

DID YOU KNOW?

Five of the 17 races at Infineon Raceway have been won from the pole.

NASCAR INSIDER

THIS WEEK

Race: Dodge/Save Mart 350
 Where: Infineon Raceway
 When: Sunday, 3 p.m. ET
 Television: Fox
 Defending race winner: Tony Stewart



Waiting for his BIG BREAK

Road racing specialist Said hopes his assistance to others will pay off

By RICK MINTER
 Cox News Service

Atlanta
 Boris Said wants to be a full-time NASCAR driver, but he's willing to share the one advantage he has — his road racing skills — with his competitor in hopes that they might one day help him achieve his ultimate goal.

For years, Said has coached NASCAR drivers, who usually make only left turns on oval tracks, on the finer points of braking and turning both right and left on winding, multiple-turn tracks. But in doing so, he gives up many of the advantages he has over the stock car crowd.

"It's hurt me a lot in road racing because a lot of these guys are so good now," he said. "But it's also helped me because the bigger picture for me is I want to be a full-time guy, not just run the two road-course races."

INFINEON RACEWAY

Track length: 1.99 miles

Race length: 110 laps/219 miles (350 kilometers)

Road course: 12 turns

First race: June 11, 1989; Banquet 300

Qualifying record: Jeff Gordon, Chevrolet; 94.325 mph; June 24, 2005

Race record: Ricky Rudd, Ford; 81.007 mph; June 23, 2002

Carl Edwards, who has been schooled by Said at Infineon, site of Sunday's Dodge/Save Mart 350, and at Virginia International Raceway, said he's often thought about how unselfish it is for Said to share the skills it took years to learn and perfect.

"I thought a lot about the position he puts himself in," Edwards said. "For him to just lay out his strategies and secrets to a guy like me says a lot about him and what kind of person he is."

In helping NASCAR drivers learn the



Boris Said (shown in the garage area at Infineon Raceway in 2004) competed in seven non-road course races last year in Nextel Cup, including a season-best finish of 27th at the Daytona 500.

rules of the road courses. Said often uses a two-seater, driving himself at first then taking the passenger seat and offering real-time tips as the car speeds around the track.

The skill levels of his students vary greatly at first, he said.

"Some are really bad, and some are not that bad," he said. "Some are bad and you just tell them a few things and they are quicker than I am. They're all different."

"Road racing has a lot of subtle differences compared to oval racing, [but] once you point the dog to the water, they just take over. They figure it out quick."

Said is taking another step that some might question in his efforts to become a NASCAR regular. He has joined with fellow road racer Mark Simo and crew chief Frank Stoddard to form their own team,

something that hasn't worked out too well for others in the past.

No Fear Racing plans to field the No. 60 Ford for Said this season at Infineon, Daytona, Indianapolis and Watkins Glen. No Fear will rely on assistance from Roush Racing, Edwards' employer, which is just the kind of arrangement Said hoped for when he decided early on to share his road racing techniques with NASCAR teams and drivers.

"We're getting a lot of help from Jack Roush," Said said. "He's been helping me a lot with set-ups, cars, motors, putting bodies on for me."

"I think we're going to have really good stuff."

Rick Minter's OBSERVATIONS

Here are some of the storylines this week heading to Sonoma, Calif.

Score one for the little guys

Sometimes the Davids of racing can slay the NASCAR Goliaths. It happened at Kentucky Speedway last week when upstart David Gilliland scored one of the biggest upsets ever in NASCAR's Busch Series. Gilliland, a 30-year-old Californian, started fourth, dropped back to 19th but sped ahead in the closing laps to beat Cup regulars J.J. Yeley and Denny Hamlin to the finish line.



GILLILAND

Gilliland, who grew up working on the cars driven by his father, Butch Gilliland, was making his seventh career Busch Series start and only his fifth of the season.

His victory in the No. 84 Clay Andrews Racing Chevrolet, was the first Busch victory by someone other than a Nextel Cup regular since Clint Bowyer, now a Cup full-timer, won at Memphis last October.

More importantly, Gilliland caught the attention of the NASCAR talent scouts who likely will put him in the driver mix sometime soon.

"We're going to keep an eye on David," Robbie Loomis, the vice president of Petty Enterprises, told reporters at Michigan International Speedway.

Gotta be the chassis

Kasey Kahne and his Evernham Motorsports chassis No. 128 have proven to be all but unbeatable on the intermediate-sized tracks this season. Kahne won the rain-shortened 3M Performance 400 at Michigan International Speedway in the same car he drove to victory at Texas, Atlanta and Charlotte earlier this season.

Although he was fortunate enough to be in front on Lap 130 of the scheduled 200 when the rains came and benefited from the quick work of his crew, he maintained that the car that should have won the race did win it.

"It's pretty crazy to win in the rain and be in the right spot at the end," Kahne told reporters after his latest victory. "But we had the best car."

Kahne's victory moved him up two spots in the standings to third, 244 behind leader Jimmie Johnson.

Schedule favors Gordon

Jeff Gordon's horrific crash at Pocono Raceway two weeks ago has some speculating that the four-time champion might miss the Chase for the Nextel Cup for the second consecutive year. Car owner Rick Hendrick isn't one of them. He points out that the schedule between today and the cut-off race at Richmond on Sept. 9 is in Gordon's favor. There are two road-course races — at Infineon and Watkins Glen (he's won more races than any other driver at the two road courses), a short track run at Bristol, where he leads all active drivers with five victories, and a superspeedway race at Daytona, where he's tops among active drivers with six victories.

