

NASCAR THIS WEEK

QUESTIONS & ATTITUDE

Compelling questions ... and maybe a few actual answers



AP/TERRY RENNA

Kurt's engine apparently wasn't the only thing giving him issues Sunday night at Charlotte.

Your highlight from Sunday's big day of racing?

For NASCAR fans, it has to be one of two things. Either Kurt Busch's great effort at Indianapolis, where he finished sixth, or the sight of Jimmie Johnson draped in confetti and champagne once again — which, come to think of it, isn't exactly a highlight for those who were hoping that dynasty was slowing.

What else?

That Indy battle with Helio Castroneves and eventual winner Ryan Hunter-Reay showcased how responsive, powerful and hair-raising those IndyCars can be on an oval. With the nervous energy IndyCar produces, you wonder why IndyCar can't climb its way out of the niche-sport corner it slid into.

A sign of economic revival?

A new Cup Series entry, complete with new sponsor, is pretty big stuff these days. When Jack Roush announced last week that he's hiring Trevor Bayne as a full-time driver next year, and bringing a full-season sponsor (a downright rarity nowadays) in Advocate, it was welcome news. Not enough for CNBC to interrupt programming, but still ...

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



HOT TOPICS: 3 ISSUES GENERATING A BUZZ

WRECK-collection



Getty Images/NICK LAHAM

This flame-out at Texas might've looked like a 43rd-place finish for Junior, but it also could've translated into another neat tree ornament on his unique property in Mooresville, N.C.

Dale Earnhardt Jr. grew up in NASCAR Cup Series racing and has become the unofficial stock-car garage historian. But recently it was discovered that Earnhardt has taken his passion for the sport to a new level.

"When a Cup car gets wrecked beyond repair, Earnhardt will call the car owner and ask if he can have the car. Why? Because out back of Earnhardt's house he has a collection (around 80 at last count) of wrecked race cars — a graveyard of mangled sheet metal.

Earnhardt said he has been building the collection for years, but this hoarding came to light when he started using social media after winning the Daytona 500. "I think it's the Twitter thing," Earnhardt said last week. "I think people are learning about me on Twitter. We've collected cars there for a long time.

"It's not like I go looking for every wreck that we have or anyone has. A lot of times, they're offered up or I'll call up a buddy that's a crew chief or something."

The collection started when Earnhardt created JR Motorsports about 10 years ago.

"When JR Motorsports first started, we'd put so much money into building those cars," he said. "When we'd tear them up, I couldn't see throwing them away or scrapping them so we'd stick them in the woods.

"The first 30 or 40 are JR Motorsports or Late Models or something related to me or my company and we just kept plugging them in there."

It's not just race cars. There are parts and pieces of wrecked cars strewn here and there.

"There are sides and noses and hoods hanging up in the trees," he said. "There's all kind of quirky stuff back there."

All this begs the question, why?

"I don't know why I want them or even why we go get them," Earnhardt said.

JOHNSON'S PROBLEM

It took Jimmie Johnson 12 races, but he finally got his first win of 2014 Sunday at Charlotte. He said his problem this year has been the handling of the No. 48 Chevy. "A lot of tools have been taken away from us to help the car turn," Johnson said. "So, it's something that I'm trying to adapt to and sort out. There are always different challenges in this sport and I know that we'll get it." They got it Sunday.

ALL-STAR CHASE BERTH?

Jamie McMurray thinks the winner of the 2015 Sprint All-Star Race will earn a berth in the Chase playoffs. "Looking back at the way the Chase format has been structured, I assume next year the winner of the All-Star race will be included into the Chase, based on my history," said this year's All-Star winner. "It seems like every year, I'm a year behind on what actually the next year is going to be. But I'm not concerned with that." In 2010, McMurray won three races but didn't make the Chase. The following year, the formula was changed to include race winners into the Chase if they weren't in the top 10.

GODWIN'S DOVER PICKS



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

Winner: Brad Keselowski
Rest of the top five: Dale Earnhardt Jr., Kyle Busch, Jimmie Johnson, Carl Edwards
Dark horse: Marcos Ambrose

Disappointment: Kevin Harvick
First one out: Martin Truex Jr.
Don't be surprised if: This race is a dogfight from the drop of the green flag.

SPEED FREAKS

A couple questions we had to ask — ourselves



AP/MIKE MCCARNI

Is this Jack Roush's future ex-driver? It's looking that way.

Do you think Jeff Gordon's back pain spells career trouble?

GODSPEAK: No, it means Gordon needs to carry a supply of aspirin for middle-age aches and pains.

KEN'S CALL: It certainly doesn't spell Y-a-y. I hear it's keeping him out of the U.S. Open in two weeks.

Where will Carl Edwards be driving next year?

GODSPEAK: A Team Penske ride would keep Edwards in the Ford camp.

