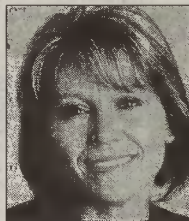


SPORTS

Hendrick hits his marks off track just like he does on it

ON NASCAR



CATHY ELLIOTT
NASCAR Columnist

"Have you even been able to leave this hotel?"

This was the question posed to championship team owner Rick Hendrick when he showed up in one of NASCAR's many workrooms at the Wynn Hotel to rehearse his speech.

From the outside looking in, Champion's Week in Las Vegas is a veritable festival of fun, a continuous string of luncheons, parties and other events celebrating the NASCAR Sprint Cup season, all leading up to the red carpet awards ceremony on Friday evening.

Everywhere you look, something is happening. On Thursday afternoon, stock cars roared their way down the fabled Strip and back - with the notable exception of Kevin Harvick, who just a couple of hours after winning the O'Reilly Auto Parts Position Improvement award managed to blow a tire during the Victory Lap. Oops.

Carrot Top showed up unexpectedly for an impromptu performance at the "After the

Lap" fan forum event hosted by the Hard Rock Hotel, but the visit was almost redundant, as aspiring standup comic Tony Stewart already had the crowd rolling in the aisles.

But from the inside looking out, all that fun is a lot of work. Drivers, sponsors and team owners are moved around like chess pieces from one obligation to the next, spread so thinly it's a miracle there's anything left by the end of the week.

The speeches they will smoothly present at the awards ceremony are drafted, tweaked and yes, practiced before the big night. For some, this is a painstaking process akin to a pit stop, with each gesture and inflection timed down to the second. You only have one chance to get it right, and you don't want to mess it up.

Mr. Hendrick, however, seems not at all concerned about where to pause, or which phrases to emphasize. He just wants to give credit where it is due.

"We start out with these great, entertaining speeches, but in the end what is really important to him is just making sure he thanks everyone," says Jesse Essex, manager of media relations for Hendrick Motorsports.

Mr. Hendrick is precisely on time for his speech rehearsal. He doesn't seem to be in a mad rush to get it over with, but instead takes time to chat with the handful of people in

the room before getting started. He is measured and deliberate, removing his jacket and quietly reading through the text before delivering the speech aloud.

Granted, he's been making this speech rather often lately - every year since 2006 - but he isn't doing it by rote. You actually feel as if he is speaking to you, not just reading words plastered on a teleprompter. He is truly appreciative of the many individuals and organizations that go into the building of Jimmie Johnson's championship team, what is now being referred to as a dynasty, and he wants to make sure they know it. His speech is heartfelt and genuine.

It is also flawless. He nails it in one take. Sloppy work doesn't earn a team five consecutive NASCAR Sprint Cup Series titles. It's all about efficiency and precision, and at Hendrick Motorsports, it starts at the top.

When asked if he needs to run through it one more time, Mr. Hendrick responds, "No, thanks. I'm good."

That may be the understatement of the year.

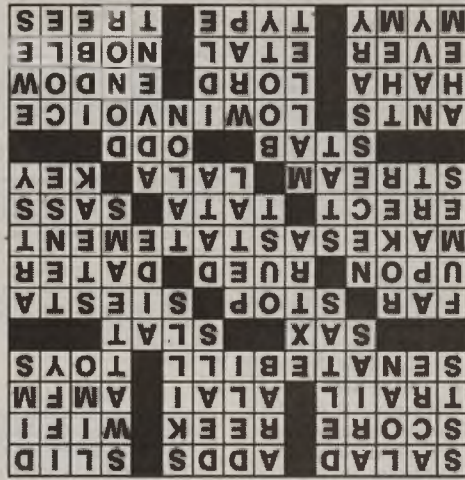
On the question of leaving the hotel, those opportunities are rare, indeed. But Mr. Hendrick does confess to one thing. "Well, I did go out and look at some cars," he says.

Imagine that.

Contact Cathy Elliott at cathyelliott@hotmail.com.

Got Sports?

