

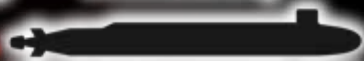


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MLB SPEEDWAY CLASSIC '25

 **SPEEDWAY
CLASSIC '25**

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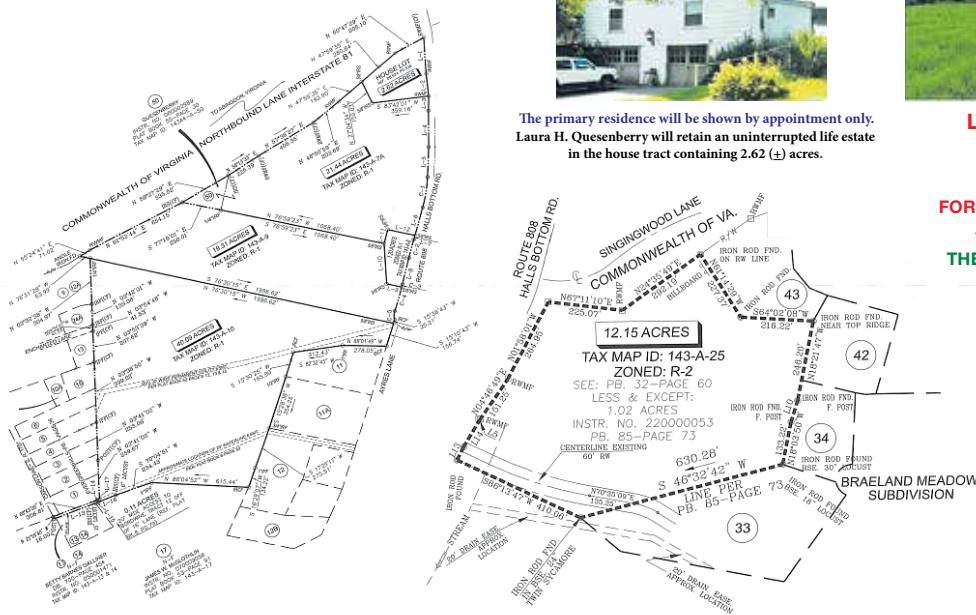


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SPEEDWAY CLASSIC '25

A Atlanta Braves

ROSTER

Name	#	Pos.	Bat	Thr.	Age	Ht.	Wt.	Birthplace
Grant Holmes	66	SP	L	R	29	6-0	226	Conway, SC
Rafael Montero	48	RP	R	R	34	6-0	193	Dominican Republic
Spencer Strider	99	SP	R	R	26	6-0	195	Columbus, OH
Jesse Chavez	60	RP	R	R	41	6-1	180	San Gabriel, CA
Davis Daniel	58	SP	R	R	28	6-1	190	Atlanta, GA
Bryce Elder	55	SP	R	R	26	6-2	220	Decatur, TX
Raisel Iglesias	26	RP	R	R	35	6-2	190	Isla de la Juventud, Cuba
Pierce Johnson	38	RP	R	R	34	6-2	202	Denver, CO
Aaron Bummer	49	RP	L	L	31	6-3	215	Valencia, CA
Enyel De Los Santos	61	RP	R	R	29	6-3	235	Dominican Republic
Dylan Lee	52	RP	L	L	30	6-3	214	Dinuba, CA
Wander Suero	45	RP	R	R	33	6-4	216	Dominican Republic
Joey Wentz	33	RP	L	L	27	6-5	220	Lawrence, KS
Chris Sale	51	SP	L	L	36	6-6	180	Lakeland, FL
Drake Baldwin	30	C	L	R	24	6-1	225	Madison, WI
Sean Murphy	12	C	R	R	30	6-3	228	Peekskill, NY
Ozzie Albies	1	2B	B	R	28	5-7	165	Willemstad, Curacao
Nick Allen	2	SS	R	R	26	5-8	166	San Diego, CA
Nacho Alvarez Jr.	67	SS	R	R	22	5-10	190	Fontana, CA
Luke Williams	37	SS	R	R	28	6-1	186	Park Ridge, IL
Matt Olson	28	1B	L	R	31	6-4	225	Atlanta, GA
Stuart Fairchild	17	RF	R	R	29	5-11	205	Seattle, WA
Jurickson Profar	7	LF	B	R	32	5-11	184	Willemstad, Curacao
Ronald Acuna Jr.	13	RF	R	R	27	6-0	205	La Guaira, Venezuela
Michael Harris II	23	CF	L	L	24	6-0	195	DeKalb, GA
Eli White	36	RF	R	R	31	6-3	195	Greenville, SC
Marcell Ozuna	20	DH	R	R	34	6-1	225	Dominican Republic



Cincinnati Reds

ROSTER

Name	#	Pos.	Bat	Thr	Age	Ht.	Wt.	Birthplace
Andrew Abbott	41	SP	L	L	26	6-0	192	Lynchburg, VA
Graham Ashcraft	23	RP	L	R	27	6-2	248	Huntsville, AL
Scott Barlow	58	RP	R	R	32	6-3	210	New London, CT
Chase Burns	26	SP	R	R	22	6-3	210	Napoli, Italy
Nick Lodolo	40	SP	L	L	27	6-6	216	La Verne, CA
Nick Martinez	28	SP	L	R	34	6-1	200	Miami, FL
Sam Moll	50	RP	L	L	33	5-9	190	Lakeland, TN
Emilio Pagan	15	RP	L	R	34	6-2	208	Simpsonville, SC
Lyon Richardson	72	RP	B	R	25	6-2	207	Jensen Beach, FL
Taylor Rogers	55	RP	L	L	34	6-3	190	Denver, CO
Tony Santillan	64	RP	R	R	28	6-3	285	Fort Worth, TX
Brady Singer	51	SP	R	R	28	6-5	215	Leesburg, FL
Brent Suter	31	RP	L	L	35	6-4	213	Chicago, IL
Tyler Stephenson	37	C	R	R	28	6-3	225	Atlanta, GA
Jose Trevino	35	C	R	R	32	5-9	215	Corpus Christi, TX
Elly De La Cruz	44	SS	B	R	23	6-5	200	Dominican Republic
Santiago Espina	14	3B	R	R	30	5-10	185	Dominican Republic
Noelvi Marte	16	3B	R	R	23	6-2	216	Dominican Republic
Matt McLain	9	2B	R	R	25	5-9	180	Orange, CA
Spencer Steer	7	1B	R	R	27	5-9	185	Long Beach, CA
Will Benson	30	LF	L	L	27	6-4	230	Atlanta, GA
Jake Fraley	27	RF	L	L	30	5-11	206	Frederick, MD
TJ Friedl	29	CF	L	L	29	5-8	180	Sewickley, PA
Austin Hays	12	LF	R	R	30	5-11	200	Daytona Beach, FL
Connor Joe	17	RF	R	R	32	5-11	205	San Diego, CA
Gavin Lux	2	LF	L	R	27	5-11	190	Kenosha, WI





by ALLEN GREGORY

Believe it not, it's baseball time in Bristol, Tennessee. Following months of planning, design and construction, the MLB Speedway Classic between the Atlanta Braves and Cincinnati Reds is set to unfold at Bristol Motor Speedway.

For Major League Baseball officials, the Classic could have a grand slam impact in terms of attendance, marketing, future game sites and outreach to a younger fan demographic raised on flashy video games.

For Bristol Motor Speedway, the latest engineering marvel could set the stage for more large-scale ventures involving sports and entertainment. And for Bristol area residents and business leaders, this is the type of national and even international exposure that no advertising campaign could ever conjure.

Among media types, the city of Bristol, Tennessee, has often been mistaken for Bristol, Connecticut – the home



base for sports broadcasting giant ESPN.

The Tennessee version of Bristol is famous for NASCAR, drag racing and country music.

Thanks to the vision and financial backing of its parent company – Speedway

“ This has been years in the making, and years’ worth of conversations. It’s kind of like planning for Christmas Day. We’re starting to make the food now, and Christmas Day is approaching.”



Motorsports – BMS has been at the forefront of several headline-grabbing ventures over the past 20 years.

Flash back to 2016 and the Battle of Bristol football game between Virginia Tech and the University of Tennessee.

While the skeptics claimed that it was impossible to imagine a football stadium inside the iconic, 533-mile oval, the game attracted an NCAA-record crowd of 156,990.

In 2021, BMS was back in the national spotlight for another brain-boggling feat. For the first time in 50 years, a NASCAR Cup Series race was held on a dirt surface.

After an initial wave of praise, the Bristol Dirt Race was halted after the wild 2023 event amid complaints from spoiled drivers and traditional NASCAR fans.

