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Those jet dryers have been replaced by NASCAR

Air Titan drying technology hatched at NASCAR's Research and Development Center

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DAYTONA BEACH | Jet dryers, the cumbersome and noisy pickup trucks loaded with modified jet engines, have been relegated to mop-up duty in NASCAR's efforts to dry its race tracks faster.

The first line of defense in getting a wet track ready for racing is now a system known as Air Titan, a drying technology hatched at NASCAR's Research and Development Center in Concord, N.C. — with the help of Ring Power, the First Coast-based company that produces and sells heavy equipment.

It looked for a time that the Air Titan system would get an early test during Sunday's Daytona 500. As late as noon, the National Weather Service was calling for the possibility of thundershowers in Daytona Beach around 2 p.m. — 40 minutes after the scheduled start. But the day and the track stayed dry.

NASCAR wasn't taking any chances. The charge to the R&D center from NASCAR chairman and CEO Brian France to come up with a more efficient track-drying system followed last year's fiasco at the Daytona 500, in which racing was delayed until Monday, then pushed back further to Monday night.

"In a short amount of time, our ... team imagined, designed and built the Air Titan," France said in a statement. "It will dramatically improve the race-viewing experience for our fans."

The Air Titan pushes compressed air through hoses and into three rectangular modules that are being towed from the back of a pickup. The air is then blown onto the track surface, with the water pushed down to the apron. Another truck with vacuuming equipment sucks up the water.

Then, the jet dryers come along as a backup.

In testing, the Air Titan system, with 17 tracks used, reduced the 2.5-hour process to dry a 2.5 mile superspeedway track down to 30 minutes. NASCAR has patented the technology.

The diesel fuel air compressors that power the system are a product of Ring Power, which has plants in Jacksonville, St. Augustine, Daytona, Orlando, Ocala and Tallahassee.

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