

Coca-Cola 600 Pre-Race Spectacular to Honor America and US Military Troops

May 26, 2004

- Impressive military show featuring Blackhawks and B-2 Bomber
- American Idols to sing National Anthem, appear at Speed Street
- Country Star John Michael Montgomery to perform #1 hit song
- Ft. Bragg's Gen. Swannack and NC Rep. Burr named race officials
- 20th Anniversary of Coca-Cola 600-longest running NASCAR sponsorship

CHARLOTTE, N.C., May 26 /PRNewswire/ -- The 20th Anniversary running of Coca-Cola 600 will honor America's men and women serving in combat with a spectacular pre-race program, featuring an impressive military display including Special Forces Blackhawk attack helicopters and the B-2 Stealth Bomber.

The eight finalists from the top rated American Idol television show will sing the National Anthem and country music star John Michael Montgomery will also be performing his hit song "Letters From Home" during pre-race activities. The American Idols will also be at the Coca-Cola stage at Food Lion Speed Street in downtown Charlotte on Saturday night.

In a special tribute to our troops serving in Iraq, Afghanistan and across the world, Major General Charles Swannack, Jr., Commanding General of the 82nd Airborne, has been named Grand Marshal and North Carolina Congressman Richard Burr has been named Honorary Starter. General Swannack, commander of the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, NC, is a combat veteran of numerous military operations, including Haiti, Panama, Bosnia and Iraq. Congressman Burr, a member of the House Intelligence Committee, is a candidate for the United States Senate.

In addition to the Special Forces Blackhawk helicopters and John Michael Montgomery performance, the impressive pre-race show will include the 82nd Airborne Chorus, the Army Golden Knight parachute team and the Army Rifle Team for a 21 gun salute. The pre-race spectacular will culminate with a fly over of the B-2 stealth bomber.

The Coca-Cola 600, one of the largest sporting events in the world, will be held over the Memorial Day weekend on Sunday, May 30, at the famous Lowe's Motor Speedway. The Coca-Cola 600 -- already approaching a sell-out -- will attract nearly 200,000 spectators and a nationwide television and radio audience. This is the 20th Anniversary of the Coca-Cola 600 and marks the longest running race sponsorship in the Nextel series.

"All of us at Coca-Cola join NASCAR fans across the nation in expressing our thanks and support for the members of the US Armed Forces who are serving to protect our freedoms in Iraq, Afghanistan and throughout the world," said Coca-Cola Consolidated spokesman Lauren Steele. "It is only appropriate on Memorial Day weekend that we pay a special tribute to America's military. We are honored to have General Swannack and Congressman Burr join us as race officials for the 2004 Coca-Cola 600."

As Grand Marshal, General Swannack will lead the pre-race parade, address the crowd of nearly 200,000 spectators, and then ride in the hot-lap pace car to start the race. As Honorary Starter, Congressman Burr will also address the crowd and wave the green flag to officially start the race. Both race officials will receive VIP tours of the pit and garage area, attend the pre-race drivers' meeting and make the awards presentation to the race winner in Victory Lane.

General Swannack is a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point and is a 33-year Army veteran. After tours of duty in the U.S. and Europe and combat operations in Haiti, Panama, Bosnia and Iraq, he was named Commanding General of the 82nd Airborne Division at North Carolina's Fort Bragg in March 2004.

Congressman Burr has represented North Carolina's 5th Congressional District since 1995. Cited by the Greensboro News and Record as "the rising star in the North Carolina GOP," Burr serves on the critically important House Intelligence Committee and is a candidate for the United States Senate in the 2004 election. Burr, his wife Brooke and two sons live in Winston-Salem, NC.

The American Idol finalists scheduled to appear at Speed Street and in the Pre-race program include: La Toya London, Jasmine Trias, John Stevens, George Huff, Jennifer Hudson, Jon Peter Lewis, Camile Velasco and Amy Adams.

Coca-Cola is the Official Soft Drink of NASCAR and the sponsor of the Coca-Cola 600. The Coca-Cola Racing Family includes top drivers Greg Biffle, Jeff Burton, Kurt Busch, Dale Earnhardt, Jr., Bill Elliot, Kevin Harvick, Dale Jarrett, Bobby Labonte, Kyle Petty, Ricky Rudd, Elliot Sadler, Tony Stewart and Michael Waltrip.

SOURCE Coca-Cola

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