilton (No. 4), and John Andretti (No. 43). With a sixth-place finish to his credit, Hamilton was the best of the five on the afternoon. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



Jeff Gordon (No. 24), Bobby Labonte (No. 18), Mark Martin (No. 6), and Dale Jarrett (No. 88) battle for position on February 21, 1999, in the Dura Lube/Big K 400. Gordon dropped out with engine problems after completing 310 of the event's 393 laps. Martin took the lead 36 circuits from the end and led the rest of the way. Jarrett finished second, nearly 1.4 seconds back, while Labonte placed third. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

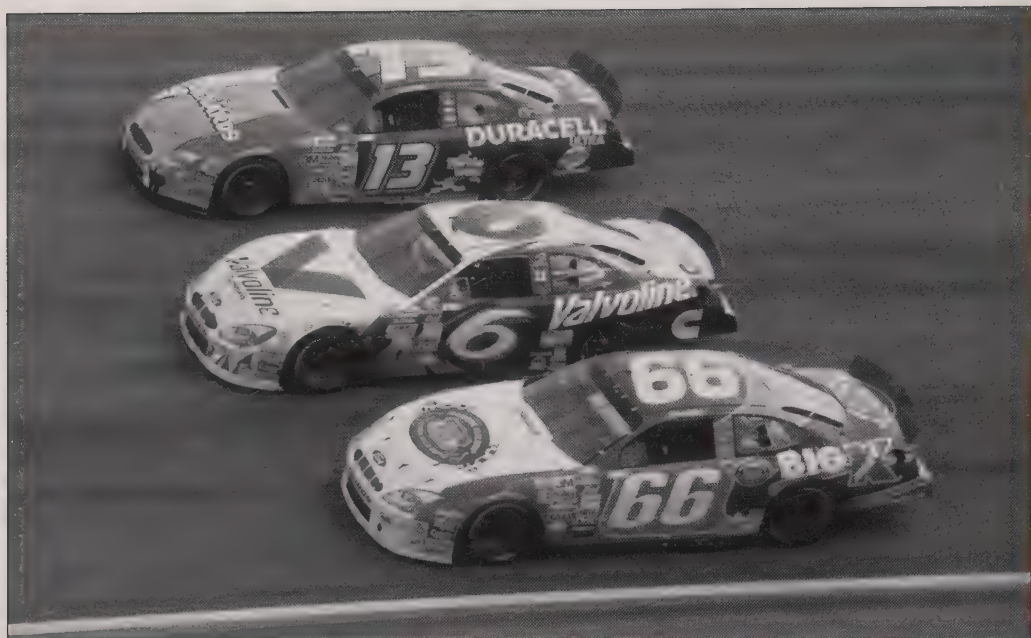
*Five*

# THE END?

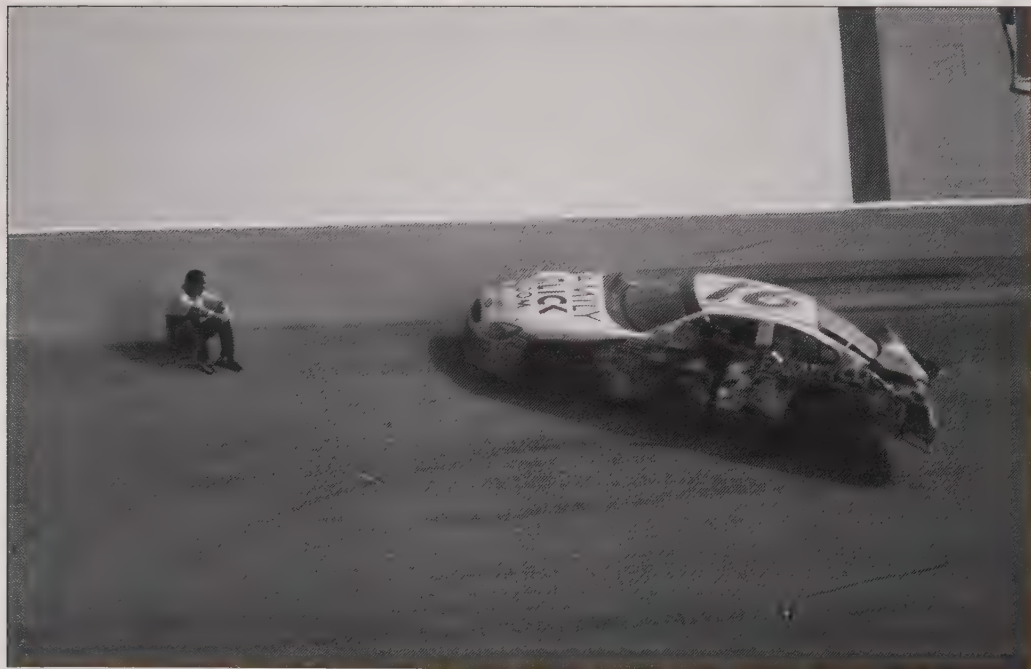


Rusty Wallace (No. 2), Kyle Petty (No. 45), Todd Bodine (No. 54), and Steve Park (No. 30) proved that the impossible was possible by going four wide in the 2003 Pop Secret Microwave Popcorn 400. None of them had a spectacular showing that afternoon with Bodine winding up the highest finisher in 16th place. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



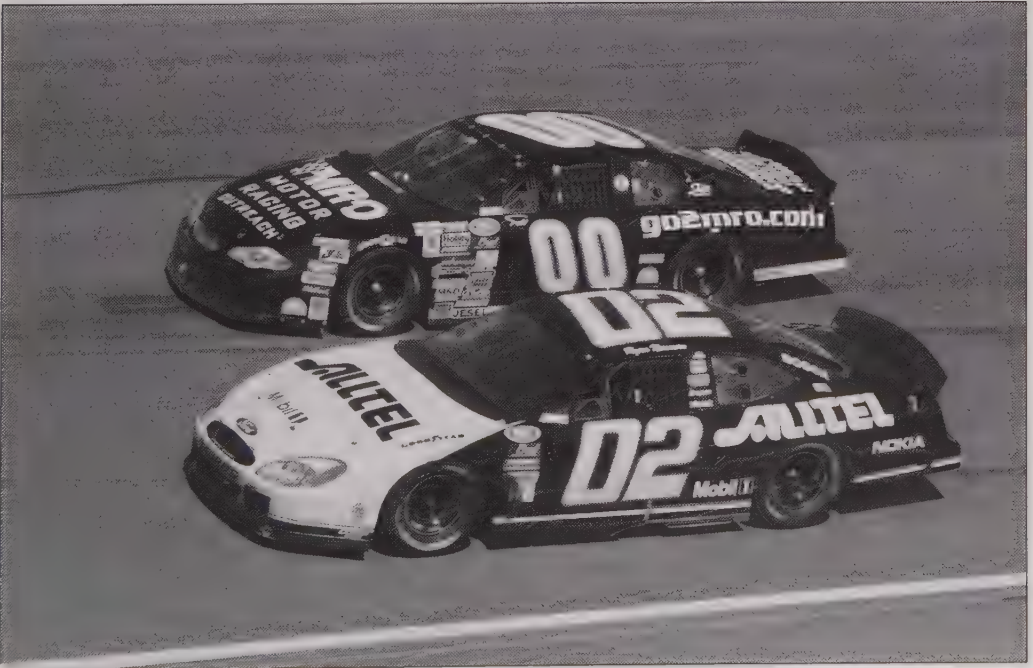


Mark Martin (No. 6) finds himself sandwiched between the cars of Robby Gordon (No. 13) and Darrell Waltrip (No. 66) during the February 27, 2000, Dura Lube/Kmart 400. Martin started 33rd but charged through the field to finish eighth. The day turned out much worse for Gordon and Waltrip, who took 38th and 39th, respectively. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

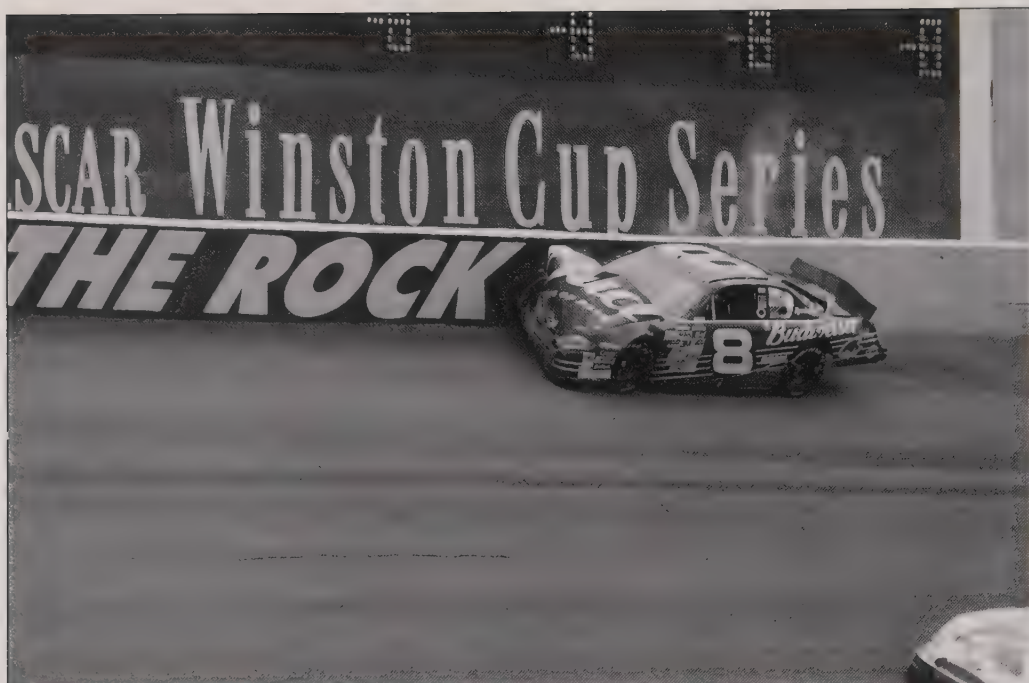


Vermont native Kevin Lepage (No. 16) takes a breather following an accident that brought out the caution on lap 256 of the October 22, 2000, Pop Secret Microwave Popcorn 400. The mishap, which also involved Sterling Marlin, dropped Lepage to a 36th-place showing in the final rundown. The win went to Dale Jarrett. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

The NASCAR community was just one week removed from the 2001 Daytona 500, where one of its greatest drivers—Dale Earnhardt—died as a result of injuries sustained during a last-lap accident, when it pulled into Rockingham for its next stop. Todd Bodine (right) joined thousands of others in honoring Earnhardt during the weekend, but he did not stop with a cap. After going up against Ryan Newman (No. 02), Bodine (No. 00) was able to post the win in the February 24, 2001, Alltel 200. (Both, courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

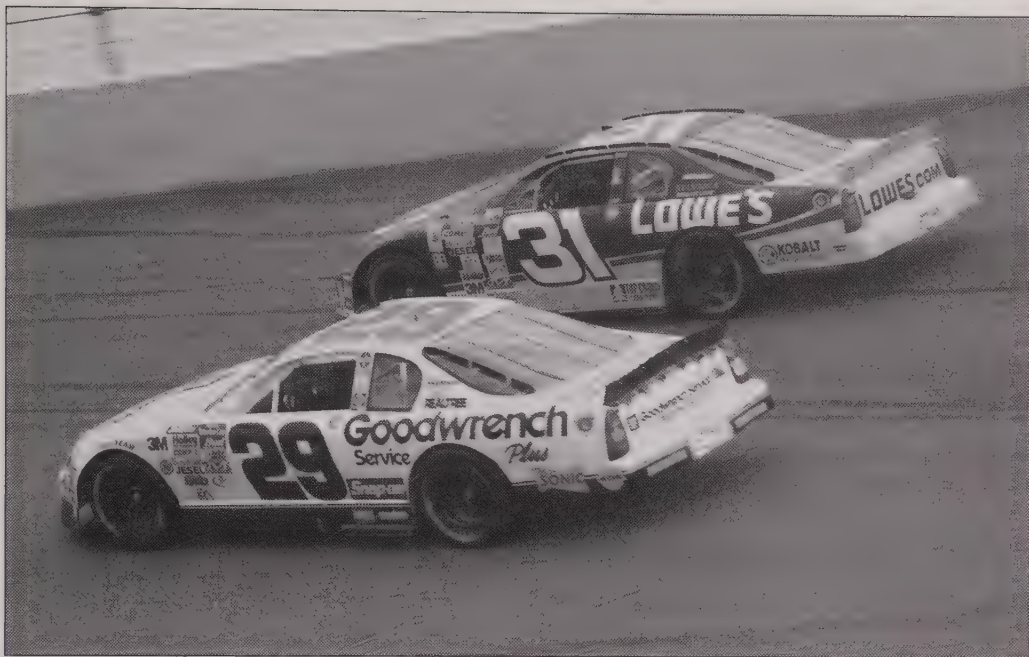




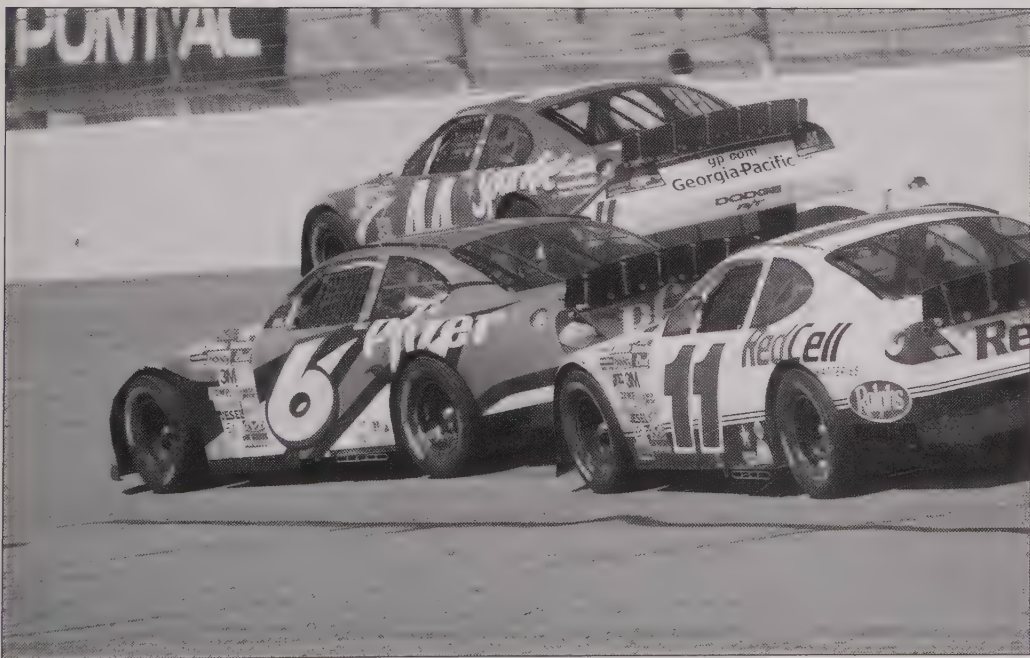


On the first lap of the 2001 Dura Lube 400, Dale Earnhardt Jr. was swept into an accident between turns three and four that also involved Mike Wallace, Kenny Wallace, Hut Stricklin, and Jimmy Spencer. After running just 17 green-flag laps on February 25, the conclusion of the race was postponed until the following day due to rain. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