The gutsy experiment did create more interest in NASCAR among the hardcore followers of dirt racing. And the companion doubleheader events involving the World of Outlaws Sprints and Super Late Models will long be remembered.

From large-scale concerts and Monster Truck shows to the holiday tradition of the Speedway in Lights extravaganza, Bristol Motor Speedway is about much more than NASCAR.

The MLB Speedway Classic may be the biggest spectacle in the history of the speedway, city and even the state.

Imagine a 220,000-square-foot fan zone outside the stadium, complete with a massive ferris wheel and live concerts. The pre-game concert features Tim McGraw and Pitbull.

The design of the field is straight out of an episode of the futuristic science-fiction cartoon The Jetsons.

“When you look at the history of this place with the history of baseball, NASCAR and music in this region, being able to bring all those

things together is really what it’s all about. I think people will love this event,” BMS general manager Jerry Caldwell said.

“This has been years in the making, and years’ worth of conversations. It’s kind of like planning for Christmas Day. We’re starting to make the food now, and Christmas Day is approaching.”

A crew from ESPN will be on hand at BMS for the game as part of the SportsCenter: 50 States in 50 Days tour, including Marty Smith and Ryan

McGee.

The game itself will be broadcast live on Fox TV in prime time.

A few years ago, even the most ardent baseball fan would have been hard pressed to envision a Major League game being played inside a NASCAR track, especially in a small market like Bristol.

But the Bristol, Tennessee version of “Field of Dreams” is ready for a green flag and a first pitch. ♦





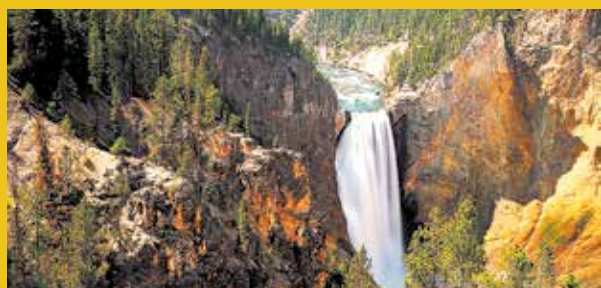
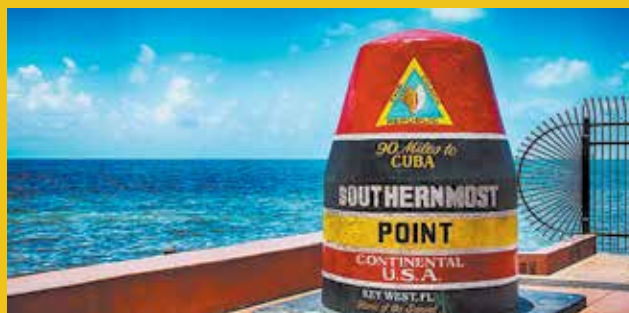
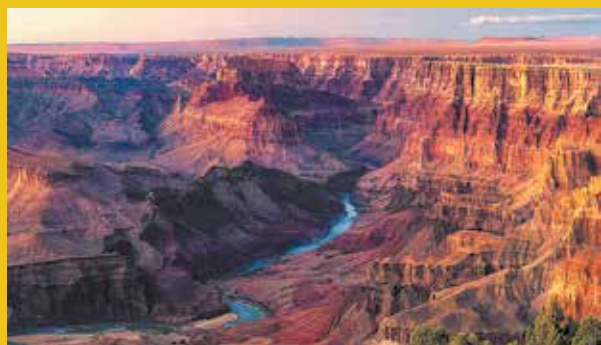
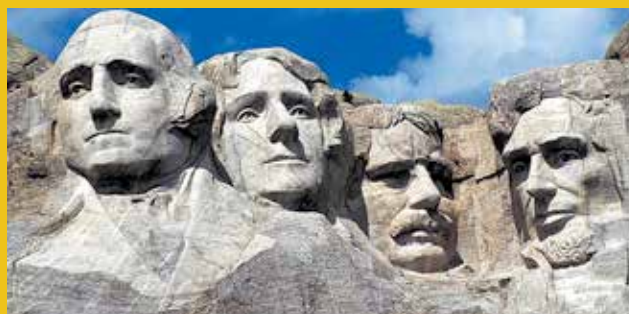
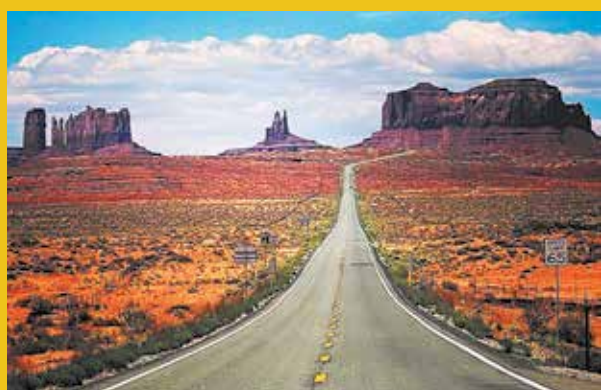
Reds, Braves fan zone





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Many Reds, Braves came through Appalachian League

by TIM HAYES



A storybook scenario for the Speedway Classic would be Hunter Stratton on the mound unleashing pitches for the Atlanta Braves.

The right-handed reliever could perhaps work a scoreless inning, notch a strikeout or two and maybe even record a win or a save.

That's the same Hunter Stratton who was born in Bristol in 1996, grew up in a house on Piney Hill Road not far from the South Holston Dam, attended Sullivan East High School and began his professional career with the Appalachian League's Bristol Pirates.

Oh yeah, he was a diehard fan of the Atlanta Braves as a kid.

Hey, it could happen.

The Braves acquired Stratton in a trade with the Pittsburgh Pirates on July 1 and while he was playing for Triple-A Gwinnett at the time of this writing on July 10, there is a chance he could be up in the big leagues on Aug. 2 when the Braves tangle with the Cincinnati Reds at Bristol Motor Speedway.

Stratton was 2-1 with a 4.30 ERA in 47 games with Pittsburgh from 2023-2025.

Austin Riley of the Braves is among many major leaguers who played in the Appalachian League. AP Photo

He pitched for the Bristol Pirates in 2017 and is one of several guys on both the Braves and Reds who once played in the Appalachian League.

The Appy League dates back to 1911 and up until 2019 was a professional circuit.

trade deadline, here is a look at guys on the roster of both teams as of July 10 who spent time in the Appalachian League and have played, managed or coached in the Tri-Cities before:

◆ Atlanta superstar slugger Ronald Acuna Jr.

Ozzie Albies was a 17-year-old member of the Danville Braves in 2014 and hit .356 with a home run and 14 RBIs in 38 games. He went 3-for-4 with two triples and scored three runs in the final game of the regular season that summer, a 6-1 win over the

(Ky.) Cubs in 1984 and three years later served as the pitching coach for the Wytheville (Va.) Cubs.

◆ Atlanta third baseman Austin Riley hit .351 with five home runs and 19 RBIs for the 2015 Danville Braves.

◆ Braves manager Brian Snitker was on the hotseat as this was written and there's a realistic chance he could be relieved of his duties by the time the Speedway Classic rolls around.

Snitker hit .270 with eight home runs and 33 RBIs in 55 games during the summer of 1977 in helping the Kingsport (Tenn.) Braves win the Appalachian League title.

He managed in the Appy League in 1996, piloting the Danville Braves to a 37-29 record.

◆ Atlanta pitcher Austin Cox was 1-1 with a 3.78 ERA for the Burlington (N.C.) Royals in 2018.

◆ Pitcher Rafael Montero of the Braves went 2-1 with a 4.24 ERA in four starts for the 2011 Kingsport Mets.

◆ Cincinnati pitcher Graham Ashcraft was 2-4 with a 4.53 ERA in 13 starts for the Greeneville (Tenn.) Reds in 2019.

◆ Emilio Pagan of the Reds had a perfect ERA while pitching for the Pulaski (Va.) Mariners in 2013. He did not allow a run in 15 outings covering 20 1/3 innings.

◆ Reds pitcher Lyon Richardson struggled with the Greeneville Reds in 2018, going 0-5 with a 7.14 ERA in 11 starts.

◆ Cincinnati pitcher Taylor Rogers was 2-1 with a 1.80 ERA in six starts for the 2012 Elizabethton (Tenn.) Twins.

◆ Reds infielder Spencer Steer hit .325 with two home runs and 13 RBIs in 20 games for the Elizabethton Twins in 2019.

◆ Cincinnati bench coach Brad Mills was the manager of the Wytheville Cubs in 1987. ◆



Hunter Stratton of Bristol played in the Appalachian League before joining the Pirates. He was recently acquired by the Braves. AP Photo

Since 2021, it has been a collegiate amateur wood-bat league.

