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## NASCAR hopes sponsorship deal will wave green flag for more 'green' business deals

**By Associated Press, Published: February 24**

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Think NASCAR is running out of sponsorship categories to mine? Think again.

The sanctioning body already has a bucketful of official sponsors, including an official outdoor and RV retail partner, an official shaving product and even an official cheese filled snack.

Now add a new category: “Green” sponsors.

This week, NASCAR signed a deal with Creative Recycling Systems, a company that provides businesses and other organizations with a way to discard electronic devices in an environmentally responsible manner.

A sport based on burning fuel at a rapid rate might still be a tough sell to hard-core environmentalists, but this week’s deal may be an indication that the sport is beginning to shed its stigma.

“The stigma is history,” said Mike Lynch, NASCAR’s managing director of green innovation.

Yes, managing director of green innovation is a job in NASCAR.

Lynch said several existing NASCAR sponsors already had environmental initiatives, including at-track recycling programs. Now that they’ve landed a completely environment-focused sponsor, NASCAR hopes to add more.

“It’s a new category, sort of, historically for the sport,” Lynch said.

Brian Diesselhorst, vice president of marketing at Creative Recycling, said the company wasn’t sure initially if NASCAR was the right place to showcase its services.

“That was one of our reservations when I first brought this to my CEO,” Diesselhorst said.

As it turns out, Diesselhorst said: "They're actually doing stuff."

As part of the deal, the company hopes to set up stations at racetracks where fans can turn in unwanted electronics for recycling. They also hope to gain new business by talking to other NASCAR sponsors about potential partnerships.

"This is a big sport, and we want to be in it for the long term," Diesselhorst said.

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**FAST FRIDAY:** Brad Keselowski posted the fastest 10-lap average during Daytona 500 practice Friday, barely edging Kyle Busch.

Keselowski averaged 195.898 mph during the second of two sessions at Daytona International Speedway. Busch averaged 195.895 mph. Clint Bowyer was third, followed by Tony Stewart, Jeff Gordon, Joey Logano and Mark Martin. Denny Hamlin, Martin Truex Jr. and AJ Allmendinger rounded out the top 10.

Only 16 cars took the track in the morning session, and 23 turned laps in the afternoon.

Eleven drivers, including former Daytona 500 winners Kevin Harvick and Jamie McMurray, didn't even leave the garage. Many teams avoided practice because they don't have backup cars and were wary of causing damage.

Drivers have one final chance, a 90-minute session Saturday, to get on the track before Sunday's opener.

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**BEER SWAP:** Budweiser is removing its name from NASCAR's Shootout exhibition race at Daytona International Speedway beginning next February and instead will be the title sponsor for the 150-mile Duel qualifying races held before the Daytona 500.

The beer brand will become title sponsor of Daytona Speedweeks and the Daytona 500 pre-race show. It also sponsors the No. 29 car driven by Kevin Harvick.

Daytona president Joie Chitwood said the track is shopping for a new title sponsor for the Shootout.

Next season's Shootout field will feature mostly pole position winners from this season. The pole position is sponsored by a rival brewer, Coors Light.

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**PASTRANA'S SCHEDULE:** Travis Pastrana's foray into NASCAR will include seven Nationwide Series races and 11 events in the K&N Pro Series in 2012.

Pastrana released his schedule Friday. It could change if he secures more sponsorship in the Nationwide Series.

The extreme sports star will make his NASCAR debut April 27 at Richmond International Raceway. He also plans to drive Nationwide Series race at Darlington (May 11), Charlotte (May 26), New Hampshire (July 14),

Chicagoland (July 22), Indianapolis (July 28) and Atlanta (Sept. 1).

He will make his K&N debut in the season-opening race at Bristol Motor Speedway on March 17.

“The wait has been grueling,” Pastrana said. “This is one of the toughest things I’ve ever done. But we’re ready to go now. ... If it were up to me we’d run every race after Richmond. I’m ready to get this thing going.”

Pastrana had planned to make his Nationwide debut last summer in Indianapolis. But two nights before the race, he shattered his right ankle and foot in Los Angeles while attempting a motorcycle trick in the X-Games.

The injury forced him to miss his entire season.

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**PURLOINED PASSES:** A Daytona International Speedway spokesman says approximately 250 limited access credentials were stolen from a guest services trailer at the track sometime between the Daytona 24-hour sports car race in late January and last week’s Budweiser Shootout.

According to the spokesman, about 50 of the passes have been recovered and police continue to investigate the incident.

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