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'Dump Trump' Public Sentiment Over Indy Pace Car

By MICHAEL MAROT
AP Sports Writer

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — There's a Dump The Donald movement afoot at the Indy 500.

Race organizers selected real estate mogul Donald Trump as this year's celebrity pace car driver a month ago. Since then, the potential Republican presidential candidate has created a stir by questioning whether President Obama was born outside the United States and whether he was qualified to attend the Ivy League schools he did.

Race fans, local citizens and an Indiana state lawmaker want to force Trump out of his next celebrity apprenticeship: driving the pace car May

29 just before the centennial celebration of the race at Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

"To me, when they first named Donald Trump, it just felt wrong," said Michael Wallack, who started a Facebook page in hopes of firing Trump. "He has no relationship to the track, to the race, to racing, to Indianapolis, and I think I would have been bothered anytime with something like that. But to do that on the 100th anniversary, it made no sense.

"Then when he started going off on the birther stuff," Wallack said, "that prompted me to do more and that's when I started the page."

Obama has publicly released his birth certificate from Hawaii, but members of the so-called "birther" movement are arguing in federal court that the document has been falsified.

Trump has taken credit for bringing the issue to the fore. And now Trump is firing back at critics of his pace car duties.

"The debate stems from unfounded, incorrect and malicious lies that Donald Trump has a racial bias toward the President," said Michael Cohen, executive vice president and special counsel to Trump. "Nothing could be further from the truth, as Donald Trump doesn't have a racist bone in his body.

"Mr. Trump's request for President Obama's birth certificate, school records and documents were predicated upon transparency, a major part of President Obama's 2008 platform," Cohen said.

"If Mr. Trump should become the next president, he would provide these documents willingly."

Track spokesman Doug Boles said speedway officials are aware of Wallack's Facebook page, first reported last week by *The Indianapolis Star*, and are monitoring the situation.

Changing the pace car driver might be a first.

"As far as I know, the speedway has not changed a pace car driver," Boles said. "But there's been a pace car since 1911, so I don't know if anybody could definitively say it's not been changed."

The speedway has a rich tradition of using celebrity pace car drivers from outside auto racing. Since 2000, the list includes actors Anthony Edwards, Jim Caviezel, Morgan Freeman and Josh

Duhamel; seven-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong; supermodel Elaine Irwin-Mellencamp; and "Good Morning America" host Robin Roberts. One potential political candidate, retired Gen. Colin Powell, also drove the pace car in 2005.

The race's reputation has survived other brushes with controversy, including a split between the two major open-wheel series and Steven Tyler's rendition of the national anthem.

Trump, opponents contend, is more polarizing and might overshadow the race.

"The folks I have talked to

indirectly have shared concern with the situation," said state Rep. Jeb Bardon, a Democrat who represents the area surrounding the race-track. Bardon said he worries Trump's appearance will draw negative attention to this month's centennial celebration.

Wallack, a partner at an Indianapolis law firm and one-time Democratic candidate for office in Hamilton County, started the Facebook page and in less than a week had 11,700 followers.

The decision to change pace car drivers might not be left entirely to organizers.

Erratic Oil Prices Play Havoc with Economies

By PABLO GORONDI
Associated Press

Oil prices fell to near \$108 a barrel late last week as gasoline jumped to average \$4 a gallon in six U.S. states, raising fears higher fuel costs will undermine crude demand.

News that Saudi Arabia, the world's largest crude producer, had cut its oil output also pushed down prices.

By early afternoon in Europe, benchmark crude for May delivery was down \$1.61 at \$108.05 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract rose \$1.55 to settle at \$109.66 late last week.

In London, Brent crude for June delivery was down \$1.20 to \$122.25 a barrel on the ICE Futures exchange.

In early May, New York became the sixth state in the country to top \$4 a gallon for the average price of gasoline, joining Alaska, California, Connecticut, Hawaii and Illinois, according to AAA's Daily Fuel Gauge. Gasoline in Washington, D.C. also averaged above \$4.

The national U.S. average for gasoline has increased for 26 straight days, and is now at \$3.83 per gallon, up 29 cents from a month ago.

"Oil is reaping the (benefits) of rising commodity prices in general, the dollar's weakness, investor interest and supply-side risks," said analysts at Commerzbank in Frankfurt. "There is no real shortage of oil on the market, though."

Some analysts expect rising global fuel costs will eventual-

ly hurt crude consumption and likely trigger a drop in oil prices, which are up 29 percent since mid-February. Crude jumped to \$147 in 2008 and gasoline averaged as high as \$4.11 a gallon before the U.S. economy plunged into recession in 2009.

"Springtime gasoline in the U.S. has never cost more," energy consultant The Schork Group said.

"Automotive diesel in the U.K. is at an all-time high and the price on the continent is fast approaching levels not seen since the 2008 bubble."

However, energy department figures last week showed a large gasoline supply drop, suggesting higher prices still haven't curbed consumer spending.

Traders will be closely watching the latest inventory data scheduled to be released this week.

Saudi Arabian Oil Minister Ali Naimi said late last week the global oil market is oversupplied, dampening hopes OPEC will soon boost its output to help bring down prices, according to the official Saudi Press Agency.

Naimi said Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter, cut daily output to 8.3 million barrels in March from 9.1 million barrels in February because of what it saw as excess global supply.

The Saudi decision "will no doubt fuel the discussion... of high prices now starting to hit demand. It would also explain why the price of oil did not rise following the surprise cut in Saudi production," Commerzbank said.

