

Family Auto Racing Rivalry Fuels Competitive Spirit

(NAPSA)—It's not a nine-to-five routine and it's a tough way to earn a living. Racing around in circles at speeds approaching 190 miles-per-hour while banging fenders and "trading paint" with other drivers week after week looks like a lot of fun on a video game. Real stock car racing drivers, however, encounter frequent frustration, occasional rewards and rare, yet fleeting, fame, fortune and glory.

The profession doesn't have the kind of career path most fathers would want a son to follow. Who wants to follow in the footsteps of their dad anyway, you say? Well, if you can catch up to them, pose the question to Bobby Hamilton Sr. and his son, Bobby Jr. Both have chosen careers as stock car drivers, and both have accepted its nomadic way of life as they travel from track to track each week, crisscrossing the U.S. in pursuit of their dream of racing stock cars on the wildly popular NASCAR circuit.

Natives of Nashville, Tenn., this father/son duo is competing in NASCAR's top two stock car racing series, the Winston Cup Series and the Busch Series Grand National Division.

Bobby Hamilton Sr., 43, is well known on the Winston Cup Circuit and is a veteran driver with the experience and knowledge to consistently compete. Bobby Hamilton Jr. is a brash 24-year-old eager to learn what it's like to drive a stock car to the winner's circle in the big leagues. Occasionally they compete against each other in a racing rivalry that's in its infancy at a level where the stakes are high.

Such was the case recently at



Father and son duelled at the recent NAPA Auto Parts 300 in Daytona. (Left) Bobby Hamilton Jr., Bobby Hamilton Sr.

Daytona International Speedway, where each drove NASCAR Busch Series cars for team owner Dave Carroll and sponsor Dr Pepper. Bobby Sr. drove the Carroll Racing Diet Dr Pepper Chevy Monte Carlo #08, while Bobby Jr. drove the team's #26 Dr Pepper Monte Carlo in the NAPA Auto Parts 300.

They finished 42nd and 33rd respectively, and enjoyed every minute on one of two super speedway tracks (Daytona is 2.66 miles around) they will encounter during the season. The other is in Talladega, Ala. The Busch Series season consists of 33 races around the U.S.

"We love the thrill of competing against each other," said Bobby Sr. "It's a real adrenaline rush to have your own son drafting behind you or trying to pass at 185 miles-per-hour. We're both trying to win the race as part of a 43-car field of drivers, each with the desire to cross the finish line first."

The cars they drove in the Daytona race have 358-cubic

inch, V8 engines that generate 580 horsepower, fueled by 100 octane racing gasoline. Lacking sound dampening and emission control equipment, Busch Series race cars generate deafening noise and they move fast at super speedway tracks, held back only by a plate that restricts the flow of air into the carburetor and limits horsepower.

"Everything is a blur when you're moving at that speed," conceded Bobby Jr. "Racing my dad is a kick, a thrill that means a lot to me. If he's ahead of me, I want to catch him, and if he's behind me, I don't want him to ever get up to my rear bumper. He's family, but this is racing, which means each of us races to win. We're not going to put each other into the wall and when we race Dr Pepper cars, we help each other as teammates."

If you think high-horsepower stock cars are the only vehicles the Hamiltons race, you would be wrong. During a recent 30-second Dr Pepper television commercial touting its national stock car racing promotion, Bobby Sr. and Bobby Jr. found themselves racing lawn tractors painted in the Diet Dr Pepper and Dr Pepper race car paint schemes. Bobby Jr. takes the checkered flag for the win, despite a pre-race admonition from his father, "Who's your daddy?"

Whether it's dueling lawn tractors or cars that move like jet fighter planes, Bobby Sr. and Bobby Jr. enjoy the competition that has made NASCAR the fastest growing spectator sport in America and one that has strong family tradition on the track and among its fans.