

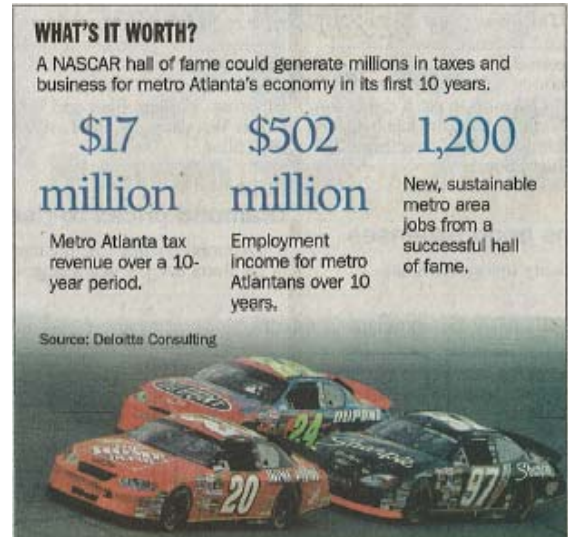
MANY INVOLVED IN THE BIDDING TORN BETWEEN DIFFERENT LOYALTIES

By [RICK MINTER](#)

In the sport of NASCAR, where two companies hold most of the power, the bidding for a NASCAR hall of fame has put many of the players in awkward spots.

It's like business partners trying to decide which one of their employees will get a coveted assignment.

Both International Speedway Corp. and Speedway Motorsports Inc. are involved in city bids for a hall of fame. ISC is controlled by the France family, which owns NASCAR, as well as racetracks in three of the competing cities: Richmond, Daytona Beach, Fla., and Kansas City, Kan.



SMI owns six tracks, including those in Atlanta and Charlotte, which have submitted bids for the hall.

So when Atlanta Motor Speedway President Ed Clark pitches for Atlanta's hall bid, he's going against his old boss, H.A. "Humpy" Wheeler, president of AMS' sister track, Lowe's Motor Speedway in Concord, N.C. Wheeler wants the hall in Charlotte.

It's the same for Daytona International Speedway President Robin Braig, who is working against his ISC associates in Richmond and Kansas City.

Clark said he has been allowed to push for Atlanta's bid without pressure from the Wheeler or others at Charlotte-based SMI.

"Nobody in Charlotte told me not to help Atlanta," he said.

"But I did get a call from [Richmond International Raceway President] Doug Fritz saying: 'Hey, you grew up in Virginia. You're supporting us, aren't you?' " he added.

Bruton Smith, chairman of Speedway Motorsports, has conflicting allegiances, too.

While he'd benefit from the hall being in Atlanta, where he's the principal owner of AMS, he's supporting the bid of his hometown, Charlotte, where he also owns the Concord track.

"As chairman of a company that owns and operates six motorsports facilities in various cities around the country, I sometimes find myself in the middle of situations that are similar to those of a father with several children," he said. "You try to be fair across the board, but sometimes you might help one while disappointing the other."

Clark said he doesn't believe conflicts and politics will keep the most deserving bidder from winning the hall.

"I think there's going to be some [politics], but the long-term process is going to be to make the best selection and the best location, not only for five years down the road but long term," he said.

There's talk that Lesa France Kennedy would like to see a hall in Kansas City, because it's an ISC track and she has spent a lot of time there.

Kennedy is head of ISC but also a member of the France family, which controls NASCAR and will help make the final decision.

Clark said he doesn't believe Kennedy will put her personal wishes ahead of what's best for the sport, but he's also not sure exactly what NASCAR is looking for in a hall of fame.

"That's what everybody is searching for," he said. "What are the hot buttons?"

Clark said that until the final decision is made, there will be people working against friends and foes alike to get a favorable nod from NASCAR.

"There will be every kind of politicking and everything else because everybody wants [the hall of fame], and everybody sees the value of having it," he said.