

# NASCAR THIS WEEK

## SPEED FREAKS

A couple questions we had to ask — ourselves

### Does all the concussion talk shorten Junior's career?

**GODSPEAK:** This is the third concussion we know about. It looks like he is hitting the rev limiter in this area.

**KEN'S CALL:** Absolutely. If he's looking for a reason to hit the beach early, this is it.

### How do you fail inspection and still win the race?

**GODSPEAK:** NASCAR uses computers and lasers now in post-race inspection. The guess here, a minor infraction.

**KEN'S CALL:** Ask Mild Matt. Once they brought scientific tools into the tech garage, the world changed. You now have technical infractions and technical victories.

### If you're Jeff Gordon, do you ever consider putting on the uniform again?

**GODSPEAK:** For a roll at Indianapolis? Absolutely. Go for it, man. What could go wrong?

**KEN'S CALL:** Maybe for an old-timers race at Go-Kart City. Brickyard, never!

## ONLINE EXTRAS

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## SPRINT CUP POINTS

1. Kevin Harvick	636
2. Brad Keselowski	622
3. Kurt Busch	602
4. Carl Edwards	587
5. Joey Logano	571
6. Kyle Busch	556
7. Martin Truex Jr.	540
8. Matt Kenseth	521
9. Jimmie Johnson	514
10. Denny Hamlin	505
11. Chase Elliott	499
12. Ryan Newman	497
13. Austin Dillon	488
14. Jamie McMurray	474
15. Dale Earnhardt Jr.	461
16. Trevor Bayne	447
17. Ryan Blaney	445
18. Kasey Kahne	439
19. Kyle Larson	436
20. Ricky Stenhouse Jr.	420
21. AJ Allmendinger	418
22. Greg Biffle	395
23. Paul Menard	366
24. Danica Patrick	354
25. Aric Almirola	347
26. Clint Bowyer	339
27. Casey Mears	293
28. Tony Stewart	287
29. Landon Cassill	284
30. David Ragan	274

# 3 THINGS WE LEARNED FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE

## 1. Junior surprise

Dale Earnhardt Jr. had to sit out Race 19 (of 36) after exhibiting concussionlike symptoms during a medical examination earlier in the week. The surprise was that he remained inside the cut line for the Chase playoffs. He now sits on the Chase bubble, 14 points ahead of Trevor Bayne.

## 2. Two-face race

Sunday's race in New Hampshire had two personalities. Over the first 219 (of 301) laps, there were two cautions. Over the last 82 laps, there were five more, which helped scramble the field and completely change the finish of the race. Greg Biffle finished fifth? See what we mean?

## 3. Mile master

There are three NASCAR Cup Series ovals that measure a mile or real close to it — Phoenix, Dover and Loudon. Matt Kenseth has won two



Dale Earnhardt Jr. had to sit out the race at New Hampshire, but he stayed in the hunt for a Chase playoff berth. GETTY IMAGES/RAINIER EHRHARDT

of those races this season. Each of those tracks has a Chase event, which puts Kenseth in a good position, at least on paper. His issue with NASCAR's post-race laser

inspection at New Hampshire might be a negative factor, however.

— Godwin Kelly, godwin.kelly@news-jrnl.com

# 3 THINGS TO WATCH

## 1. The tell

Nine times since the inaugural Brickyard 400 at Indianapolis Motor Speedway in 1994, the race winner has gone on to win NASCAR Cup Series championship honors. The 160-lap race at Indy has become something of a title tell. Jeff Gordon was the first to do it in 1998, and Kyle Busch pulled it off last season. Other names on the list are Dale Jarrett, Bobby Labonte, Tony Stewart and Jimmie Johnson (three times).

## 2. 500 boost?

Back in May, Indianapolis Motor Speedway hosted the 100th running of the Indianapolis 500, and every seat in the house was sold. You have to wonder if some of that Indy magic will spill over to this



Kyle Busch celebrates his win at Indianapolis last year, which acted like a springboard to the 2015 NASCAR championship. GETTY IMAGES/MATT SULLIVAN

Sunday's race. The Brickyard 400 lost luster, and fans, after a 2008 fiasco with tires that forced NASCAR to call cautions for tire changes every 10 laps. No matter to the drivers, who continue to list it as a stock-car major.

