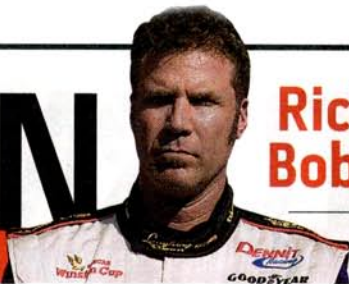


MY TURN

Ricky Bobby



SUZANNE HANOVER / S.M.P.S.P.

I'm a big, hairy American winning machine

My story is of a man who could only count to 1. I'm the best there ever was. I wake up every morning and take a long piss of excellence. I vomit victory and crap desire. Actually, I crap red, white and blue—not because I'm patriotic but because I have a medical condition. Maybe it comes from eating 20 loaves of **Wonder Bread** a week and washing each one down with a gallon of **Powerade**.

Growing up in West River, N.C., all I wanted to do was go fast. Until I was 9, the only words I ever said were, "I want to go fast." Even if I was playing with a **Jack Hawk 9000** hunting knife, all I could say was, "I want to go fast." My mom was worried, but she finally realized I had an innate obsession with speed. That was reinforced on career day, when my daddy finally showed up to come back into my life. He hadn't been around much since I was conceived in the bathroom of a steakhouse. The women were lining up for Reese Bobby that night, and he chose my momma, Lucy.

I'll never forget what my daddy told the class that day, after he told us not to listen to the teacher but before he got kicked out of the school: "It's the fastest that gets paid, and it's the fastest that gets laid." As he left he said something that changed my life: "Son, always remember, if you ain't first, you're last."

My big break came in the **Laughing Clown Malt Liquor** car. The crew chief, Lucius Washington, asked who wanted to go fast. I raised my left hand and slammed my right foot down.

Not long after that I met my smoking hot wife. She's hotter than eating 10,000 packs of **Big Red** all at once. If you rate her butt on a scale of 100, it's easily a 94. Her butt is so hot it made a plane fall out of the sky and caused

fatal traffic accidents—which was great because Hank and all the guys at **McReedy Funeral Homes** do such a terrific job. She's definitely smoking hot, but, you know, I look good—I mean *damn* good—in my **Julio's Thongs for Men**.

Me and my smoking hot wife have two boys, Walker and Texas Ranger, and they're winners—just like Ricky Bobby. If we wanted two losers, we would've named them Doctor Quinn and Medicine Woman. My boys are just like me, especially in their love of **Chinese Prune Candy**.

For all you smoking hot ladies out there who aren't my smoking hot wife but might want to replace her someday, I recommend and heartily endorse **Maypak**—the tampon of NASCAR.

I started to win races right away, and fans love me because I drive so hard. As an American, I can honestly say my country needs me to win. Racing for points is for gay French Formula 1 drivers like my rival Jean Girard.

Even my team owner wants me to race for points, but with all due respect, that idea ain't worth a velvet painting of a whale and a dolphin getting it on.

I was so good so fast that I talked my owner, Mr. Dennit at Dennit Racing, into starting a team for my best friend, Cal Naughton Jr. Me and Cal call ourselves Shake and Bake. Growing up together, me and Cal always thought of duo nicknames, like Peanut Butter and Jelly, and Farts and Matches, but nobody really wanted to be Farts. So Shake and Bake was by far the coolest.

Sometimes Cal will say, "Hey, Ricky Bobby, why can't I finish first sometime?" And I say, "Cal, if you win, how can I win at the same time?" We can't both be the best there ever was.



Ricky and Cal—just think of us as 1 and 1A ... no, wait, there ain't no 1A.

SUZANNE HANOVER / S.M.P.S.P.

I beg NASCAR

for months for the chance to be an extra in Will Ferrell's racing movie and write about it. I hear there is trepidation about "integrating" me into the movie. Who said anything about integrating? I don't want to do a nude scene with Ferrell; I just want to stand in the background of a media scene.

"Don't sell yourself short," says NASCAR's P.R. man extraordinaire, Andrew Giangola. "I want you in the hot tub scene."

Luckily for movie fans, there will be no such scene when *Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby* drives into theaters August 4. I play a photographer in victory lane, which requires a visit to wardrobe first thing in the morning when I arrive on the set at Lowe's Motor Speedway. The wardrobe guy tells me jeans aren't allowed in victory lane, even though they're Levi's Signature Series, the official jeans of NASCAR. If photographers couldn't wear jeans in real victory lane, victory lane would be empty. I'm told to put on a pair of black Dickies.

After that, I wander over to the staging area for extras. David Linck, the movie's publicist, informs me that "extra" is wrong. "You're atmosphere," he says.

I talk idly with the atmosphere—there will be 150 of us today, up to 300 early next week. Most of the people I talk to are just doing this for fun. But there are plenty of aspiring actors and actresses, too. I hear stories of roles and near-roles, none of them in any movie I've heard of. One aspiring actress, a professional flutist, is friends with the head of the SPORTING NEWS' research department. Small world, no?

