

Rahal's Last Ride

When Competitive Auto Racing Teams (CART) legend Bobby Rahal announced he was going to retire after the 1998 season, it marked the end of one of the greatest driving careers in the history of the sport. After 25 years of racing, Rahal ranked second in career earnings, and cruised to 24 CART wins, including the cherished Indianapolis 500 title in 1986.

In order to celebrate the end of his racing career, Rahal's racing crew, called Team Rahal, and his corporate sponsors decided to host a party at the Marlboro 500 in Fontana, CA - the last CART race of the season. Touting the event as "Rahal's Last Ride," sponsors planned a track-wide celebration and promotion for Bobby Rahal and his career in the sport.

Hewlett-Packard, a corporate sponsor of Team Rahal, saw "Rahal's Last Ride" as an important opportunity to publicize its relationship with Team Rahal. Hewlett-Packard was already hosting the post-race party at its HP Chalet, but they also wanted to create a number of banners to place around the track highlighting Hewlett-Packard's sponsorship of the team.

Marsi Bennett at Hewlett-Packard's San Diego office, contacted Billy Mitchell, director of operations at a local Amiable Technologies office in San Juan Capistrano, California, about the banners. Amiable focuses on developing engineering-based software applications for the digital imaging industry, while Mitchell has more than 10 years of experience in the printing industry and handles manufacturing, purchasing and technical support duties for Amiable's California office. Amiable was clearly qualified to handle any of Bennett's banner requests.

Along with a few other banners to be placed around the racetrack, Bennett wanted a large 15'x 20' banner with a mural of Bobby Rahal images and a Team Rahal logo, which would be placed on the track near HP's Corporate Chalet. More important, Bennett wanted photographic-quality images that would look vibrant and clear from any distance - from a few inches away to across the stadium.

"Because Hewlett-Packard was asking for such vibrant colors from any distance, we needed a media that could accept UV-resistant inks and retain color clarity," said Mitchell, " We also needed a tough material that was suited for outdoors. Although the banner would only be on display for one day, we could not predict the weather, so it had to be able to handle any conditions."

"We've been using Rexam Image Products high performance materials since 1995 and we knew that Rexam's banner media on Tyvek® would meet all of our job requirements and professional standards perfectly," added Mitchell.

Team Rahal supplied Amiable with a transparency of the graphic for the banner. After scanning the image into FlexiSIGN-Pro, digital-imaging software developed by Amiable, the color was enhanced and text was added. Amiable then scaled, paneled, and RIPed the

image. The final print was produced on an HP DesignJet 2000CP printer, using Tyvek DMTB9 media and HP inks, while grommets were added to the final product to aid in installation. The whole process for the 15' x 20' banner took 30 hours.

"As the image had to be photographic-quality, and we obviously did not want to have to redo any of our work, we depended on Rexam Image Products' consistency and quality," said Mitchell. "We weren't disappointed."

"The banners certainly added to the enjoyment of the day," said Steve Wolf, manager Team Rahal. "They helped create an atmosphere of excitement and celebration."

"It was an easy process," said Bennett. "Team Rahal created the image, and Amiable produced it on Rexam Image Products banner material which ensured the quality of the image. Everyone was very pleased with the final results, and we created some great exposure for everyone involved in the event."