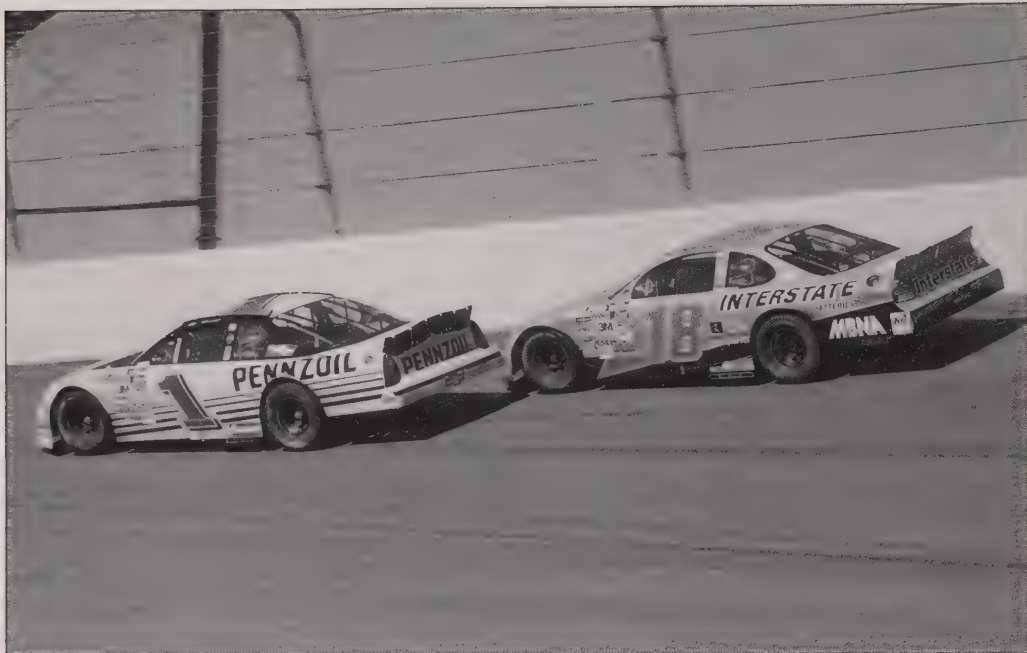


Kevin Harvick (No. 29) replaced Dale Earnhardt in the Richard Childress Racing Chevrolet and raced teammate Mike Skinner (No. 31) during the 2001 Dura Lube 400. Childress opted to change the car's number from No. 3 to No. 29 and its color from black to white. Harvick finished 14th in his debut at Rockingham. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

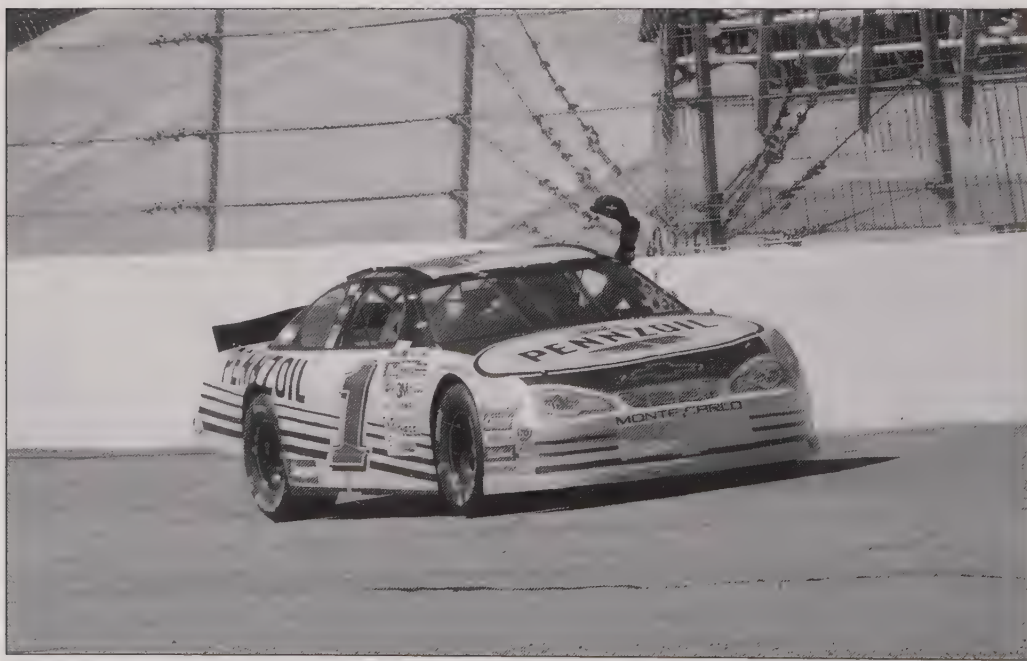


As hard as it was to concentrate on the business at hand, there was racing to be done during the 2001 Dura Lube 400. Brett Bodine (No. 11) gets into the back of Mark Martin (No. 6) as they race for position during the event. Martin finished 20th, one lap down, while Bodine was 27th, another couple of laps back. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)





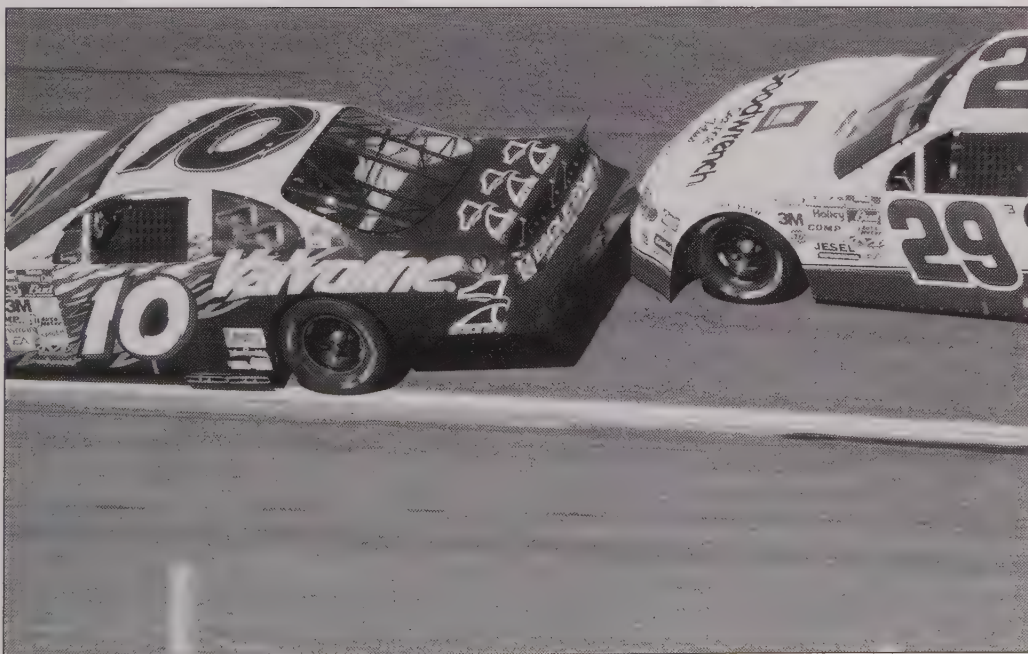
Capping off one of Rockingham's most emotional races ever, Steve Park (No. 1) holds off a furious last-lap charge by Bobby Labonte (No. 18) to win the 2001 Dura Lube 400 in a car fielded by Dale Earnhardt Inc. The victory, the second of Park's NASCAR premier series career, was no accident. In all, he led five times for a total of 167 laps. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



After taking the checkered flag in the 2001 Dura Lube 400, Steve Park (No. 1) became the latest in a long line of race winners to honor the late Alan Kulwicki with a backward victory lap. At the same time, Park also honored his late boss Dale Earnhardt by waving a cap emblazoned with the famous "No. 3" to the crowd. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

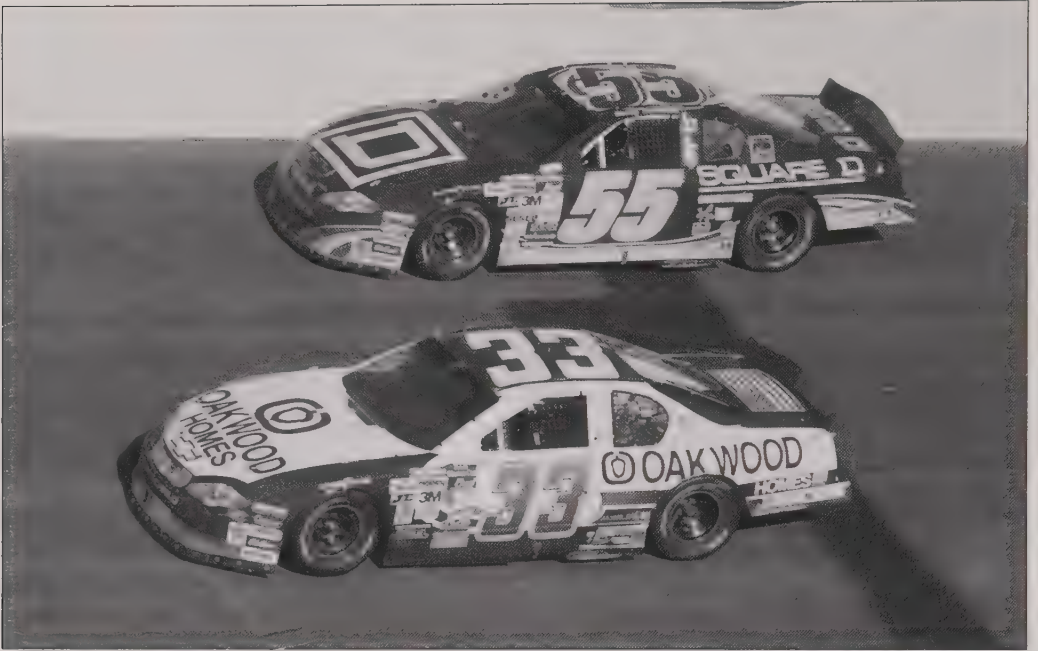


When Kevin Harvick moved up to the NASCAR premier series in 2001, he also continued running a full schedule in what is now known as the NASCAR Nationwide Series. Although others would later follow in his footsteps, Harvick overcame huge obstacles to be crowned champion of that season. He clinched the title with a fifth-place finish in the Sam's Club 200 on November 3. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

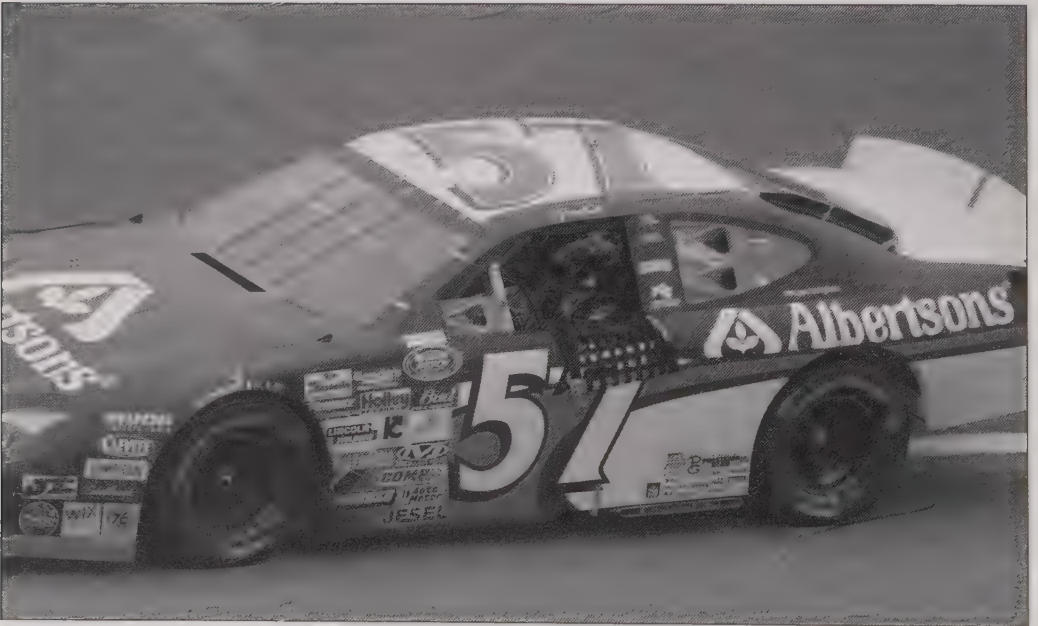


Kevin Harvick (No. 29) gave Johnny Benson Jr. (No. 10) a healthy nudge early in the November 4, 2001, Pop Secret Microwave Popcorn 400, but by the end of the afternoon, the two drivers had gone in decidedly different directions. Benson finished third, while Harvick could do no better than 27th, three laps down. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

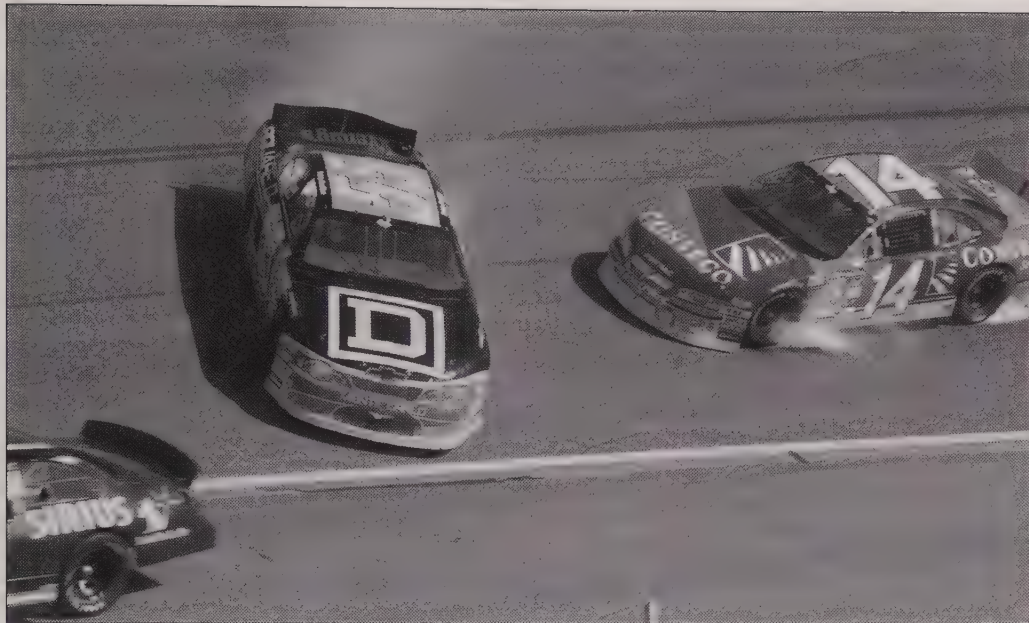




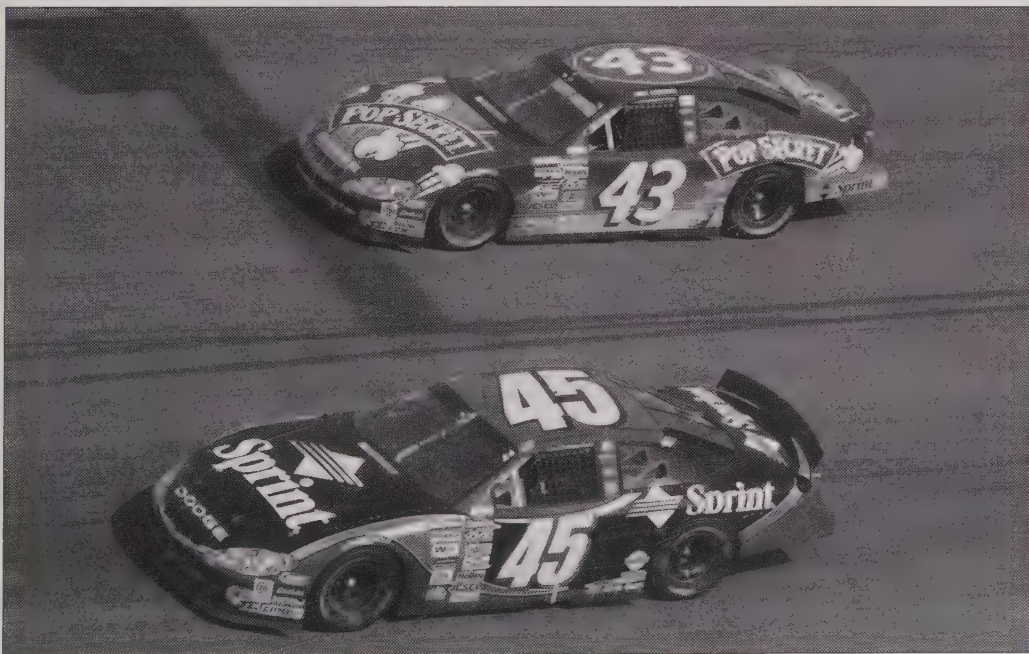
Joe Nemechek's victory in the 2001 Pop Secret Microwave Popcorn 400 came in one of his last starts for Andy Petree Motorsports. Nemechek (No. 33) joined Haas-Carter Motorsports for the start of 2002 but was left in search of a ride when the operation shut down after competing in seven of the first 10 races of the season. Bobby Hamilton drives the No. 55 car. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



