Red Ribbons and Checkered Flags

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As NASCAR competition heats up this summer, here's to one racing legend whom HIV left in the dust. NASCAR driver Tim Richmond, whose life was the loose basis of Tom Cruise's *Days of Thunder*, tore up the tracks in his short, seven-year career. In 1986 alone, the sport's perennial playboy—known for his fun-loving personality on and off the track—won seven races and finished third in the NASCAR Winston Cup race. An AIDS diagnosis put the brakes on his career in 1987, forcing him to abandon the driver's seat. He died on August 13, 1989.

"He was just beginning to get the success that he had always wanted so badly, and then he got diagnosed with AIDS," says Charlotte Observer sportswriter David Poole, author of *Tim Richmond: The Fast Life and Remarkable Times of NASCAR's Top Gun* ($19.95, Sports Publishing). "The disease cut short a brilliant driving career that people would have talked about for generations to come."

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