While there will be roster reshuffling due to the MLB

hit .290 with a home run and seven RBIs in 18 games for the 2015 Danville (Va.) Braves.

◆ Atlanta second baseman

Bristol Pirates at DeVault Stadium.

◆ Pitching coach Rick Kranitz of the Braves played in one game for the Pikeville





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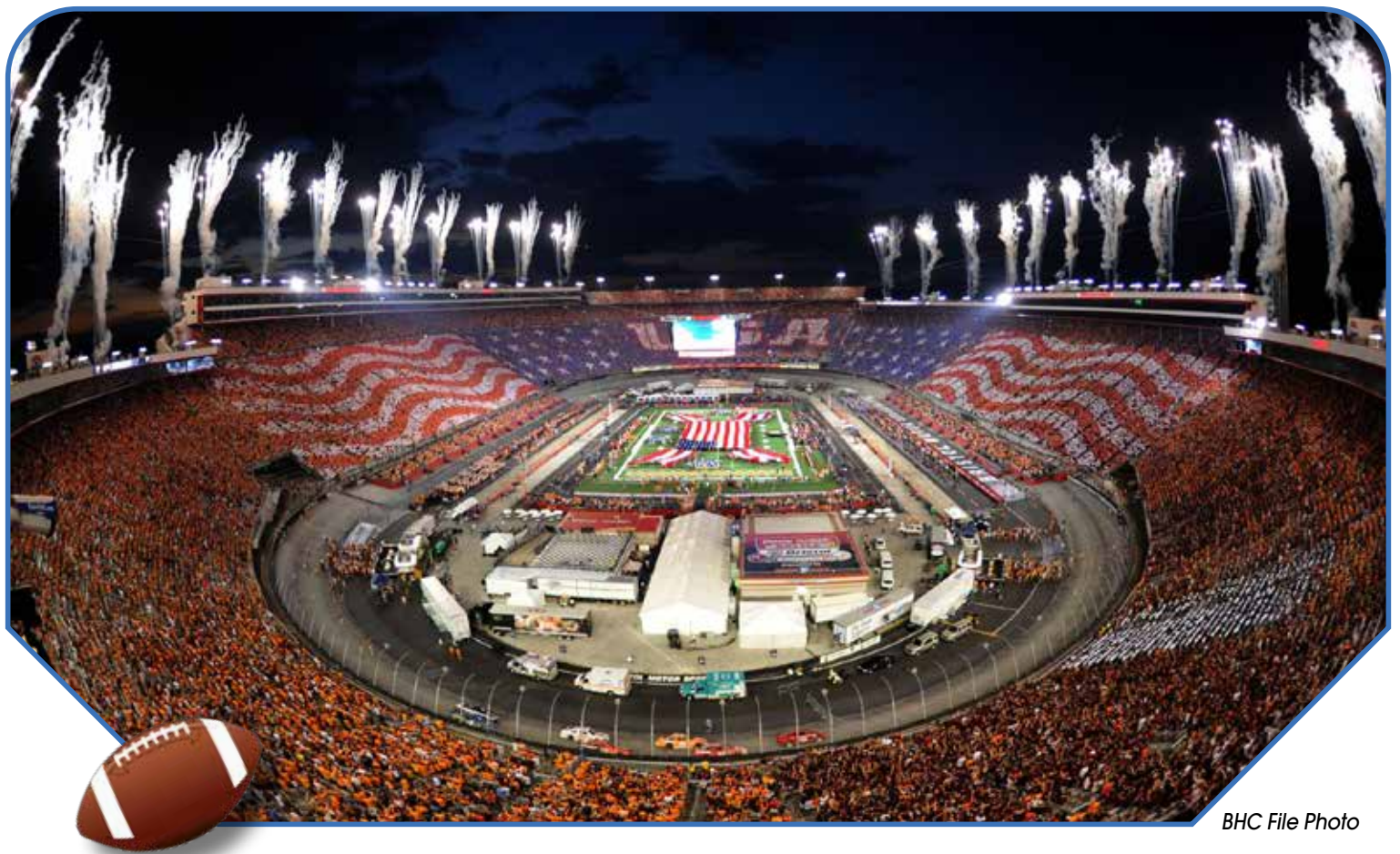


MLB SPEEDWAY CLASSIC '25



Speedway Classic

sprang from 2016 football game's success



BHC File Photo

by DAVID MCGEE

The MLB Speedway Classic came together much sooner than the 2016 Battle at Bristol college football contest which preceded it at Bristol Motor Speedway, but the two events are intrinsically related.

The Battle at Bristol was nearly two decades in the making, while this weekend's professional baseball contest between the Atlanta Braves and Cincinnati Reds came together in less than half that time.

Not long after Speedway Motorsports acquired Bristol Motor Speedway in 1996, Executive Chairman Bruton Smith began conversations about hosting a college football game in the infield of NASCAR's most popular track.

The dream of pitting the Volunteers against this region's other favorite team – the Virginia Tech Hokies -- on a gridiron constructed in the track's rectangular infield was a popular talking point but took nearly 20 years of negotiations and conversations before finally occurring on Sept. 10, 2016.



The epic result exceeded every expectation as the Battle at Bristol attracted the largest crowd in college football history with 156,990 fans filling the grandstands plus a massive prime time TV audience. The weekend also included a concert by Kenny Chesney, the Band Perry and Old Dominion.

Among those who took notice of the attendance, the impact and just the buzz surrounding the football game were some innovative folks from Major League Baseball. The same people who brought their sport out of traditional big city stadiums and into specialty venues like Fort Bragg in North Carolina in 2016; the Little League World Series in Pennsylvania, first played in 2017; England's London Stadium, first played in 2019; the College World Series field in Nebraska in 2019; Iowa's Field of Dreams in 2021 and historic Rickwood Field in Alabama in 2024. Baseball was looking for other opportunities to showcase their sport in non-traditional venues so why not at the World's Fastest Half-Mile? Bristol, also known as the Last Great Colosseum, is one of the largest sports venues on the planet.

Much like the Fort Bragg game was the first major league contest ever played in North Carolina and the Omaha game was the first in Nebraska, Bristol will carry that honor for Tennessee. Jeremiah Yolkut, MLB's vice-president of global events, said Bristol has been on their radar for years and is one of the few venues that could host an event of this magnitude.

"We felt, when we walked into this place several years ago and we looked at it, there was no better stage to consider putting on a large-scale event that would bring two of our iconic franchises onto the infield of a racetrack, to further bring out what is so great



about baseball," Yolkut said. "To be able to bring the game here to Bristol and create storylines that tie into a faster paced game, high energy and big moments, that is the stage we want to put that on and we're excited to be here," he said. Yolkut recently proclaimed this would be the largest regular season game attendance figure for the 2025 season. And limited tickets were still available.

Track President Jerry Caldwell said BMS got the league's attention after successfully hosting the 2016 Battle at Bristol and its massive non-NASCAR crowd. "This has been a several year conversation and it's really exciting to see that come together," Caldwell said. "We came on their radar after the Battle at Bristol and did that by the way we were able to execute. That was about the same time they were about to look at some new venues to be able to play baseball -- and the stars aligned." Murray Cook, MLB field and stadium consultant, first

visited BMS in 2017. He determined a regulation major league field would fit in the track's infield with a few modifications to the facility.

Before work on the field began, speedway contractors had to remove a portion of the Goodyear building, the Sunoco fuel tanks and signs, segments of pit wall and the frontstretch inside wall on the start-finish line side and the Musco lights along

those walls which help illuminate the racing surface. Steve Swift, SMI's senior vice president of operations and development said this process has been different than when the track hosted the football game. Infrastructure wasn't removed then, the field took up much of the infield and MLB is be fully responsible for creation of the playing surface. "That [Battle at Bristol] was

mostly a field build. This is a modification build," Swift said. "A little different challenges. The field is not as big as football but actually we're putting in more field, which is mind boggling. Football, we learned a lot and we took a lot of those learnings. MLB also recognized a lot of that and have put that into the baseball field as well." Since mid-June a small army has installed and leveled the gravel forming the base of the field. They added clay and astroturf and all the fencing, with the entire project facing a July 31 completion deadline. Once the game is complete, the next challenge is removing the field and all the other infrastructure from the baseball game, reinstalling the track safety walls, rebuilding the Goodyear building and getting the speedway ready to host a NASCAR tripleheader starting Sept. 11 – just 39 days away. ♦

“ That [Battle at Bristol] was mostly a field build. This is a modification build,” Swift said. “A little different challenges. The field is not as big as football but actually we’re putting in more field, which is mind boggling.”



