



Competing for the HALL

Cox News Service

With the passing of the holiday season, NASCAR officials will be likely turning their attention to selecting a city to host the hall of fame.

Last month NASCAR's top boss, CEO Brian France, said, "Probably after the holidays, we'll be negotiating and try to see if we can make some more progress and announce something in the first quarter [of 2006]."

France has insisted that there's no clear front-runner among the five towns that want to be racing's Cooperstown, N.Y.

Five cities are competing to hold the attraction: Atlanta, Charlotte, N.C.; Richmond, Va.; Daytona Beach, Fla.; and Kansas City, Kan.

Some in Atlanta seem to believe the contest has been narrowed to two big Southern cities, Atlanta and Charlotte.

"There are still five cities in the running, but we think we're in a real dogfight with North Carolina," said Paul Kelman, executive vice president of Central Atlanta Progress, the business group trying to bring NASCAR's main attraction to Atlanta.

Charlotte, home to Lowe's Motor Speedway, Hendrick Motorsports and the late Dale Earnhardt, has been the natural choice for the hall of fame among many racing fans.

But Atlanta's bid, at least on paper, has better numbers.

Charlotte draws about 330,000 conventioners a year. Atlanta brings in 3 million.

Early in the process, Charlotte guessed its hall of fame could attract 400,000 visitors a year. Atlanta's NASCAR hall, not far from the new Georgia Aquarium, expects 1 million.

Here's a detailed look at the five cities competing for the hall.



DAMON HIGGINS / Cox News Service

Daytona International Speedway is home to the Daytona 500 (above), NASCAR's most important race. Daytona Beach, Fla., is known as the "Birthplace of Speed."

Daytona Beach

Why Daytona should get it: The city is the home of NASCAR headquarters and the France family, which controls the sport. There already are two major NASCAR events, the Daytona 500 and the Pepsi 400, at Daytona International Speedway.

Why Daytona shouldn't get it: The city already has an attraction, Daytona USA, and public support appears to be lagging for another NASCAR-related attraction. Without government support, many consider Daytona Beach's bid futile.

Sports background: Daytona Beach is known as the "Birthplace of Speed" because of the speed trials and beach races that were held there from the earliest days of the automobile. The city also is home to NASCAR's Super Bowl, the Daytona 500.

The bid: The Florida Legislature did not authorize a requested \$30 million tax break for the hall, but organizers already had based their finances on private-sector funds. The city has hired an architectural firm to design a hall that would cost more than \$70 million. If Daytona Beach is selected, many say the hall would be built on property on, or next to, Daytona International Speedway.

NASCAR fan support: More than 200,000 fans come to Daytona twice a year for NASCAR races, and tens of thousands show up for the annual Bike Week festivities. Overall, 9 million people visit the area each year. City leaders expect the hall would attract at least 400,000 people annually.

Other tourist sites: To the east are the popular beaches of the Atlantic Ocean, and to the west are Disney World and other Orlando attractions.

Atlanta

Why Atlanta should get it: A downtown location near Centennial Olympic Park, the Georgia Aquarium and new World of Coca-Cola could drive larger crowds than anywhere else. Atlanta's strong corporate support of NASCAR should also help.

Why Atlanta shouldn't get it: NASCAR is not as identified with Atlanta as it is with, say, Charlotte or Daytona Beach, Fla.

Sports background: Atlanta is the only city in the running with four major league franchises.

The bid: Atlanta hopes to put the hall of fame across the street from Centennial Olympic Park on land owned by Ted Turner. The hall would cost about \$92 million, with as much as \$25 million projected to come from the state, \$5 million from the city through special tax breaks for building downtown, \$30 million from corporate sponsors and the rest from bank loans, according to state documents. Atlanta's bid team believes the attraction could draw 1 million visitors a year.

NASCAR fan support: The two Nextel Cup weekends at Atlanta Motor Speedway have a \$455 million impact on the area economy, according to one study.

Other tourist sites: The grand plan is for a NASCAR hall of fame to work in tandem with other attractions such as Centennial Olympic Park, Georgia Aquarium, World of Coca-Cola, CNN Center, Georgia World Congress Center, Georgia Dome, Philips Arena and Turner Field.

Richmond

Why Richmond should get it: Richmond believes it offers the best location, near Washington and other major population centers. More than 50 percent of the U.S. population is within a one-day drive of Richmond.

Why Richmond shouldn't get it: Richmond was not among the four cities — Atlanta, Charlotte, Daytona Beach and Kansas City — initially invited to bid for the attraction. This could indicate it started as a long shot.

Sports background: Richmond International Raceway is the second-oldest stop on the Nextel Cup tour, hosting an event since 1953 and two per year since 1959. Richmond also is the longtime home of the Braves' top minor league team, the Richmond Braves.