For more than a decade, Jason Keller (No. 57) was a popular driver on what is now known as the NASCAR Nationwide Series tour. Keller led twice for a total of 76 laps to capture the victory in the February 23, 2002, 1-866RBCTerm.com 200. Keller went on to score three more checkered flags through the season's first 12 races. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

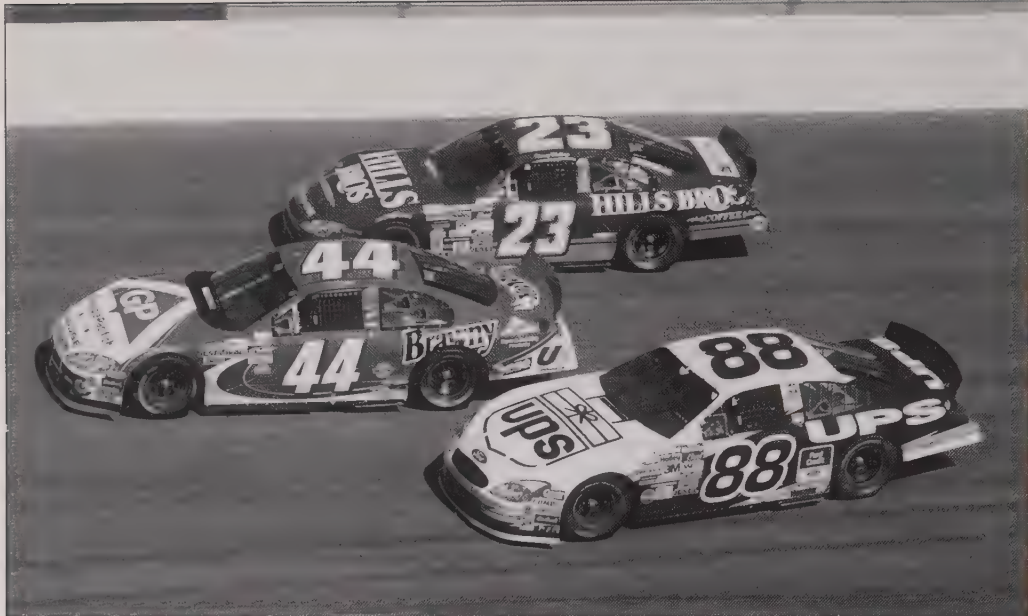


The first of four cautions during the November 3, 2002, Pop Secret Microwave Popcorn 400 came out on lap 23 when Bobby Hamilton (No. 55) and Mike Wallace (No. 14) got together coming off turn four. Although both were able to continue, it did neither driver much, if any, good. Hamilton was 38th and Wallace 43rd in the final rundown. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

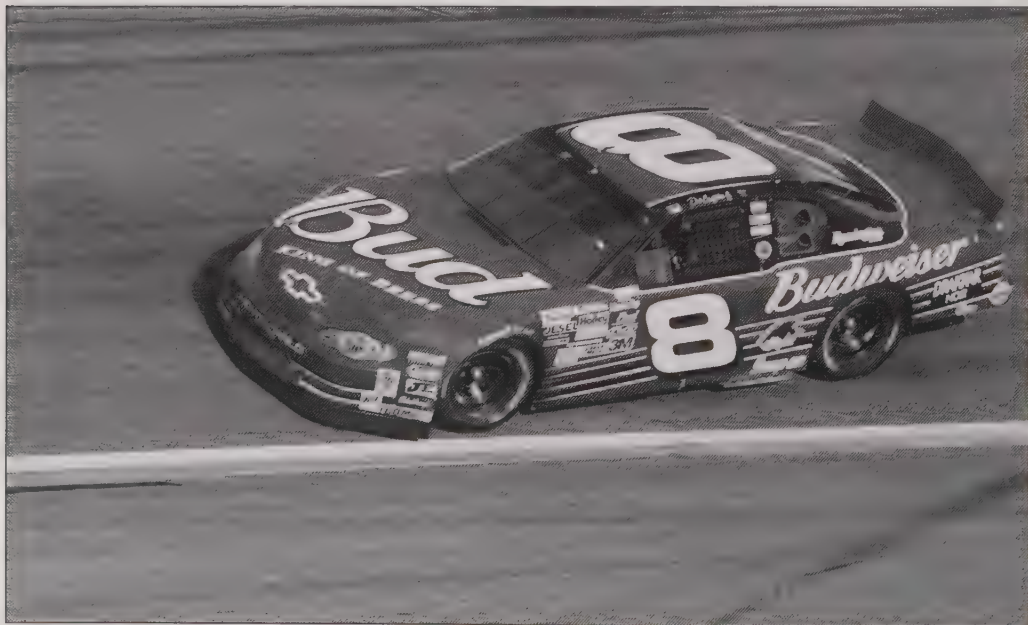


Petty Enterprises drivers John Andretti (No. 43) and Kyle Petty (No. 45) squared off in the 2002 Pop Secret Microwave Popcorn 400. Andretti finished 18th, one lap down, while Petty limped to a 30th-place showing, three laps down. Three of Petty's eight career victories came at Rockingham, located about an hour's drive from the Petty Enterprises shop in Level Cross, North Carolina. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

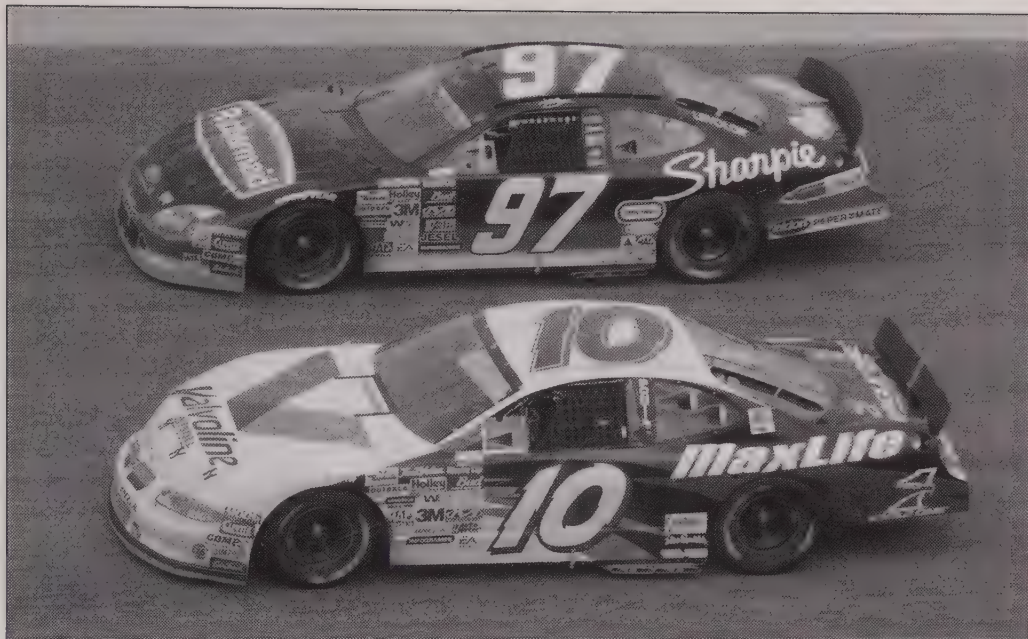




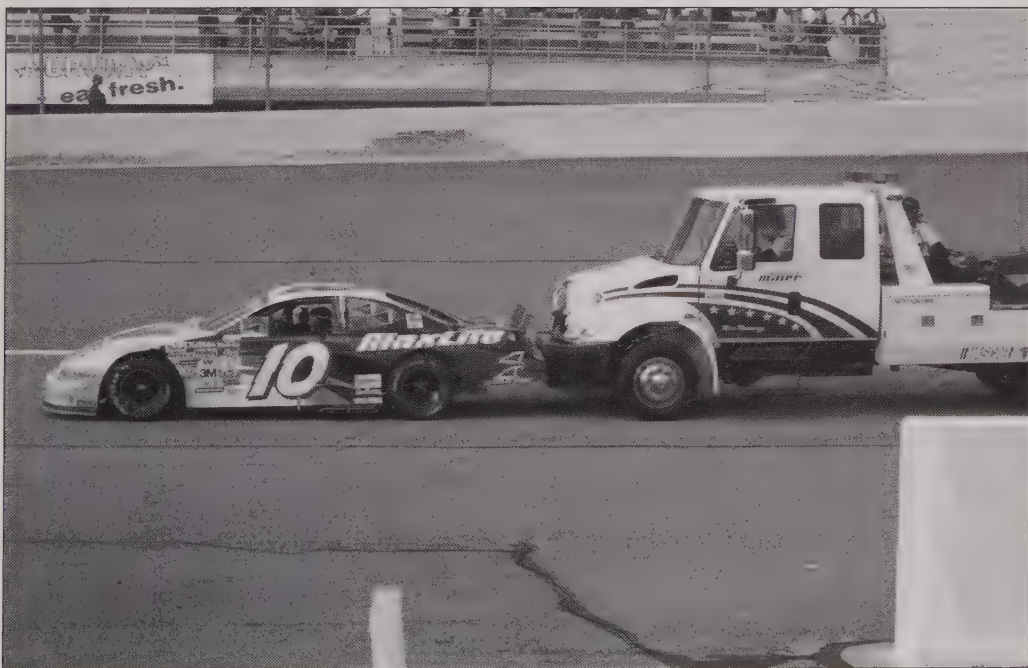
Dale Jarrett (No. 88) gets loose as he tries to get position under Greg Biffle (No. 44) and Kenny Wallace (No. 23) during the 2002 Pop Secret Microwave Popcorn 400. Jarrett finished 12th, Wallace 13th, and Biffle 25th. Biffle ran seven NASCAR premier series races in 2002 to prepare for a run at Rookie of the Year honors with Roush Racing the following season; Jamie McMurray actually took home that honor. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



The back end of Dale Earnhardt Jr.'s No. 8 Chevrolet started to break free during the 2002 Pop Secret Microwave Popcorn 400, but Junior was able to regain control before actually spinning out. Not that it mattered much to the Dale Earnhardt Inc. driver, who struggled most of the day en route to a disappointing 34th-place finish. In nine career NASCAR premier series starts at Rockingham, Earnhardt Jr. had just one top-10 finish. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

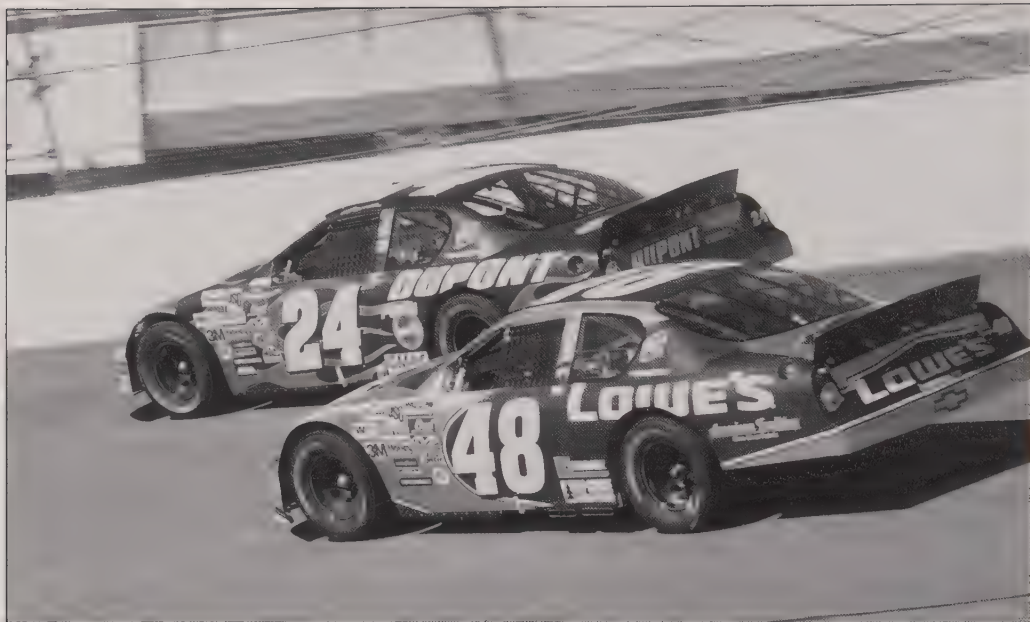


Johnny Benson Jr. (No. 10) charged under Kurt Busch (No. 97) for the lead on lap 366 of the 2002 Pop Secret Microwave Popcorn 400. Two laps later, Busch's Roush Racing teammate Mark Martin passed him for second place. Martin proceeded to hound Benson for the top spot the rest of the way but was never quite able to make the pass. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



Johnny Benson Jr.'s fuel supply was a concern in the closing stages of the 2002 Pop Secret Microwave Popcorn 400. Benson (No. 10) had enough gas to make it across the finish line but ran dry on the cool-down lap and had to be pushed back to pit road. It was the lone victory of Benson's NASCAR premier series career. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

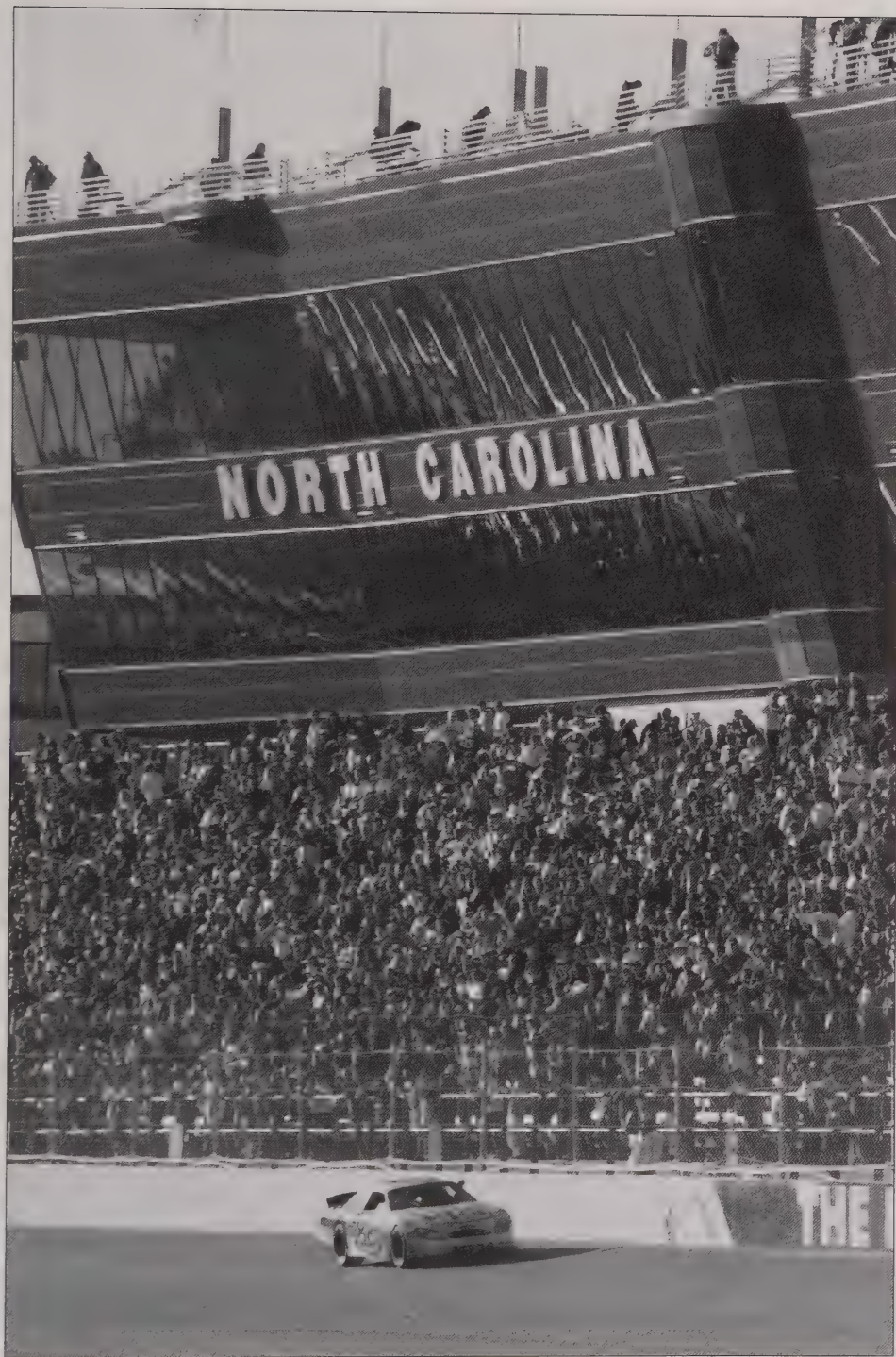




Hendrick Motorsports teammates Jeff Gordon (No. 24) and Jimmie Johnson (No. 48) had so-so days during the February 23, 2003, Subway 400. Johnson finished eighth behind race winner Dale Jarrett, while Gordon wound up 15th, one lap down. Gordon had four wins at Rockingham, while Johnson was shut out of Victory Lane in five career starts there. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