Rand McNally Still Publishes Its Atlas

SKOKIE, Ill. — The first real sign of summer has lately arrived — the Rand McNally Road Atlas.

With summer travel season approaching, Rand McNally last week officially launched the latest edition of its iconic Road Atlas, which includes new smartphone tags with mobile web links that provide users with enhanced road trip content.

"Americans rely on the Road Atlas each year to help them plan their travels and to keep as a just-in-case back up in their car," said Dave Muscatel, CEO of Rand McNally. "The new 2012 Road Atlas has some extras that travelers will find even more useful."

In addition to hundreds of map updates, the new Road Atlas features smartphone tags (also called QR codes). When scanned, the tags link to rich destination content. In addition to images and text, some tags point to videos featuring attractions and activities. Travelers who don't have the tag scanner on their smartphone can get information and access to the free app at Rand McNally's Web site.

"With the new smartphone tags in the 2012 atlas, travelers will be able to get relevant destination content that will help

them plan for interesting stops while on the road," explained Muscatel.

The first Road Atlas was published in 1924 with annual editions rolling ever since.

Among this year's updates to the Road Atlas is a return to some favorite road trips — a program that kicked off the Best of the Road brand a decade ago. The new edition of the atlas contains overviews highlighting Rand McNally editors' favorite Best of the Road trips from the last ten years.

This year's trips are:

- A Shore Thing: Michigan's Lake Michigan shore;
- From Pacific to Palms: A slice of Southern California;
- Head for Hill Country: The lush Hill Country of Texas

Cultivating New York;

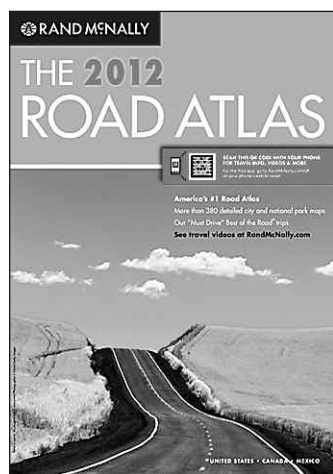
- Canandaigua to Cooperstown, New York;
- Simply Sonoma: The backroads of Sonoma County, California

• Seaside to Summit: Manchester to Bretton Woods, New Hampshire;

• Southern Charm: Rock Hill to Greenwood, South Carolina;

• Snow on the Eastern Shore: Ocean City to Baltimore, Maryland;

• Pacific Northwest Passage: Portland and down the coast of



Rand McNally has been publishing its famous Road Atlas every year since 1924. The 2012 Road Atlas will be available to motorists across the country beginning this week.

Oregon.

The new 2012 Road Atlas will be featured prominently in the recently announced Best of the Road search and road rally. Rand McNally and USA TODAY recently announced the joint program, which expands the Best of the Road program from the pages of the Road Atlas to an online point of interest search and road rally.

Rand McNally says it is keeping its print edition vibrant, even in this digital age.



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U.S. New Home Sales Are on the Rise

By DEREK KRAVITZ
AP Real Estate Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — More Americans bought new homes in March, helping give the battered industry a small lift after the worst winter for sales in almost a half-century.

The Commerce Department says new-home sales rose 11 percent last month to a seasonally adjusted rate of 300,000 homes. That follows three straight monthly declines. But the pace remains far below the 700,000 homes a year that economists view as healthy.

Last year was the fifth consecutive year of declines for

new-home sales. Economists say it could take years before sales return to a healthy pace. Poor sales of new homes mean fewer jobs in the construction industry, which normally powers economic recoveries following recessions. Each new home creates an average of three jobs for a year and \$90,000 in taxes, according to the National Association of Home Builders.

The median price of a new home rose nearly 3 percent from February to \$213,800. New-home prices are about 34 percent higher than the median price of re-sales — more than twice the markup in healthy housing markets.

Many builders are waiting for the glut of foreclosures and other distressed properties to be cleared before stepping up construction. But with 1.2 million foreclosures forecast this year nationwide, according to foreclosure tracker RealtyTrac Inc., a turnaround isn't expected for years.

The seasonally adjusted number of new homes for sale in the United States is the fewest since the summer of 1967.

Builders have struggled to compete with a wave of foreclosures and short sales — when a lender agrees to let a borrower sell a home for less than its market value. High unemployment, tight credit and a lingering fear that prices will fall further have also kept people from making home purchases.

Residential construction has all but come to a halt. Building permits, a gauge of future construction, sank in the winter to their lowest level in more than 50 years before recovering somewhat in March. But that improvement was spurred by a more than 28 percent jump in permits granted for apartment and condo buildings. That suggests that builders are confident people are flocking to rentals, not homeownership.

New-home sales rose in most regions of the country. Sales jumped nearly 67 percent in the Northeast, which was hit hard by wintry weather; by almost 26 percent in the West; and by nearly 13 percent in the Midwest. Sales fell 0.6 percent in the South, which accounts for the nation's biggest home-sale market.

Given the pace of new-home sales, it would take more than 7 months to clear them off the market. Economists say a six-month supply of homes is healthy.

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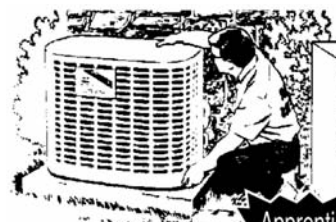
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