

# Ribbs Rams His Way Into NASCAR Truck Series

By Leah Kerr

Willy T Ribbs is one of the new faces joining the 2001 NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series (NCTS). A veteran SCCA and Indy racer, Ribbs was able to convert his participation in the NCTS driver diversity-testing program into a seat in a Dodge Ram truck for Bobby Hamilton's racing team.

"To be involved in a factory-backed effort with Dodge is the sort of thing that drivers get into racing for," said Ribbs. "This is a great opportunity for me to compete in the NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series for a team as successful as Bobby Hamilton Racing."

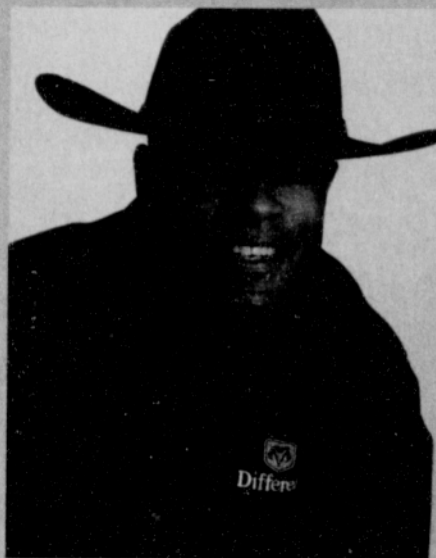
"Dodge and DaimlerChrysler have both stood for providing opportunities to qualified employees," said Jim Julow, vice president, Dodge global brand center. "With the momentum and support of Dodge's return to the NASCAR Winston Cup series and NASCAR's commitment to enhancing minority participation in their series, we feel this is the right thing to do and the right time to do it."

By helping to fund a scholarship program and provide for up to four students a year, Dodge plans to expand its motorsports diversity program to also include opportunities in road racing and drag racing.

In the 2000 BF Goodrich Tires Trans AM season, Ribbs tied for seventh place by taking second in Long Beach, third in Detroit, fourth in Las Vegas and fifth at the season finale in San Diego.

"Willy T. Ribbs is seen as an inspiration for many aspiring African American drivers," said NASCAR Vice President Brian France. The only other black driver in the NASCAR truck series is Preston Tutt, who plans to drive the Billy Ballew Motorsports entry. Other African-American drivers, Tim Woods and Bill Lester also participated in the diversity-testing program and are still looking for a ride in the series.

Ribbs was selected from among a number of candidates who were evaluated for eligibility based on guidelines that include racing experience, profes-



Willy T. Ribbs

sional background, and character.

His racing career began after graduating from high school in 1977. Driving Formula Ford Cars in Europe, he won the Dunlop Championship during his first year of competition. Shortly thereafter, he returned to the U.S. to race Formula Atlantic cars.

In 1982 his career experienced a tremendous boost when he won the pole at the Long Beach Formula Atlantic race. In fact, he outpaced veteran drivers such as Al Unser Jr. and Michael Andretti before engine failure preempted his race to the finish line. Nevertheless, that race opened the door to the SCCA

Trans-Am in 1983, where he won five races and was named Pro Rookie of the Year.

In 1986 he competed in two NASCAR Winston Cup races for DiGard Racing. However, the team was not able to complete the season due to financial difficulties.

In 1989 he drove

Gurney's developmental IMSA GTP Eagle HF prototype. That same year, Ribbs became the star driver on the newly created Raynor-Cosby Motorsports team. Actor-comedian Bill Cosby funded this effort.

In 1990 Ribbs made his CART Indy car debut at Long Beach. He competed in ten CART races and won two top-ten events. In 1991, he qualified for the Indianapolis 500 on the last day, earning the 29th starting position.

Throughout 1994 Ribbs raced in the Cart series and achieved top-ten finishes at Denver and Michigan Grand Prix races.

He ran the Las Vegas 500 IRL race in 1999 before signing with Victoria Motorsports SCCA Trans-Am team for the 2000 season. He finished second at Long Beach, third at Detroit and fourth at Las Vegas where he was awarded the Johnson Control Triple Crown.

The NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series season starts on February 16, with the first Daytona International Speedway, Daytona Beach, Fla.

## Tentative 2001 NASCAR Craftsman Truck Schedule

March 4	Homestead-Miami (FL) Speedway
March 17	Mesa Marin Raceway, Bakersfield, CA
April 7	Martinsville (VA) Speedway
May 6	Gateway Int'l Raceway, St. Louis, MO
May 12	Darlington (SC) Raceway
May 20	Pikes Peak Int'l Raceway, Colorado Springs, CO
June 1	Dover (DE) Downs Int'l Raceway
June 8	(Fort Worth) Texas Motor Speedway
June 23	Memphis (TN) Motorsports Park
July 7	The Milwaukee (WI) Mile
July 14	Kansas (KS) Speedway
July 21	(Loudon) New Hampshire Int'l Speedway
Aug. 3	Indianapolis (IN) Raceway Park
Aug. 10	Nashville (TN) Super speedway
Aug. 18	Chicago (IL) Motor Speedway
Aug. 26	Nazareth (PA) Speedway
Sept. 6	Richmond (VA) Int'l Raceway
Sept. 15	(Fort Worth) Texas Motor Speedway
Sept. 28	South Boston (VA) Speedway
Oct. 14	Las Vegas (NV) Motor Speedway
Oct. 26	Phoenix (AZ) Int'l Raceway
Nov. 3	(Los Angeles) California Speedway

\*All races air on ESPN or ESPN2. Check local listings for times.