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FOR THE DAILY JOURNAL
OF COMMERCE**

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Ivy Hi-Lift adds racing to its equipment and scaffold inventory

The "Contractors' Car" puts a spark in customer relations

EUGENE, OR—JUNE 4, 1998—One on one contact has always been a way of doing business for Eugene-based Ivy Hi-Lift. So when the company, which specializes in equipment and scaffold rental and sales, decided to sponsor a Raybestos Northwest Series NASCAR in February of this year, it only made good marketing sense. Many of Ivy's customers are big sports fans and racing is no exception.

The company, however, decided to take the traditional race car sponsorship one step further. Ivy not only agreed to be the main financial contributor, but to invite business associates such as equipment suppliers to join them in creating a niche market-oriented car. The company appropriately dubbed the race car the "Contractors' Car" and splattered nearly a dozen industry associate names all over the car, crew uniforms, hauler and pit cart. Ivy also tied the race team and its contributors to various company marketing programs such as its print and radio advertising.

The strategy paid off as Ivy's 1998 Chevrolet Monte Carlo, driven by 20-year-old Damon Lusk, is performing exceptionally well in the Series and currently holds sixth position in the point standings out of a field of 54 drivers.

"The relationship with our associate sponsors and Damon has been a win-win situation," said Tim Justice, Ivy Hi-Lift Marketing Manager. Financially everyone's investment was quite modest because we basically teamed up to share the expense of a race team. And for Damon, as young as he is and as hard as it is to find backing, he gets a full-fledged sponsor that is excited about him and the way he wants to race."

At press time, Lusk, a native of Kennewick, Washington, had raced six races, including five top ten finishes with two being top five. Only 32 points separate Lusk from the Series second place driver.

"Damon's performance has been incredible," said Justice. "He challenges the top drivers in the Series who have been driving for years. Considering that this is only his second year in the Series, we couldn't be more pleased."

Justice is especially impressed with his driver's representation of the company. When Lusk is not pushing Ivy's #22 car to consistently qualify and place around Northwest speedways, he is making appearances at whatever Ivy branch is nearest the next race on the schedule, or being lined up for Ivy branch open houses and trade show appearances. With 17 Ivy locations throughout the West, Lusk will eventually make visits to a location near all but two of Ivy's equipment and scaffold rental stores.

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“It’s tough enough turning someone loose to represent only your company,” said Justice, “but Damon represents Ivy and ten other associate sponsors. You want someone who exemplifies what you as a company stand for—in this case, what 11 companies stand for. But Damon has done it. He talks with our customers and their kids as if they were a friend. He respects fans and if someone wants an autograph or a race poster, he’s right there. Damon’s even been known to sell a piece of equipment—that’s hard to find,” emphasized Justice.

The NASCAR Raybestos Series is a 16-race circuit that primarily tours the Northwest. During the season, the Ivy Hi-Lift team will make appearances that include races at Portland International Raceway and Portland Speedway in Portland, OR; Evergreen Speedway in Monroe, WA; South Sound Speedway in Tenino, WA near Olympia; Tri-City Raceway in Kennewick, WA; and Douglas County Speedway in Roseburg, OR. Ivy is also anticipating an appearance at the Sears Point Raceway invitational in mid-June. The invitational is a NASCAR Winston Cup Championship companion race that features such drivers as Terry Labonte, Jeff Gordon and Dale Earnhardt, and carries ESPN television coverage.

“The Ivy sponsorship is a major breakthrough for our team,” said Lusk, who missed out on last year’s Series rookie-of-the-year honors by only six points. “With Ivy Hi-Lift supporting us we’ve been able to step up to the front of the Series field. A legitimate sponsorship makes our season a lot less stressful knowing that all we have to do is focus on driving—and winning while we’re at it.”

Before the Ivy sponsorship, Lusk depended on the racing support of his father, Doug Lusk, also of Kennewick, Washington. Together, with the support of the family business, Lusk Pump & Irrigation, the two built their team while calling on the backing of local friends and suppliers. But with Lusk’s improving record and a natural driving ability that quickly moved the team up to more challenging race divisions, Lusk Racing suddenly found itself needing the support of a corporate sponsorship. In only his fourth year as a driver, Lusk moved from Late Models to Super Fours, where he took rookie-of-the-year honors both years, and then to the Northwest Series.

Justice explains that the Contractors’ Car was one way for the company to recognize its core customer base and invite them to join key suppliers and employees in supporting the race team. As part of the company’s customer dedication and market positioning strategy, Ivy brought on board support from associate sponsors including A-1 Plank & Scaffold of Hays, KA; JLG Industries of McConnellsburg, PA; Trus Joist MacMillan of Boise, ID; Trak International of Port Washington, WI; WACO Scaffolding & Equipment of Cleveland, OH; Hessel Tractor (John Deere distributor) of Portland, OR; Mayville Engineering Company of Mayville, WI; MultiQuip Inc. of Carson, CA; Daily Journal of Commerce of Portland, OR; and Gradall Company of New Philadelphia, OH.

“We are very excited about having teamed up with Lusk Racing, said Justice. “As America’s number one spectator sport, NASCAR is continuing to grow in popularity; sponsoring a race car simply enables us to get involved in a sport that our customers enjoy and relate to. Plus, it gives our employees a team they can call their own. Like I said, it’s a win-win situation”

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Ivy Hi-Lift is an Initial Plant Services Company headquartered in Eugene, Oregon. With 15 branches located throughout Arizona, California, Idaho, Oregon, Nevada, Utah and Washington, the company rents and sells a full line of equipment including Aerial Work Platforms, Contractor & Industrial Equipment, Forklifts and Scaffolding. Additionally, Ivy provides an extensive service program that features an industry-recognized safety program dedicated to the safety of Ivy employees and customers.

For future updates on the Ivy Hi-Lift Racing team, as well as other Ivy Hi-Lift news, visit the Ivy web site at www.ivyhilift.com.

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