

# Dragging With My Laptop

**J**EANNINE JOHNSON, 16, is poised in her drag-racing car, eyes locked on the lights overhead. Three yellow ones flash, and she takes off at 85 mph. Eight seconds later, the race is over and a green light at the finish line tells Johnson she's won.

She can thank her computer for part of her success. Junior dragsters guess how long it will take them to go from start to finish, and try to come as close to that time as possible. And if her car is not running well, the Puyallup, Washington, teen explains, it won't perform as she predicts. So after each race, she connects her PC to a data collector near her car's en-

## Car Paint Goes High Tech

Picking the color of your new car is hard enough. New high-tech paint will make it even harder:

- Is it charcoal gray or cool violet? ChromaFlair is a hue-shifting pigment currently used on some GM and Nissan cars. More carmakers plan to use it.
- Mood-ring-style paint, where the car's color changes according to the weather, is being developed by German researchers.
- Scratch Guard Coat is not a color but a self-repairing elastic resin that repels scratches and makes slight ones fade. It will be on Nissan cars in this country soon.



gine. It records rpm, jackshaft speed and motor temperature. The downloaded info appears as a line graph, which she overlays on graphs from prior races. If they don't match, it's tune-up time.

Microsoft gave Johnson the grand prize in its Start Something Amazing Awards, for best use of a PC in a sport.

Due to a childhood surgery that damaged growth plates, Johnson's right leg is shorter than her left. "A lot of kids play baseball and soccer, but I can't because of my disability," she says. "Drag racing lets me participate in a unique sport not a lot of people do."

