

Former Daytona 500 winner visits Villages

Geoff Bodine, ESPN pit spotter Diana Hubbard talk with Motor Racing Club

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By Keith Chartrand

When a former Daytona 500 winner and a current member of ESPN's NASCAR broadcast team are in the same room, the stories can be endless.

Yet to wrap up Wednesday night's Villages Motor Racing Fan Club meeting, Geoff Bodine and Diana Hubbard were asked to do a little role playing.

Hubbard played the role of pit reporter and Bodine played the role of driver. The driver added a little spice to make the plot more interesting.

"How close is too close?" Hubbard said as she approached Bodine with a microphone.

"If something bad happens I tell my (public relations) girl to tell the (media) I need five minutes so I don't say something bad," Bodine said.

During Bodine's lengthy career he recalled one specific post-race interview.

"We were racing at Bristol and I was battling Jimmy Spencer for the lead," Bodine said. "We raced the whole race clean with him. After restarts and pits I was always the one that had to pass. I must have passed (Spencer) three or four times. The one time he had to pass me he hits me. Next go around I just so happened to crash into him; freak accident."

As the gathered crowd laughed, Bodine said officials parked him and an interview immediately followed – no 5-minute cooling off period. His answer had a couple of choice words in it.

"Here comes the media and I didn't get the five minutes I need to cool off," Bodine said. "It is not fair. In football when an injured player is lying on the turf you don't see someone come running onto the field trying to interview them. It is not fair."

Hubbard nodded in agreement.

"Anyway, at the time I was trying to get a sponsor," Bodine said. "Toward the end of the interview I apologized for cursing. We didn't get the sponsor."

Hubbard and Bodine have two very different careers both involving the same sport.



Submitted photo
Geoff Bodine, NASCAR driver, and Diana Hubbard, an ESPN pit spotter, don The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club hats while visiting with the group Wednesday night at Colony Cottage Recreation Center.



The 62-year-old Bodine made a point to relive one of the most spectacular crashes in racing history – his crash in the June 2000 truck race at Daytona.

“As soon as I hit the wall, it knocked me out, which was a good thing. I didn’t remember anything after that point until I got out of the truck,” he said.

Bodine, showing multiple images of the wreck to club members, pointed out several elements of the crash and post-crash that many people might not have known.

Bodine’s arm was sticking out of the wreckage as it flipped.

Eight spectators were injured in the crash and Bodine asked NASCAR to give him the names of the injured, but they wouldn’t release to him.

“Every cell in my body hurt,” Bodine said. “Mom back home thought I was dead. My kids at the track thought I was dead. Fans thought I was dead.”

He didn’t even remember wiggling loose as the EMT workers got to him. What people do remember was a motion Bodine made.

“The oxygen mask on my face wasn’t directly over my mouth and nose,” Bodine said. “I adjusted it. When people saw that I moved my arm they knew I was alive. That was God’s way for me to tell people that I was OK.”

Capturing a crash like that for broadcast purposes isn’t as easy as it might seem.

Race fans sit back in their recliner to watch 43 cars exceed speeds of 200 miles per hour. The broadcast seems smooth, seamless and clean.

Wednesday night, Hubbard led an imaginary behind-the-scenes tour, showing how a live race is televised. The planning, logistics and predicting the unpredictable is difficult but it is not controlled chaos.

“The entire crew doesn’t let the panic set in,” Hubbard said. “While they can’t predict what is going to happen, they have to be able to be spontaneous. Our crew does a great job of being spontaneous.”