## 3. Chasing Chase

History may be on Chase Elliott's side when he races the No. 24 Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet at

Indianapolis. After all, Jeff Gordon won a record five Brickyard 400s in the No. 24 machine, including the '94 inaugural as a 22-year-old sophomore driver. Chase was born in 1995. Not only that, but Chase's dad, Bill Elliott, won the 2002 Brickyard and posted four other top-five finishes during his career.

— Godwin Kelly, godwin.kelly@news-jrnl.com

## GODWIN'S PICKS FOR INDIANAPOLIS

**WINNER:** Kevin Harvick  
**REST OF TOP 5:** Martin Truex Jr., Brad Keselowski, Tony Stewart, Matt Kenseth  
**FIRST ONE OUT:** Brian Scott

**DARK HORSE:** Chase Elliott  
**DON'T BE SURPRISED IF:** Harvick busts out of his funk and wins his second Brickyard 400.



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## QUESTIONS & ATTITUDE

Compelling questions... and maybe a few actual answers

### How big is this headache?

Technically, we don't know how the issue with Junior Earnhardt's concussion symptoms will play out. That's the thing about the brain — it's a mystery and answers to no timetable. But without question, we know this: If Junior decides he doesn't want to risk further long-term effects, and retires either relatively soon, very soon or perhaps even immediately, NASCAR's movers and shakers will be reaching for the Tylenol.

### It'd be that big of a blow?

Absolutely. Over the past decade-plus, plenty of lifelong fans have found reason to be upset with a sport they love. Many still hang in there, but some gave up. Undoubtedly, many of those who are still hanging in there are old Earnhardt fans (the No. 3) who continue hanging in there because of Junior. If Junior goes, some of them go, maybe along with some, or many, or most, of the younger fans Junior brought in on his own.

### What if you were Junior?

I'd obviously be torn, assuming he still enjoys the racing aspect of his career. If this issue forces him into retirement sooner than he'd planned, it's not like he could occasionally scratch his racin' itch at some late-model track near home. He'd be done with it entirely. The good news is, he seems to have a rather full and fun life away from the track, so he'd be busy and happy. NASCAR's Boys in Marketing ... not so much.

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## FEUD OF THE WEEK



Edwards



Newman

**CARL EDWARDS VS. RYAN NEWMAN:** "They checked up in front of me and I got (Edwards) and crossed him up and took about three other guys out," Newman said. "But, that was 'racin,' I guess."

**GODWIN KELLY'S TAKE:** That might have been Newman's view of the accordion-like incident late in the race, but Edwards made no comment after the event, and that's never a good sign.

## WHAT'S ON TAP?

**SPRINT CUP:** Crown Royal Presents the Combat Wounded Coalition 400

**SITE:** Indianapolis Motor Speedway (2.5-mile, rectangle-shaped)

**TV SCHEDULE:** Friday, practice (NBC Sports Network, 1:30 p.m. and 4 p.m.). Saturday, qualifying (NBCSN, 1:45 p.m.). Sunday, race (NBCSN, coverage begins at 2:30 p.m., green flag at 3:15 p.m.)

**XFINITY:** Lilly Diabetes 250

**SITE:** Indianapolis Motor Speedway  
**TV SCHEDULE:** Friday, practice (NBCSN, noon and 3 p.m.). Saturday, qualifying (NBCSN, 11:40 a.m.), race (NBCSN, 3:30 p.m.)

**CAMPING WORLD TRUCKS:** Aspen Dental Dirt Derby

**SITE:** Eldora Speedway (half-mile, clay oval)

**TV SCHEDULE:** Wednesday, race (Fox Sports 1, 9 p.m.)



## KEN WILLIS' TOP 10 NASCAR DRIVER RANKINGS

<b>BRAD KESELOWSKI</b> Mr. Hunch likes him at Brickyard	<b>KEVIN HARVICK</b> Angry at crew, which is a good sign	<b>KURT BUSCH</b> Last week's hiccup was long overdue	<b>MARTIN TRUEX JR.</b> The gremlins have taken up residence	<b>CARL EDWARDS</b> Will finish fourth at Indy	<b>JOEY LOGANO</b> Last year's Brickyard runner-up	<b>KYLE BUSCH</b> Last year's Brickyard winner	<b>MATT KENSETH</b> Lost a round of NASCAR laser-tag	<b>CHASE ELLIOTT</b> Free fallin' ...	<b>RYAN NEWMAN</b> Remember him? Finished third, seventh past two weeks
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>

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

# HUMES 3 day event

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