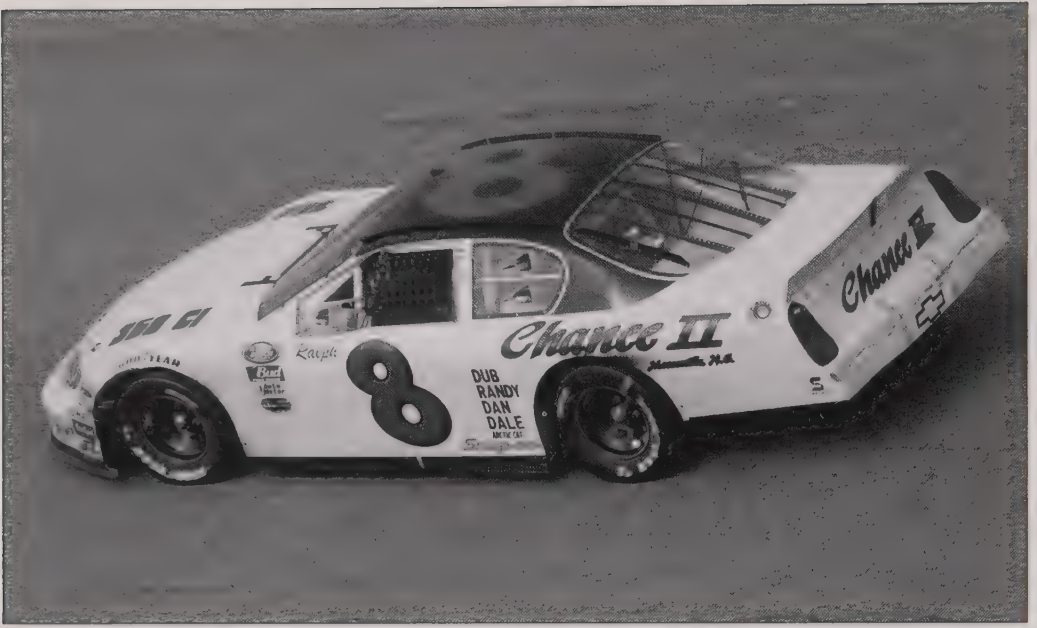


After finishing fifth in the 2003 Subway 400, Jamie McMurray's No. 42 Chip Ganassi Racing Dodge is pushed back to the garage to begin the inspection process. The next day at the track, McMurray led 192 of 197 laps in the track's rain-delayed Rockingham 200. It was the second of what would eventually be four consecutive victories for McMurray in the NASCAR Busch (now Nationwide) Series at The Rock. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

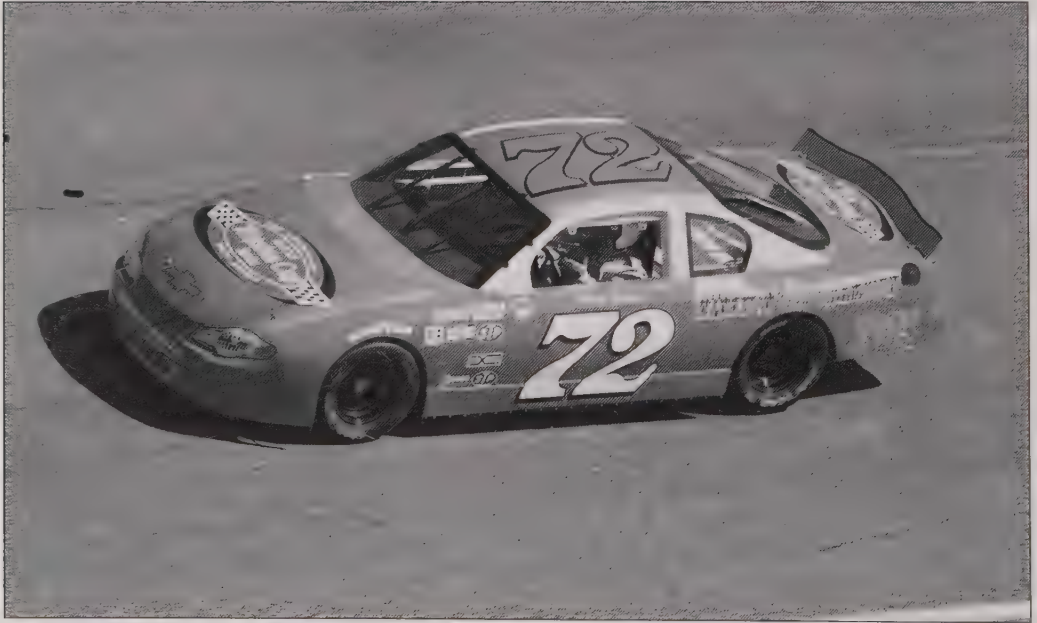


After holding off a late-race challenge from Kurt Busch in the 2003 Subway 400, Dale Jarrett (No. 88) turns his Robert Yates Racing Ford around and takes a backward victory lap to salute the fans in attendance. The 46-year-old Jarrett afterward credited an increased offseason workout regimen with helping him outlast his decades-younger rival. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

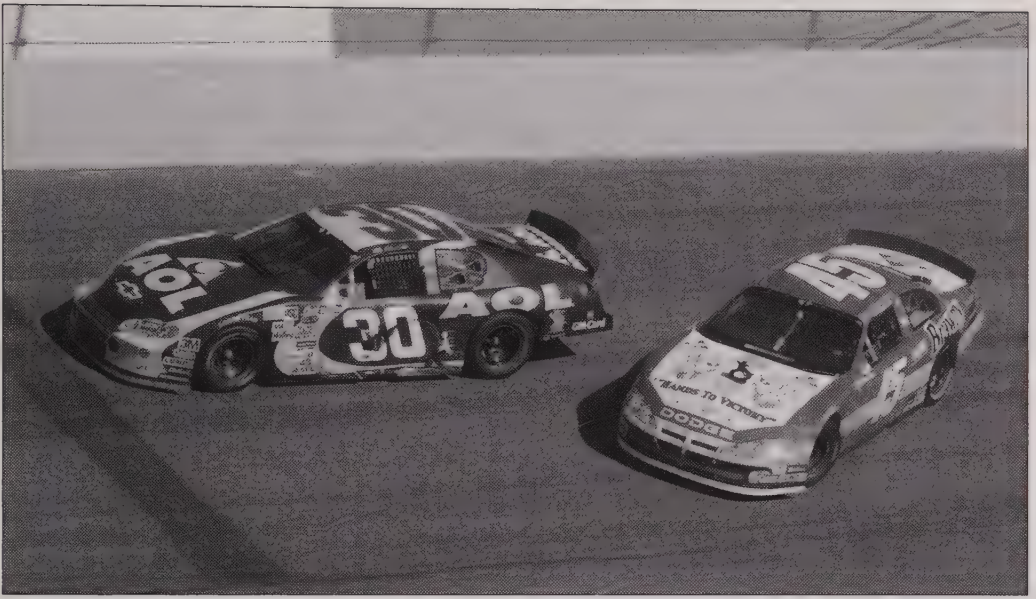




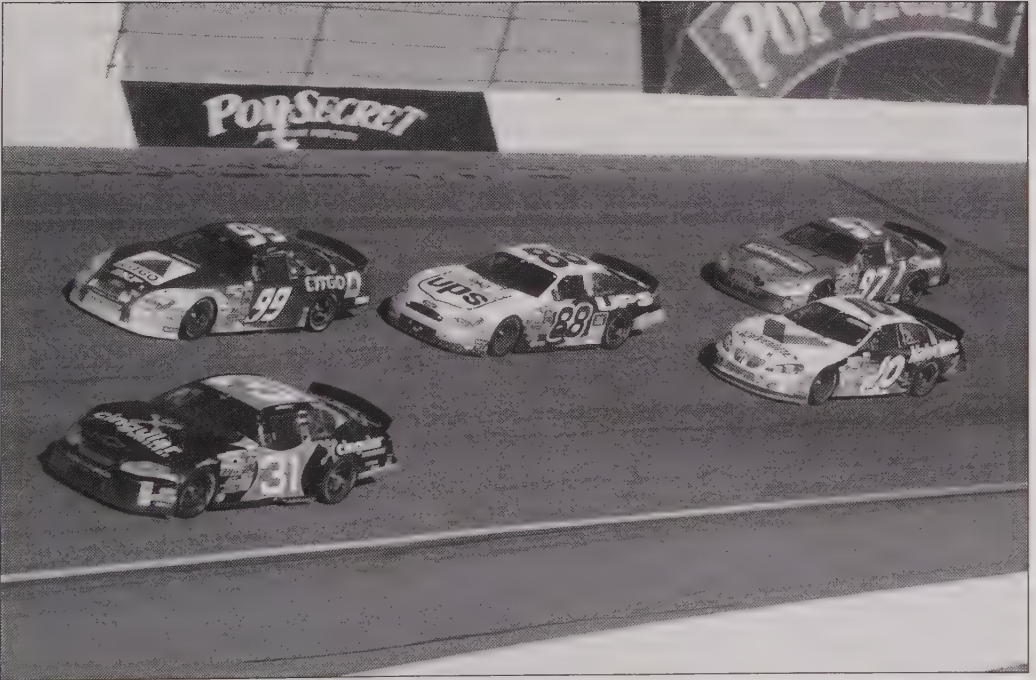
Martin Truex Jr.'s No. 8 Chevrolet carries a special paint scheme honoring the legendary Ralph Earnhardt, patriarch of the famous racing family, during the November 8, 2003, NASCAR Busch (now Nationwide) Series Target House 200. Truex never led the race but still managed to come home in second place. Truex drove for Chance 2 Motorsports, a team owned by Teresa Earnhardt and Dale Earnhardt Jr. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



Thirty years after clinching his lone NASCAR championship in Rockingham, Benny Parsons was back at the track to drive his No. 72 car commemorating his 1973 title prior to the November 9, 2003, Pop Secret Microwave Popcorn 400. The year 2003 was R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company's final season as title sponsor of what is now known as the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

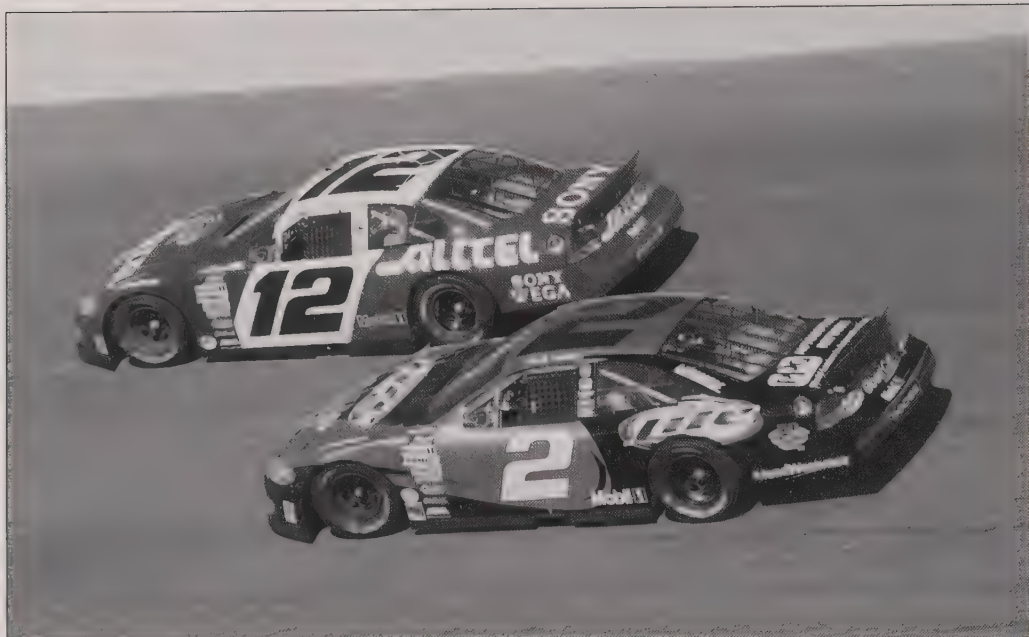


Kyle Petty (No. 45) left tire marks commonly known as donuts on the side of the Chevrolet driven by Steve Park (No. 30) when the two made contact during the 2003 Pop Secret Microwave Popcorn 400. Petty then spun his family-owned Dodge in turn four to bring out the race's sixth caution on lap 156. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



As always at Rockingham, the 2003 Pop Secret Microwave Popcorn 400 saw packs of cars all around the track from the drop of the green flag to the checkered. Robby Gordon (No. 31), Jeff Burton (No. 99), Dale Jarrett (No. 88), Johnny Benson Jr. (No. 10), and Kurt Busch (No. 97) vie for running room during the event. Burton, who finished seventh, was the best of the bunch on the afternoon. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

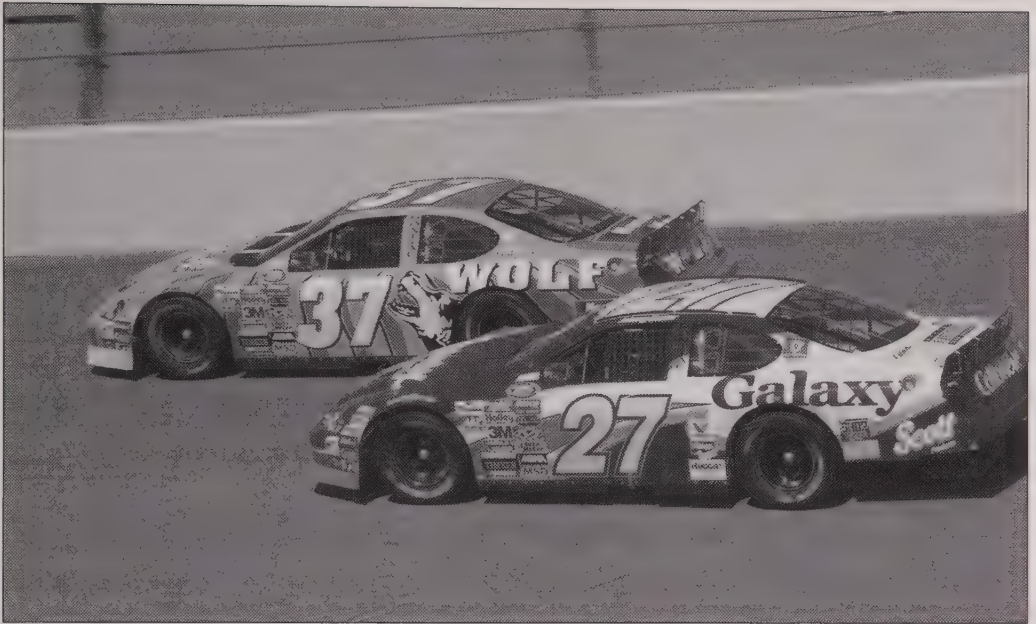




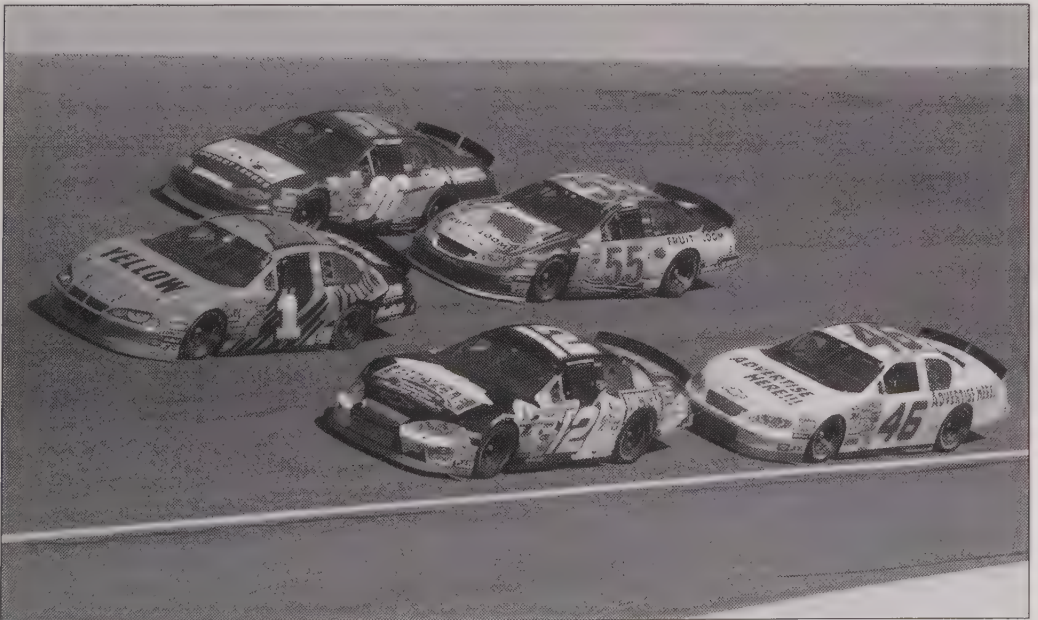
By the early 2000s, teams that fielded two or more cars were no longer a novelty in NASCAR—it was quickly becoming the norm. Penske Racing paired veteran Rusty Wallace (No. 2) with young up-and-coming phenom Ryan Newman (No. 12), and they duked it out during the 2003 Pop Secret Microwave Popcorn 400. Newman finished fifth to Wallace's 23rd in the event. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



