

# ON THE SIDELINES From Page B1



## The \$20,000 Bug

Nathan Lee does a burnout as he pre-stages during timed runs at Farmington Dragway. The factory worker from Maryland has more than \$19,000 invested in his machine (photo by Randy Pettitt).

"I was like any other young guy," said Lee, the owner of a beautiful gold Beetle, which sports a full roll cage and racing tires.

"I wanted a 69 Camaro or something like that, but my brother kept telling me that I couldn't afford one. So, I went out and bought a Volkswagon."

Like a lot of other loves, his romance with the Beetle took some time to develop.

"Oh, I hated it when I first got it," he recalls.

"But then I had it a while and started to like it a little bit. So I figured if I was going to keep it, then why not make it a little different."

Lee's idea of something different is not only beautiful, but surprisingly fast for a little four-cylinder. The fenders, hood and trunk are all made of fiberglass to reduce weight. The engine, equipped with a header pipe that produces deafening noise, is loaded with chrome and expensive racing parts.

Perhaps the most stunning feature of the car, was the way the flawless paint job gleamed in the April sunlight.

"I wanted it to look good and go fast," Lee said.

"I spent \$19,000 on that little car. I figured it up one day -- I still have all the receipts."

Though he could've easily bought one fine 1969 Camaro for a much lesser amount, Lee is undaunted.

"Money isn't everything," he fires back. "I've sort of fell in love with that little car."

### You Can Do It, Too

Though Lee says that racing VW's is more than a hobby than anything else, he pondered the mention of becoming a pro drag racer.

"If that happens, then great," he said. "But I'm doing this because I have fun."

"I'm not going to get rich or anything. I'm just going to go as far as I can and have a good time."

The Maryland native says if he can race, then so can anyone else.

"I'm living proof that anyone can race if they want to. I operate a forklift in a factory -- I'm not rich."

"This kind of show (the Spring Nationals) is a good way to show blacks that they can race. Everybody's the same as far as I'm concerned."

Lee, who also teaches karate when he's not working or traveling to race his VW, says racial harmony is good at the tracks.

"I haven't had any trouble or anything. People have treated me just like another competitor. I treat people like I would want them to treat me and I get along fine."

"Like the guy that beat me in the first round -- I went up to him and wished him luck. I told him I hoped he went all the way (to the finals)."

"I think drag racing in general will help more blacks and whites get along. It's just something that brings people together. You're having too good of a time to worry about who's black and white."

As he loaded the formidable machine onto the trailer towed by a Nissan Maxima, Lee noted it was his first time at Farmington.

"Kenny Thomas (a fellow driver parked right next door) brought me down here," he explained.

"I'll be back," said Lee, who also interjected that Larry Westmoreland built the motor, but he and his brother Reggie do the upkeep on the car.

"I hope to do a little better next time."

### The Rookies

Down pit road a ways, sat a black VW Bug that was one of the prettiest race cars at the track.

Calvin Crawford, who overheard my conversation with Lee and stopped by, was quick to point out that he drove the beautiful machine.

"I didn't get to do much today, though," said the Rock Hill, S.C., resident.

"The traction bars had messed up and the car got hold of the asphalt track and vibrated a crack in the oil pan," he further explained.

"Then, by the time we got that fixed, we missed qualifying. They were going to let us have another run and the damn second gear broke."

Despite the mechanical troubles, the car's owner - James Ingram -- appeared quite proud of his machine.

"It's a 1962 VW Beetle sedan and it runs in the Super Stock division," explained Ingram, who appeared to be the oldest of the crowd gathered near the auto.

"We're members of the Old Hill City Bug Club and just came here to see what we could do. Unfortunately, lady luck wasn't with us."

Crawford said the innocent looking \$8,000 machine has burned up quite a few city streets.

"This is the first time the car's been on the track," he said.

"But I have whipped a bunch of people on the street with it. It'll tear the streets up. I've outran Corvettes, Camaros and 300 ZX's with it."

"You pull up beside people and they laugh because it's a Volkswagon. Well, this little VW right here is no laughing matter."

"We'll race you in the quarter-mile or whatever. It doesn't make any difference to me. It'll scar."

Indeed, the car's thundering engine would not suggest otherwise.

Mike Hoyles, who sported a Johnson C. Smith monogrammed shirt, identified himself as a sidekick of the group.

"I just came here to watch and help out," laughed Hoyles, who said he was a football player at J.C. Smith.

Ingram said he had another car at home, but it wasn't quite ready.

"We might have two of them next time. We'll be back to let them see what we can do."

And like Ingram's hope to do better next time, there is much promise that racing is trying to put away its forgettable and often racist past.

Indeed, there was living proof among the Volkswagon fanatics at Farmington Dragway. Everyone was finally just another one of the boys.

## Jim Valvano hopes Shackleford doesn't pull a Chris Washburn-type routine on him

By the Associated Press

RALEIGH -- North Carolina State's Charles Shackleford is leaning toward leaving the Wolfpack and registering for the NBA draft, a Charlotte newspaper says.

The *Charlotte Observer* reported last week that a source, who asked not to be named, said the junior center is close to registering for the June 28 draft.

Shackleford must notify the NBA by May 14 if he wants to be considered in the draft, but could change his mind any time until the day of the draft and retain his last season of collegiate eligibility.

Shackleford, who lives off campus, could not be reached for comment, the newspaper said.

Wolfpack coach Jim Valvano said Friday he wants a decision soon from Shackleford in order to address the situation in the late recruiting period, which starts next week. Shackleford was the Wolfpack's leading scorer this season at 16.7 points per game, and its top rebounder at 9.5 per game. If Shackleford leaves, Valvano plans to aggressively recruit junior-college players to help fill the void.

"We should know quickly," Valvano said. "If he does leave, we would need quick help. We're not going to get a 6-10 center of his ability, and there's Avie Lester here as a potential starter, but we'd be looking squarely in the junior college ranks for rebounding."

Valvano said he and Shackleford

have discussed the possibility of Shackleford turning pro several times since last Christmas. Valvano said he has talked to NBA scouts about Shackleford's current and future marketability and in February set up a discussion between Shackleford and Marty Blake, director of scouting services for the NBA.

Valvano said Blake advised Shackleford to stay at N.C. State for his senior year. However, Valvano's discussions with the NBA suggested Shackleford could be one of the first 15 players taken in the draft.

"I've discussed him being a first-rounder, and I've discussed the benefit of staying," said Valvano. "Now it's time for him to decide. Let's do it the right way and not at the last minute."

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