

Bill Lester

Biography

Bill Lester III was born on February 6, 1961 in Washington D.C. to William Alexander Lester, Jr., an electrical engineering professor and researcher at IBM Corporation, and Rochelle Lester, a social worker and elementary school teacher. Lester graduated from Skyline High School in Oakland, California in 1979 and was awarded a Regents Scholarship to attend the University of California, Berkeley where he earned his B.S. degree in electrical engineering and computer science in 1984. Bill Lester has enjoyed two remarkably successful careers.

Before becoming a professional race car driver, he spent 15 years working as a computer scientist and project manager in Silicon Valley for Hewlett-Packard. After embarking on a full-time racing career, Lester competed in NASCAR and IMSA, two of America's most prestigious racing series. He won over \$2 million in purse money, drove a total of 30 162 laps in competition, and earned six podium finishes and one victory during his 10 full seasons.

In 2006, Lester became the first African American driver in 20 years to compete in NASCAR'S premier Cup Series. It would be another 11 years before another African American driver, Darrell "Bubba" Wallace, would compete again in the Cup ranks. Among Lester's other credits are initial professional races in the SCCA Trans-Am Series and IMSA Series. In 1999, he won the CART African American Driver Development Program tryout and, as a result, successfully tested an Indy Lights car with Team Kool Green. In 2012, he completed his racing career by earning a trip to the Rotax Grand Finals of international karting competition in Portimao, Portugal, proudly representing Team USA.

During his five seasons of participation in the NASCAR Truck Series, NASCAR featured Lester in a TV ad promoting the series on the Speed Channel. He was the first Black driver to appear on the Honey Nut Cheerios cereal box, two years in a row. Lester appeared on the cover of Black Enterprise in April of 2004. Feature articles about Lester also appeared in USA Today and The New York Times as well as Car and Driver magazine, among others.

Bill Lester has received various awards including "Breaking New Frontiers" award from Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority in 2004, "Trailblazer in Motor Sports" award from the Rainbow/PUSH organization in 2004, "Jackie Robinson Award" from the Rainbow/PUSH organization in 2006, "Trailblazer Award" from RYSE Magazine in 2013, and the "Sam Lacy Pioneer Award" from the National Association of Black Journalists in 2013.

Lester's TV work began in 2003 with a two-year stint as a broadcast analyst for the Fox Sports South show "Around the Track." In 2014, he also worked as a Broadcast Analyst for the NBC Sports show "NASCAR America." Bill Lester is available for celebrity speaking engagements through Bruce Merrin's Celebrity Speakers, NOPACT Talent, Executive Speakers Bureau, and Great Black speakers. Bill has been featured in countless articles (THE NEW YORK TIMES), interviews (CNN), podcasts (NASCAR WEEKLY), and video

games (NASCAR by EA sports), and his image has been displayed on trading cards and in merchandizing. Bill Lester retired from professional racing in 2007.

