

High-octane content drives readers, advertisers

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The Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer in Kentucky has created a weekly NASCAR page that also runs in fellow Paxton Media papers the Vincennes Sun-Commercial in Indiana and The Messenger in Madisonville, Ky. Owensboro Executive Editor Matt Francis said Member Choice Complete provided the papers with comprehensive NASCAR coverage and allowed them to save money by dropping a produced service. The customized page includes AP stories, photos and agate, while prominently displaying a local racing column by a Messenger-Inquirer sports writer. Vincennes already has a sponsor for the new page, and the other papers plan to follow suit.

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B6 MESSENGER-INQUIRER, Thursday, July 23, 2009

this week in

NASCAR

Hendrick getting stronger

Convention of wisdom always held that if a rival were ever to challenge NASCAR for stock car racing supremacy, it would be Bristol, Tenn.

The North Carolina businessman and NASCAR gadfly owns multiple race tracks spread throughout the country, including the money makers like Bristol Motor Speedway in Tennessee.

If he were to start up a series to challenge Sprint Cup, he'd have places to race.

Just look up a TV deal, then turn 'em loose.

"Of course, he'd need someone to actually show up ready to roll, and that's the problem."

Sprint Cup stars and their teams would need to defect to pull in the numbers to make the venture profitable.

Otherwise, it would be just another

series like the Automobile Racing Club of America's Rolex/Max-outlet, which runs the Car of Tomorrow Cup cars and puts on a good show, but is still mainly seen as a development series for NASCAR.

No, Smith can't do it alone. He'd need help.

Someone like Rick Hendrick. This is all just wild speculation.

Hendrick, for all we know, is partly happy with NASCAR the way it is.

He has a three-time points defending champion in Jimmie Johnson, Jeff Gordon is still as popular as ever, and 50-year-old Mark Martin is the best good story of 2009 with his return to victory lane.

But Dale Earnhardt Jr. there is Hendrick's biggest headache at a time when other team owners are shutting ramps down due to a lack of sponsorship and laying off workers back at

the shop. Hendrick is the most powerful owner in NASCAR. His reach starts far beyond NASCAR's official rule, at his own pace, buying an owner to four teams.

From leader Tony Stewart's start-up operation as a partner with Carl Haas to Hendrick's cars and Hendrick engines.

Stewart's teammate is Ryan Newman, and you might as well call the two-car team a Hendrick satellite operation.

Speculation that Kevin Harvick might leave Richard Childress Racing to join a Stewart/Haas third team would put another popular driver with a ton of potential within the Hendrick Universe.

Don't forget Earnie and Natuschew and Camping World Truck Series teams in the mix as well.

Having so much influence over so many star drivers gives Hendrick a lot of power.

When he speaks, teams nod along. NASCAR listens, and listens long and hard.

NASCAR's power stems from it being

NASCAR. It dictates what it wants, when it wants, and everyone falls in line.

There are cracks in that structure, but will they grow big enough to send the behemoth tumbling down?

NASCAR still hasn't figured out how to make racing in a better world with the Car of Tomorrow. Bus strapped for cash are staying away from the tracks, and TV viewership is down.

But nothing in the way of controversy is currently brewing to make a team owner think about bolting for a new, top-level league.

That doesn't mean it won't happen in the future as the numbers continue to slip. It might get to a point where someone like a Rick Hendrick could have the power to make NASCAR bow to his wishes, or leave.

No doubt Mr. Smith would be waiting.

See Jennings' column normally runs on Thursday. He can be reached at 691-7212 or jennings@messenger-inquirer.com

Allstate 400 at the Brickyard

Indianapolis



TRACK DETAILS
Distance: 2.5 mi.
Race Distance: 400 mi.
100 laps

SCHEDULE:
Schedule: 4 p.m. on Speed
2:30 p.m. on IndyCar
Sat. 9 p.m. on NBC
Sun. 9 a.m. on NBC
Sun. 11:30 a.m. on NBC
Sun. 11:30 a.m. on NBC

LAST RACE:
Tony Stewart, Aug. 2, 2008
Last race: Aug. 2, 2008

Sprint Cup

Allstate 400 at the Brickyard
Last year: Jimmie Johnson won the five-race season in three years, outrunning Carl Edwards in a seven-lap sprint to the finish. Goodyear's tires weren't durable enough to withstand more than 10 or so laps at a time, creating a chaotic and confusing caution-filled race.

Last race: Mark Martin raced to his second high fourth victory of the year, leading 195 of 267 laps July 11 at Chicagoland Speedway.

Nationwide
Kroger 200
Site: Clay City, Ind.
Schedule: Saturday, practice (ESPN2, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.)

Standings

Sprint Cup	
1. Tony Stewart	2,884
2. Jeff Gordon	2,709
3. Jimmie Johnson	2,672
4. Kurt Busch	2,436
5. Denny Hamlin	2,457
6. Carl Edwards	2,438
7. Ryan Newman	2,395
8. Kasey Kahne	2,336
9. Juan Pablo Montoya	2,321
10. Kyle Busch	2,293
11. Mark Martin	2,296
12. Matt Kenseth	2,296
13. Greg Biffle	2,295
14. David Reutimann	2,219
15. Clint Bowyer	2,189
16. Brian Vickers	2,149
17. Jeff Burton	2,113
18. Marcos Ambrose	2,078
19. James McMurtry	1,993
20. Joey Logano	1,966

Hall of Fame taking shape

Opening is scheduled for next May 11

By Mike Cranston
Associated Press
CHARLOTTE, N.C. — The sun, reflecting off the silver dome draws your eyes as you approach downtown Charlotte. Designed to look like sheet metal from a stock car but in the shape of an oval racetrack, it's the capstone element of the NASCAR Hall of Fame.



With the opening nearly 10 months away, you still have to

A customized NASCAR page produced in Owensboro appeals to readers in three markets in western Kentucky and southern Indiana. [Click here](#) to see the full-page layout.

"NASCAR is tremendously popular in our circulation area, so obviously this is a popular feature with readers."

Matt Francis
Executive Editor
Owensboro (Ky.) Messenger-Inquirer

Member Choice is AP's comprehensive content, technology and licensing solution. In addition to all of the English-language text, photos, agate and graphics the AP produces each day, it also offers:

- > **AP Exchange**, a browser-based application that helps organize and find the content most important to your market
- > **AP WebFeeds/WebFeeds Manager**, integrates with front-end systems the locally relevant AP Exchange searches you build, as well as additional Member Choice content
- > **Marketplace**, the easiest way to share your content with other news organizations
- > **Extended Licensing**, which gives you the ability to use AP stories in niche and weekly publications within your market
- > **Money & Markets**, the AP's insightful personal finance and investing package of graphics and data

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