KEN'S CALL: My Magic 8-Ball hints at Ganassi, but I hear it's not really magic. So it'll probably be Gibbs.

ONLINE EXTRAS

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FEEDBACK

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

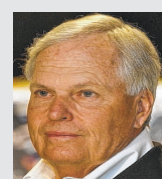
CUP POINTS

- Jeff Gordon 432
- Matt Kenseth 421
- Kyle Busch 408
- Carl Edwards 408
- Dale Earnhardt Jr. 394
- Jimmie Johnson 388
- Joey Logano 378
- Brian Vickers 365
- Brad Keselowski 361
- Ryan Newman 361
- Greg Biffle 351
- Kevin Harvick 345
- Kyle Larson 344
- Denny Hamlin 340
- Austin Dillon 334
- Paul Menard 328
- Kasey Kahne 324
- AJ Allmendinger 314
- Aric Almirola 312
- Clint Bowyer 309
- Marcos Ambrose 303
- Tony Stewart 299
- Jamie McMurray 286
- Casey Mears 282
- Ricky Stenhouse Jr. 258
- Martin Truex Jr. 251
- Danica Patrick 218
- Kurt Busch 215
- Justin Allgaier 205
- Michael Annett 179
- Cole Whitt 164
- David Gilliland 160
- Alex Bowman 152
- David Ragan 150
- Reed Sorenson 145
- Josh Wise 133
- Ryan Truex 84
- Travis Kvapil 82
- Michael McDowell 63
- Parker Kligerman 44
- Terry Labonte 54
- David Reutimann 37
- Bobby Labonte 29

FEUD OF THE WEEK



KURT BUSCH



RICK HENDRICK

Kurt Busch vs. Hendrick Motorsports: Busch said he has not been happy with the motors he is getting from the Hendrick camp.

Godwin Kelly gives his take: "If this keeps up, Busch is going to blow up after another engine failure."

WHAT'S ON TAP?

SPRINT CUP: FedEx 400
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, 9:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.). Sunday, race (Fox, coverage starts at 12:30 p.m., green flag at 1:15 p.m.).
NATIONWIDE: Buckle Up 200
SITE: Dover International Speedway
SCHEDULE: Saturday, qualifying (ESPN2, 10:30 a.m.), race (ESPN, 2 p.m.)
CAMPING WORLD TRUCKS: Lucas Oil 200
SITE: Dover International Speedway
SCHEDULE: Friday, qualifying (Fox Sports 1, 12:30 p.m.), race (Fox Sports 1, 5:45 p.m.)



WEEKLY DRIVER RANKINGS — BASED ON BEHAVIOR AND PERFORMANCE

JEFF GORDON Any chiropractors in Manhattan?	JIMMIE JOHNSON Mr. Inevitable	KEVIN HARVICK Gremlins are part of ride-along program	JUNIOR EARNHARDT Survived 2 weeks at home	CARL EDWARDS Will Trevor inherit his shop keys?	KYLE BUSCH This week's Dover winner	JOEY LOGANO Middle name is Thomas	BRAD KESELOWSKI Can't find the cruise control	BRIAN VICKERS Will win a race in June	GREG BIFFLE In a mini-slump
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

CHARLOTTE REWIND

For Jimmie, it's not just about winning, but winning at right time

Jimmie Johnson had never gone this far into a NASCAR Cup Series season without a win, but that all changed when he captured the Coca-Cola 600 at Charlotte Sunday night. Johnson has never won fewer than two races or finished lower than sixth in final points driving the No. 48 Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet. After the win, the six-time champion talked about the pressure of netting that first victory.

Was there any point in the beginning of the season up until now that you

started to panic because you hadn't had a win? Was there any extra added pressure coming into tonight?

"No. I mean, the first goal is to make the Chase. You want to win races at the end of the season. You have to win races at the end of the season to be the champion.

"Of course, we want to win early and often. But we were holding steady in the championship points. In my opinion, I don't believe there will be 16 different winners. I felt like a strong championship

points position would get us into the first phase of the Chase. Granted, tonight simplifies things. We'll take it, move on."

"We really want to heat up and win races later in the season, especially before the Chase starts. More than anything, I just got tired of answering the question. There wasn't a lot of frustration due to pressure of winning. There was frustration in not having fast race cars."

After you won the pole you said you wanted folks in the garage to fear the

No. 48 again. Do you feel like that's starting to happen or do you need to win at Dover as well?

"We're off to a good start. Multiple wins do that. If we can take advantage of the next few tracks that are great tracks for us, it would be great momentum."

"Ideally you'd love to do it before the Chase gets started and carry that right into the start of the Chase. But you never know when you're going to peak and when everything's going to be just right."

Mon. & Thurs. 8:30-8:30
Tues., Wed., Fri. 8:30-6
Sat., 8:30-2

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