

YOU THINK NASCAR SUCKS? I might think it sucks more than you do, so maybe that means you have to suck me off. It always sucks when something that didn’t *used* to suck starts sucking and only keeps sucking harder. These days, NASCAR (National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing) doesn’t just suck dick—it sucks a BOWL of dicks.

If you’ve only seen it on television, you probably think it even sucks more than it actually sucks. Watching the Weather Channel is more exciting than watching a modern-day NASCAR race on TV. On television, you don’t get to feel the heavy-metal thunder-dome roar of 43 cars screaming by you at 200 MPH and rattling your bones. You don’t smell the exhaust and hear the cheers of 170,000 people around you. But I’ve been to a handful of NASCAR races over the past couple years—at Daytona, Bristol, the Poconos, and Watkins Glen—and it still kinda sucks.

It didn’t always blow, though. Over the past generation or two, NASCAR has gone from wild and dangerous to safe and boring. Watching the old footage from the glory days of Richard Petty and Dale Earnhardt and Cale Yarborough, you can almost *smell* the sweat and gasoline. There used to be something crazy, dangerous, and reckless about it. Now it’s all clamped-down and locked-in. And I’m here to tell you what went wrong.

First, though, I’d like to silence the urban pole-smokers who say that auto racing isn’t a sport and that drivers aren’t athletes. If you think that driving 500 miles in three hours with 42 other cars surrounding you doesn’t require tremendous stamina, reflexes, and hand-eye coordination, why don’t you try it, tuff guy? You’d probably wind up a big red stain on the asphalt after two or three laps. James Dean thought he was a race-car driver, too, and he wound up a smear of tomato paste on a California road. There are no intermissions or breaks or time-outs, and the cars get so hot, the average driver sweats off ten pounds a race. It requires so much stamina and concentration, it’s a wonder that most drivers aren’t tweakers—and maybe they are. And racing strategy—involving not only split-second decisions, but things such as mechanical engineering and pit stops—is possibly more complicated than in any other sport. In fact, since it involves machines, auto racing is a more futuristic and *evolved* sport than batting around a stupid fucking ball.

All right, then. Here are the reasons why NASCAR sucks now:

IT LOST ITS OUTLAW ROOTS

No other sport has roots deeper in criminal behavior than NASCAR. Although the official organization was established in the late 1940s, stock-car racing’s roots reach deeper into the

Prohibition era. Throughout the American South’s mountainous regions, bootlegging was a lucrative and dangerous business, and only the fastest moonshine-runners evaded the law. From this criminal culture sprouted a homegrown tradition of bootleggers



racing one another to see who had the fastest car. Junior Johnson, whom writer Tom Wolfe dubbed “The Last American Hero,” was a legendary moonshine-runner from North Carolina. The police never caught him. Junior went on to become one of NASCAR’s most successful early drivers, winning 50 races into the mid-1960s. The NASCAR story is similar to America’s story: We started out opposing the Establishment and then *became* the Establishment. We came into existence by rebelling against the World’s Bully, then we became the World’s Bully. NASCAR started with crime, but then it went big-time.

IT ABANDONED ITS CULTURAL ROOTS

As noted, stock-car racing was a cultural phenomenon specific to a place and time: The white American South during and after Prohibition. Auto racing has always been a primarily rural thing:



The city offers no room to race, what with a red light every fucking block. These days, in a quest to sate its insatiable greed—and also to fend off unfounded charges of racism—NASCAR officials are pushing for “diversity” and are consciously distancing themselves from the

working-class Southern whites who made the sport a billion-dollar empire. They’ve even paid hundreds of thousands in hush money to demagogues such as Jesse Jackson, trying to silence charges that NASCAR is the “last bastion of white supremacy.”

Funny—although hip-hop was born and flourished in black urban ghettos, you never see people demanding that it “diversify” and reach out to others. You might think it’s silly to compare auto racing to hip-hop, but I’m a man of rare understanding who respects both cultures. I feel it’s unhealthy for *anyone* to be ashamed of their heritage, and white Southerners are no exception. Multiculturalism and globalism and diversity are just going to make everything the same color of gray, and that’s a boring place to be. A stubborn push for “diversity,” in the end, results in the *opposite* of diversity. It makes everything the same, because it steamrollers over regional culture. When you try to be all things to all people, you wind up pleasing no one.