Speedway Classic by the numbers



- 1 - Only MLB game played in Tennessee
- 46 - Days of facility conversion (June 16-July 31)
- 215 - Supplemental Musco lighting units
- 340 - Tons of clay for playing surface
- 400 - Feet from home plate to center field
- 17,500 - Tons of gravel for base of field
- 124,000 - Square feet of synthetic astroturf
- 220,000 - Square feet of Fan Zone outside BMS





Luminaries Ruth, Stengel

once played exhibition games in Bristol Virginia

by TIM HAYES

It was a few minutes past noon on April 5, 1922, when the brakes screeched and hissed on train No. 26 as the locomotive arrived from Memphis, Tennessee, and came to a halt in front of the Bristol train station.

Zack Wheat, Burleigh Grimes, Dutch Ruether and the rest of the Brooklyn Robins (also referred to as the Superbas, Dodgers and Nationals by newspapermen of the time) disembarked and stepped onto the platform.

The New York Yankees did the same as Wally Pipp, Bob Meusel, Waite Hoyt and manager Miller Huggins were among those breathing in that fresh Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia air on an overcast spring day.

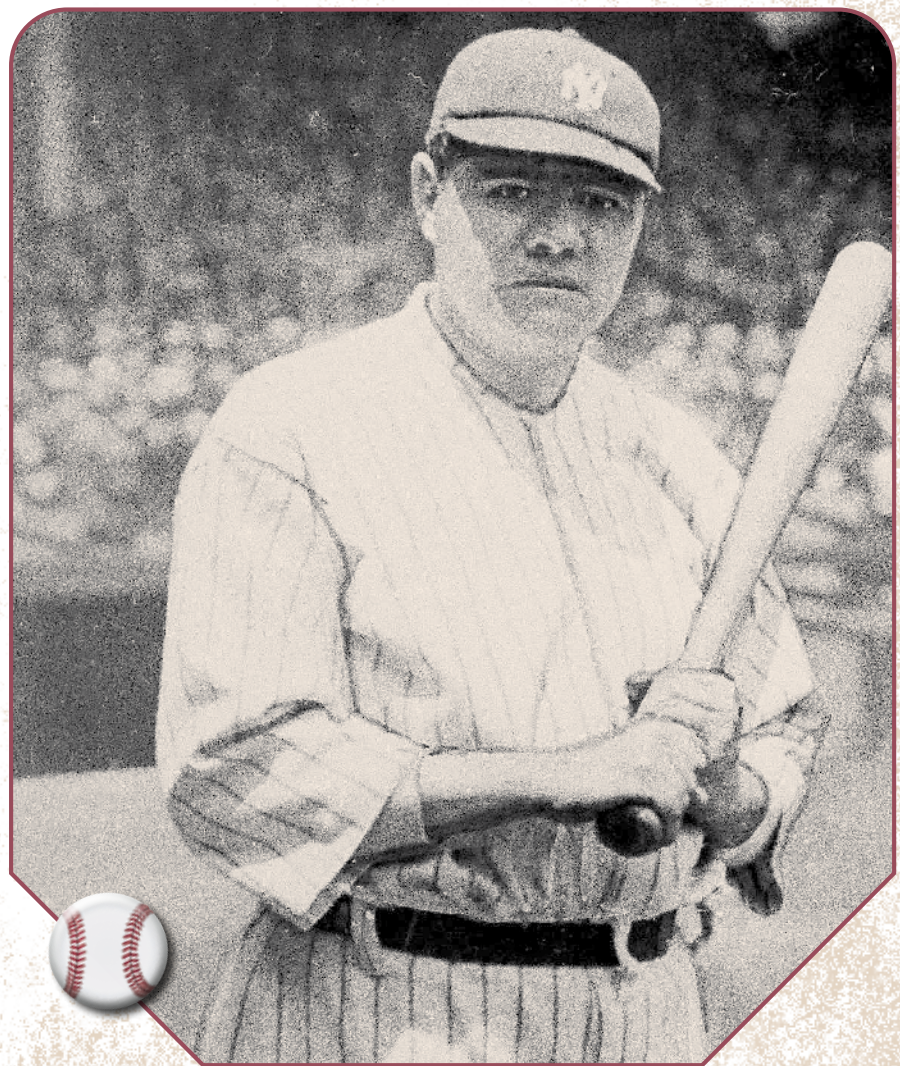
Yet, the crowd that had gathered at the station and those who were already lined up to purchase tickets at Tenneva Field were mainly there to see just one man.

A 27-year-old outfielder for the Yankees by the name

of George Herman "Babe" Ruth, who had slugged 59 home runs the season before, was already an icon and Bristolians wanted to catch a glimpse of the Great Bambino.

The Bristol Herald Courier had summed it up in that day's edition, writing "Babe Ruth, who is perhaps more widely known than any sporting personality who has ever basked in the limelight of the public gaze, will be the principal attraction."

A crowd of more than 5,000 showed up at Tenneva Field (which was located on what



Babe Ruth



Region's MLB ties extend 100-plus years, include Hall of Famer Billy Wagner

by **TIM HAYES**

The Mountain Empire's ties to Major League Baseball go way back. The winning pitcher in the very first World Series game played was Rural Retreat, Virginia, native Deacon Phillippe of the Pittsburgh Pirates, who outdueled Boston's Cy Young on that first day of October in 1903 at Huntington Avenue Grounds.

Johnson City, Tennessee's own Landon Knack pitched in the most recent World Series and got a championship ring as a member of the Los Angeles Dodgers. However, the summer of 2025 might go down as the most memorable when it comes to Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia getting their time in the spotlight as part of the national pastime. Shortstop Josh Owens from Providence Academy in Johnson City, Tennessee, was chosen early in mid-July's Major League Baseball Amateur Draft and is a promising prospect to say the least. Southwest Virginia native Billy Wagner became the first local in the pros elected to the National Baseball Hall of

Fame in Cooperstown, New York, as he took his spot alongside the game's immortals during the induction ceremony on July 27.

Then there's the Speedway Classic being held Aug. 2 as the Atlanta Braves and Cincinnati Reds square off in a regular-season game at Bristol Motor Speedway. It was not known last month whether Wagner – a 1990 Tazewell High School graduate – would be attending the game.

Seems he'd be a logical choice to throw out the ceremonial first pitch. Regardless, Wagner has visited the high banks of BMS before.

"Of course," Wag-



Former Atlanta pitcher Billy Wagner became the first player from this region enshrined in the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y. The ceremony was July 27. He finished with 422 saves, a 2.31 ERA and 1,196 strikeouts.

ner said. "Was a big fan of [NASCAR driver] Morgan Shepherd."

Count him among those all in when it comes to baseball at BMS.

"Playing in front of that type of crowd will be electric," Wagner said.

Wagner once pitched his home games at the Houston Astrodome – referred to as the Eighth Wonder of the World – but knows the Speedway Classic will be even more wondrous.

"Things have changed, haven't they? Who would have thought that would have ever happened?" Wagner said. "The spread of the game is awesome and I'm excited to

“ I played for what was my favorite team growing up, played for [Hall of Fame manager] Bobby Cox,” Wagner said “



see how that turns out.”

He also has a tie to the Atlanta Braves, having pitched the final of his 16 MLB seasons with the club.

After previously suiting up for the Houston Astros, Philadelphia Phillies, New York Mets and Boston Red Sox, Wagner was 7-2 with 37 saves and a 1.43 ERA in 2010 with the Braves as he earned a spot on the National League All-Star team.

“I played for what was my favorite team growing up, played for [Hall of Fame manager] Bobby Cox,” Wagner said. “Being in that setting in the end, I don’t think anybody could picture going out a better way. The only thing lacking was not winning a World Series. That season personally was one of the best I’ve had.” ♦





Bristol & Professional Baseball

A Little History...

