



## **Red Bull Driver Search**

Searching for the future American F1 Champion

### **Press Release**

From the Offices of Maxim Sports Management

Contact: Maria Jannace

Tel: 212.337.0003

Email: maria@maxim-online.com

### **A Tremendous Chance For Young Americans**

*In the world racing community, Red Bull Energy Drink's recent announcement of its American Formula 1 Driver Search initiative is generating significant interest. The likelihood of an American presence in the cockpit of an F1 car in the near term has clearly struck a positive chord among both fans and those in the sport. That interest is reflected in the following story written by 20-year newspaper veteran Gerhard Kuntschik, a sports writer, reporter and columnist who covers auto racing, the NBA and the NHL for the "Salzburger Nachrichten," a national Austrian newspaper... [Translated and edited]*

**Salzburg, Austria (09 July 2002)**— Almost 30 years ago, a young and talented racer, who lacked support from any major sponsors, came from the U.S. to Europe to make his way up the racing formulae to become a top line driver. Nowadays, his job is to find talented American youngsters to help prevent a common result: their careers being "finished" before they've even started because of running out of sponsorship money. His name is Danny Sullivan, and he is well known on both sides of the Atlantic: He became a Formula 1 driver in 1983 with British team Tyrrell, and later won the Indianapolis 500 (1985) and the CART Championship (in 1988). His new job is head of the driver search program that Salzburg-based energy drink company Red Bull started this year. This program shall finally deliver a successful U.S. F1 driver.

"Formula 1 needs a U.S. driver if it wants to become popular in the United States," says Sullivan, originally from Louisville, Kentucky. "American people want to cheer for a local hero."

Formula 1 is hugely popular the world over – except in the United States. As Sullivan says, "If Michael Schumacher, today's all-conquering F1 champion and one of the highest paid athletes in the world, walked along Fifth Avenue in Manhattan in civilian clothes, nobody would recognize him." Sullivan adds, "The American public, even the racing fans, have little or no knowledge of F1. This can only change by having American drivers on the starting grid." To be fair, F1 once did have a distinct popularity in America, the high point of which was when Mario Andretti clinched the F1 World Championship – way back in 1978...

Reaction by the media and fans to the Red Bull driver search program is very positive. Sullivan, who splits his time between homes in France and the United States, has organized a group of U.S. racing insiders that he calls "scouts" – team owners and managers, coaches, journalists, etc. – each of whom are closely watching a handful of 16- to 21-year-old drivers, the identities of which are a secret at this point. [Most of these drivers are currently racing in American junior formulas such as (but not restricted to) World Karting Association championships, Formula Ford, Star Mazda, Russell Series, Formula Dodge, Barber Dodge and Toyota Atlantic. -Ed.]

For this first year, four or five of them shall be selected for the program that will start this fall. Next year, they will race in different junior categories all over Europe. Sullivan recently was watching races and visiting teams in these formulae. "This program is a tremendous chance for young Americans. I wish I had had this chance of a lifetime," the 52-year-old says.

Sullivan's personal story is a very interesting one. He came to Europe without major backing in 1972, raced in Formula Ford, then Formula 3. In 1975, he finished runner-up in the well-respected British Formula 3 championship (tied with Brazilian Alex Ribeiro, the two were second to Swede Gunnar Nilsson, who went on to win the 1977 Belgian Grand Prix but later died of cancer at the tender age of 30). When F1 team owner Ken Tyrrell, for whom Jackie Stewart became a triple world champion, selected his drivers for the 1983 season, Sullivan got the second cockpit alongside Italian Michele Alboreto strictly because of his driving skills. Finishing fifth in the famous Monaco Grand Prix was his best result. For 1984, still without major sponsorship, he could not defend his seat in F1 and turned to race CART Indycars. "Companies tended to support only drivers of their countries – but not Americans. That's why I was left on my own. With the Red Bull program, now it's different," explains Sullivan.

During the U.S. Grand Prix at Indianapolis, 15 to 20 Red Bull F1 Driver Search candidates will be announced -- in the presence, of course, of Indianapolis Motor Speedway owner Tony George, who as promoter of the U.S.G.P. is definitely interested in getting a "local hero" into the field some time soon. As is F1 promoter Bernie Ecclestone, who gave the program his total support.

Following the announcement of the candidates, the young hopefuls will be subjected to strength-and-conditioning testing, followed immediately by an intense driving "run-off" at a European track. Sullivan and his judges will then decide who will race for which team in what category next season. Smiles Sullivan, "By then the guys must rely on themselves. I will be no babysitter."

And next year, the whole search starts again, to find the "second generation" of talented American racers, while the first group is expected to move up one or more steps.

Please contact:

Maxim Sports Management, Inc.

Maria Jannace

18 West 21 Street, 6 Floor

New York, NY 10010

Tel. 212.337.0003

Fax: 212.337.1206

Website: [www.redbulldriversearch.com](http://www.redbulldriversearch.com)

Junior Team Website: [www.redbull-juniorteam.com](http://www.redbull-juniorteam.com)