



# PAINTING DAYTONA SPEEDWAY LOGOS

*tougher than passing on the high side*

**R**ACE LOGOS have long been an important part of racing. They are just as much a spectacle for fans as they are an effective advertising tool for the sponsors. Race fans certainly take the logos for granted and probably don't give much thought to how they are produced but imagine a big race at Daytona without the Daytona logo front and center in the infield.

Kenny Bogner and Missouri Turf have been painting the Daytona logos since 1998. I have been working for Kenny for several years now at the Kansas Speedway and now on the traveling crew for as many races as my day job will allow. Here is a recount of my recent trip to Daytona with Kenny; also with us were veteran logo painters Tony Wagoner and Kenny's son, Justin.

After flying in to Daytona late Saturday night, our workweek starts early Sunday morning. As we drive to the maintenance facility located behind turn 2, I notice the 3-story high wall of earth and turf that is the structural support for the near straight up banking of Daytona. The backside of the tracks turn is so steep that it must be mowed with a remote control mower.

At maintenance, after uncrating the equipment and supplies, the first task is to sort through dozens of white, plastic 55-gallon barrels to find the correct patterns, or stencils if you prefer, for the 2012 Coke Zero 400 race weekend. Yes, I said 55-gallon barrels. These logos are so big that the patterns barely fit into the barrels for shipping and

storage. The Daytona letters and flags alone are 200 feet long and 80 feet high. This pattern is so large that it is in three separate pieces requiring three 55-gallon barrels for storage.

For this race weekend, we have 11 patterns to layout and paint including Nascar.com, Subway Jalapeno 250, Sprint Cup, three Coke Zero 400's, 7-11 Qualifying Day, Nationwide Dash for Cash, TNT, ESPN and, of course, the Daytona logo. All patterns were located except for the Sprint Cup and NASCAR.com. We later found out that those patterns were still at the Kentucky Speedway and had not yet been shipped to Daytona. To anyone else, this would be a major problem but Kenny and Justin are not concerned. If the patterns don't make it by Wednesday, they will just lay it out using gridlines in the grass. I am always amazed how they can remain so calm when things don't go as planned.

Since our rental car won't hold much paint, the speedway supplies us with one utility golf cart and a 1980-something half ton Chevy pickup. This truck is perfect because we really don't care if we get a little paint in the bed or on what's left of the seat and it runs well most of the time. Just have to remember to tap hard on the gas pedal when it reaches 15 mph to get it to shift to second. I guess that makes it a semi-automatic transmission. On this first day the old truck is loaded with staples, strings, a rolling tape measure, dozens of cans of white aerosol paint and as many 55-gallon drums of pat-

terns as will fit in the rusty old bed and we're off to the track.

We drive under the backstretch bleachers, through an opening in the concrete wall and we are on the track. We make a left turn towards turn 2. As we approach the turn, I was truly in awe of the steepness of the banking. I really think that if we drove the old Chevy up the banking, we would almost immediately start rolling over right back down to the apron. There was a track services crew replacing foam behind the safer barrier. It is so steep; they had to use a telescopic forklift to reach up to the wall from the apron to provide support as they worked at the top of the steep bank.

We continued our trek around the famous track until we reached the 7-acre infield. I turned off the noisy old truck and then heard nothing. The track was strangely quiet considering there would be a major racing event here in about 120 hours. Daytona Grounds Manager, Sam Newpher, had the bermuda-grass perfectly cut to about  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch. Kenny's first task is to lay out and string the centerline that stretches from pit entrance to pit exit, parallel to pit road through the infield. Then, using the start/finish line as the center line perpendicular to the string, he measures toward pit entry and again to pit exit to set locations for each of the massive logos. The Daytona logo is set in the middle and below the string line, the Coke Zero logos are on either side of the Daytona logo and centered on the string line and all other logos are outside of each of the Coke Zero logos and



above the string as viewed from the bleachers.

Now that we have the logo locations, it's time to roll out the patterns. As we struggle to pull the huge sheets of carefully folded and rolled plastic out of the barrels, we are overcome by the stench of stagnant water that has been sealed in the barrel for months while stored in the Florida heat. There is no time to dry out these patterns; we have to put them away wet.

After we unfold the pattern, we pull it tight against the string and center it to the mark. Then pull the corners tight and staple one side. Then one of us will start stapling the top side and another will staple the bottom, then the other end. Once stapled tight, we "dot" the pattern with white turf paint. When complete, the plastic sheet pattern is immediately removed. The patterns are always folded the same way for storage which makes it much easier to lay out. Folds are always left to right toward pit exit, then rolled toward the bleachers. This process is repeated until all patterns have been dotted in the grass.

Due to the heat and bright sun, we want to finish the layout before lunch to avoid burning the grass through the clear plastic sheeting. The next step is to string all straight lines within the logo. Kenny believes that the logo should look as good at ground level as it does from the bleachers or the press box cameras or even from the blimp. He does not like crooked lines. All straight edges are strung as are the tops and bottoms of all lettering. This really is the difference in an average looking logo and a masterpiece. The many tight strings are one reason why it is very important to wear high top, waterproof boots when painting logos with Kenny. Of course you want to keep your feet dry but also to keep from getting your ankles cut by the strings when you trip over them.

The rest of the day is spent spraying white paint. We run 2 guns from each pump so we are always working in pairs on each logo. While spraying white, we will dust the areas that will be yellow with white as a base coat since yellow does not cover green grass very well on its own. By just dusting these areas, it is still easy to see the edges of the areas that will be painted yellow later. We will spend the rest of Sunday painting white. At the end of the day Sunday, we put the pumps

and tips in water and switch to the really important work of exercising the huge bass in Lake Lloyd.