- ◆ Bristol, Tennessee/Virginia is known as the "Twin City" because the state border runs down the middle of State Street. You can stand in the middle and have one foot in each state. Each city has a separate elected government, its own school and court system but cooperates on community events.
- ◆ Bristol is part of the Tri-Cities – Bristol, Johnson City and Kingsport – but it could also be called the "Quad Cities" because Elizabethton, Tennessee is just a few miles away.
- ◆ Each of those four cities has long supported Minor League Baseball in the form of the Appalachian League, a former rookie league for the baseball feeder system.
- ◆ Bristol and Johnson City were charter members in the original Appalachian League established in 1911 and when it reformed in 1921, when a Kingsport team also joined. Bristol, Elizabethton, Johnson City, Kingsport and other towns across Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia continued to field teams from the 1930s until modern day.
- ◆ George Herman "Babe" Ruth, one of baseball's greatest players, played in an exhibition game in Bristol on April 5, 1922. Ruth's New York Yankees lost 10-7 to the Brooklyn Robins (later Dodgers) as Ruth went 1-for-4, with a double and scored a run. The game attracted 5,000 to the former Teneva Field.
- ◆ The following day, the defending World Series champion New York Giants downed the Chicago White Sox 13-3 in a game that drew 1,000 fans.
- ◆ Also in April 1922, the Bristol State Liners lost a 3-1 decision to a team of mostly Giants rookies, which included veteran center fielder Casey Stengel, who went 0-for-3. The following day, the State Liners fell to the Philadelphia Athletics 6-2.
- ◆ Bristol was home to two all-Black baseball clubs in its history. The Invincibles were established in the 1890s. The semi-pro Bristol Blue Sox operated from the 1930s until the 1950s, playing against teams across East Tennessee, western Virginia and North Carolina.
- ◆ Bristol was the site of a unique footnote

in baseball history on May 13, 1952, when 18-year-old Bristol Twins pitcher Ron Nesciai threw a 7-0 no-hitter, striking out 27 batters to defeat the Welch, West Virginia Miners at Shaw Stadium. He later pitched for the Pittsburgh Pirates. He is still the only pitcher ever to do so in a nine-inning, professional-league game. The National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues called it "the greatest individual performance in the history of baseball."

- ◆ A bit closer to modern day, Cleveland Indians legend Bob Feller pitched in a three-inning old-timers game at Bristol's DeVault Stadium on July 30, 1974. It preceded the Appalachian League contest between the Bristol Tigers and the Pulaski Phillies.

Appalachian League Notes...

- ◆ Established as a rookie league, the Appalachian League was transformed in 2021 into a collegiate summer baseball league for rising freshmen and sophomores, utilizing wooden bats.
- ◆ Teams in Bristol, Elizabethton, Johnson City, Kingsport and Greeneville, Tennessee, comprise the current Appalachian League western division.
- ◆ Now known as the Bristol State Liners [an homage to the 1921-25 team] Bristol's team was previously associated with the Twins, Tigers, White Sox and Pirates of the Major League.
- ◆ More than 20 former Bristol players advanced to the Majors including: Alan Trammell, 1984 World Series MVP and a 2018 Baseball Hall of Fame selection; Lance Parrish, an eight-time All Star; Travis Fryman, a five-time All Star; Lou Whitaker, a former American League Rookie of the Year, five-time All Star and World Series champion; Mark "Bird" Fidrych, a two-time MLB All-Star and 1976 AL ERA leader; Vern Ruhle, who went on to become a Reds pitching coach.
- ◆ The Cincinnati Reds and Atlanta Braves briefly had Appalachian affiliates - both in Wytheville, Virginia and, more recently, the Reds had an Appalachian League team in Greeneville, Tennessee.
- ◆ Major league stars who played briefly in the Appalachian League – and are part of the league's Hall of Fame – include Greg

Maddux, David Justice, Dale Murphy, Kirby Puckett, Nolan Ryan, Eddie Murray, Cal Ripken, Jr., Rick Ankiel, Ron Guidry and Darryl Strawberry. While brief, their time in this region brought them through Bristol and the Tri-Cities.

- ◆ 2024 Baseball Hall of Fame inductee and former World Series winning manager Jim Leyland began his coaching career managing the Bristol Pirates in 1971.
- ◆ Pete Rose, Jr., son of baseball's all-time hits leader, was manager of the Bristol White Sox in 2011-2012.

Bristolians who played in the Majors...

- ◆ The Bristol Tennessee/Virginia has produced a number of former Major League players including Kevin Barker, a first baseman with the Brewers, Padres, Blue Jays and Reds; pitcher Justin Grimm, who played 10 seasons with the Rangers, Cubs, Royals, Mariners and Athletics, finishing with 378 career strikeouts and a 2016 World Series ring from his stint with the Cubs, Jimmy Gobble of Bristol was also a pitcher, who played seven Major League seasons for the Royals and White Sox.
- ◆ Billy Wagner, a native of nearby Tazewell, Virginia, is among the newest inductees into the Baseball Hall of Fame. Wagner played 16 seasons for the Astros, Mets and Braves. He had a career 2.31 ERA, 422 saves and nearly 1,200 strikeouts.

Locals in the Pros...

- ◆ Bristol native Hunter Stratton was 2-1 as a pitcher for the Pittsburgh Pirates before joining the Braves organization.
- ◆ Pitcher Landon Knack, a member of the Los Angeles Dodgers organization, is from Johnson City and sports a 3-2 major league record.
- ◆ Outfielder Evan Carter of Elizabethton is in his second season with the Texas Rangers.
- ◆ Johnson City is also home to former Detroit Tigers pitcher Daniel Norris, who had eight seasons with the Tigers, two with Toronto and one each in Milwaukee and Chicago. He was in the majors from 2014 to 2023 and threw over 500 strikeouts. Will Craig of Johnson City, formerly played for the Pittsburgh Pirates in 2020 and 2021.



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From page 19

on April 6 as Bristol continued to be big time.

The matchup between the Yankees and Robins was the first of four consecutive days in which MLB players would take the field in Bristol.

The 1921 (and soon-to-be 1922) World Series champion Giants cruised to a 13-3 triumph over the Chicago White Sox the day after Ruth and company left town.

Manager John McGraw's team was paced by George Kelly's three hits and impressive pitching from Cecil "Red" Causey.

An estimated crowd of 1,000 was on hand, a major dip in attendance from the day before. One of those spectators, however, made up for the disappointing turnout with some vociferous heckling.

"Had it not been for one of those rabid fellows to be found at every ballgame, there would have been absolutely nothing to amuse the customers," Charles A. Taylor reported in the New York Herald. "This particular one had a slang vocabulary that astonished both the Broadway and Chicago boys, hardened as they are."

Future Hall of Famer Bill Klem was the umpire for the second exhibition game and he had to lay down the law early.

"The local Chamber of Commerce also furnished a perfectly good brass band, but umpire Bill Klem became

offended when the bass drum stifled his decisions and ordered the musicians to shut up," Taylor wrote. "Afterward Klem rescinded

the trio of Farley, Mehaffey and Weldon (first names weren't reported) of the hometown team and none of them came from the guy

the pros – Telford, Tennessee, native Tilly Walker – had two hits for the Philadelphians, who scored three times in the first inning.

Exhibition games in small communities used to be common, events of a bygone era when folks relished the chance to see heroes they'd only glimpsed in newspaper pictures or movie reels.

The New York Giants and Cleveland Indians were supposed to play an exhibition game on April 11, 1946 at Shaw Stadium in Bristol, but that contest was rained out.

Now – 103

years later – Major League Baseball is returning to Bristol as the Atlanta Braves and Cincinnati Reds face off in a regular-season game on Aug. 2 being dubbed as the Speedway Classic. It will be the first MLB regular-season game ever played in the state of Tennessee.

A makeshift diamond on the infield of Bristol Motor Speedway will be surrounded by a crowd expected to be in the neighborhood of 100,000 and the showdown between National League clubs will be televised in primetime on FOX.

Instead of a brass band provided by the Chamber of Commerce, Tim McGraw and Pitbull will headline a pregame concert.

It will be a spectacle that would even make Babe Ruth proud. ♦



his edict to the extent of allowing a minimum of jazz between innings."

A seven-run second inning sparked by Emil "Irish" Meusel highlighted the victory for the juggernaut that was the Giants.

New York pounded out 11 hits in six innings against starting pitcher Charlie Robertson of the White Sox. Robertson would fare much better just 24 days later when he tossed the fifth perfect game in MLB history against the Detroit Tigers.

The second team (what would be called a split-squad today) comprised mostly of Giants rookies beat the Appalachian League's Bristol State Liners by a 2-1 count on April 7, scoring twice in the top of the ninth inning to eke out the win.

The Giants B-team managed just three hits against

starting in center field. Casey Stengel, later to reach legendary status as a MLB manager, was 0-for-3 that day.

