

Area man rides with Earnhardt

A former Jonesboro resident lived a NASCAR fan's dream Wednesday night at Lowe's Motor Speedway in Concord, N.C.

Frank Shelton rode with Dale Earnhardt Jr. in the No. 8 Budweiser Chevrolet of Dale Earnhardt Inc. Shelton won the opportunity to ride along with Earnhardt for three laps through a national promotion run by Wrangler.

"It was very exciting," Shelton said after his ride with Earnhardt. "I got to drive a race car myself for eight laps, which was an unreal experience. I'm sure I wasn't doing nearly as fast as they normally do, but riding along with Dale was just thrilling."

Shelton said Earnhardt was driving around 165 miles per hour during their ride around

Lowe's Motor Speedway. The checkered flag came down before he knew it.

"I drive a tractor-trailer, but I've never done 165 miles an hour before," Shelton said. "It was thrilling. It's more exciting than any kind of roller-coaster you could ever be on or any thrill ride. It's one of those experiences you'll never forget."

Shelton, a Jonesboro High School graduate and longtime Jonesboro resident, now lives in Bauxite. He said his parents and sister still reside in Jonesboro.

A truck driver for Groendyke Transport, Shelton was one of three people selected at random to win the national Wrangler promotion. He entered the contest when his wife, Janice, saw the sweep-

stakes on Wrangler.com.

Experts from the Richard Petty Driving Experience helped Shelton learn to operate a NASCAR-style race car before he took the car around the track.

"There's nothing I've ever experienced like it," Shelton said. "I've done quite a few crazy things. I just can't imagine doing that every Sunday."

Following the 2007 season, Earnhardt will officially be the driver of the Hendrick Motorsports No. 88 car. For a fifth consecutive season, the Wrangler logo will appear on Earnhardt's car and racesuit in 2008. Wrangler's relationship with NASCAR began with a primary sponsorship of Dale Earnhardt in the 1980s.



Former Jonesboro resident Frank Shelton (foreground) gets ready to ride with Dale Earnhardt Jr. in Concord, N.C. Shelton won a

Wrangler promotion for the opportunity to ride three laps with Earnhardt at Lowe's Motor Speedway.