### LONG WEEK AHEAD

When we arrived at 7 am Monday, I was surprised to see that the Florida humidity had turned our bright white logos to a dull, almost light gray shade. I could tell this was going to be a long week! It is still quiet on the track except for the occasional clank of a dropped tent pole and the low drone of forklifts and trucks coming from the parking lots outside the track. One pump was changed to yellow and the other to red. Even though it is fairly easy to change to different paint colors on these airless machines, it is easier yet to just move the pump from one logo to the next painting the same color at each logo.

While Justin and Tony moved through the infield painting yellow at each logo, Kenny and I stayed with the two Coke Zero logos painting red then we moved our pump to the other logos painting the small amount of red in each of them. With such large logos, it is important to apply paint very evenly and as lightly as possible. When finished, we want the logo to look like a uniform carpet of color. This means we must avoid "caking" the paint on the grass by misting on the paint from multiple directions. This is tricky, especially along the edges of letters and shapes.

With almost 60,000 square feet of logos to paint in 4 days, there is no time to use boards to create crisp edges. Instead, we must have a steady hand on the gun and always be aware of where you are in the huge sea of colors. When Justin and Tony finish yellow, they switch to light blue. Kenny and I are in red most of the day, switching to black to finish the day. But of course, the day is not complete until Lake Lloyd provides more lunger largemouths.

Tuesday morning, the track is no longer silent as the seemingly endless fleet of tractor-trailers arrives to unload and mount tires on wheels. Network people have now invaded the space around our 7-acre island of art to string cables and mount cameras and microphones. Kenny and I stay in black most of the day while Justin and Tony finish blues then switch to black also. The winds have really picked up today. When you are trying

hard to mist paint wind is your enemy especially with black paint. All colors are now first coated and since another mist coat is yet to be done, some black overspray will not cause much of a problem. However, it is important to avoid the overspray onto the green bermudagrass by spraying into the wind along the unpainted edges.

It's Wednesday morning, July 4, and the Daytona International Speedway has become a city in itself both inside and outside the track. Network trucks, race team souvenir trucks, exhibit trucks, RV's and tents are filling the space around the outside. The infield has swollen with team haulers, drivers' motor coaches, more network trucks and NASCAR's fleet of support trucks and equipment. NASCAR officials are measuring and setting up timing equipment, walking the track to inspect the asphalt and the walls. Safety trucks and jet dryers are arriving from Talladega, Charlotte, Chicago and Michigan. Tour trams are passing through pit lane and winding around to the start finish line so eager tourists can take pictures in front of flag stand. No one in this city has taken this holiday off, especially the tired and sore logo paint crew.

By the way, the Sprint Cup and NASCAR.COM patterns are still missing 48 hours before the track goes "hot," the entire left side of the infield remains void of logos, Kenny remains cool while me and everyone else in this temporary city wonder how he can possibly pull this one off. Justin and Tony pressure up their pump to go from black paint to clean water then back to white. They will start the second mist coat of white on everything. This coat of white is critical especially for the giant Daytona letters. This coat must be applied lightly and very evenly so the letters do not show different shades of white.

As Kenny is preparing to lay out and hand outline the remaining logos, an Angel arrives from the shipping and receiving building to deliver two 55-gallon drums filled with the patterns for the remaining logos. I noticed Kenny kneel down and rest his head in his hand. He said he was just stretching his back but I know what he was really doing! Justin and Tony arrived quickly to help us lay out and "dot" both patterns. I had been doing some time lapse video work earlier in the week, but here was an opportunity to set up

the camera once and get time lapse of a very famous logo from green grass to final coat in one day.

We put our pump to white and painted white on both logos followed by yellow, red, blue and black to complete both logos before lunch. The pit road rumor mill was very busy talking about how Kenny's new laser device that was mounted on a tripod along the crash wall above the Sprint Cup logo enabled him to complete that logo in just a few hours. We decided to let the rumors run wild!

After lunch, we put our pump back to white so we could make sure that all the white was second coated in the same day to ensure uniformity of brightness throughout the infield. We finished early and it was a holiday, so of course the only thing left to do is catch more bass in Lake Lloyd before heading back to the condo to enjoy fireworks on the beach.

We had been getting occasional rain showers and the intense heat created the need for Sam to run irrigation Wednesday night. The combination of irrigation, rain and humidity makes it very difficult to hold some colors, especially red, yellow and black. With white second coated and stable, we decided to repaint all red, yellow and blue on Thursday morning. After lunch, we had to finish painting and clear the infield of all of our equipment and paint buckets since practices and time trials would begin bright and early Friday. We decided that Friday night, after the Nationwide race, we would re-paint all black in addition to repairing any logos that get hit as a result of spins or crashes to be ready for the Sprint Cup Race Saturday night.

We were finally able to sleep late Friday morning to rest and recover. Since Sunday, we have loaded, hauled, carried and sprayed more than 320 5-gallon buckets of paint. At 50 pounds per bucket, that is 8 tons of paint. It was time to rest. Kenny flew back to Kansas City to layout and cut new patterns for clients leaving the three of us to deal with the logo carnage that usually results from the typical Daytona "big one" crash. While there were plenty of crashes and the "big one" at the start/finish line, only 2 logos were damaged so we were able to repair damage and re-paint black in all logos by 2:00 am Saturday to end the work week.

Every race and every different logo has

been a new learning experience for me and Daytona is no exception. Working with Kenny and his crew at multiple tracks including Kansas, Richmond and Daytona, I have a new respect for this job. Our crew must make sure every logo looks perfect no matter what the condition of the turf and every track is different. Kenny and Justin have worked hard to develop and teach us new methods

that reduce the amount of paint needed, minimize damage to the turf and deliver top quality logos. ■

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