



Maine Times Profiles NASCAR Driver Ricky Craven

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Ricky Craven always knew where he belonged. Like so many Maine kids, before and after him, he was drawn to the rumble and roar of auto racing at a young age. The first time he tooted around old Unity Raceway, he drove a borrowed car faster than its owner could. He was quick, instinctive, and focused, winning his first track championship at 17. He had potential. He had support. He had a well-defined goal and was determined to get it done.

For the next 13 racing seasons, Craven capitalized on his potential like no other Maine driver, steadily climbing the racing mountain. In early 1997, Craven was near the summit, part of the best team in the best stock-car racing circuit in the world. The skinny kid from Newburgh was trading Budweiser-sponsored red paint with Winston Cup legends named Earnhardt, Wallace, Martin, and Gordon.

But then hard times fell upon him, marked by crashes and injuries. After the Hendrick Motorsports team left him unsigned in 1999, he worked with lesser-known outfits and things got worse. "My attitude had gotten pretty bad, and the thing was, the sport continues on without you, and you think, 'This can't happen, this is what I've worked my whole life for,'" Craven comments.

But after some soul-searching and prioritizing, he's made a formidable comeback over the past few years. Craven was 21st in points in 2001, 15th in 2002, and stood 17th after 19 races in 2003. And the future looks bright. Craven, now 37, and the Tide sponsorship are under contract with PPI Motorsports through 2004. The team holds an option for 2005, and talks have begun for that season as well as 2006.

In spite of his ups, downs, and recent reacquired success, he's showed no signs of forgetting where he came from. "This job has allowed me to travel all over. I've never found a place like the coast of Maine," says Craven. "It intrigues me and it's sort of like a magnet. A gravitational force. I always find my way back to Maine."

About Maine Times

Maine Times is a lifestyle magazine serving the entire state of Maine, with over 100,000 readers every month. Our mandate is to deliver a wide-angle view of what's happening in, to, and because of Maine. A beautifully designed, oversized magazine, Maine Times includes the work of Maine's best writers, photographers, and illustrators. For more information about Maine Times and its content, readers are invited to view the website at www.mainetimes.com.

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