On April 8, Connie Mack's Philadelphia Athletics wrapped up the four-day festivities with a 6-2 win over the Bristol State Liners. One of the original locals in

"The local Chamber of Commerce also furnished a perfectly good brass band, but umpire Bill Klem became offended when the bass drum stifled his decisions and ordered the musicians to shut up,"





Former major leaguer, NASCAR crewman, Yost has unique perspective

by TIM HAYES

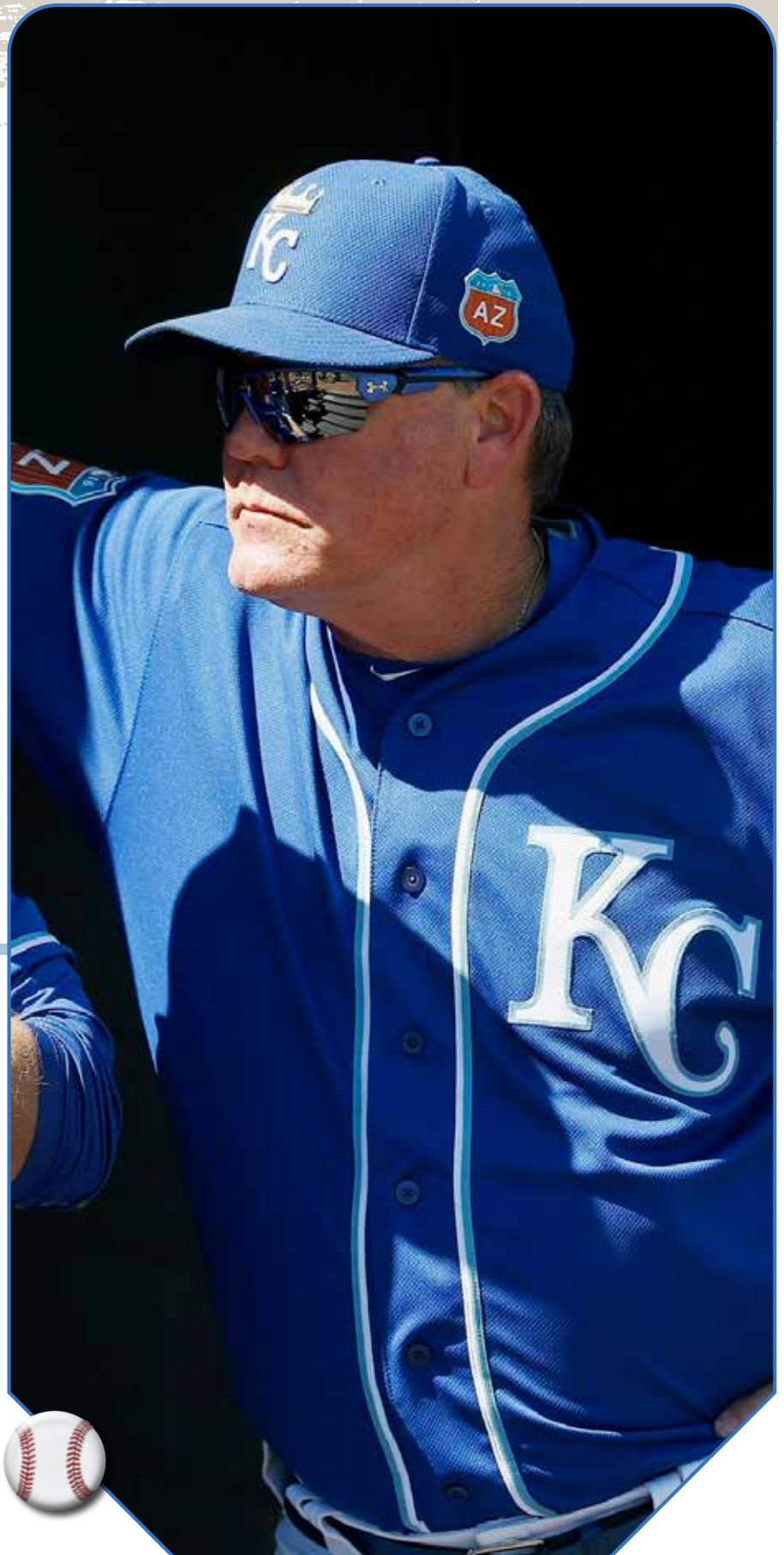
The Speedway Classic will offer a rare cross-over of sorts between Major League Baseball and NASCAR when the Atlanta Braves and Cincinnati Reds play a regular-season prime-time game on Aug. 2 at Bristol Motor Speedway. Ned Yost is among the few individuals who have experienced the best of both sports.

He was a catcher, coach and manager in the majors and piloted the Kansas City Royals to a World Series title in 2015.

Through his close friendship with Dale Earnhardt Sr., he worked on the pit crew of the iconic No. 3 Chevrolet for the final nine races of the 1994 season when "The Intimidator" won his seventh Cup Series championship.

The 70-year-old Yost is now a senior advisor to Kansas City general manager J.J. Picollo and, while the Royals won't be playing in the Speedway Classic, he certainly will be paying close attention to the spectacle.

"When I first heard it, I was little jealous that I



wouldn't be there to watch it," Yost said in a telephone interview during spring training. "The Braves are going and I asked [Atlanta manager] Brian Snitker about it and he was excited. I think it's going to be extremely cool." Yost is not just your casual race fan.

"Ned would rather talk NASCAR than talk baseball," said Doug Henry, Kansas City's bullpen coach from 2013-2017 when Yost was the skipper. After all, this is a guy who wore uniform No. 3 while managing the Milwaukee Brewers and Royals to honor Dale Earnhardt.

The passion for stock car racing wasn't always there for Yost, a native of native California.

"I became more of a fan after I met Dale," Yost said. "When I played in Milwaukee, Robin Yount was my roommate for a couple of years and he was really good friends with Rick Mears. We would always pay attention to the CART, IndyCar racing. We would sometimes go wherever he was racing."

Yost became buddies with Earnhardt in the mid-1980s thanks to a mutual friend – ex-major league catcher Jody Davis – and the two went on hunting trips together frequently throughout the country.

"Once I met Dale, I knew who he was, but really didn't pay attention to NASCAR," Yost said. "But after we formed that friendship, then of course I really grew to be a huge fan of it through him. He was such a special guy."

Yost was on the coaching staff of manager Bobby Cox with the Atlanta Braves (Earnhardt's favorite baseball team) in 1994 when the MLB season ended prematurely with a players' strike. He went from nightly games in the National League to weekly battles in NASCAR thanks to his pal. "We went on strike in the

middle of August and they sent all the major league coaches to the minor leagues for the last two weeks to finish up the minor league season watching them," Yost

When he was in the hauler, I was in the hauler." Yost marveled at the mentality of Earnhardt behind the wheel.

"I really got to learn how

five laps up, he ran it like he was winning the race "His competitiveness was compelling and it was eye-opening to me how he never took a lap off. There was just



said.

"Come September 1, we didn't have anything to do and Dale called one night and he goes, 'What are you doing?' and I said, 'I ain't doin' nothin.' And he said, 'Why don't you come be on my race team for the last nine races so you can help us win this seventh championship?' I thought it would be cool and my first race was in Darlington."

What was Yost's role in the pits?

"I always kid people and tell them I was a rehydration engineer," Yost said. "I would give Dale water when he came in and made sure his helmet and goggles were in the car. When he was on the track, I was on the track.

competitive he was and how he continued to fight every lap," Yost said. "It didn't matter if he was 10 laps down or

"Once I met Dale, I knew who he was, but really didn't pay attention to NASCAR," Yost said. "But after we formed that friendship, then of course I really grew to be a huge fan of it through him. He was such a special guy."



so much I learned from him and in turn it made a huge impact on my career. That was one of the most valuable times I ever had. It set me up with a managing job at the major league level just because I saw his attitude and his work ethic, his focus and determination. It was like something I had never seen before and that's what made him so great."

Yost missed taking part in the fall night race at Bristol by one week in 1994.

"Bristol's one of the few places where I haven't been," Yost said.

Hired as manager of the Brewers in Oct. 2002, more than year after Earnhardt died in a last-lap crash at the 2001 Daytona 500, Yost picked



No. 3 as an homage to his comrade and he'd wear that digit on his back in Milwaukee and Kansas City.

"I wanted to do it in Atlanta, but the number was retired [for Dale Murphy]," Yost said.

"As soon as I went to Milwaukee in 2002, the number was open and I took it."

Yost still follows racing and even made an appearance on Dale Earnhardt Jr.'s popular podcast.

"When I was flying out to spring training, I was watching the Dale Jr. Download and he was interviewing Richard Childress," Yost said.

"It was a great hour and a

"His competitiveness was compelling and it was eye-opening to me how he never took a lap off. There was just so much I learned from him and in turn it made a huge impact on my career."



half and Richard is a good friend of mine. I enjoyed so much being around him too during the time I was with Dale and the team. I got half-way through watching that and I got to looking and in the background Dale Jr. had my bobblehead [doll] on his shelf. I said, 'OK, that's good' and I had to text him and tell him he made my day.

"I do still watch it and pay attention. Mostly with RCR (Richard Childress Racing) and JR Motorsports."

Yost will be keeping a close eye on how things unfold at Bristol Motor Speedway when the Braves and Reds play the first-ever MLB regular-season game in Tennessee.



He was managing Kansas City in 2019 when the Royals posted a 7-3 win over the Detroit Tigers in Omaha, Nebraska, just two days before the College World Series began there.

