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Liberty student kicks off racing season

June 20, 2008 | Eric Brown

Stephen Berry, driver of the No. 71 Chevrolet Monte Carlo racecar, will start his engine for the first time this year at South Boston Speedway, on Thursday, July 3. The Bailey's 200 will feature about 30 top drivers from NASCAR's Whelen All-American Series. Now a sophomore at Liberty, Berry finished third last year at the speedway and has high expectations going into this year's competition.

"It's sort of like an all-star race, all the big guys come there for this one race," said Berry. "It's unique because it is a race on a Thursday and the day before July 4 when there is not any other racing going on. I expect that we will have a great shot of winning this race."

Last season, Berry competed in the Whelen All-American Series full time, accumulating several poles and numerous top five finishes. This year, he plans on burning rubber part time in addition to running several races in NASCAR's Camping World Series. Berry hopes to contend in the Camping World Series full time next season and eventually dreams of one day battling racing's biggest stars in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series.

"Our goal is to move up to the next level of racing each year," said Berry. "The window of getting into the Sprint Cup is from age 19-24. Basically, when you are 24 you are too old to move into that series. I have one more series to go before I can move up to the Cup series with Jeff Gordon and those guys."

Racing action at South Boston Speedway begins at 7 p.m. The line-up includes a 50-and 100-lap event, the Bailey's 200 and a post-race fireworks display. Berry, who is backed by Sellers Racing and sponsored by Liberty University, is confident he will have a celebration of his own in victory lane.

"We have the best equipment and crew chief out there, and I feel like there are no excuses," he said. "We are going in there expecting nothing less than a win."

For more information on South Boston Speedway and the Bailey's 200, visit <http://www.southbostonspeedway.com>.