



A Boys & Girls Club youth watches in awe as NASCAR motorsports professionals work on race cars.

Club Kids Get Behind-the-Scene NASCAR Experience

Thanks to BGCA's partnership with CARQUEST, 20 young people from Boys & Girls Clubs of Cabarrus County and Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Charlotte (N.C.) took a day-long field trip to Hendrick Motorsports, home of four NASCAR Sprint Cup Series teams with drivers Casey Mears, Jeff Gordon, Jimmie Johnson and Dale Earnhardt Jr.

The young group met team members and toured the facilities while learning that teamwork and a passion for excellence were common traits among all of the successful motorsports professionals they met.

Tony Eury Jr., Crew Chief for the #88 Dale Earnhardt Jr. team, spoke to the visitors and signed autographs for them, emphasizing the importance of studying math and science to do his job. As the group continued their tour, the technical

departments they visited supported his statement.

The Club teens visited the fabrication, paint, assembly and set-up areas, then moved on to the Engine Department where the basic functions of the elaborate computerized fabrication machines were reviewed. The youth were also treated to a view of the series of engine dynamometer rooms where race conditions are simulated.

The teens were also surprised to learn that fitness is a vital part of the NASCAR business. In the Team Training Center, the head of the fitness program explained the importance of diet and exercise for the pit crew to stay in shape to meet the demands of their job.



Boys & Girls Club teens stand in the background of an ESPN

At the pit stop practice, ESPN recording at Hendrick Motorsports in North Carolina. cameras captured footage of the race team crew members interacting with Boys & Girls Club members. Coach Mark Mauldin introduced the team and outlined each part of the pit stop demonstration. Several static tire change maneuvers were performed, as well as a live stop with the car moving into place. Following the demonstrations, the visitors were all invited to experience changing tires and sitting in the car.

The final stop on the tour was a visit to the #24 and #48 shops for lunch and prizes. Prior to the pizza lunch Chad Knaus, crew chief for the #48 Jimmie Johnson team spoke to the group. He shared many stories about his progress in the business and his experiences. Chad's message was that no matter what you end up doing in life, education will make you more effective at your job.

During lunch Dion Williams, a crew member of the #24 Jeff Gordon team and former Boys & Girls Club member, shared his personal story. Dion graduated from Wake Forest University and played linebacker for the Minnesota Vikings. He shared a comparison of athletes in basketball and football to those on a race crew. He outlined the practice and preparation that enabled him to succeed in both football and as a crew member.

Following lunch the visitors each received a prize and gift bag that included hats, diecast cars and team hero cards. A special commemorative engine piston created in the Hendrick Engine Department and engraved with the logos of Boys & Girls Club, Hendrick Motorsports and CARQUEST was also given to each Club youth.

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