"That was a tremendous experience," Yost said. "I think [the Speedway Classic]

is going to be absolutely awesome."

The guy who knows a thing or two about both making left turns at high speeds and hitting a high fastball, Yost has appreciation for both NASCAR and Major League Baseball from his up close and personal experience.

"I am curious to see how it all plays out and how they put that field in, a field that major leaguers can compete on. That is a tremendous task in these venues," Yost said. "It's going to be super special, really cool and a lot of fun." 



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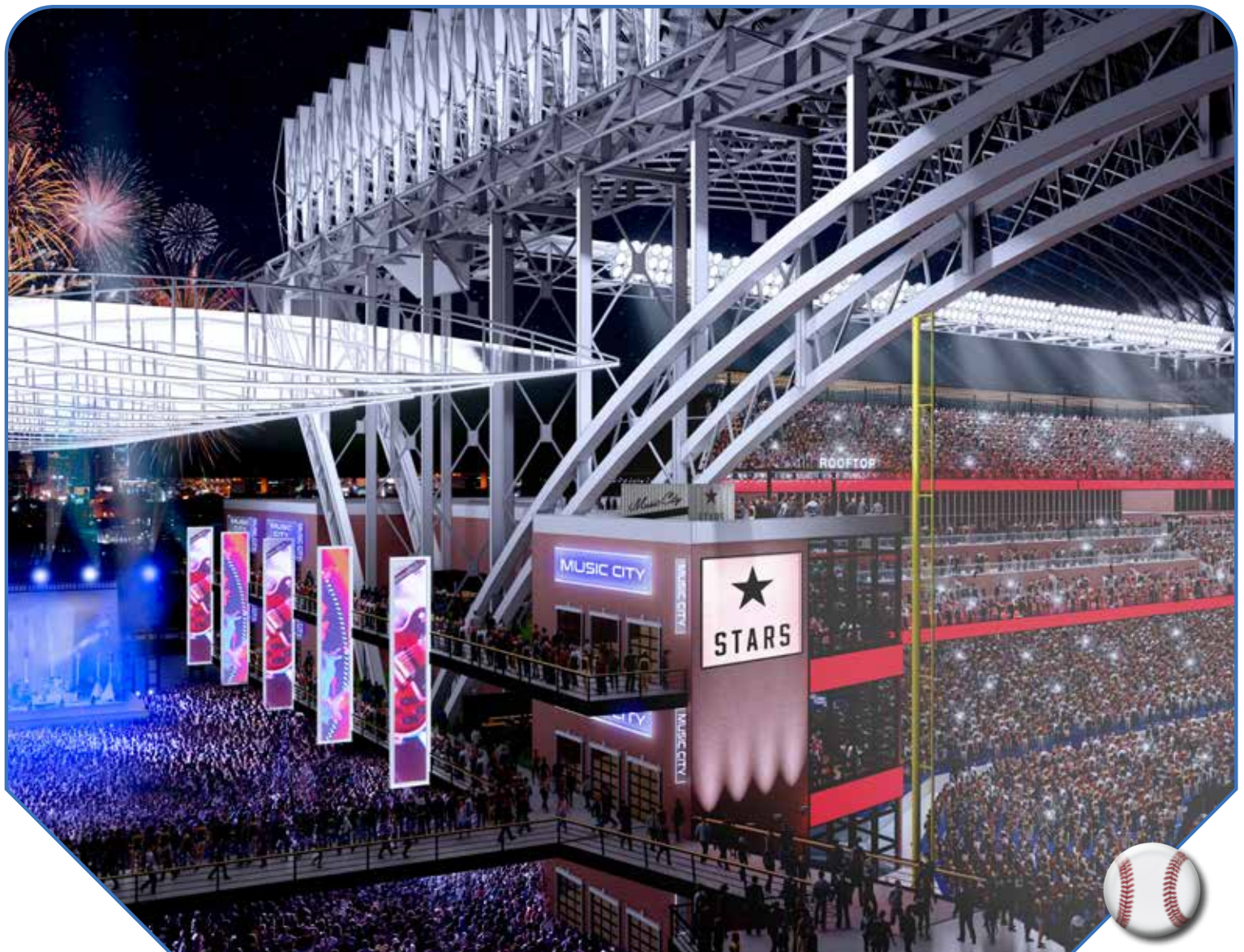
SPEEDWAY CLASSIC '25

29



Nashville group eyes MLB expansion; sees Bristol as state showcase

by TIM HAYES



This artist rendering depicts what a proposed Nashville Stars stadium might look like, including a music performance venue – similar to BMS at the Speedway Classic. Courtesy Music City Baseball



The Speedway Classic set for Aug. 2 in Bristol, and featuring the Atlanta Braves facing the Cincinnati Reds, will be the first Major League Baseball regular-season game ever played in the state of Tennessee.

It might not be the last. Nashville is among the cities favored to land an MLB franchise when the next round of expansion occurs and there have even been rumors of the Tampa Bay Rays or Chicago White Sox possibly relocating to the state capital.

The primetime game at Bristol Motor Speedway could add to the momentum of a growing movement to get Tennessee a team in the big leagues.

"I think baseball is a statewide passion, not just a Nashville story, you know?" said John Loar, a Nashville real estate developer and managing director of Music City Baseball, a community-driven organization looking to bring an MLB club to Nashville. "I think the opportunity to have a Major League Baseball game in Bristol, Tennessee, just reinforces the state's interest."

Loar said in a recent telephone interview that he will make the 4.5 hour trip to Bristol to witness the event which will also feature a pregame concert headlined by multi-time Grammy Award winner Tim McGraw.

Bristol is the Birthplace of Country Music, while Nashville is the hotbed of that musical genre.

"I think you could be looking at some record-setting attendance numbers surrounding not only the game but the performance of Tim McGraw as well," Loar said. "I think it's interesting to tie the two together because that's a big part of the attraction. There's just a tremendous amount of overlap there. ... A lot of Major League Baseball

players want

to be country music stars and a lot of country music stars want to be baseball players."

It should come as no surprise then that musicians such as Justin Timberlake, Kane Brown, Luke Combs, Darius Rucker and Kix Brooks have offered their support to the Music City Baseball organization.

Along with Loar, the board of directors also includes former United States Attorney General and current dean of Belmont University's law school Alberto Gonzales, Negro Leagues Museum President Bob Kendrick and former Tennessee Titans running back Eddie George.

Philadelphia Phillies executive Dave Dombrowski, Hall of Fame manager Tony La Russa, former American League MVP Don Mattingly and Vanderbilt University baseball coach Tim Corbin are among the baseball men who have gotten behind the idea of Nashville being a major league city.

"We're very focused on expansion and I think what we've accomplished since we've been here is really just establishing what we call the local ownership group," Loar said. "Obviously, there will be a majority owner, but that decision will really be made by Major League Baseball and its owners."

"Hopefully, as part of the 2026 collective bargaining agreement or shortly thereafter, expansion will be part of that conversation. Our job is just to be three

years in front of that.

You need at least three years you know to build a ballpark, stadium or word-class

entertainment venue."

Loar envisions a mixed-use development that would host both entertainment programs and Major League Baseball.

"The people are moving here – baseball players, people in the business – and there's just the overall growth of Nashville," Loar said. "It's centrally located and I think all the revenue factors work. The expansion of the corporate market here, you

“ Hopefully, as part of the 2026 collective bargaining agreement or shortly thereafter, expansion will be part of that conversation. Our job is just to be three years in front of that. You need at least three years you know to build a ballpark, stadium or word-class entertainment venue.”



have Oracle and Amazon showing up, a strong health care industry and you have the entertainment business with country music. It's expanding on all that into other genres."

The Tennessee Titans of the National Football League, Major League Soccer's Nashville FC and the National Hockey League's Nashville Predators are already entrenched on the

scene with large fanbases.

The University of Tennessee and Vanderbilt have won College World Series titles and there are minor league teams in Knoxville, Chattanooga, Nashville and Memphis already.

Major League Baseball would seem to be the logical next step.

A recent poll among MLB players conducted by TheAthletic.com had Nashville as the leading vote getter among potential expansion cities.

Johnson City, Tennessee, native Will Craig starred at Science Hill High School and later played for the Pittsburgh Pirates during the 2020 and 2021 seasons.

He has lived in Nashville for several years and spent the past two seasons as an assistant baseball coach at Belmont University before recently landing a job at Duke University.

"I do think MLB could work in Nashville," Craig said. "The city loves sports and the pro teams that are there are loved by the city. ... Right now, Tennessee seems split between [MLB supporters of] Atlanta, St. Louis and Cincinnati so I think you could inherit a lot of fans."

