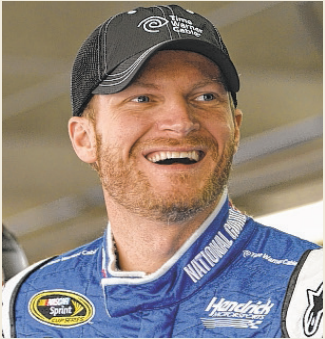


# NASCAR THIS WEEK

## SPEED FREAKS

A couple questions we had to ask — ourselves



Getty Images/JOHN HARRELSON

Will this be the official face of Junior this week? We'll see soon.

**When you hear the words "testing at Daytona," what comes to mind?**

**GODSPEAK:** It's time to take down the Christmas tree, put away the holiday lights and call in the dogs.

**KEN'S CALL:** I always wonder who'll show up with a new hair color, or perhaps a nip or tuck to help stave off Father Time.

**What's your favorite Daytona testing memory?**

**GODSPEAK:** After Derrike Cope crashed into Ken Schrader, who was coming up to speed from pit road. Said Schrader: "It was my fault. I forgot he was an idiot."

**KEN'S CALL:** The sight of Cal Wells' team — new to the Cup Series about 15 years ago — breaking out laptops and real-time telemetry in the garage. Nothing has ever been the same.

**What are you looking for during this week's Cup test?**

**GODSPEAK:** What will Dale Earnhardt Jr. look like? Will he be sporting the full beard or be completely whisker-free? It's always fun to see how he starts the season.

**KEN'S CALL:** I can't wait to see the Stewart-Haas team huddle during the lunch break. Someone needs to click that "Before" picture.

## PRESEASON THUNDER

Six days of NASCAR preseason testing at Daytona International Speedway runs from Thursday through next Tuesday — two days each for the three national touring series. Come to us for all the updates (including speeds) at news-journalonline.com.

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Do you have questions or comments about NASCAR This Week? Contact Godwin Kelly at godwin.kelly@news-jrnl.com or Ken Willis at ken.willis@news-jrnl.com



Getty Images/TOM PENNINGTON

Jamie McMurray, as usual, gets a jump on the racing season in the Rolex 24 at Daytona.

# Plenty on McMurray's plate as season looms

Jamie McMurray didn't make the 2013 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series Chase playoffs, but he had a pretty solid season at Earnhardt Ganassi Racing.

McMurray, who survived the cuts and personnel changes made by car owner Chip Ganassi, scored nine top-10 finishes, including an "upset" victory at Talladega Superspeedway in October.

The 37-year-old driver finished the season 15th in points and will start 2014 with a little tuneup race called the Rolex 24 at Daytona. He'll co-drive a Daytona Prototype in the twice-around-the-clock endurance race.

Until then, except for a two-day Cup test at Daytona, McMurray plans to lie low with his young family and enjoy the downtime from the Cup Series, which runs from February through November.

As McMurray gets older, the winter break seems shorter. Only two days after the Cup Series awards banquet in Las Vegas, race teams were called to Charlotte Motor Speedway for a NASCAR-mandated test to sort out 2014 rules.

"The break seemed really short this year," McMurray told NASCAR This Week during a sports-car test session at Daytona last weekend. "I think some of it has to do with the Charlotte test that was thrown in there. We did it twice, because it got rained out two days. It took up half a week."

"That's normally a week when nothing is going on. It is what it is. When you can take your family with you each week, it's not

that big of a deal, but the break did seem awfully short to me."

McMurray is excited about Daytona, since restrictor-plate race victories seem to come in streaks. Cup Series champion Jimmie Johnson swept both plate races at Daytona last season. McMurray is the last driver with a plate win.

"When I look at plate racing, for me and a lot of guys, it goes in streaks," McMurray said. "Those streaks include winning and wrecking. I hope I'm on a streak of winning."

McMurray won the infamous 2010 Daytona 500, which was delayed twice for pothole repairs in Turns 1 and 2.

He said a second 500 victory would put him in the elite company of longtime winners.

