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DRIVER BIO: Sam Hornish Jr., Driver, No. 12 Dodge Challenger

Sam Hornish Jr. returns for his sixth season of NASCAR competition with Penske Racing in 2012. The 2011 season was an unusual one for Hornish as it marked the first time that he didn't contest a full-season of racing in a professional career that spans over 10 years. Though some may have viewed 2011 as a step back for Hornish, it really turned into a huge leap forward as he is now in a position to contest a full season in the NASCAR Nationwide Series, driving the No. 12 Alliance Truck Parts Dodge in 2012.

After posting his first-ever NASCAR Nationwide Series win at Phoenix in November and building a great relationship with sponsor Alliance Truck Parts, the Indianapolis 500 winning driver is once again poised to challenge for victories and contend for a championship this season.

Both Hornish and Penske Racing proved in 2011 that adversity provides opportunity. Hornish, who counts himself fortunate to have the support and guidance of Roger Penske, validated the Captain's belief in him yet again when he won the Wypall 200 at Phoenix International Raceway for his first point-paying NASCAR victory. A native of Defiance, Ohio, whose father owns a trucking company, Hornish also found himself partnered with a fitting new sponsor last season in Alliance Truck Parts.

Paired with Alliance Truck Parts and Dodge, Hornish and the No. 12 Penske Racing team were able to lay the groundwork for what promises to be a bright future, despite only competing in 13 Nationwide Series races in '11. While it was the penultimate race of the season that brought Hornish and the Alliance Truck Parts Dodge to Victory Lane, the veteran driver showed flashes of promise throughout the year. On two separate occasions Hornish earned front row starts, he finished in the top-five two times as well and he posted top-10 results in six of the 13 races he contested. It was his solid performances throughout the year that earned Hornish an opportunity to return with a full-season ride in 2012.

As he enters this season with great hopes and expectations, Hornish can rely on his years of motorsports experience and success to help guide him in what he believes will be a banner year of racing.

The 32-year-old Hornish remembers growing up racing with his father while his mother helped run the family business in his native Ohio. Advancing through the racing ranks en route to the IndyCar Series, Hornish credits the support of his family for the unprecedented success he achieved at a young age.

Hornish began racing go-karts at age 11. Four years later he emerged victorious in the World Karting Association's U.S. Grand National Championship. In 1996, Hornish moved to Formula Ford, spending more than two seasons in the U.S. Formula Ford 2000 Series before progressing to the Toyota Atlantic Championship.

Hornish entered the IndyCar Series in 2000. He caught the eye of Panther Racing, which went on to hire him for the team's 2001 campaign. The decision was rewarded when Hornish claimed victory in his first two starts with the team, ultimately winning the series crown in his rookie season. In 2002, Hornish earned five victories and 11 top-five finishes on his way to his second consecutive IndyCar Series Championship.

After the 2003 season, Hornish's childhood dream was realized when Team Penske invited him to join them for the 2004 season. Hornish won his debut race with the team – his victory marked the first time in the history of Penske Racing that an Indy car driver won his inaugural race. In his second season with Team Penske, Hornish earned two victories and finished third in the series championship.

Hornish made significant additions to his resume in 2006 by earning his third career IndyCar Championship and winning the Indianapolis 500. He captured the win from the pole, making a pass on the final stretch of the last lap to steal the win from rookie Marco Andretti. The IndyCar Series Championship marked the first-ever series title for Penske Racing and the Indy win represented the team's 14th 500 victory. At the end of the 2006 season, Hornish made his debut in stock car racing, making a pair of NASCAR Nationwide Series starts for Penske Racing.

In 2007, Hornish competed in his final season in the IndyCar Series while contesting multiple NASCAR Nationwide Series races and two NASCAR Sprint Cup Series events as he began to transition from open-wheel to stock cars.

During the 2008 Sprint Cup Series Hornish started strong at the season-opening Daytona 500 and the Sprint All-Star Race, where he was one of two participants to race their way into the event. Hornish earned three top-15 finishes with a season-best result of 13th in the Coca-Cola 600 at Lowe's Motor Speedway. Hornish also competed in eight Nationwide Series races with four top-15 finishes and a Camping World Truck Series race where he earned his first NASCAR top-10 finish with a ninth-place result. Hornish finished second in the 2008 Sprint Cup Series Rookie-of-the-Year standings.

In 2009, Hornish completed his sophomore season in the Cup Series with strong results. He captured his first Cup Series top-10 finish at Phoenix International Raceway with a ninth-place result en route to a total of seven top-10 finishes for the year. Hornish continued his forward momentum by scoring his first NASCAR top-five finish with a fourth-place result at Pocono Raceway followed two weeks later by a fifth-place showing at Michigan International Speedway. Hornish earned his first NASCAR victory in the Sprint Showdown qualifying event for the 2009 All-Star Race at Lowe's Motor Speedway. Hornish went on to finish 16th in the All-Star race.

The 2010 NASCAR Cup Series season saw Hornish make marked improvements in many categories. His qualifying results improved dramatically as he posted two top-three starting positions in 2010. Hornish also made gains in consistency and average finishing position over the course the season. He completed a noteworthy 95% of the laps in which he raced and he led a NASCAR career-high 50 laps of competition.

Though he only raced a partial schedule in Nationwide Series competition in 2011, Hornish was able to re-evaluate his goals and career path. He emerged from the season more determined than ever to succeed in stock cars and he is focused on picking up where he left off in 2011 and fighting for the NNS title in the No. 12 Alliance Truck Parts/WURTH Dodge Challenger.

Although Hornish is a world-class racer, he hasn't forgotten his roots and is actively involved in giving back to the sport and his community. In his hometown of Defiance, Ohio, Hornish was involved in the creation of a senior center, as well as the addition of a heart center at the Defiance Medical Center. Hornish also turned his love of bowling into a successful charity campaign at the fall race weekend at Texas Motor Speedway. In conjunction with Speedway Children's Charities, Hornish has raised over \$500,000 to benefit the children of North Texas.

Hornish enjoys customizing vehicles. His collection includes a 1930 Model A Ford, a 1951 Mercury, a 1955 Chevrolet Del Ray, a 1965 Cadillac Coupe de Ville and a 1967 Chevrolet pick-up truck, as well as a Corvette ZO6 Indianapolis 500 Pace Car.

Hornish divides his time between Napoleon, Ohio and Mooresville, NC. He and his wife, Crystal, have two daughters, Addison and Liza.

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