Bill Elliott, one of the most popular drivers in the history of NASCAR, posted the final victory of his career at Rockingham in the 2003 Pop Secret Microwave Popcorn 400. Ironically, the track was also the site of Elliott's very first NASCAR premier series start nearly 28 years earlier. In 48 career starts there, Elliott collected four wins and 21 top-10 finishes. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

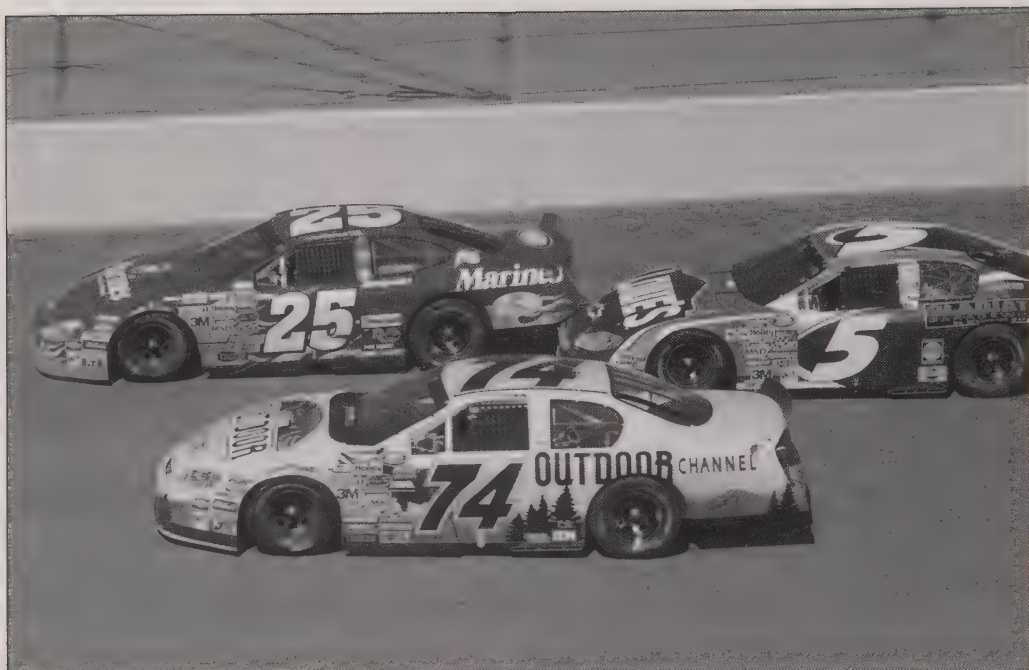


Brewco Motorsports teammates David Green (No. 37) and Johnny Sauter (No. 27) enjoyed fine runs in the February 21, 2004, NASCAR Busch (now Nationwide) Series Goody's Headache Powder 200, the most recent event in what is now the NASCAR Nationwide Series to be run at Rockingham. Green, the 1994 division champion, finished fifth, while Sauter took sixth. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



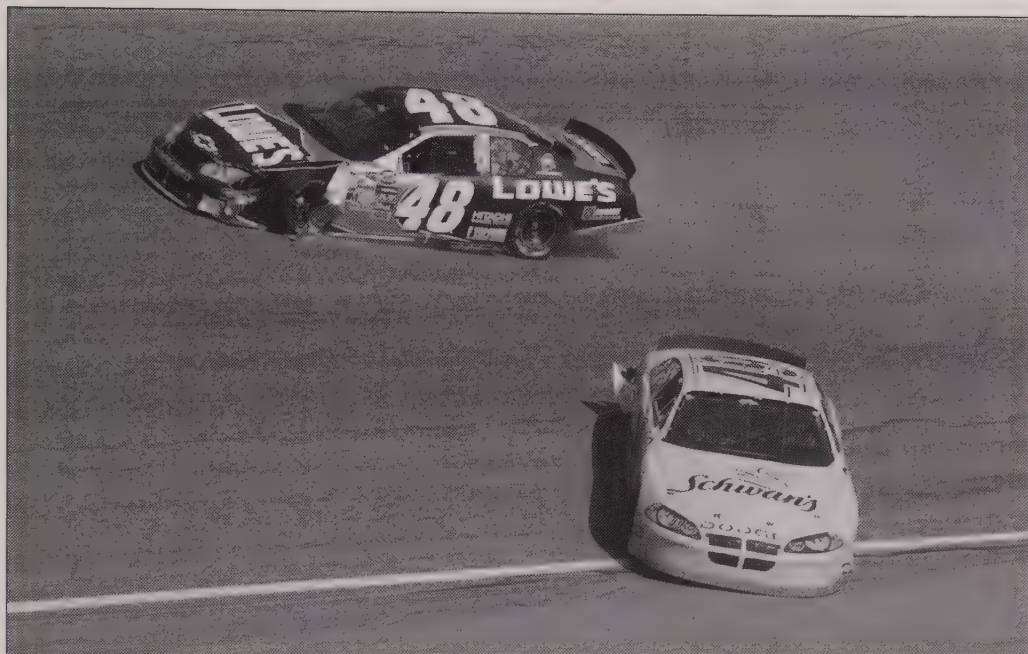
Johnny Benson (No. 1), Gus Wasson (No. 96), Tim Fedewa (No. 12), Robby Gordon (No. 55), and Ashton Lewis (No. 46) put on a driving clinic during the 2004 NASCAR Busch (now Nationwide) Series Goody's Headache Powder 200. Following the bittersweet conclusion of the weekend, such a scene would not be repeated at Rockingham for more than four long years. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



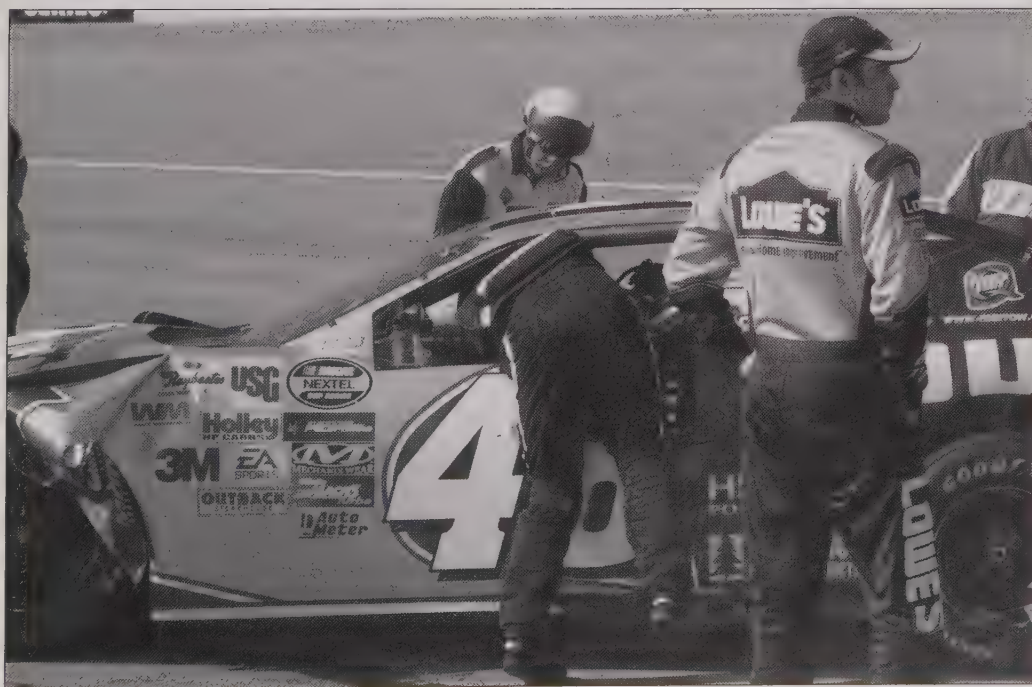


It was still early in the first full-time NASCAR season ever driven by Kyle Busch (No. 5) when he tried to find a way past Bobby Hamilton Jr. (No. 25) and Damon Lusk (No. 74) during the 2004 NASCAR Busch (now Nationwide) Series Goody's Headache Powder 200. Busch was seventh at the end of the day and already showing signs of the stardom he would go on to achieve at the NASCAR Sprint Cup level. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

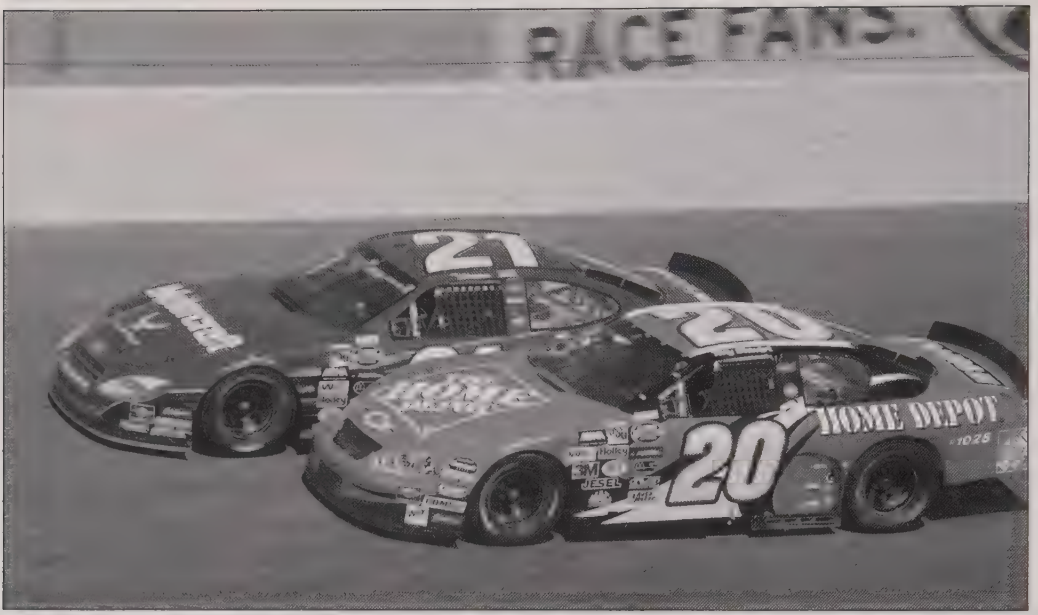
Jamie McMurray did not dominate the 2004 NASCAR Busch (now Nationwide) Series Goody's Headache Powder 200, but in the end, it did not really matter. He still ended the day in Victory Lane after his fourth straight win at Rockingham. Mark Martin was the only other competitor to have achieved such a feat at The Rock. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



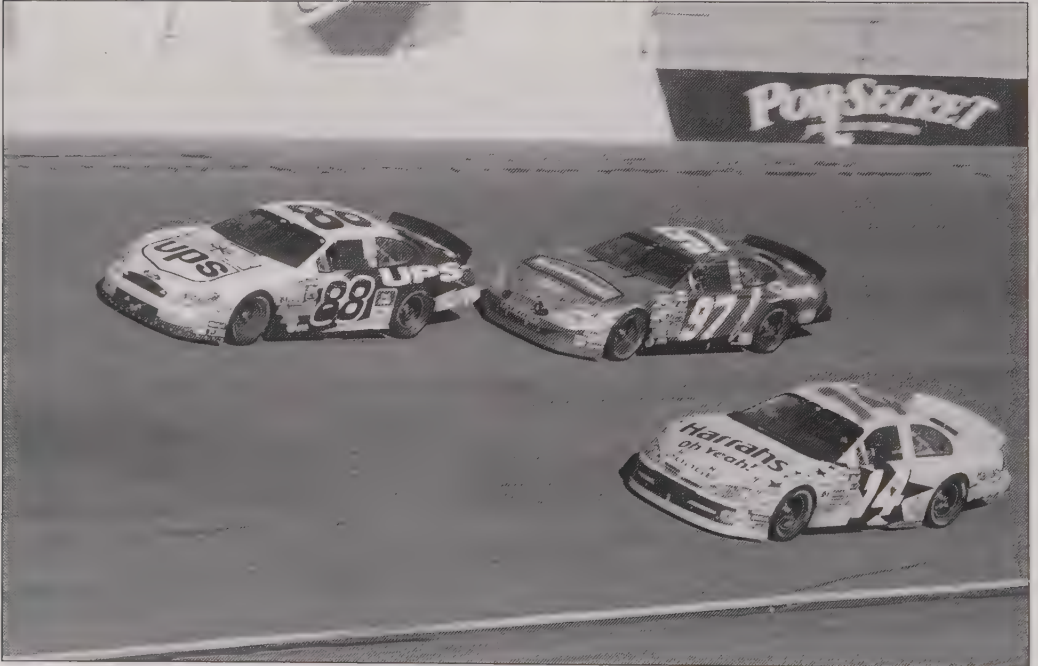
Jimmie Johnson (No. 48) and Ken Schrader (No. 49) tangled in turn four on lap 132 of the 2004 Subway 400 (above). Uninjured in the mishap, a dejected Johnson looks on as safety crews prepare to tow his Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet back to the garage. He was done for the day. It was a disappointing race for both drivers. Johnson qualified 29th and finished 41st due to the accident, while Schrader had already been involved in one accident before his run-in with Johnson. Unlike Johnson, however, Schrader was able to limp to the checkered flag. Four laps down to the leaders, Schrader was credited with a 27th-place finish. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