The bid: A nonprofit group called Virginians Racing for the Hall of Fame is helping the Economic Development Authority of Henrico

Charlotte

Why Charlotte should get it: Charlotte has become the hub of NASCAR racing, with approximately 90 percent of racing teams with headquarters there. The city's new slogan, "Racing was built here. Racing belongs here," is hard to dispute. The city and surrounding area already are popular with fans searching for race-related tourist attractions.

Why Charlotte shouldn't get it: Numerous race shops already have their own museums and gift shops, so the hall of fame's impact could be diluted. And with NASCAR's effort to become more national, it might not make sense to build its hall in an area where the market already is saturated.

Sports background: Charlotte has professional teams in football and basketball, but NASCAR is the city's No. 1 sport. The first top-level series race was held at the Charlotte Fairgrounds in 1949. In the 1970s, before NASCAR expanded its schedule, the city was near many tracks where races were held, so teams began building race shops there.

The bid: Charlotte has picked a downtown site near the convention center, hired a renowned architectural firm (I.M. Pei) and persuaded the state Legislature to raise the hotel-motel tax and channel the money to the hall, which is expected to cost more than \$130 million. The federal government is allowing the state to raise \$20 million by selling acreage at a highway interchange next to the proposed hall of fame site. Race track owner Bruton Smith told reporters in Charlotte he would pledge \$50 million toward a monorail project, which would connect the hall to Lowe's Motor Speedway. Smith owns six tracks, including Lowe's and Atlanta Motor Speedway.

NASCAR fan support: The three race weekends at Lowe's Motor Speedway, headlined by two Nextel Cup points races and NASCAR's all-star event, draw more than 150,000 fans per race. But there are empty seats, which track officials blame on a slumping textile industry in the Carolinas.

County with the bid. The group plans to offer NASCAR several locations, including one at the raceway.

Part of the pitch has been a postcard campaign asking Virginians to let NASCAR know of their support for the project. The financing for the hall probably would be a mix of private and public sources.

NASCAR fan support: The 107,097-seat track has sold out 27 consecutive Nextel Cup races. According to track officials, approximately 2.5 million fans from all 50 states and dozens of foreign countries have attended races there.

Other tourist sites: The Virginia state Capitol, designed by Thomas Jefferson; historic homes and neighborhoods; Civil War sites and museums; art, science and children's museums.

Kansas City

Why Kansas City should get it: NASCAR wants to speed growth beyond its Southeastern roots, and Kansas City's location in the center of the country would make a statement about the sport's national vision.

Why Kansas City shouldn't get it: It would be risky for NASCAR to put its hall of fame so far from its roots and historical fan base.

Sports background: Kansas City is a two-state metro area that in one state (Kansas) has the state-of-the-art Kansas Speedway and in the other (Missouri) has two major league sports franchises, the football Chiefs and the baseball Royals.

The bid: Kansas City has a high-traffic site picked out next to Kansas Speedway: the 400-acre, \$730 million Village West retail and entertainment development. Kansas City-based HOK Sport+Venue+Event — architect of many of the country's highest-profile sports venues of recent decades — has signed on to design the project if Kansas City lands it. The bidding group hasn't said how the estimated \$100 million project would be financed, but believes the area's success in getting the \$250 million track built lends credence to its prospects.

NASCAR fan support: Kansas Speedway opened in 2001 and had sold out races in its first four seasons, igniting massive economic activity in the surrounding Village West area. Nearly 82,000 season tickets have been sold this year. The track is attempting to land a second Nextel Cup event.

Other tourist sites: The still-growing Village West development includes Cabela's — "The world's foremost outfitter of hunting, fishing and outdoor gear" — which has a 180,000-square-foot showroom. In addition to the track and the thriving retail and entertainment attractions, the Village West area includes the Kansas City T-Bones minor league baseball stadium.

Kansas City, noted for its fountains, has sold out races in its first four seasons at Kansas Speedway.

Capsule reports prepared by Rick Minter and Tim Tucker / Cox News Service

NOTEBOOK

New Craftsman Truck Series logo follows '10 Years Tough' campaign

Cox News Service

The NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series will carry a new look into the 2006 season.

The series has unveiled a redesigned logo that will be used in all series advertising, marketing and promotional materials.

The design enhances the logo carried by the series in 2004 and features the same Craftsman red color that has identified the series since 1996. Craftsman earlier this year announced extension of that sponsorship for another five years through the 2010 season.

"Evolving the identity of one of America's most exciting forms of racing is impor-

tant as the series itself continues to show dramatic growth in its second decade," said Roger VanDerSnick, NASCAR vice president of marketing.

The 2005 series logo highlighted the anniversary "10 Years Tough" campaign, which marked the series' first decade.

Double duty for Busch

Hendrick Motorsports has announced that 2005 Nextel Cup rookie of the year Kyle Busch will drive the No. 5 Lowe's-sponsored Chevrolet in every Busch Series race in 2006.

Busch is the sixth driver to commit to full Nextel Cup and Busch programs in 2006, joining Carl Edwards, Clint Bowyer, Reed Sorenson, Denny Hamlin and J.J. Yeley.

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