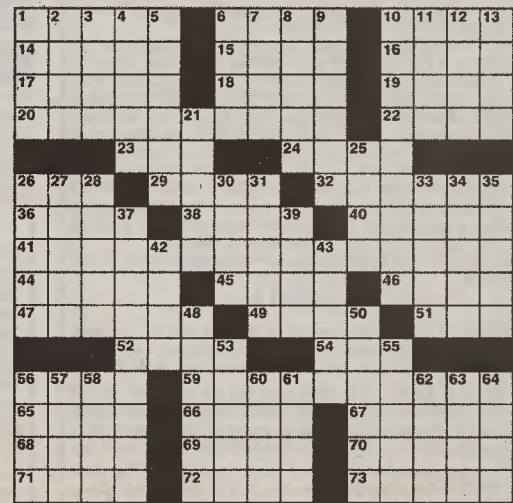
Get it in the Times TODAY!
888-3631



Newsday Crossword

PAYDAY by Sally R. Stein
Edited by Stanley Newman
www.stanxwords.com

- ACROSS**
- 1 Soup alternative
 - 6 Finds a sum
 - 10 Lost traction
 - 14 Make a touchdown
 - 15 Offend the nose
 - 16 Traveler's Web connection, for short
 - 17 Bloodhound's path
 - 18 Jai ___
 - 19 Two-band, as a radio
 - 20 Something filibustered in Congress
 - 22 Playthings
 - 23 Jazz instrument
 - 24 Wooden strip
 - 26 Remote
 - 29 Octagonal traffic sign
 - 32 Mexican snooze
 - 36 Fairy-tale second word
 - 38 Regretted
 - 40 Library stamp
 - 41 Talks to the press
 - 44 Standing tall
 - 45 Parting word
 - 46 Backtalk
 - 47 Steady flow of water
 - 49 Tra___ (singing syllables)
 - 51 Door opener
 - 52 Rough estimate
 - 54 Peculiar
 - 56 Picnic spoilers
 - 59 Like a bass singer
- DOWN**
- 1 Former fast planes: Abbr.
 - 2 Farmland unit
 - 3 Mortgage, for example
 - 4 Opera solos
 - 5 River mouths
 - 6 Saudi or Omani
 - 7 Sandwich shop
 - 8 Distributes the cards
 - 9 Talents
 - 10 Police crisis crews
 - 11 VIP's auto
 - 12 Far from certain
 - 13 Grows faint
 - 21 Crowd-scene actor
 - 25 Assistant
 - 26 Shows anger
 - 27 In two different places
 - 28 TV weatherman AI
 - 30 Depose
 - 31 Flower part
 - 33 Porterhouse, for one
 - 34 Feeling nervous
 - 35 Pretentious
 - 37 Not optional
 - 39 Numerical information
 - 42 Unit of 39 Down
 - 43 Eagle's claw
 - 48 Hammerlike tool
 - 50 Onset
 - 53 Ill-gotten gains
 - 55 Generous one
 - 56 Throat-clearing sound
 - 57 Maritime force
 - 58 The folks yonder
 - 60 Prepare presents
 - 61 Doing nothing
 - 62 "___ delighted!" ("Sure!")
 - 63 "Old King" of rhyme
 - 64 Lambs' mothers



CREATORS SYNDICATE © 2010 STANLEY NEWMAN STANXWORDS@AOL.COM 12/7/10

AREA SPORTS BRIEFS

BASKETBALL Anna Freeman Appreciation Night

East Davidson High School will hold an appreciation night for former star Anna Freeman Friday evening as the Golden Eagles play host to Trinity. Festi-

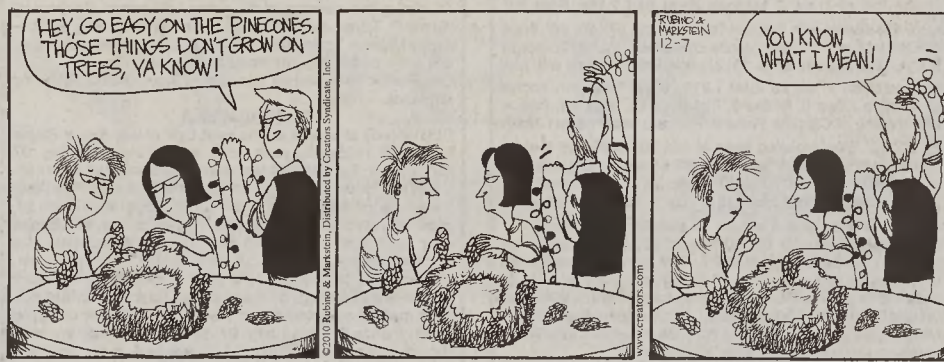
See BRIEFS, Page 12

9			3	5	2		1		
1		2	6				4		
	8			1			6		5
			5				8		
6	3		2		8		5	1	
		8			4				
3		1		4			8		
		7			5	3		4	
	2		8	9	3				6

9	7	1	3	6	8	5	7	4	
4	6	3	5	7	1	7	9	8	
2	8	5	9	4	7	1	6	3	
7	9	2	4	3	6	8	1	5	
1	5	6	8	7	2	4	3	6	
3	4	8	1	9	5	6	7	2	
5	2	9	6	1	4	3	8	7	
6	3	4	7	8	9	2	5	1	
8	1	7	2	5	3	9	4	6	

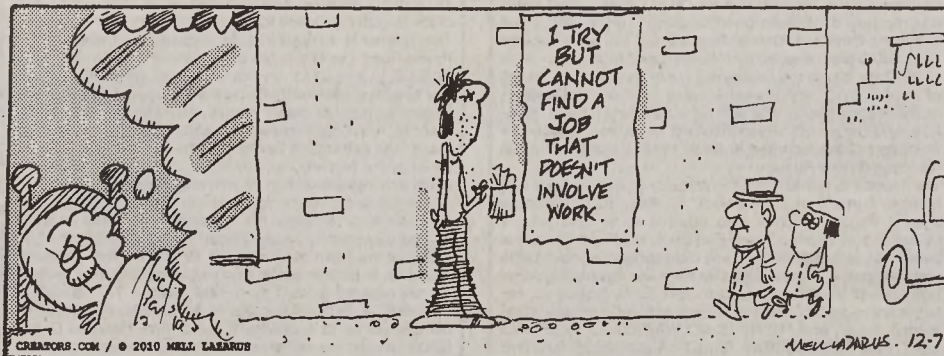
DADDY'S HOME

BY TONY RUBINO AND GARY MARKSTEIN



MOMMA

BY MELL LAZARUS



OUTSKIRTZ

BY DAVID AND DOREEN DOTSON

