

# NASCAR THIS WEEK

## QUESTIONS & ATTITUDE

Compelling questions ... and maybe a few actual answers



Associated Press/JOHN RAOUX

Will Mark Martin finally climb into the Hall of Fame next year?

## SPEED FREAKS

3 questions we had to ask — ourselves

### Will this kick-start Carl Edwards into title contention?

**ROB'S RAMBLINGS:** Title contention, no. But wasn't it kind of cool to see that back flip again?

**KEN'S CALL:** Fuel-mileage victories don't kick-start anything, except debates on the worthiness of fuel-mileage wins.

### Who'll be next first-time winner?

**ROB'S RAMBLINGS:** Truex is the obvious answer with 11 top-10s in 12 races, but rooting for Jeff.

**KEN'S CALL:** It's gotta be Martin Truex, right? Eventually, right? Right?

### Will Jeff Gordon be a good broadcaster?

**ROB'S RAMBLINGS:** In reference to my last answer, my heart — and ears — do not want Jeff here. Maybe just make a guest appearance every now and then.

**KEN'S CALL:** He's excellent at explaining the nuances of being a racer, but he's too nice to ruffle feathers, and we can use some of that in the booth.

## 3 THINGS WE LEARNED AT CHARLOTTE



Associated Press/GERRY BROOME

Carl Edwards does a back flip from his car after winning the Coca-Cola 600 on Sunday at Charlotte Motor Speedway. How much longer until we see that back flip again?

### 1. Carl still has it

Carl Edwards snapped a 31-race winless streak, even if it was a fuel-mileage victory. But he still has it when it comes to his signature back flip. Maybe this win could be what jump-starts Edwards, who has struggled this season with just one top-10 and an average finish of 18.8.

### 2. Hamlin's headache

No matter how intense Denny Hamlin's migraine was Sunday, he leaves Charlotte loving the track and his car set-up. After winning the All-Star Race on May 16, he nearly pulled off another win at the track. If not for a vibration in a wheel that forced him into the pits late, he had a legitimate shot at the double.

### 3. Daddy Kyle is back

There was some question about Kyle Busch's ability to handle a 600-mile race after a long layoff stemming from a crash in the season-opening Xfinity race at Daytona. The new father — his son was born May 18 — answered with an 11th-place finish in his first points race since returning.

— Rob Ullery

### Gotta ask, is 600 miles too much?

Almost was for Denny Hamlin, who drove the last 100 miles feeling like he was gonna puke. As we ponder what that'd be like if you were wearing a full-faced racing helmet ... Ugh ... where were we? Let's move on.

### Shorter races?

This week they're at Dover, where races were shortened from 500 to 400 miles in the late-'90s. Even Pocono was eventually convinced to lop off 100 miles. The coming years will likely see plenty of changes, including race lengths. At some places, less will be more.

### Too early to handicap next HOF?

Never too early. I really thought Mark Martin and Rick Hendrick were going in with last week's voting, so that should make them my two favorites for next year. Make Benny Parsons the third favorite.

### 44 percent? Shouldn't Hall standard be higher?

Yes, two new Hall of Famers (Jerry Cook, Bobby Isaac) received less than 50 percent of the vote, yet they're Hall of Famers. Yes, standards should be higher. But remember, the Hall is a business. Put more people in, potentially draw more paying customers.

— Ken Willis

## ONLINE EXTRAS

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Questions? Contact Godwin Kelly at godwin.kelly@news-jrnl.com or Ken Willis at ken.willis@news-jrnl.com

## CUP POINTS

- Kevin Harvick..... 473
- Martin Truex Jr..... 432
- Joey Logano..... 407
- Dale Earnhardt Jr..... 401
- Jimmie Johnson..... 393
- Brad Keselowski..... 381
- Matt Kenseth..... 372
- Jamie McMurray..... 353
- Jeff Gordon..... 346
- Kasey Kahne..... 345
- Ryan Newman..... 343
- Aric Almirola..... 339
- Paul Menard..... 336
- Kurt Busch..... 327
- Denny Hamlin..... 321
- Carl Edwards..... 312
- Clint Bowyer..... 296
- Danica Patrick..... 292
- Greg Biffle..... 284
- AJ Allmendinger..... 274
- Casey Mears..... 263
- Kyle Larson..... 256
- Austin Dillon..... 253
- David Ragan..... 238
- Ricky Stenhouse Jr..... 234
- Sam Hornish Jr..... 230
- David Gilliland..... 224
- Justin Allgaier..... 208
- Trevor Bayne..... 207
- Tony Stewart..... 202
- Cole Whitt..... 193
- Brett Moffitt..... 174

