

Enck fuels drivers for 500 miles

CONCORD — It's a pretty cool thing to be at the race track and be able to say you know Jeff Gordon or Dale Earnhardt Jr.

But the guy you really want to know is Kenny Enck.

He's the guy with the food, the official caterer of most of the top Nextel Cup racing teams and the man who can work wonders with Hamburger Helper.

Each week (except at Martinsville where there's not enough room for all his grills and equipment), Enck and his crew cook breakfast, lunch and dinner in the garage area. Team members, drivers, owners and assorted guests queue up under the tents and between the haulers to partake of a NASCAR-sized feast.

On average, Enck cooks one ton of food each race weekend and there's more variety than there are stickers on most quarter-panels.

Saturday afternoon at Lowe's Motor Speedway, he and his crew were offering, among other things, tacos, pepper steak, roast beef, chicken parmesan, grilled pork loin and, of course, his famous macaroni and cheese-flavored Hamburger Helper.

Enck estimates he makes between 100 and 150 pounds of Hamburger Helper each weekend. There's Chicken Helper, too, but it's the cheesy stuff that has them lining up to get some.

"Robbie Loomis and Bobby Hamilton Jr., are usually first in line," Enck said.

He won't divulge all his secrets, but admits he enhances the standard recipe, adding, for example, cream for water. If you want to be the Wolfgang Puck of the garage, you can't tell them all you know.

Dinner Saturday night — when the drivers spilled out of their mandatory pre-race meeting — included enough grilled steaks to make a nice-sized cow, stuffed shells and, because Jeff Gordon asked for it, salmon for No. 24.

Smoked salmon, by the way. The good stuff.

decade ago, saw the need for good food in the garage and now he might be the most popular guy at the track.

■ Yes, that was Larry Hagman.

The former J.R. Ewing, having apparently recovered nicely from the gunshot wound he suffered years ago on "Dallas," was

the honorary race director for the UAW-GM 500. He attended the drivers' meeting, posed for photos, signed autographs and generally went about the business of being Larry Hagman.

■ There was a group, including Mayor Pat McCrory, roaming around pushing Charlotte's NASCAR Hall of Fame bid. They spread the word through the suites and garage area, even in the drivers' meeting.

Any feeling on Charlotte's chances?

"Well, we have 12 people here and Kansas City doesn't have any," said Tim Newman, chief executive of the Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority.

■ It's not really a race until stuntman Mark Hager blows a few things up.

He got two chances and did a nice job wrecking enough cars to make it look like a Bodine family reunion. Hager sandwiched stunts around a Montgomery Gentry concert. Proving how good he is, Hager managed to miss both Montgomery and Gentry during his stunts.

The second stunt was the more flamboyant. Called the T-Bone, Hager jumped his car into a stack of three cars, all during an explosion that belonged in a Schwarzenegger movie. Then he landed his car on a line of wrecks in the infield and, in true show-biz fashion, hopped out and gave the crowd the thumbs-up sign.

■ Rusty Wallace might be retir-



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PRE-RACE SHOW



JEFF SINER - STAFF PHOTO

'The Unknown Stuntman'

Stuntman Mark Hager flies out of the high-rising flames of an explosion during a pre-race show at Lowe's Motor Speedway Saturday evening. Country music duo Montgomery Gentry also performed as part of the entertainment.