

# New day in racing

Continued from page 1C where it's at. And it's more fun with talented young Americans like Hornish, who's all of 26, Andretti and Danica Patrick (24) that Americans could actually care about.

I was raised on stock cars — Richard Petty, Yarborough, David Pearson. Those cats were drivers first and magnetic personalities in a natural kind of way, not built by hype. If NASCAR wants to keep a grip on the racing public, it needs to boost the on-

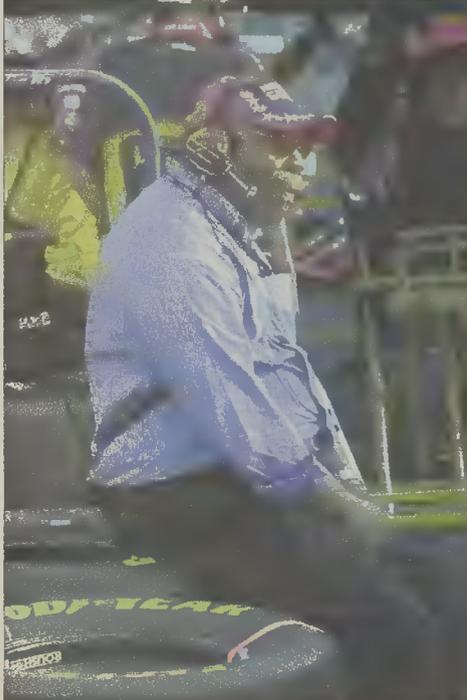
track product as well as promote lifestyles of the fast and famous.

All racing, however, could use a dash of color. NASCAR's on the right track with grassroots programs and Drive for Diversity, a feeder system that prepares underrepresented groups for entry to the industry.

Open wheel, which 20 years ago was in lockstep with NASCAR in terms of African American participation, which meant next to one, is much slower. There are no

black drivers on the horizon, but there are a couple of owners. Denver Nuggets forward Carmelo Anthony owns a team in the Indy Racing League and Cedric the Entertainer owns a squad in the rival Champ Car World Series. Sam Belnavis, who has a piece of Roush Racing's action, is on the stock car side.

Ultimately, when the rubber hits the road, it's all about performance. After Sunday, Indy's a lot better than anyone could've hoped for. Even in NASCAR Valley.



Sam Belnavis, the second African American to own a team that participates in NASCAR's top division, Nextel Cup, watches the Coca-Cola 600 Sunday from the pits at Lowe's Motor Speedway. Belnavis has a stake in Roush Racing, which fields five teams.

PHOTOS/WADE NASH

## Sting rookies off to good start

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beginning (Washington) got off to an 11-0 start. We knew the Mystics were an explosive team and we didn't want them to continue with that confidence, so I just made a change."

The rookies are part of that change. Bond and Currie were drafted to provide immediate offensive help for a team that couldn't sustain much rhythm last year. Although they have a lot to learn, Currie is optimistic.

"I think with any rookie, there are adjustments," she said. "The game is different. There are much better players in this league and you have to be ready every night. I like this style and I like our coaching style. You are really

allowed the freedom in this league to show your talents and work toward your strengths."

That's what Bogues had in mind when scouting Currie for the WNBA draft. She's tailor-made for the uptempo offensive pace Bogues prefers, but the challenge is in improving her defense.

"What we needed and what I saw in Monique was a little farther advanced than other players. Monique is a flat-out scorer. I am challenging her on the defensive end. She wants to be one of the best players in the league, and I'm going to try to help her get there. But in order to do so, she's got to play both ends of the floor, which is what she is focusing on."

## Harding freshman finishes third at international boxing competition

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Last year Bolton won a national Silver Gloves championship for junior boxers. At the Azerbaijan tournament, he made it into the semifinals in the 110 pound class, where he lost to a boxer from Ireland. Competition in the Aliyev Cup was for 15 and 16 year old champions from 17 countries.

Bolton's Charlotte Boxing Academy coach, Al Simpson, coached the 15-boxer U.S. national team to a second place finish at

Aliyev Cup. Americans earned two gold medals, two silvers, and Bolton's bronze to finish second in the competition which is sanctioned by USA Boxing, which governs amateur boxing in the United States.

For more information about Charlotte Boxing Academy call Coach Simpson at 704 241-0814, or check out [www.parkandree.com](http://www.parkandree.com), then click on Activities, then Athletics, then Boxing.

## NFL looks at playing two regular-season games abroad

By Roy Kammerer

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DUESSELDORF, Germany — The NFL has proposed playing two regular-season games outside the U.S. starting in 2008, league officials said Saturday.

Mark Waller, head of NFL international development, said the proposal to play abroad was put to team owners Tuesday in Denver. It came after the 49ers and Cardinals played last October before a regular-season record crowd of 103,000 in Mexico City.

The owners will discuss the issue again in October. The games would be played in

Mexico, Canada, the United Kingdom and Germany, where five of the six NFL Europe teams play.