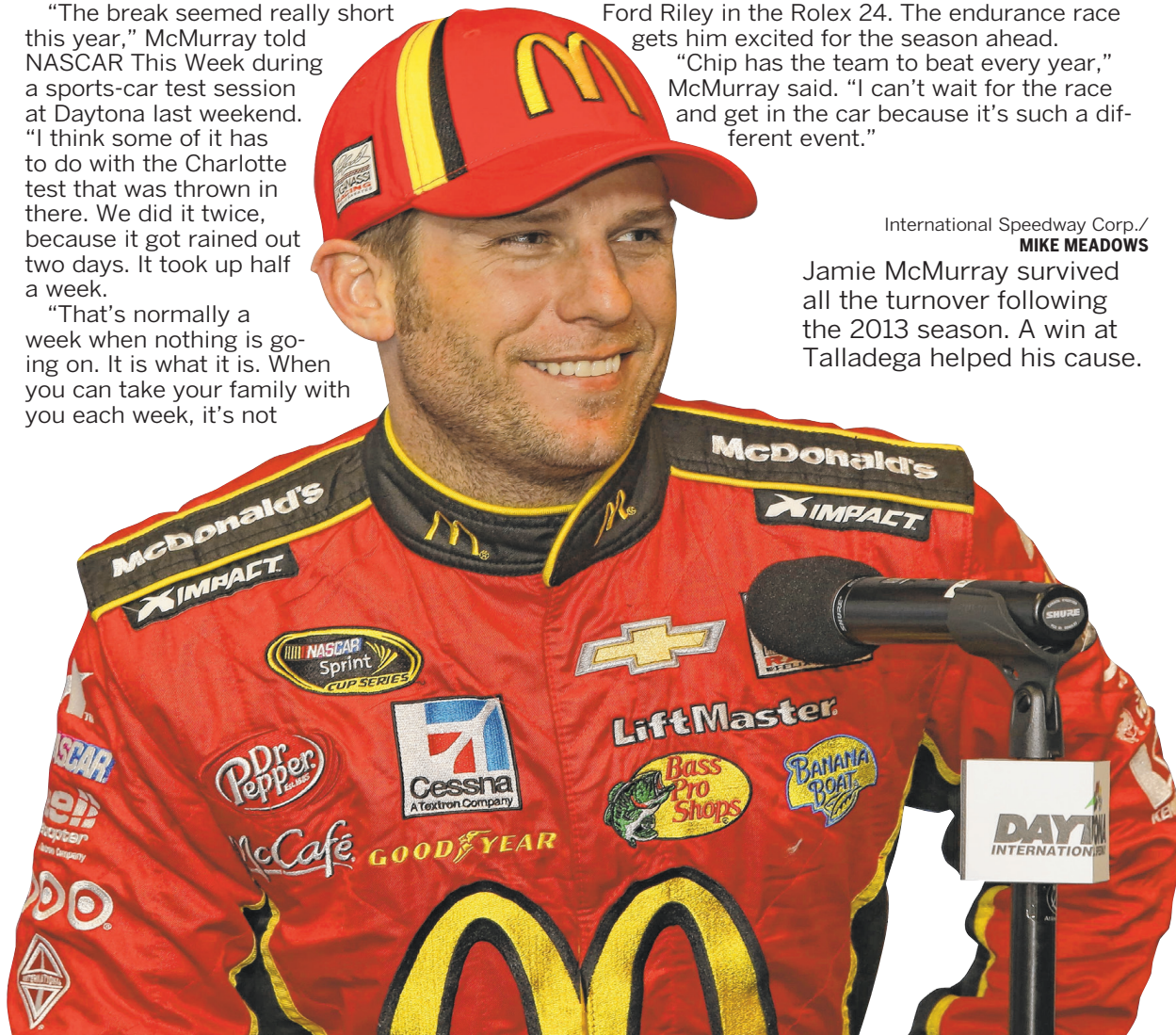
"When you get to do something a second time, you savor it more, you take in more," McMurray said. "For me, it will be a different experience than when I won it the first time."

But before he straps into the No. 1 Chevrolet for 2014 Speedweeks, he will compete in the No. 01 Ford Riley in the Rolex 24. The endurance race gets him excited for the season ahead.

"Chip has the team to beat every year," McMurray said. "I can't wait for the race and get in the car because it's such a different event."

International Speedway Corp./MIKE MEADOWS

Jamie McMurray survived all the turnover following the 2013 season. A win at Talladega helped his cause.



Godwin Kelly is the Daytona Beach News-Journal's motorsports editor and has covered NASCAR for 30 years. Reach him at godwin.kelly@news-jrnl.com

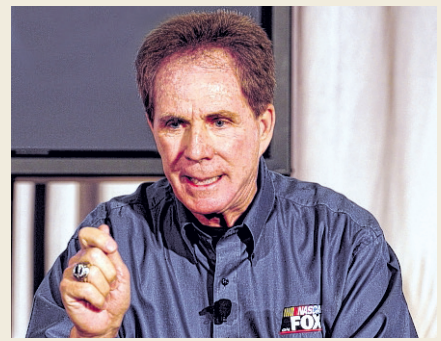
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## QUESTIONS & ATTITUDE

Compelling questions ... and maybe a few actual answers



Getty Images/JAMEY PRICE

If his TV gig ever disappears, maybe he can sell you a Buick.

**Testing, testing ... can anyone hear me out there?**

Loud and clear. For those of us who live within several miles of NASCAR's "home track" at Daytona, that rumble and deep bellowing we hear this time of year signals an approaching season. In more peaceful parts of the world, it may be the first chirp of a blue jay, heralding springtime and the opening of the great outdoors (naturally, that's assuming a colder locale ... not to mention assuming that blue jays chirp). In these parts, the baritone blasts trumpet an onrushing race season.

