

25 Years Of Stars Racing Cars

(NAPS)—George Lucas, Ashley Judd, Clint Eastwood, Cameron Diaz, Jay Leno and Gene Hackman all have something in common besides being famous actors. They are all part of a 25-year legacy of celebrities who have taken on the high-speed, heart-pumping challenge of racing cars in the Toyota Pro/Celebrity Race.

Celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2001, the annual Toyota Pro/Celebrity Race, part of the Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach in California, has introduced more than 250 top-name stars to the excitement of real auto racing. The event, which has evolved to become the nation's largest, most prestigious celebrity racing tradition, has helped raise more than \$1 million for charity.

During the last 25 years, many of Hollywood's hottest stars from film, television and music have put the pedal to the metal behind the wheel of modified, race-ready Toyota Celicas. In fact, the race has seen the likes of Joe Montana, Tim Allen, Woody Harrelson, Craig T. Nelson, Kelsey Grammer, Coolio, Marsha Mason, Melissa Joan Hart, Rick Schroder, Anthony Edwards, Matt LeBlanc, Queen Latifah and Dennis Franz.

The appeal of real racing has also fascinated celebrities from competitive sports and modeling. Over the past 2½ decades, world-class athletes including John Elway (Super Bowl-winning Denver Broncos quarterback), Shaun Palmer (X-Games champion), Carl Lewis (Olympic Games gold medalist) and Walter Payton (NFL Hall of Famer) have left the stadium to burn rubber on the racetrack. Even top models



Renowned director George Lucas and actress Ashley Judd take a break from their preparations for the 2000 Toyota Pro/Celebrity Race. They are among more than 250 celebrities-turned-race car drivers.

such as Carol Alt and Kim Alexis have donned racing suits for the thrill of the Toyota Pro/Celebrity Race.

“What began as a novel idea more than 25 years ago has now become the world's most illustrious celebrity racing event,” said Les Unger, national motorsports manager at Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A. “Year after year, we've seen the level of celebrity talent and the quality of racing competition continue to rise. Best of all, the Toyota Pro/Celebrity Race has evolved into a major charity event that helps raise money to support Racing for Kids, a fund-raising organization that benefits children's hospitals.”

Run through the streets of downtown Long Beach since 1977, the Toyota Pro/Celebrity Race is held annually and broadcast on ESPN. The 2001 Toyota Pro/Celebrity Race will be held on Saturday, April 7.