

# SportsPro

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## Beyond Formula One: the motorsport business stories to watch in 2015



John Raoux/AP/Press Association Images

There's a world of motorsport outside Formula One and, ahead of this weekend's Daytona 500, the start of the 36-race Nascar season, SportsPro picks out five business storylines from across the sport to watch for in 2015.

### Nascar's hunt for a Cup sponsor

Nascar has begun the search for a new title sponsor for its top-tier series, following Sprint's confirmation late last year that it will not renew its deal when it expires at the end of 2016. Sprint has been Nascar's Cup sponsor since 2008, when the company merged with Nextel. Nextel previously signed a decade-long deal with Nascar, worth US\$950 million in total once a six per cent annual escalator is built in, in 2004.

Last year, Nascar unveiled a new title sponsor, Xfinity, for its second-tier championship, which was formerly known as the Nationwide Series, in a deal said to be worth up to US\$200 million, a figure slightly below Nationwide's investment. Like that deal, the hunt for a replacement for Sprint will be led by Nascar's chief sales officer Jim O'Connell, although the rights and activation fees involved are likely to be much higher. Indeed, the Cup title deal is one of world sport's largest sponsorships.

Former IMG executive George Pyne closed the Nextel deal during his decade at Nascar. He told SportsPro "it's a very complicated, complex sponsorship and therefore needs to be sold that way", adding: "It's one where you have to be quite thoughtful because of the size of the sponsorship. Going at it and putting together the package in the most thoughtful way, so that they can demonstrate the kind of value they're asking for, will be an important element of that process. That's not easy to do. As I reflect back, we met with a lot of companies the last time and it took a fair amount of time to pull together."

Elsewhere in Nascar, keep an eye on the farewell tour for four-time champion Jeff Gordon, one of the biggest names in the sport - and the man starting Sunday's season-opening Daytona 500 from the pole. The inevitable marketing programme which will be created around his final season behind the wheel will provide yet another salutary lesson for Formula One, which, despite the efforts of individual teams, continues to exist without a visible and effective central marketing department.

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