## 3 THINGS TO WATCH FOR AT DOVER

### 1. Keselowski's place

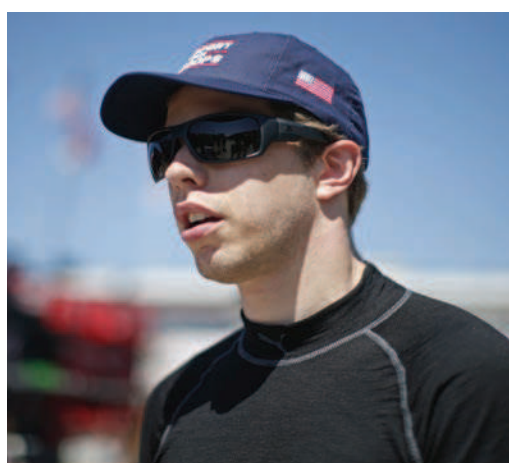
Brad Keselowski may have this race circled on his calendar after finishing second twice here last season and winning one pole. With one win and eight top-10s in 12 races this season, don't be surprised with another strong Dover run.

### 2. A Chevy sweep

Jimmie Johnson and Jeff Gordon put Chevy in Victory Lane here last season. Chevy put five cars in the top 10 in the first race and five in the top eight in the second.

### 3. Come on, Gordon, get it over with

Jeff Gordon has to win in his farewell tour. He just has to. So let's play this game one more time. Gordon led 94 laps — the second most — in winning the Sept. 28 race here.



Associated Press/CHRIS KEANE

Brad Keselowski finished second at Dover twice last season. Is a win in his immediate future?

— Rob Ullery

## WILLIS' DOVER PICKS

**WINNER:** Matt Kenseth  
**REST OF TOP FIVE:** Harvick, Johnson, Logano, Kurt Busch.  
**DARK HORSE:** Austin Dillon.  
**FIRST ONE OUT:** Ricky Stenhouse.

**DON'T BE SURPRISED:** If Stenhouse isn't soon worried about his ride. He has to start producing, assuming Jack Roush hasn't suddenly accumulated a ton of patience.

Ken Willis has been covering NASCAR for The Daytona Beach News-Journal for more than 30 years. Reach him at ken.willis@news-jrnl.com



## FEUD OF THE WEEK



JEFF GORDON

LARRY MCREYNOLDS

**JEFF GORDON VS. LARRY MCREYNOLDS:** Gordon gets Larry Mac's seat in the Fox booth next year, while Larry heads to pit-side studio.

**KEN WILLIS' TAKE:** Yes, we're cooking up this one: No bitterness from Larry Mac, at least not publicly.

## WHAT'S ON TAP

**SPRINT CUP:** FedEx 400 benefitting Autism Speaks  
**SITE:** Dover International Speedway  
**SCHEDULE:** Friday, practice (Fox Sports 1, 11 a.m.); qualifying (Fox Sports 1, 3:30 p.m.); Saturday, practice (Fox Sports 1, 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.), Sunday, race (Fox Sports 1, 1 p.m.)

**XFINITY:** Buckle Up 200  
**SITE:** Dover International Speedway  
**SCHEDULE:** Friday, practice (Fox Sports 1, 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.), Saturday, qualifying (Fox Sports 1, 11 a.m.), race (Fox, 2:30 p.m.)

**TRUCKS:** Lucas Oil 200  
**SITE:** Dover International Speedway  
**SCHEDULE:** Friday, qualifying (Fox Sports 1, 12:30 p.m.), race (Fox Sports 1, 5:30 p.m.)



## WEEKLY DRIVER RANKINGS — BASED ON BEHAVIOR AND PERFORMANCE

<b>1</b> KEVIN HARVICK Upset alert: Finished outside of top 2	<b>2</b> JIMMIE JOHNSON Spins his way out of our No. 1 spot	<b>3</b> MARTIN TRUEX A mile-high top-10 streak	<b>4</b> JOEY LOGANO Wins this week at Dover	<b>5</b> JUNIOR EARNHARDT Still searching for Dover's white cliffs	<b>6</b> BRAD KESELOWSKI Maintaining low baby profile on Twitter	<b>7</b> JEFF GORDON Won't bag Publix groceries in retirement	<b>8</b> MATT KENSETH Pretends to be happy for Carl	<b>9</b> KURT BUSCH Bad news: Ugly headlines are back	<b>10</b> JAMIE McMURRAY Fast approaching 39th birthday
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Mon. & Thurs. 8:30-8:30  
Tues., Wed., Fri. 8:30-6  
Sat., 8:30-2

# HUMES

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