"We've got some really good races to go," Hendrick said. "I know you have guys outside the [top 10] that have good cars and good momentum. It's going to be a dogfight for that last three or four spots."

Gordon led the most laps at Michigan last week and finished eighth, is 11th in the standings, 11 points behind 10th-place Greg Biffle.

Old school vs. new school

There seem to be two separate schools of thought when it comes to driver development for NASCAR's top divisions. Roush Racing has used the "Gong Show" (tryouts to find dozens of candidates, then nurture the chosen ones as they begin in the Craftsman Truck Series and advance to the Busch and Nextel Cup circuits).

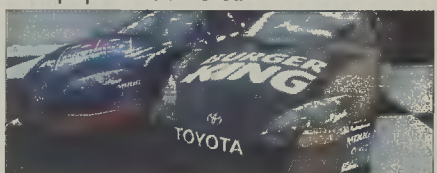
Hendrick Motorsports, like other teams, jumped on the training bandwagon for a time, but now seems to have reverted back to its original strategy of letting other field cars for newcomers, sizing up the talent and trying to hire the cream of the crop.

"What I've done in the past is when I see a talent that really stands out, then I'll figure out a way to put him in a car," team owner Rick Hendrick said. "We're kind of keeping a seat available in the Busch Series. If we find one of those guys... who's really outstanding, we're going to make a move, but we're not going to go out and pick four or five and try to grow them all at one time."

"We're waiting for that star that comes along."

What has changed for all teams over the years is that drivers have exceptional ability behind the wheel and they are marketable.

Waltrip sponsors unveiled



Michael Waltrip announced Sunday that Burger King and Domino's Pizza will share sponsorship of Michael Waltrip Racing's 00 Toyota next season in the Nextel Cup series.

Catching up with ...

Randy LaJoie

Randy LaJoie, 44, of Norwalk, Conn., has seen his NASCAR driving career become stuck in neutral. After 15 victories and two championships, in 1996-97, he has made just two starts this season, both in back-marker cars and both requiring the use of his past champion's provisional starting position. But there is hope. He has been hired by Richard Childress Racing to prepare the Busch car driven by Kevin Harvick in races where Harvick is away preparing his Nextel Cup car while the Busch Series is running at a different track. LaJoie recently spoke with Cox News Service reporter Rick Minter.

Q. How do you feel about your relief

role?
A. "When you're on the sidelines, it's a lot of downtime. I say, 'Put me in, coach.' It's a first-class operation, and it's a heck of a confidence-booster to go out and run good in that car. A good race car is easy to drive. It's so much harder to drive one that's not right, and I've been driving cars that weren't right for way too long."



NASCAR

Q. Can the understudy role for Harvick jump start your career?

A. "Possibly it could lead into something next year with RCR if Kevin wants to cut back some on his Busch schedule. Richard [Childress] did it for Jeff Burton. Maybe

he can do it for Randy LaJoie."

Q. How do you feel about Nextel Cup drivers taking the limelight from Busch drivers?

A. "Something needs to be done. It's not the Busch Series like it once was... You used to have Ford fans and Chevy fans and Cup fans and Busch fans. But there are no more Busch fans, because 80 percent of the drivers are Cup guys. It's going to be a tough call on what to do with the Busch Series."

Q. How's your "The Joie of Seating" company that manufactures racing seats doing?

A. "I'm starting over. I believe in my product. It's the best aluminum seat out there."

Q. Why do many race drivers fail to embrace the latest in safety equipment?

A. "It's too bad that race drivers are thick-headed when it comes to themselves."

Up-and-coming ... Chase Miller

Chase Miller, a 19-year-old Canton, Ga., native is part of Dodge's driver development program. After coming up through the go-kart ranks and racing in Late Models and Hooters Pro Cup cars, Miller is on the fast track to NASCAR. He's running a six-race ARCA schedule this season in the No. 4 Dodge for Cunningham Motorsports. Two weeks ago, he got his first major victory at Pocono Raceway under the watchful eyes of NASCAR power brokers who were at the track for the Nextel Cup race the next day. Miller after starting recently spoke with Cox News Service reporter Rick Minter.



Chase Miller won at Pocono the track for the Nextel Cup race the next day. Miller after starting recently spoke with Cox News Service reporter Rick Minter.

On having to sit on the sidelines for several weeks after winning at Pocono: "It's kind of tough. We had some good momentum going... I would have liked to race at Michigan [the next week]. I think we would have had a real fun time."

On how he caught the attention of Dodge: "They saw me race last year at Gateway [where he led eight laps and finished 23rd]. I got a phone call a couple of weeks later. That's how I got noticed."

On his next career step: "The plan is to go up to the Craftsman Truck Series, but I don't know what the timetable is."

On his other interest, flying airplanes: "I started because I figured that one day I'd have to fly to get from track to track... I'm just flying single-engine Pipers right now, but I'm working on getting all the upgrades to get into bigger twins."

Correction: A photograph in last week's NASCAR Insider page should have shown the No. 1 Dodge driven by Cale Gale in the Busch Series the previous week, instead of the No. 01, which was pictured.

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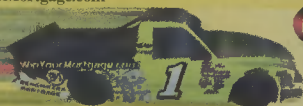
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