At 9:34 a.m. I have my first celebrity sighting: John C. Reilly. I analyze whether Reilly can pull off being a NASCAR driver. It's a crucial test because NASCAR fans can be, um, touchy about how the sport is portrayed.

With his firesuit unbuttoned at the collar, Reilly certainly looks the part, though his bushy hair and mustache make him more suited for 1986 than 2006. He has



COLUMBIA PICTURES (3)

How to make actors look like drivers: Put them in firesuits covered with sponsors, check. Baseball hats and sunglasses, check. Walking without swinging their arms, check. Weird dancing ... check?

The ballad of a Ricky Bobby

extra

I write about sports because I can't run, catch or throw. As I found out on the set of *Talladega Nights*, I can't act, either. **By Matt Crossman**

the walk nailed—a NASCAR driver walks in a perfectly straight line. His shoulders never move, and his arms barely swing. I think that comes from years of walking in jostling crowds. Or maybe that Matt Kenseth commercial is right and the drivers are robots.

We get props—cameras, credentials, etc.—before lunch. I want to use my own credentials, so I can brag about having played myself in a Will Ferrell movie. But I'm told I can't because the SPORTING NEWS logo might, in a million years, be visible, and nobody has asked for or

received the SPORTING NEWS' approval. The movie people won't take my word for it that it's OK.

I briefly consider playing myself anyway—there's not a chance in a million years I'd get caught—but I chicken out. I got into the journalism business for the sole purpose of sticking it to The Man. I've gotten so soft I won't even stick it to The Props Guy.

Back in the staging area, I watch the stampede toward the free food. It reminds me of the NASCAR press box, only the people here are groomed and have manners. A woman walks up to me and says, "You actually look like press."

A woman walks up to me and says, 'You actually look like press.' Frankly, I'd rather look like a fireman.

Frankly, I'd rather look like a fireman.

She has been an extra—er, atmosphere—several times and has several more such parts lined up. In real life, she owns a funeral home. "We don't have a body," she says. "This will keep me busy until we get a death call."

I can't believe how many people are involved in making this movie. I talk with five people who deal only with atmosphere. There are more directors and assistant directors than there are illegal parts on Jimmie Johnson's car. That's one indication this movie is a big deal for NASCAR.

This will be NASCAR's biggest foray into pop culture since *Days of Thunder*, which was a big deal in 1990 but now seems dated and cheesy, perhaps because the star turned into a couch-jumping whack job.



primps for us. She fixes my collar and brushes what I really, really hope is lint off my shoulder.

When Ferrell arrives on set, the first thing I notice is he's not as tall as I thought. He looked like a giant in that cheerleading skit on *Saturday Night Live*.

In this scene, Ferrell's Ricky Bobby is interviewed by FOX's Dick Berggren. After the first rehearsal, an assistant director steps in and tells the atmosphere not to laugh.

Yeah, right.

Ferrell's victory speech gets funnier every time he does it. I won't ruin it by telling you what he says, but each take is hilarious. Some of the material is scripted, some Ferrell makes up on the spot, some comes from director Adam McKay, Ferrell's writing partner on this movie and *Anchorman*.

Though the words often are McKay's, Ferrell's delivery and

improvisation sometimes are too much. While the cameras roll, McKay bites his lip and plays mind games with himself so he doesn't laugh. So far, McKay has ruined one take in this movie by laughing, and he ruined seven—SEVEN!—in *Anchorman*.

Looking through my camera's viewfinder, I see Berggren, the back of Ferrell's head and some of the atmosphere fake clapping. I

must admit, as atmosphere, I'm quite awful. I never actually touch the shutter, and I look nothing like a photographer

because I showered and shaved and ironed my clothes today. Also, real photographers don't convulse with laughter during victory lane interviews. They save that for hot tub scenes. **SN**

When I first get on the victory lane set, I'm trapped behind a guy playing a NASCAR official. He looks just like Lex Luthor on *Smallville*. The small chance I have of making it into a shot is eclipsed.

It could be worse. I could be behind Ferrell's crew chief, played by mammoth Michael Clarke Duncan. Tony Siragusa could hide behind him. After I move into better position, I'm close enough to touch the car, which looks race-used, with dings and nicks all over the back.

We run through a couple of rehearsals. I get sprayed with champagne and

dusted with confetti. Between takes, random conversations go on behind me. Somebody asks, not in a joking way, "What are those chickens with fur called?" I'd ask what that means, but I don't want to break character. The rest of the atmosphere apparently doesn't understand the word *pantomime*.

This victory lane is supposed to be in Las Vegas. The assistant director asks the showgirls in the background whether they would mind taking off their coats for rehearsal. They nod that they don't mind, and the men on the set enthusiastically offer support for that decision.

"Easy, fellas," the

There are more directors and assistant directors than there are illegal parts on Jimmie Johnson's car.



If this shot—and the movie screen—were 20 feet wider, you'd see a certain writer laughing so hard he couldn't stand up.

assistant director says.

Next to the showgirls is a guy dressed like the track mascot. He jokes he has a perfect face for the giant dice head he wears. He hams it up next to the Vegas girls, churns butter, even talks a little trash.

A woman walks the rim of pretend photographers and

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