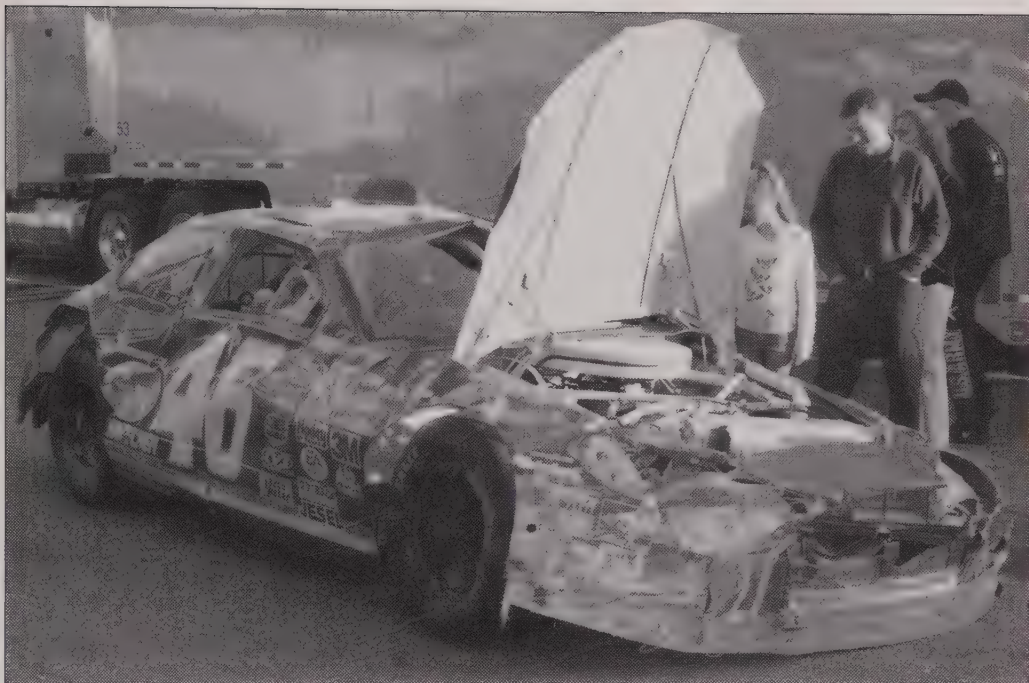




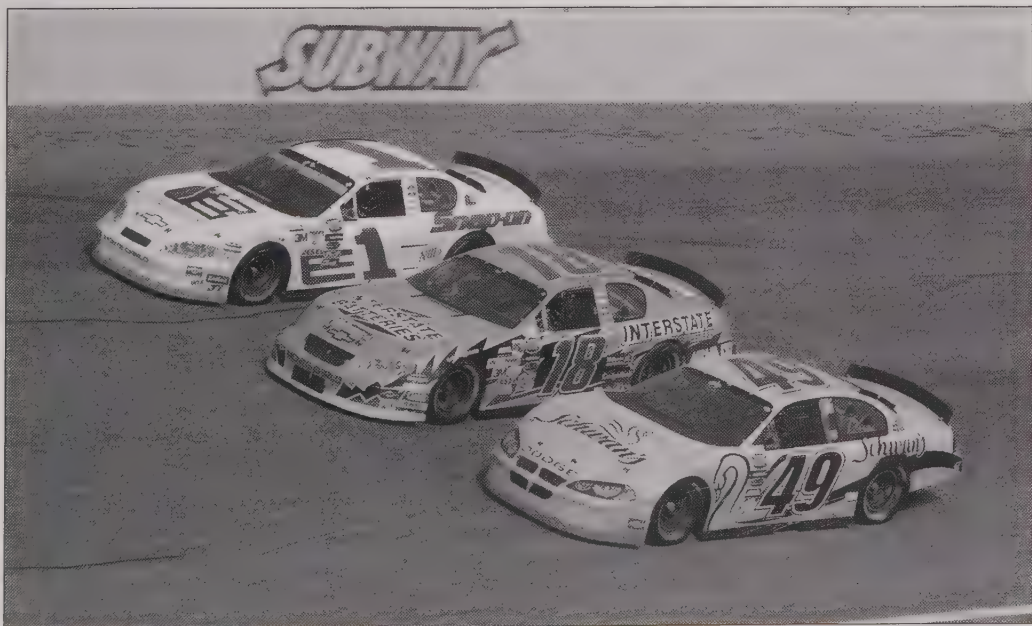
Ricky Rudd (No. 21) made his last start at Rockingham during the February 22, 2004, Subway 400, nearly three decades after he made the first start of his NASCAR career there. Although Tony Stewart (No. 20) pressured Rudd for a spot during the event, neither driver finished very well that afternoon. Rudd wound up 19th to Stewart's 26th. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



A year after battling for the win in the February 2004 event at Rockingham, neither Dale Jarrett (No. 88) nor Kurt Busch (No. 97) was much of a factor during the 2004 Subway 400. Engine failure dropped Jarrett out of contention at the midway point of the race, while Busch managed an eighth-place effort. Larry Foyt (No. 14), biological grandson and adopted son of racing legend A.J. Foyt, was credited with 32nd. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

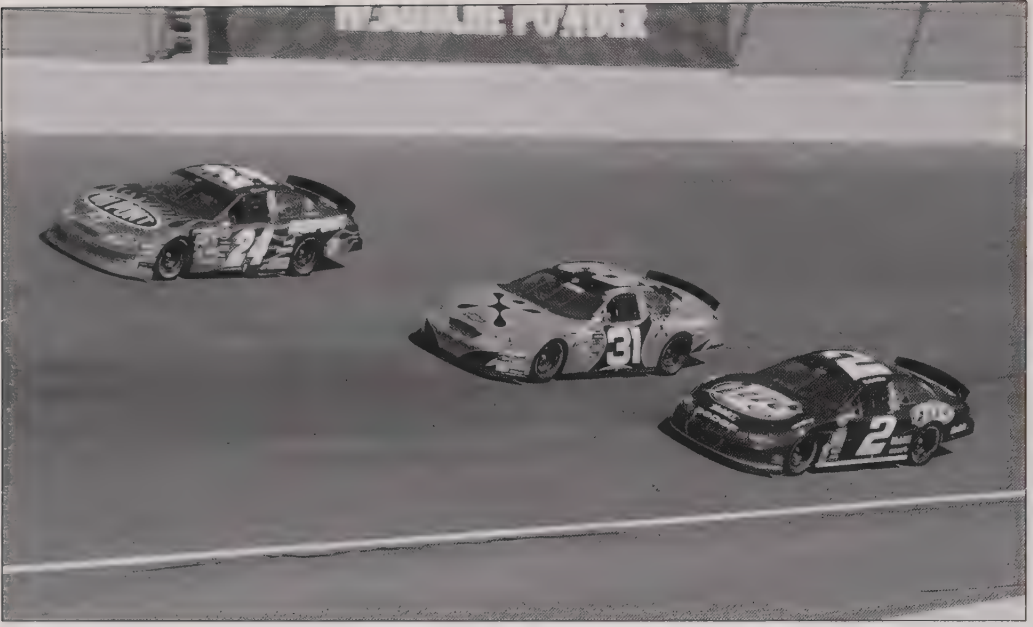


Although he tumbled down the backstretch five times during a wild melee on lap 264 of the 2004 Subway 400, journeyman driver Carl Long (hands in pockets) was able to walk away from his car uninjured and later inspect the battered No. 46 machine in the garage. Also caught up in the mishap were Joe Nemechek, Bobby Labonte, Mark Martin, and Brendan Gaughan. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

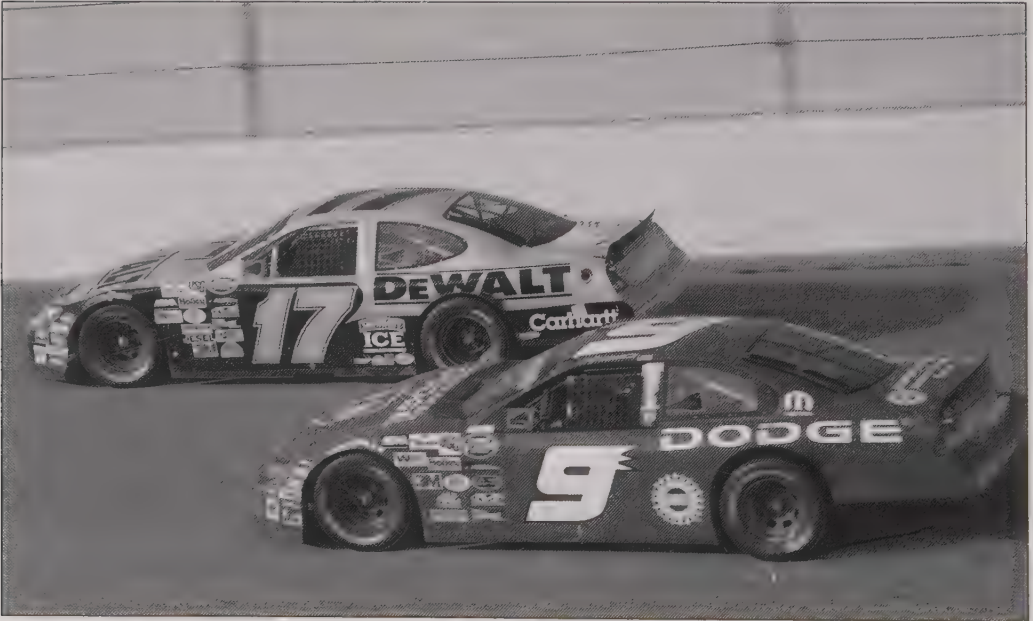


John Andretti (No. 1) and Ken Schrader (No. 49) sandwiched Bobby Labonte (No. 18) during the 2004 Subway 400. It was not the best of days for any of the trio with Labonte's 25th-place showing leading the way. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)





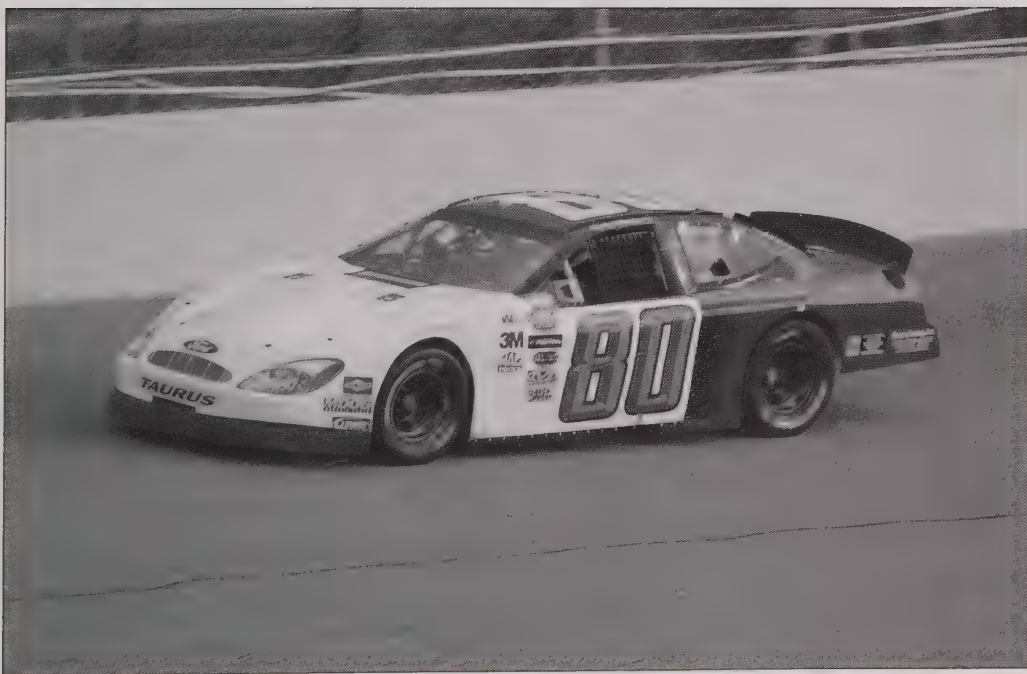
With NASCAR premier series champions Jeff Gordon (No. 24) to the high side and Rusty Wallace (No. 2) underneath, Robby Gordon (No. 31) is between a rock and a hard place during the last series race at Rockingham. Robby Gordon's day ended early when he was involved in an accident with Jeff Green that brought out the event's seventh and final caution on lap 352. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



Making just his second NASCAR Sprint Cup Series start, Kasey Kahne (No. 9) is all over Matt Kenseth (No. 17) in the closing laps of the 2004 Subway 400. Coming off turn four on the last lap, Kahne made one last desperate charge. Kenseth won by 1/100th of a second, one of the closest finishes ever at Rockingham. It would be the last NASCAR Sprint Cup race ever run at The Rock. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

*Six*

## ANDY TO THE RESCUE



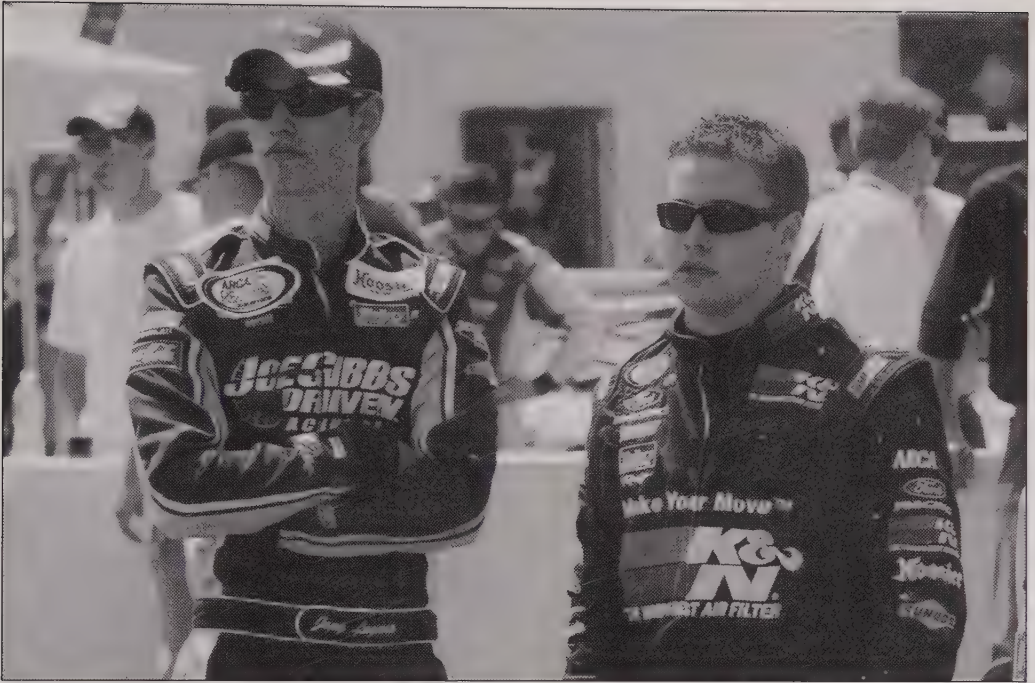
Andy Hillenburg (No. 80) could not have known when he ran the 2004 Subway 400—the 78th and last NASCAR premier series race held at The Rock—that he would one day bring the track back from the brink of oblivion as its owner. Hillenburg started 43rd and finished 34th in Rockingham's final race in the series, completing 376 of 393 laps. He also made his first series start at the track on March 3, 1991. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



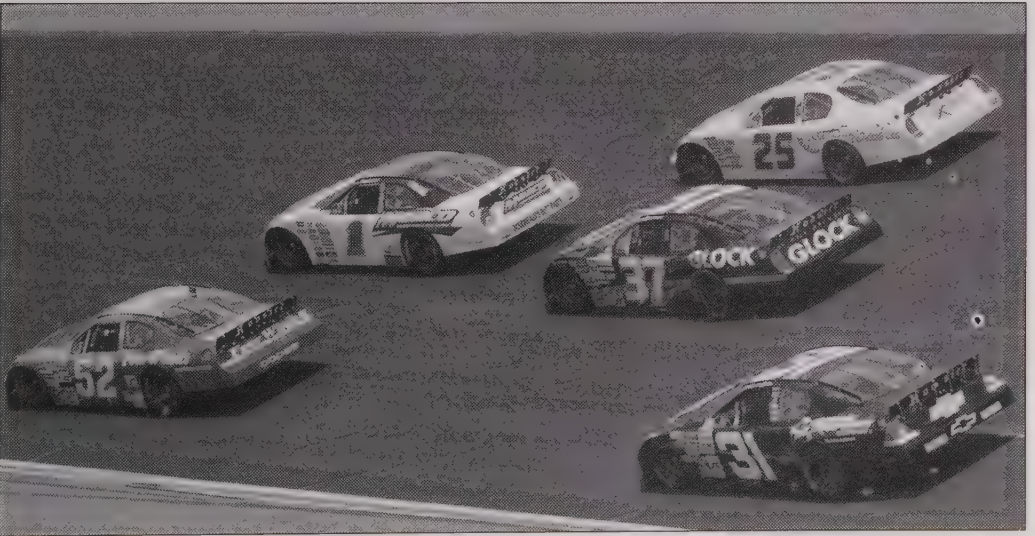


Andy Hillenburg's bid for North Carolina Motor (now Rockingham) Speedway at an October 2, 1997, auction was more than enough for him to join the ranks of race track owners. As reporters look on, Hillenburg (seated with wife Michelle at his side) signs the paperwork making the track his (left) and then shakes hands with Gene Millican of the National Auction Group to seal the deal (below). The track was Hillenburg's. (Courtesy of David Griffin.)



