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J.D. Gibbs, Who Helped Make Nascar Stars, Is Dead at 49

By The Associated Press

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J. D. Gibbs, a founder and former president of Joe Gibbs Racing, a Nascar team whose stars he helped cultivate, died on Friday. He was 49.

The cause was complications of a degenerative neurological disease, Joe Gibbs Racing announced. The announcement did not say where he died.

Gibbs, the eldest son of the Hall of Fame Washington Redskins coach Joe Gibbs, largely ran the day-to-day operations of Joe Gibbs Racing, which is now an elite competitor in Nascar. He took over from his father in 2004, when the elder Gibbs returned for a second stint as Redskins coach.

J. D. Gibbs told The Charlotte Observer in 2005 that his father's parting directions were succinct: "He told me, 'Don't screw it up.' "

Gibbs is credited with launching the career of the Daytona 500 winner Denny Hamlin and spearheading the team's pivotal move to Toyota from General Motors.

Hamlin, whom Gibbs discovered while he was racing short tracks in Virginia, wrote on Twitter, "I will always be grateful for what his family did for mine and the opportunity he gave me 14 years ago."

Gibbs also supported Tony Stewart and Kyle Busch, who won championships for the team.

Joe Gibbs Racing announced in 2015 that J. D. Gibbs was stepping away from full-time duties for health reasons.

Jason Dean Gibbs was born on Feb. 21, 1969, near Los Angeles. His father was an assistant coach at the University of Southern California at the time, and he had a peripatetic childhood as Joe Gibbs moved to different teams in the National Football League.

J. D. Gibbs played defensive back and quarterback at William & Mary from 1987 to 1990 while his father coached the Redskins, a team he led to three Super Bowl titles. He joined Nascar when his father began his team in 1992.

J. D. Gibbs was eventually co-chairman of Joe Gibbs Racing, but he began with the organization as a part-time driver and crew member. He made 13 Nascar national series starts from 1998 to 2002, and in one race, in 1995, he rushed to help Neil Browder out of his burning car after a crash.

Gibbs's survivors include his father; his brother, Coy; his wife, Melissa; and four sons.

The New York Times contributed reporting.

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