"I will say the reception we got from the owners was incredibly positive — all the questions were on the practical issues," Waller said.

Plans were also announced to add two more teams to the six playing in NFL Europe by 2010. Last year, owners gave the league a five-year operating license — ending years of threatening to pull the plug on the operation because of the cost.

"It now gives us a platform to grow the game internationally with a concept of clarity,"

Waller said.

Outgoing commissioner Paul Tagliabue said developing the game internationally may rank as one of his top five accomplishments during his 16 years in charge.

"I feel the international initiatives we made, along with the owners, may become more significant over time," Tagliabue said.

The league's effort to make an impact internationally began in 1986, when NFL teams began to play preseason games overseas.

The German cities of Hanover and Leipzig are the leading candidates to get NFL Europe expansion clubs

## Ex-Panther pleads not guilty

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES — Chicago Bears cornerback Ricky Manning Jr. pleaded not guilty Friday to an assault charge stemming from an alleged attack on a man in a restaurant last month.

The 25-year-old Manning, who played last season for the Carolina Panthers, appeared in court but entered the plea through his attorney. He remains free on \$30,000 bail.

He waived his right to be in court June 16, when a date is to be set for a hearing to determine if there is enough evidence to require the former UCLA player to stand trial on a charge of assault by means likely to produce great bodily injury.

Two other former UCLA football players, Maurice Drew and Tyler Ebell, are scheduled to appear on the same charge, also on June 16.

All three are accused of attacking a man at a Denny's restaurant early on the morning of April 23, according to prosecutors. They were arrested soon after in Manning's car.

The three had allegedly been harassing a man working on a laptop computer at the restaurant. He complained to a manager, and was then kicked and punched in the face by several attackers until he lost consciousness, according to the LAPD.

The victim identified Manning as one of his alleged attackers, police said.

A day after his arrest, Manning signed a five-year, \$21 million offer sheet with the Bears.

Carolina did not match the deal, but a team official said the decision was not related to the arrest.

In a conference call the week after the Panthers declined to match the offer, Manning said he could not comment on the case but would be happy to do so "when things are sorted out."

Manning is on probation for a similar offense in 2002 near the UCLA campus, the district attorney's office said. If convicted in the latest case, he would face up to four years in state prison.

## From pros to pee-wees, your source for Charlotte sports

### The Charlotte Post



## COCA-COLA "STUDENT" OF THE MONTH

### "Nigel Stephon Harris"

Junior  
Olympic High School



**Career Goals:**  
"To major in music education and become a music teacher and band director by attending one of the following HBCU's: Winston-Salem State University, Jackson State, Clark Atlanta, Howard University, or NC A&T State University."  
- Nigel



Our 17-year-old "Student of the Month," Nigel Stephon Harris, has been accepted in the July Experience Program at Davidson College to further enhance his academic development. Nigel takes advanced classes at Olympic High School, and has averaged a 3.0 or better throughout high school. Committed to academic excellence, Nigel has spent the last two summers at Davidson participating in the Love of Learning Program where emphasis has been placed on academic, spiritual and social development. In addition, he has participated in Campus Connections, Bible-centered teaching program which allowed him to visit numerous HBCU's and gain knowledge of academic and financial facts for entering college. He will participate again his senior year. A credit to his school, Nigel was among the group of area high school students selected to convene at Waddell High School to discuss youth issues and concerns. Nigel's extracurricular activities at Olympic include membership in the Chamber Choir and playing Baritone for the Gospel and Concert choirs. Nigel won "Best Musical Accompaniment" during Olympic's recent trip to a Singing Festival Competition in Myrtle Beach.

Nigel's gift as a musician became most apparent when he joined the band in fifth grade at Reid Park Elementary School. He plays trumpet, trombone, baritone, piano, keyboard and tuba. For two years Nigel has served as tuba section leader for the Olympic High School Marching Trojan Band and has been awarded the position for the coming school year.

Nigel's talents have not gone unnoticed. He has been inducted into the Tri M Music Honor Society at Olympic, won "Best First Chair" at Olympic's 2006 Band Banquet, and was selected to attend the Western Carolina University Leadership Band and Drum Major Camp last summer.

Concerned about the welfare of his community, Nigel is a member of the NAACP, participates in the Communities in Schools program, and has garnered numerous volunteer hours. Nigel especially likes volunteering at Santa's Helper, responding to letters to Santa from area children for the United States Postal Service.

Nigel is the son of Stephanie and Norman E. Harris, Jr. The family attends Little Rock AME Zion Church where Nigel is very active participating in the Athletic Ministry as a point guard on the basketball team, singing in the youth choir, and is a junior usher. This summer, Nigel will travel with other youth to Louisville, Kentucky for a church conference.

**Best Wishes "Nigel" from**  
**Coca Cola Bottling Company Consolidated of Charlotte**  
*Coca Cola Real*