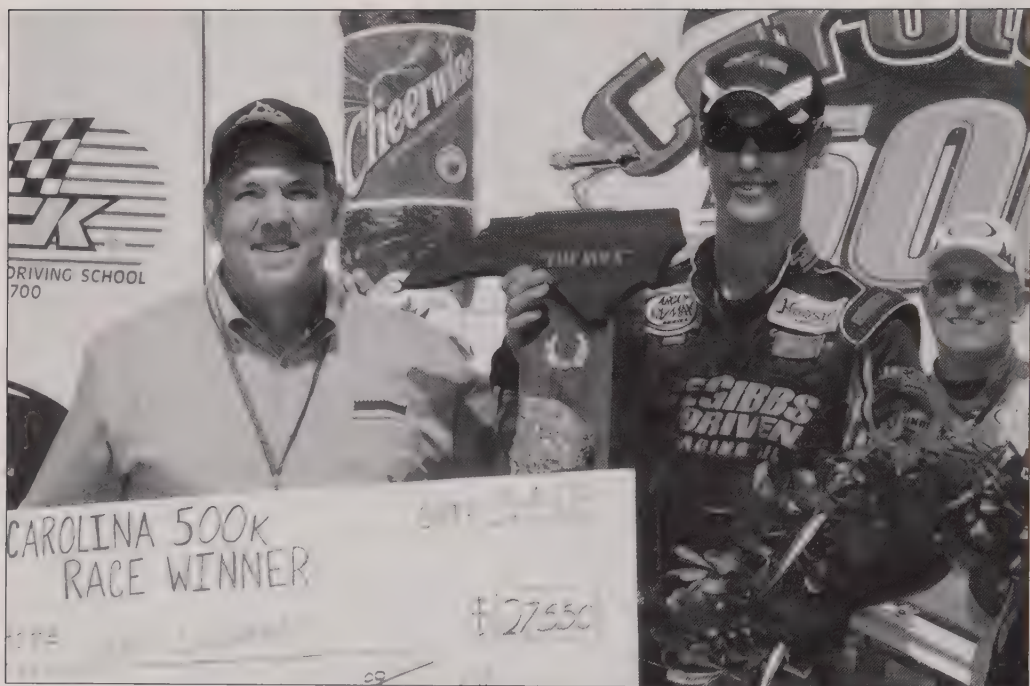


One of the best things about racing's return to Rockingham was the fact that the sport's up-and-coming young guns once again had the opportunity to prove themselves on the track's challenging layout. Amongst the fresh-faced drivers in the ARCA Re/Max Series Carolina 500k on May 4, 2008, were Joey Logano (left) and Ricky Stenhouse Jr. Logano went on to become a winner in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series, while Stenhouse claims two NASCAR Nationwide Series championships. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

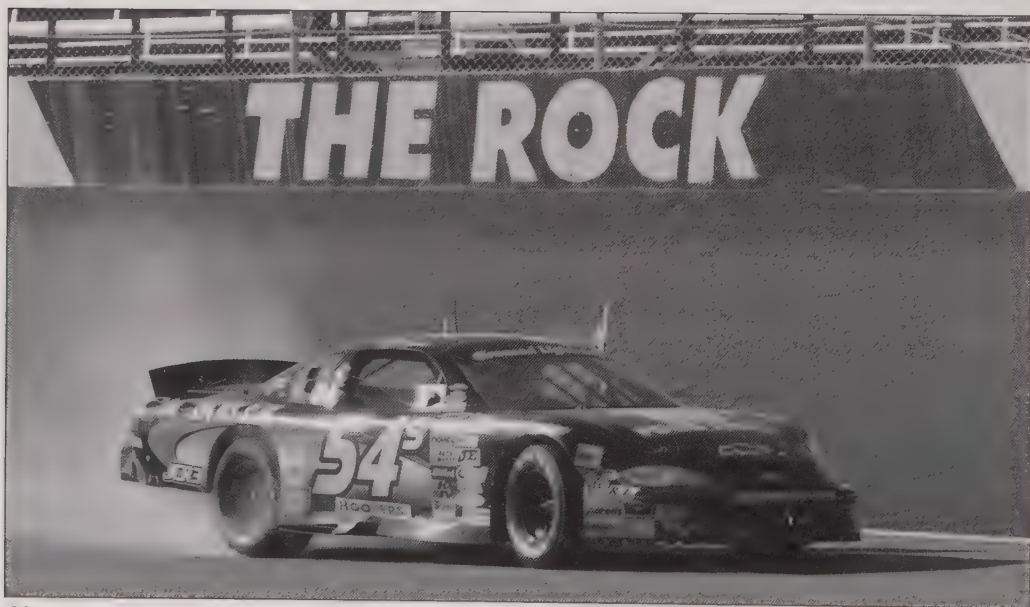


After an absence of more than four years, stock car racing returned to Rockingham for the 2008 Carolina 500k ARCA Re/Max Series event. With 50 cars in the starting field, the kind of hard-nosed racing displayed by Ken Schrader (No. 52), Tom Hessert III (No. 1), Dexter Bean (No. 37), Joey Logano (No. 25), and Austin Dillon (No. 31) could be found all around the facility. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)





With racing's return to Rockingham and a potential star taking the win, there was plenty of reason to celebrate following the 2008 Carolina 500k. In the winner's circle, track owner Andy Hillenburg (left) congratulates Joey Logano (right) on his victory. A few weeks shy of his 18th birthday, Logano became the youngest-ever winner of a major race at the track. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



Clay Rogers (No. 54) celebrates his victory in the November 1, 2008, Mark Brooks Memorial/American 200 Hooters Pro Cup event with a frontstretch burnout. Held on the track's traditional early November weekend, the "American" portion of the race name was also a throwback to The Rock's NASCAR premier series glory days. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



Clay Rogers (right) receives a piece of The Rock—literally—from Andy Hillenburg in Victory Lane following the 2008 Mark Brooks Memorial/American 200 Hooters Pro Cup event. The race was named in honor of Hooters founder Bob Brooks's son, who lost his life along with 1992 NASCAR premier series champion Alan Kulwicki and two others in an April 1, 1993, plane crash. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)





SAFER barrier soft walls were installed at Rockingham in all four turns and on the inside of the backstretch wall in mid-September and late December 2011. The safety measure was an important step in bringing NASCAR back to the fold. (Courtesy of Rockingham Speedway.)



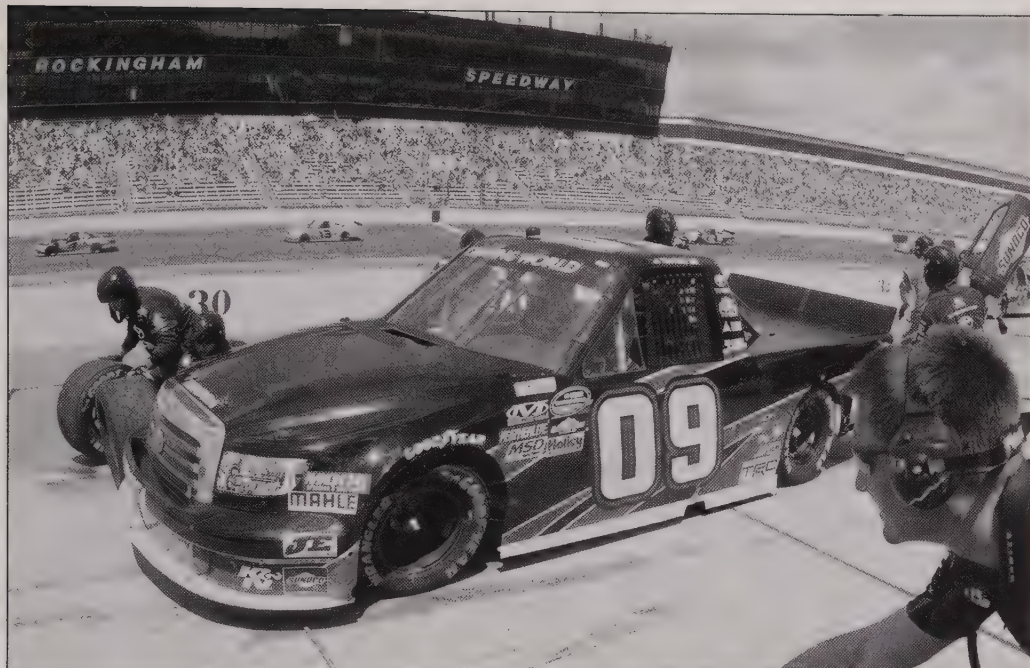
Andy Hillenburg shares a laugh with NASCAR president Mike Helton prior to the 2012 NASCAR Camping World Truck Series Good Sam Roadside Assistance 200. It had taken Hillenburg some time to bring the sanctioning body back into the fold at Rockingham, and his success in doing so was one of the best feel-good stories in recent memory. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)





Many racing families have battled their way around Rockingham's tricky layout, including the Pettys, Pearsons, Earnhardts, Allisons, Foyts, Jarretts, Waltrips, Parsonses, Wallaces, Bodines, and Labontes. Richard Childress (above, left) made 18 NASCAR premier series starts at the track before turning his attention to fielding cars there as an owner, beginning with Dale Earnhardt. Ty Dillon (above, right), Childress's grandson, finished eighth in the 2012 Good Sam Roadside Assistance 200. Ty's father, Mike Dillon, also raced at Rockingham. Ward Burton (below, right) had wins in both of NASCAR's top-two national series at the track, while his son Jeb (below, left) was able to finish 11th in the 2012 Good Sam Roadside Assistance 200. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



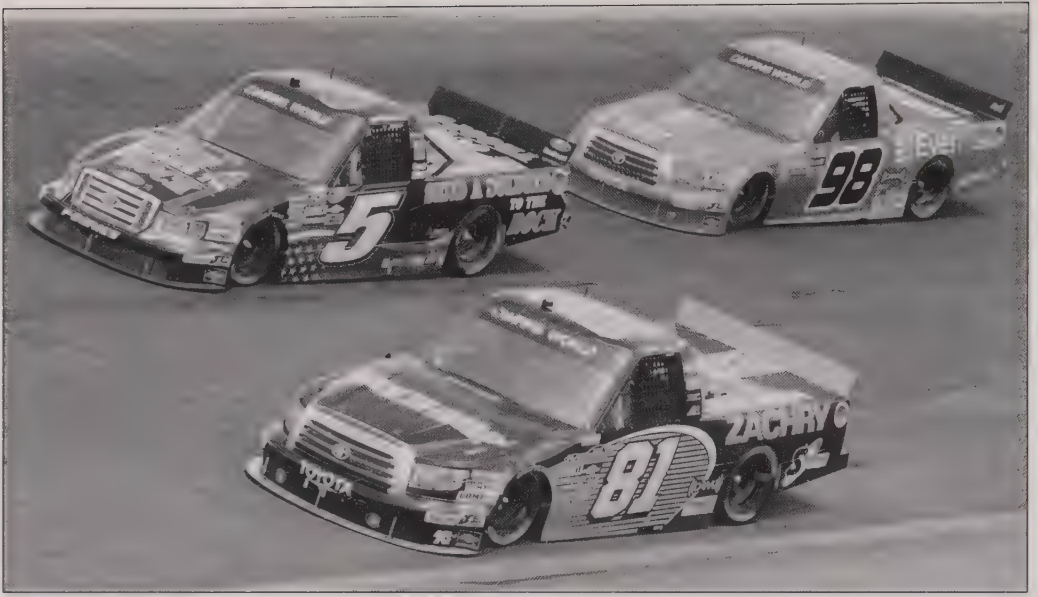


During a mid-race stop, John Wes Townley's No. 09 RAB Racing over-the-wall pit crew flies through its stop as quickly as possible. Townley finished 20th in the 36-truck field. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

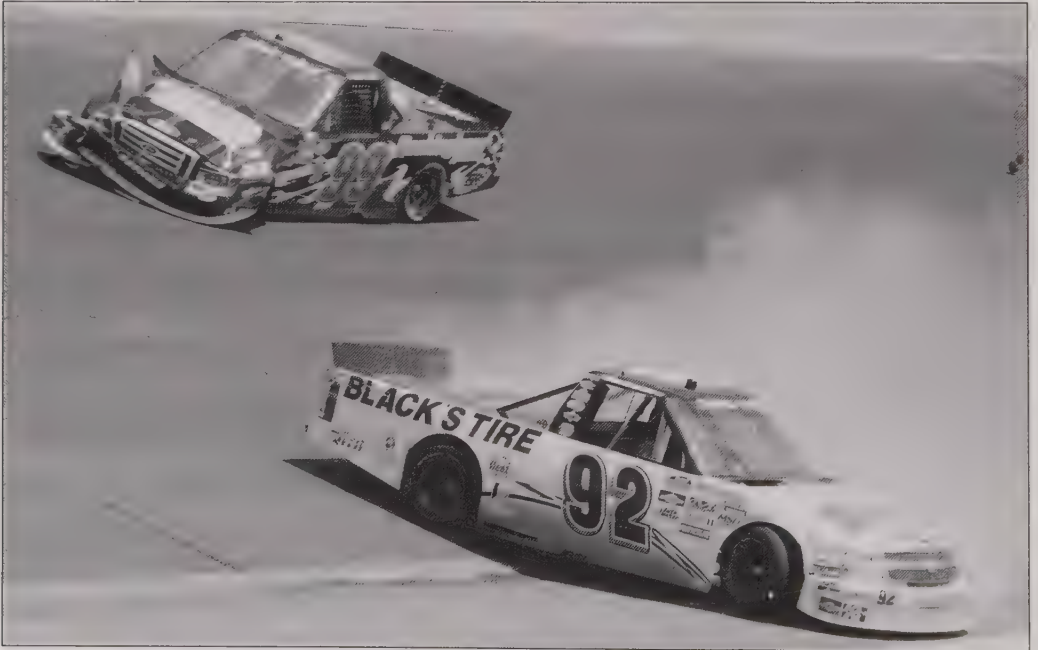


Ty Dillon (No. 3) tries to chase down Nelson Piquet Jr. (No. 30) late in the 2012 Good Sam Roadside Assistance 200. In the end, however, Dillon settled for an eighth-place finish to Piquet's seventh. Piquet, a native of Brasilia, Brazil, won two races during the 2012 NASCAR Camping World Truck Series. Dillon, meanwhile, also made it to Victory Lane that season. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



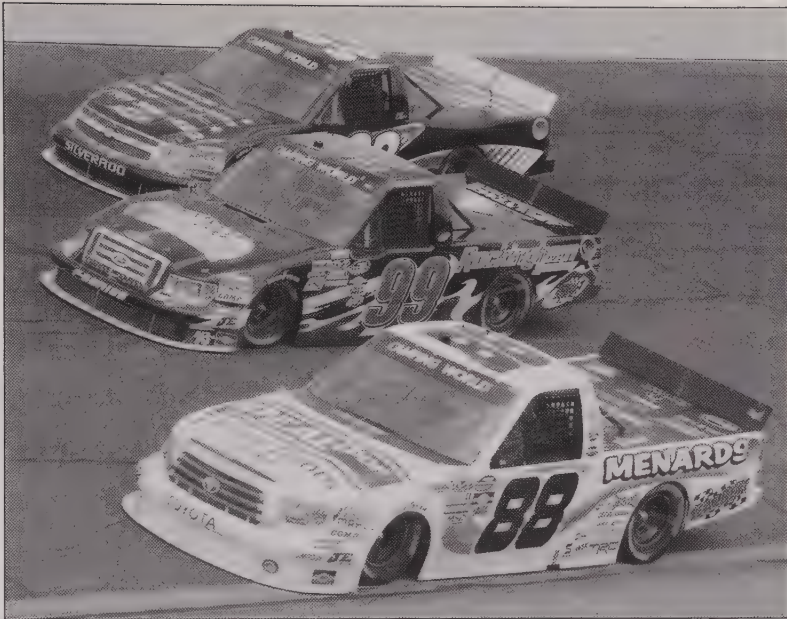


David Starr (No. 81) hugs the yellow line at the bottom of Rockingham's racing surface while trying to fend off the advance of Paulie Harakka (No. 5) and Dakoda Armstrong (No. 98). Starr rolled across the finish line in 13th place with Armstrong right behind him in 14th. Harakka, a graduate of NASCAR's Drive for Diversity development program, was credited with a 26th-place effort. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



An accident involving David Reutimann (No. 92) and Bryan Silas (No. 99) in turn four brought out the third of four yellow flags that flew during the 2012 Good Sam Roadside Assistance 200. Silas was sidelined for the rest of the day, while Reutimann finished 19th, three laps down. Two of the four cautions on the day were for accidents, while the rest were for debris. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

