

The History of the Cup Lites Racing Series

In 1989, 11 time snowmobile World Champion constructor and YAMAHA factory backed driver, Tim Bender, designed and built a high speed, snowmobile engine powered 3/4 scale Winston Cup like stock car with low maintenance and affordable racing as the main objective.

At the time Bender's Snowmobile Business, Bender Racing Inc., the YAMAHA Factory's Official Performance Parts Company, was booming as they were manufacturing special built racing snowmobiles and parts for the factory and consumers. Also Tim's NASCAR driving career was escalating, so he put his 3/4 scale CUP LITES race car plan on the back burner for the time being.

Bender, who started his racing career in 1974, became known as one of the most well respected innovators, tuners and fiercest competitors in snowmobile racing. That reputation soon carried over to NASCAR racing.

On January 21, 1999, Tim was honored for his achievements and inducted into the International Snowmobile Hall of Fame in Eagle River, Wisconsin.

In the span between 1989 and 1997, Tim set several NASCAR records including becoming NASCAR's Winningest Sportsman Series Superspeedway driver with 7 wins at Charlotte Motor Speedway and Pocono Raceway.

By 1995, Bender was making his presence felt in NASCAR Busch Series driving a car for 1990 Daytona 500 Winner Derrike Cope with impressive runs at Daytona, Talladega, and Atlanta.

For 1997, Bender signed a deal to drive the #17 Kraft Singles Chevrolet of Riser Enterprises for the entire NASCAR Busch Grand National Series. Tim's early season was highlighted by winning the Pole and setting a New Track Record at Atlanta Motor Speedway. Unfortunately, Tim was injured in a qualifying accident at Bristol, Tennessee where he injured his neck and herniated a disk in his back. "After the Bristol Motor Speedway accident and while I was recuperating I dug the designs out for the CUP LITES Car. The more I thought about it, the more it made sense to have a division and a car designed for people who either couldn't financially afford it or didn't have the time to campaign a conventional Race Car," Bender stated. As soon as the doctor gave him the okay, he started testing the prototype car incorporating ideas from what he had learned since 1989. When spectators, track owners and prospective drivers saw the car, they fell in love with the concept.

When testing was completed, Tim Bender Race Cars Inc. and their 10 employees began building 30 Cup Lites Race Cars. As the 1998 Season was approaching, Tim made agreements with track owners to run an inaugural 12 Race Touring Series around the New York and Ontario areas sanctioned by CUP LITES Inc.

CUP LITES International marketing director Ron Moore successfully negotiated a multi year contract with the MBNA Bank as the title sponsor of the series, and Gray Tools as a co-sponsor. The MBNA Bank is the leading credit card issuer in motorsports and will offer a MBNA CUP LITES Master Card in 1999. "MBNA is very excited about the potential of the MBNA CUP LITES Series," says MBNA Canada's first vice-president Andrew Fuller. "When we first saw one of Tim's CUP LITES Race Cars, we were immediately impressed with the caliber of the workmanship and the potential this series represents. MBNA is proud to introduce ourselves as the title sponsor of this quality series."

With support from quality companies such as MBNA Canada, MBNA America, and Gray Tools, the excitement and enthusiasm the CUP LITES bring out in competitors and spectators alike, and the interest the CUP LITES cars have drawn from all over North America, the sky is the limit for TIM BENDER RACE CARS INC. and the MBNA CUP LITES Racing Series.

In 2003, Tim Bender returned to Snowmobile Racing agreeing managing the Polaris factory Snow-Cross team. At the same time Paul Graff, a long time Cup Lites team owner, agreed to purchase the Cup Lites Racing Series to be run as a separate company while Tim Bender continues to produce cars and parts through Tim Bender Race Cars Inc. [Read the press release].

In 2004, The Cup Lites Racing Series will continue it's growth as it expands into the south with the newly formed Cup Lites Southeast, based in Alabama. This series will tour some of the most historic track of Alabama and Northern Florida.