IT DIDN’T USED TO SUCK

IT LOST ITS INTERESTING CHARACTERS

A generation ago, NASCAR drivers had names such as Fireball Roberts, Lake Speed, and Soapy Castles. Crackers such as Richard “The King” Petty had a Southern accent so thick, you needed sub-titles. Back then, NASCAR drivers were drunk, stubbly, unreconstructed good ol’ boys blowing pistons and racing their tires off the wheel. They were men with balls so big, they needed a sidecar to carry them. Curtis Turner would get so drunk while flying his propeller plane out to an island party, he’d pass out, forcing reporters to fly the plane in mid-flight.

In keeping with a corporate push to maintain a more wholesome, pro-family image, NASCAR drivers have gone from slick, greasy peckerwoods to sanitary horse jockeys. All the personality has been vacuumed, permed, and dry-cleaned out of them. Jeff Gordon is technically a great driver, but he has all the charm of an aspirin tablet. The most recent champion, Jimmie Johnson, has all the charisma of a crash-test dummy. Most sporting promoters realize that flashy, brash, controversial athletes are good for business and that the fans love them. NASCAR officials haven’t learned this lesson.

IT LOST ITS SENSE OF DANGER

No other sport is more potentially dangerous to its participants than auto racing. What other sport has racked up the nearly three-dozen deaths that NASCAR has? Its most loved and legendary driver remains Dale Earnhardt, Sr. His nickname was “The Intimidator.” Drivers said the most frightening experience of their lives was looking in their rear-view mirrors and seeing his black car and steely eyes bearing down on them. If you were in his way, he’d push you out of it. Such recklessness finally caught up with The Intimidator, though—on the last lap of 2001’s Daytona 500, he crashed and snapped his neck, dying instantly. NASCAR enforced new driver head restraints and rules for aggressive driving, and no one has died while racing since. Yawn.

THE CARS AREN’T “STOCK” ANYMORE

What used to distinguish NASCAR from snobbier racing divisions such as Formula One and Indy cars was its pretense of using “stock cars,” i.e., unmodified assembly-line automobiles. A generation ago, the cars used to resemble actual cars that people could buy and drive themselves. Now, it costs upwards of \$20 MIL-LION to maintain just one competitive NASCAR vehicle. Your average dirt-poor race fan can no longer identify with these bleached-clean cyborgs racing \$20-million spaceships.

IT GOT BOGGED DOWN IN RULES

Unsportsmanlike conduct is often the most exciting thing about sports, but in its undying quest to court corporate sponsorship, NASCAR officials began “disciplining” drivers for everything from

using profanity to fisticuffs to criticizing the organization. They also severely tightened racing rules to the point where nearly every race is slowed down by upwards of twenty “caution flags” for things as simple as a Burger King wrapper on the track. They simply don’t let ’em hit the gas, “trade paint,” and *race* anymore.

NA\$CAR \$OLD OUT

Corporations know how to make money. They also know how to destroy anything that was good with

THE NEW NASCAR:
Sanitized, overmarketed cyborgs such as Jeff Gordon



something in the first place. In the nearly sixty years since its inception, NASCAR has grown from a grassroots regional phenomenon to America’s second-biggest money sport, behind only football. NASCAR has gone from Thunder Road to Park Avenue. Every inch of every car and driver’s uniform is plastered with corporate sponsors. In no other sport do the athletes wear their sponsorship all over their bodies.

Working-class fans are now forced to pay 100 bucks just to squeeze between two fat-asses on some bleacher seats. Exploiting the fans’ dogged loyalty, the level of merchandising has become surreal. A recent eBay search of the term “NASCAR” yielded 31,054 hits, with items such as “Mark Martin Viagra Uniform Jacket,” “Bill Elliott Hologram Cards,” “Jeff Gordon Laser Italian Charms,” “Tony Stewart/NASCAR Collectible Chocolate Racecar,” “Dale Earnhardt Bowling Ball,” and “Dale Jr. Earrings.” There were NASCAR thermometers, coaster sets, belly rings, salt & pepper shakers, travel pillows, ice buckets, charm bracelets, light-switch covers, candy bars, Teddy bears, hunting knives, squirt guns, floor jacks, wall clocks, lunch boxes, coolers, duffel bags, and quilted comforters—anything onto which you could conceivably slap a fucking LOGO and a driver name.

But there are already signs that NASCAR’s popularity is waning. He who trades his identity for money will one day wind up with neither. For what shall it profit NASCAR if it gains the whole world but loses its soul?