NASCAR was back at The Rock, and so was three-wide racing during the 2012 Good Sam Roadside Assistance 200. Matt Crafton (No. 88) tries to duck under Bryan Silas (No. 99) and Chris Cockrum (No. 93) for position early in the event. The move worked, and Crafton went on to capture an impressive third-place finish. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

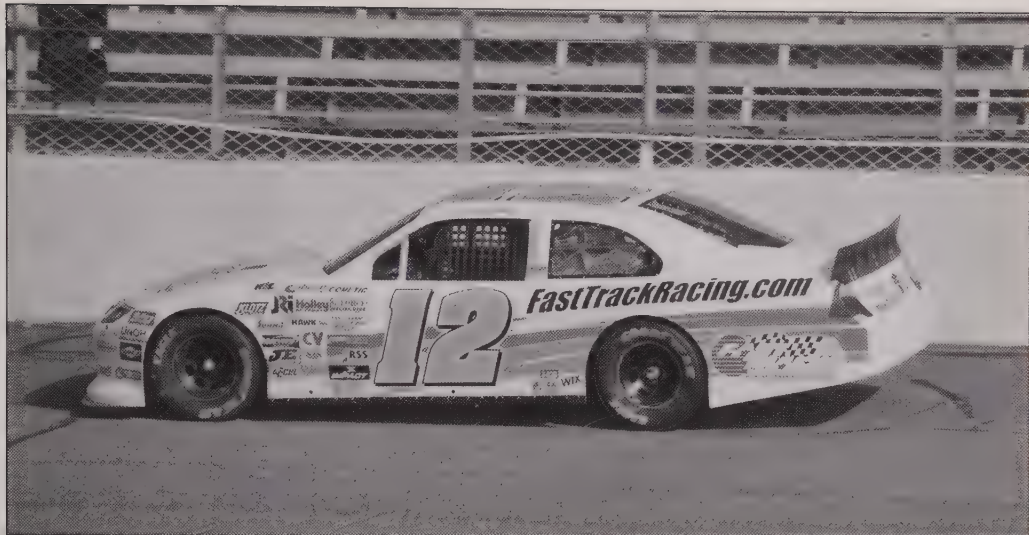


Although his truck was qualified fifth fastest for the 2012 Good Sam Roadside Assistance 200 by Brad Sweet, NASCAR Sprint Cup star Kasey Kahne had to start from the rear of the field due to the driver change. Still, he took the lead from Matt Crafton on lap 155 and led the rest of the way in one of the truck series best feel-good stories of the season. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)

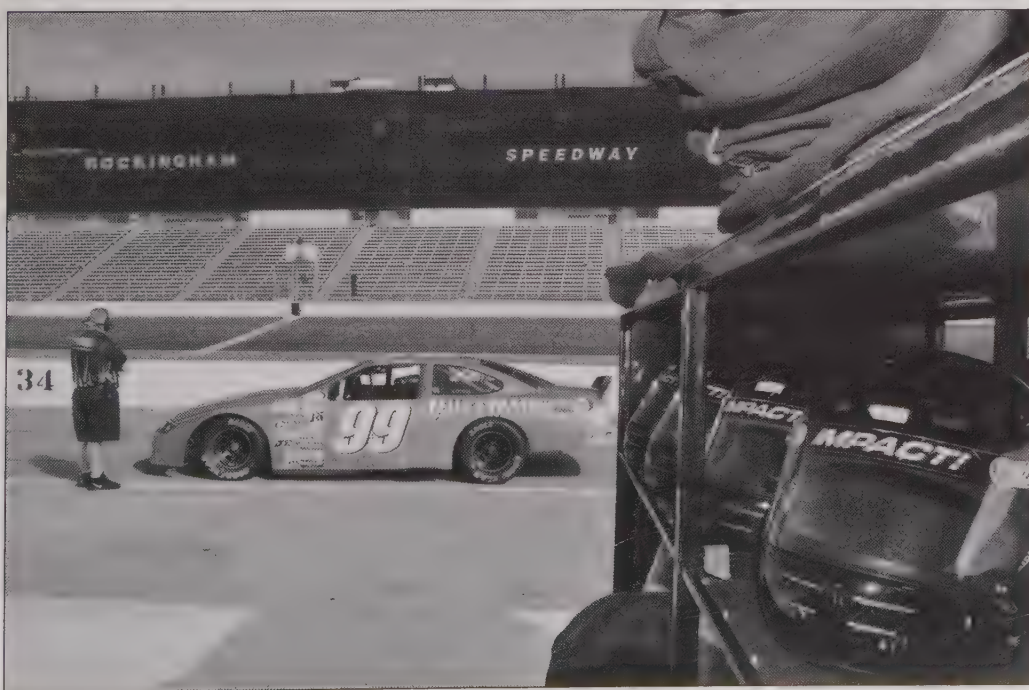




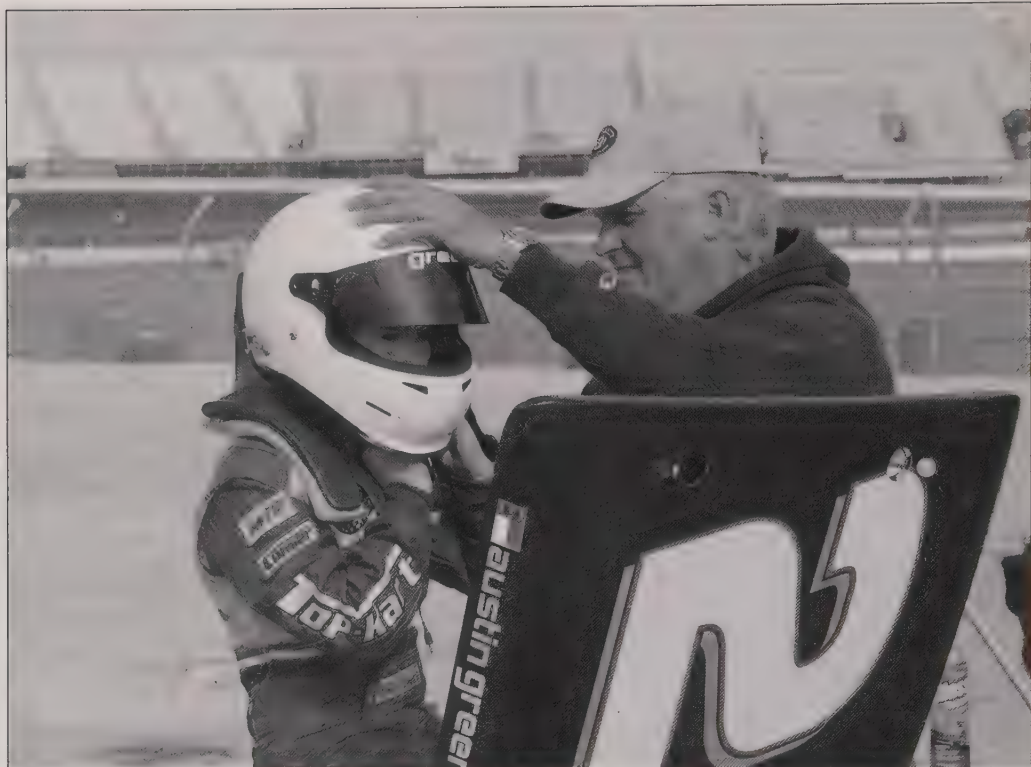
Andy Hillenburg (center) is honored with the National Motorsports Press Association (NMPA)/ Speedway Motorsports Spirit Award during a ceremony on January 20, 2013. An NMPA press release stated that the award is “designed to recognize character and achievement in the face of adversity, sportsmanship and contributions to motorsports.” Scott Cooper and Lori Worley of Speedway Motorsports present the award to Hillenburg. (Courtesy of Bryan Hallman.)



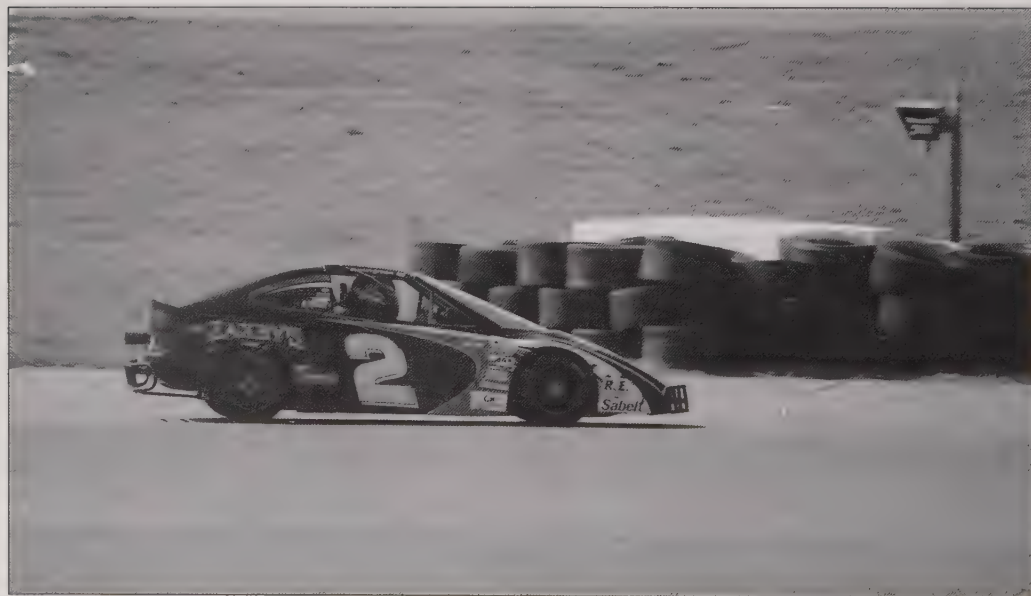
Andy Hillenburg was making dreams come true for avid race fans long before he purchased a race track. His Fast Track High Performance Driving School is offered at several facilities around the country, including Rockingham. Sessions can last anywhere from a three-lap ride around the track up to three days of intensive driving. (Courtesy of Fast Track High Performance Driving School.)

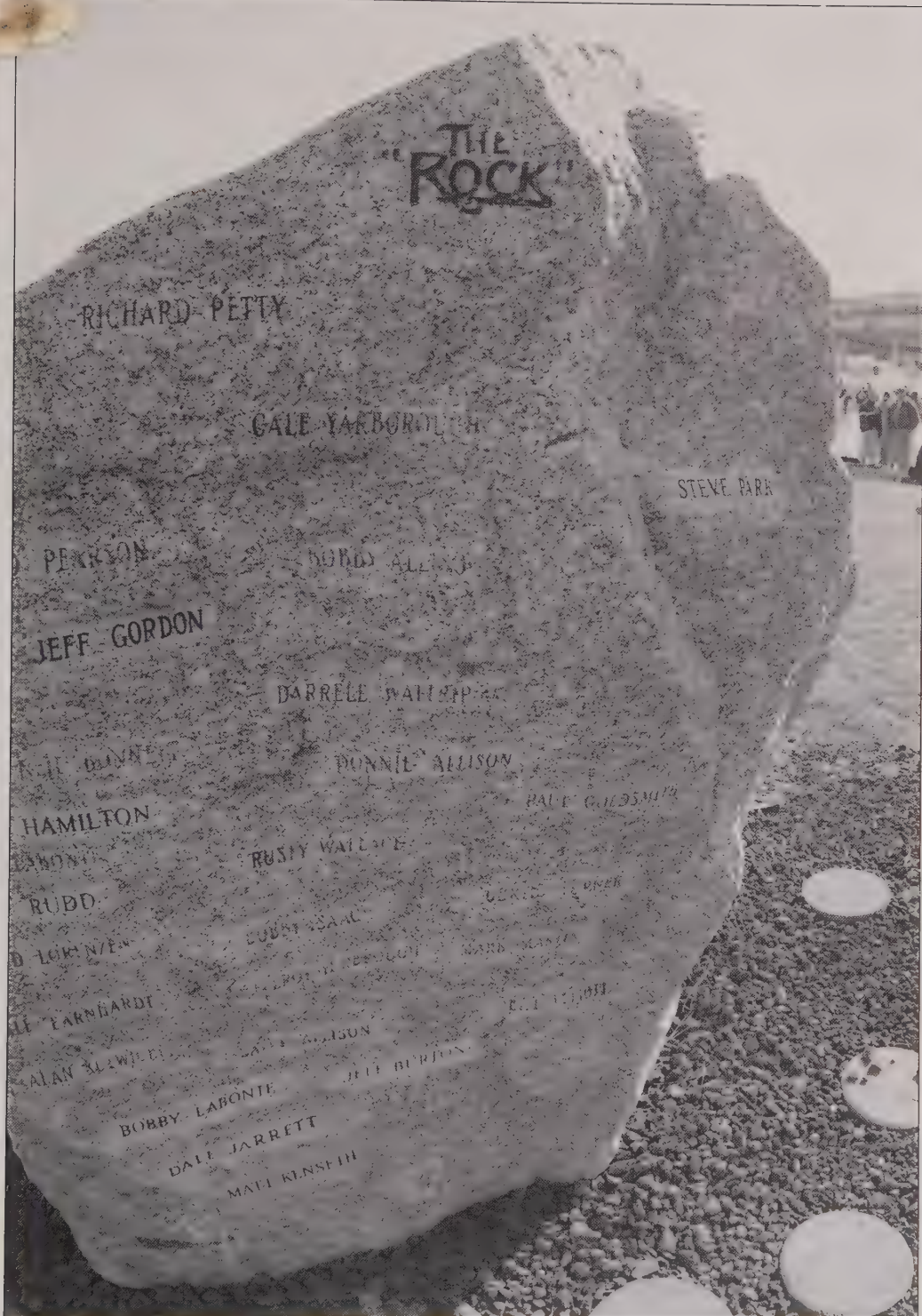






Austin Green (above, left) is helped by his dad, David, prior to strapping into his Bandolero machine (below). Austin's dad and uncles Jeff and Mark raced at Rockingham many times at both the NASCAR Sprint Cup and NASCAR Nationwide Series levels. Legends and Bandolero cars are raced on a road course located in the infield of the main track itself as well as on an oval layout that is part of "Little Rock"—a half-mile facility located behind the backstretch of the big track. (Courtesy of Austin Green Racing.)





The Rock, one of the most unique monuments in the sport, is engraved with previous winners. May new names continue to be added for years to come. (Courtesy of David Griffin.)

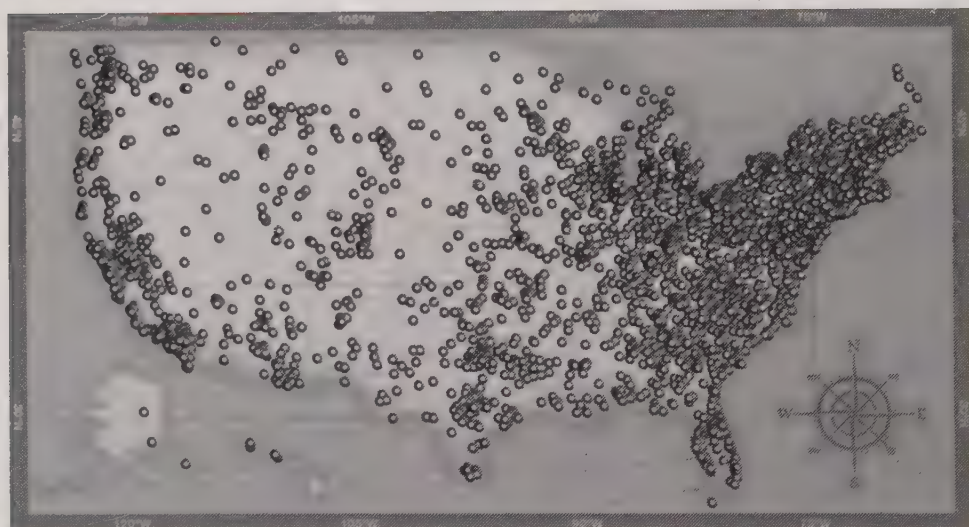


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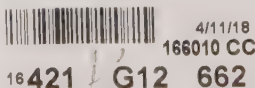


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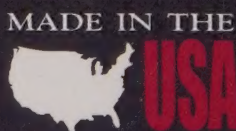
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