**Any particular theme heading into the two days of Daytona pre-season testing?**

Several, actually. For starters, there's the issue of familiarity — some drivers are new to their teams, some drivers are new to the Cup Series. It generally takes a while to get it all sorted out in your head, and pre-season testing is the first step. Along those lines, it'll be our first chance to see the new Stewart-Haas gang all together, playing nice (we assume). Combine Tony Stewart, Kevin Harvick, Danica Patrick and Kurt Busch, and suddenly your holiday family gatherings seem downright peaceful and comforting, don't they?

**How old is Darrell Waltrip?**

Finally old enough to drive a Buick, it appears. A recent press release from Tennessee tells us that ol' DW just opened a Buick GMC dealership in Franklin — it's the latest addition to the Darrell Waltrip Automotive Group. "Ironically," Waltrip says in the press release, "two of the best years I ever had in racing was driving a Buick (1981-82)." We trust this is simply the latest evidence of someone misusing the word "ironically" when he'd be better off saying "coincidentally" — either that, or DW is insinuating Buicks aren't fast. And come to think of it, when was the last time you saw a Buick in the left lane zipping through interstate traffic?

**Is DW in the Service Department prepping '98 LeSabres for resale, or keeping his TV job?**

As we speak, he's probably getting a fresh haircut, because the Fox crew will do 12 hours of testing coverage this week (two days of Cup testing, one day of Nationwide). Chances are, Larry McReynolds is already in the east banking taking track temperatures.

**Any other TV news?**

Just this bit of insider scuttlebutt: Allen Bestwick will need to narrow his focus a bit. The longtime NASCAR broadcaster (radio, TV, play-by-play, pits, studio, etc.) will stay with ESPN after the 2014 season (ESPN's last under its current NASCAR deal) as he transitions into the Worldwide Leader's lead broadcaster for its IndyCar coverage. Bestwick begins that role this year while keeping his NASCAR duties at ESPN, and next year becomes solely an IndyCar guy, which isn't as easy as it may sound, given how IndyCars are faster and have less sheet metal, therefore making it tougher to determine who's who in heavy traffic. But since much less folks are watching, a mess-up isn't as noticeable.



Ken Willis has been covering NASCAR for The Daytona Beach News-Journal for 27 years. Reach him at ken.willis@news-jrnl.com

## 2014 SPRINT CUP SCHEDULE

<b>Feb. 15</b> Sprint Unlimited, Daytona FOX Sports 1	<b>April 12</b> Darlington Raceway FOX	<b>June 28</b> Kentucky Speedway TNT	<b>Sept. 14</b> Chicagoland Speedway ESPN
<b>Feb. 16</b> Daytona 500 qualifying FOX	<b>April 26</b> Richmond International Raceway FOX	<b>July 5</b> Daytona International Speedway TNT	<b>Sept. 21</b> New Hampshire Motor Speedway ESPN
<b>Feb. 20</b> Duels, Daytona FOX Sports 1	<b>May 4</b> Talladega Superspeedway FOX	<b>July 13</b> New Hampshire Motor Speedway TNT	<b>Sept. 28</b> Dover International Speedway ESPN
<b>Feb. 23</b> Daytona 500 FOX	<b>May 10</b> Kansas Speedway FOX	<b>July 27</b> Indianapolis Motor Speedway ESPN	<b>Oct. 5</b> Kansas Speedway ESPN
<b>March 2</b> Phoenix International Raceway FOX	<b>May 17</b> All-Star Race, Charlotte FOX Sports 1	<b>Aug. 3</b> Pocono Raceway ESPN	<b>Oct. 11</b> Charlotte Motor Speedway ABC
<b>March 9</b> Las Vegas Motor Speedway FOX	<b>May 25</b> Charlotte Motor Speedway FOX	<b>Aug. 10</b> Watkins Glen International ESPN	<b>Oct. 19</b> Talladega Superspeedway ESPN
<b>March 16</b> Bristol Motor Speedway FOX	<b>June 1</b> Dover International Speedway FOX	<b>Aug. 17</b> Michigan International Speedway ESPN	<b>Oct. 26</b> Martinsville Speedway ESPN
<b>March 23</b> Auto Club Speedway FOX	<b>June 8</b> Pocono Raceway TNT	<b>Aug. 23</b> Bristol Motor Speedway ABC	<b>Nov. 2</b> Texas Motor Speedway ESPN
<b>March 30</b> Martinsville Speedway FOX	<b>June 15</b> Michigan International Speedway TNT	<b>Aug. 31</b> Atlanta Motor Speedway ESPN	<b>Nov. 9</b> Phoenix International Raceway ESPN
<b>April 6</b> Texas Motor Speedway FOX	<b>June 22</b> Sonoma Raceway TNT	<b>Sept. 6</b> Richmond International Raceway ABC	<b>Nov. 16</b> Homestead-Miami Speedway ESPN

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2004 Ford F-150 Supercab #E0369AA Was \$15,947 <b>NOW \$14,947</b>	2006 Hummer H3 #8524PA Was \$16,947 <b>NOW \$15,947</b>
2004 Suzuki Grand Vitara #8785P Was \$8,947 <b>NOW \$7,947</b>	2004 Chevy Suburban Z71 #D1220A Was \$14,947 <b>NOW \$13,947</b>

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