

## **Sarah Fisher's First Job Out of High School Is to Win the Indianapolis 500**

HARRISBURG, N.C., Tuesday, April 24, 2001 -- While most of her classmates are still trying to figure out what to do with their life, Sarah Fisher's main goal -- in her first job out of high school -- is to win the Indianapolis 500.

"I want to be as accomplished as I can in many areas, but right now my dream is racing," said Fisher, who will pilot the No. 15 Walker Racing/Kroger Special Dallara/Oldsobile/Firestone Indy car in the Atlanta 500 Classic at Atlanta Motor Speedway April 28. The race is the final tune-up for the Indy Racing Northern Light Series teams prior to the Indianapolis 500 May 27. Fisher hasn't given up school completely, though. The 20-year-old race car driver from Commercial Point, Ohio, is a student at Butler University, in Indianapolis and is majoring in business and mechanical engineering. No doubt she's one of the smartest race car drivers out there. Fisher graduated in 1999 with a 4.178 grade point average at Teays Valley High School (thanks to honors classes) and earned induction into the National Honor Society. But now the Indianapolis 500 comes first, a goal she's had her sights on since she was 12 years old.

Dreaming about Indy glory isn't inappropriate for Fisher, since it seems her first Indy Racing win could be right around the corner. Her second-place finish at Homestead-Miami Speedway April 8 was the highest finish ever for a woman in Indy Racing competition, and she qualified 19th for the Indianapolis 500 last year, becoming only the third woman in the history of the sport to accomplish that feat.

Janet Guthrie raced at the famed Indianapolis Motor Speedway from 1977 to 1979, with a best finish of ninth in 1978. Lyn St. James competed at the Brickyard seven times during the 1990s, with her best finish 11th in 1992.

With momentum from Miami, and the hope for a good finish in Atlanta, Fisher could head to Indianapolis with the potential to change the face of American motorsports forever. A win could inspire thousands of girls to become race car drivers much the same way Tiger Woods has changed the face of golf. Fisher downplays all that, though, seeking instead to focus on what a win would mean for her and the Walker Racing team.

"Gender is an issue, so I deal with it," Fisher said. "But the gender doesn't matter. In a way, it helps us return the investment that our sponsors have made, because it puts us in the spotlight more. At the present, a win would mean we had reached some personal and team goals. We would need a lot more results on the racetrack for it to go further than that."

What got her to this point is the same formula that has worked for boys for decades in baseball and football and girls in gymnastics and tennis -- start early and have supportive parents. For Fisher, the early start came racing go-karts. Karting is racing's version of tee ball or Pee Wee football. It teaches the fundamentals and allows a lot of time for practice. Her folks were behind her all the way.

"I think that I have the dedication and talent to succeed," said Fisher, who won five karting championships from 1991 to 1994 before moving up to dirt-track sprint cars in 1995. "I started at a young age. But it is so important to involve your family and get the backing you need from them too. You definitely need to have parental support."

It would be hard to imagine a parent who wouldn't want their child to see Fisher as a role model, with her high grades and focused determination on accomplishing goals. That is a something Fisher says she welcomes, though with a bit of apprehension.

"I would like to be considered a role model for young drivers that are coming up in the ranks and earning their way here," she said. "Although, I do feel like I am under a microscope, sometimes people forget this is my first job out of high school."