The Music City Baseball group's proposed name for the possible big-league team would be the Nashville Stars, the moniker used by a successful Negro Leagues team in the city in the 1940s and 1950s.

The Speedway Classic could provide a big boost in perhaps making the Stars shine bright one day in the big leagues.

"I think this game coming up in Bristol will prove the interest in Tennessee," Loar said. "I think Tennessee's a baseball state. It'll prove that this state, this market is a major league market and I think it will be above a mid-tier market." ♦





Hample hopes to add to his unique baseball collection during Classic

by TIM HAYES

The Speedway Classic on Aug. 2 between the Atlanta Braves and Cincinnati Reds is expected to draw the largest crowd to attend a Major League Baseball game in 2025 and could perhaps feature the biggest turnout of spectators to ever witness a big-league contest anytime or anywhere.

Among those converging on Bristol Motor Speedway for the extravaganza will be a 47-year-old from New York City who happens to be one of the sport's most famous fans.

Zack Hample is a luminary of sorts in this social media age, a mega fan of the national pastime who never made the majors as a player but has achieved

stardom for his uncanny ability to snag baseballs.

Home runs, foul balls, toss ups from coaches and players, batting practice blasts, gifts from ballpark employees, discoveries of hidden horsehide spheres in nooks and crannies that he can fish out with

The world's best ballhawk had collected 12,843 such souvenirs as of a July 5 visit to Philadelphia's Citizens Bank Park. He doesn't even count those balls he has accrued during spring training and minor league games.

BMS will be the 67th differ-

Major League Baseball game and with his trusty glove on his hand will be racing through the stands to amass more mementos.

"I was 100% thrilled [when the game was announced] because I'm all about going to new stadiums," Hample said

in a recent telephone interview. "I've been to all 30 of the current Major League Baseball stadiums multiple times, so for me to get to experience a new ballpark. ... I'm pumped."

Hample has been around the world in pursuit of his passion.

What has been the most memorable trip of his journey thus far?

"I would say the first time I went to the Tokyo Dome for the A's vs.



Josh Hample is internationally recognized as one of baseball's biggest fans and recognized for his uncanny ability to snag baseballs. He has nearly 13,000 baseballs in his collection and has traveled to MLB stadiums and unique events like the Speedway Classic for years. He plans to be in Bristol to add to his remarkable collection. AP Photo.

a device that is nothing more than a cup on a string.

ent facility that Hample will have visited that has hosted a



Mariners when they opened the season there in 2012," Hample said. "Japan overall was so different and unusual to me and the baseball experience was fascinating. I remember how quiet everybody was during the game. It was almost like a golf match.

"I was having fun with one of the outfielders, shouting at him during the game, just fun, playful stuff like, 'Hey Johnny baby, look alive, the next one's coming your way,' like nothing rude, not even heckling. And the looks on the faces of all the Japanese fans surrounding me in left field; they were shocked and appalled that the obnoxious American was there making noise during a baseball game. I think everybody was learning something from other people there. That was really cool."

Mexico City, London, Australia, Fort Bragg, North Carolina and Birmingham, Alabama, are among the places which have hosted MLB special events – like the Speedway Classic will be – Hample has been present for.

"The Dodgers and Diamondbacks played in Sydney, Australia in 2014," Hample said. "I remember that pre-game like every 10 or 15 seconds the whole stadium was cheering and getting excited. I couldn't understand why there was this roar from the crowd like clockwork, almost on a schedule.

"And I finally realized why because [Dodgers pitcher] Clayton Kershaw was warming up for the game and long tossing and every time he threw the ball like 300 feet, the whole stadium was cheering. They were just excited because nobody had seen a Major League Baseball game before. People cheered like crazy when the batter hit a pop-up in the infield because they couldn't believe how high the ball went and they

were excited. I love seeing baseball in foreign places and that won't exactly be the case in Bristol; I am sure it's going to be an educated fanbase but I'm sure there will a lot of people who don't see Major League Baseball very often. I am sure the vibes are going to be like nothing else."

Hample devises a game-plan as he's studied the lay-

ing in and having no idea and having to figure out on the fly," Hample said. "Once I got started making YouTube videos and I felt like people were gonna judge my performance and the more cool things that happened the better the videos will do, I didn't want to be messing around cluelessly at a new ballpark

"Now I try to figure out ev-

even thrown up balls could drop down out of reach. Any little detail, even where the railings are. It's all gonna be helpful for moving around the stadium, choosing a good place to watch and of course collecting baseballs -- which is my passion."

He has already noticed the major distance between the outfield fences and the



out of Bristol Motor Speedway and checked in on the construction progress made in the weeks and months leading up to the one-of-a-kind showdown.

"When I was much younger and going to new stadiums for the first time, I liked to know nothing. In fact, I even avoided watching games on TV at a new stadium because I enjoyed the challenge of go-

everything. I'll look at seating diagrams, I'll look at photos when the stadium is being built or when certain elements are being put in place to really get an idea really of where the outfield seats are, where the walkways are. The standing room areas, how high the protective netting is, if there's a little gap in between the outfield wall and the front row of the bleachers, a place where home run balls or

bleachers – separated by the high banks of the track where those NASCAR machines turn laps – when it comes to the makeshift diamond in the Bristol Motor Speedway infield.

"That's forced me to rethink my strategies," Hample said. "How much time do I really want to spend in the outfield compared to the infield? Maybe forget home runs and try to focus on foul balls and toss-ups. It's such a bizarre circumstance and I'm really excited to be there."

Hample was a talented hitter at Columbia Prep High School in New York and had



a brief stint as a member of the team at NCAA Division III Guilford College in North Carolina, which at the time was an Old Dominion Athletic Conference rival of Emory & Henry.

He got his first ball at an MLB game in 1990 and he hasn't stopped grabbing them since. He doesn't keep all of them and many times gives them to youngsters at the games.

Hample has written three books, has nearly 675,000 subscribers to his YouTube channel at last check and has been interviewed on talk shows hosted by Jay Leno, Conan O'Brien and Rosie O'Donnell.

He caught Mike Trout's first career home run ball and the 3,000th hit by Alex Rodriguez that sailed over the fence and found its way into his glove. He has his own baseball cards, apparel and was the subject of a full-length documentary.

Did he ever think his love of catching baseballs would get so big?

"I had no idea," Hample said. "It was never my goal. I really feel like I stumbled into it. I've done a lot of things that have increased my reach – writing books, doing the YouTube stuff and being interviewed on TV a lot – but that was just sort of a natural progression of trying to further my career as a writer and have a bigger audience. I never thought it would get this big."

Hample's increase in popularity has also led to a growth in the number of critics, who blast him regularly on X (formerly Twitter) for the over-zealousness which he exhibits in chasing down wayward baseballs.

"It's weird to kind of get this attention for a nerdy obsessive hobby," Hample said. "It really seems to catch on with so many people. It just feels like every kid who is age 7-17 and likes baseball,

seems to know who I am and it's fun.

"I kind of get to live the best of both worlds, right? I can go to a baseball stadium and get the celebrity treatment and can pretend I'm all famous and important and

worse, because the internet can be a nasty place at times, but thankfully almost everybody I've met has been really cool."

Hample is sure to make some new acquaintances in Bristol and will have some

about the competition, I'm just more excited than anything," he said.

Like many people in the Big Apple, Hample has never been to a NASCAR track. Perhaps this trip to Bristol will inspire him to come back for



then I walk out of there and nobody knows who I am and

“ I feel like we are all going to be battling it out with each other, but hopefully in a friendly way. I know all these guys and we try to negotiate and each pick a spot and back off if one of us gets one first. ”



nobody cares. And I can just get back to my normal life and be like a civilian again. It is very strange to be in this situation. For better or for

competition in a throng that could number in the 100,000 range.

"It would be cool to be at a record-setting game," Hample said. "We'll see if that happens. ... Even if there are 100,000 people most of them are not going to be sitting in places where baseballs go. It's not like I have to compete with 100,000 people. I do know that a bunch of my fellow baseball collectors are going to be traveling in for this game.

"I feel like we are all going to be battling it out with each other, but hopefully in a friendly way. I know all these guys and we try to negotiate and each pick a spot and back off if one of us gets one first. It's a really nice community of people who collect baseballs. I'm not super worried

in September for the playoff race.

"At one point a number of years ago, I connected with someone who was involved somehow with NASCAR and he told me if I wanted to go to a race he'd help me get access and maybe I'd do it for YouTube," Hample said. "As things go, it didn't quite work out. ... I'd love to go to a NASCAR race someday though. At some point that definitely needs to happen."

For now, he's savoring the opportunity to be at a baseball game inside a famed NASCAR venue.

"Like I said, I'm really looking forward to coming to Bristol for this game," Hample said. ♦





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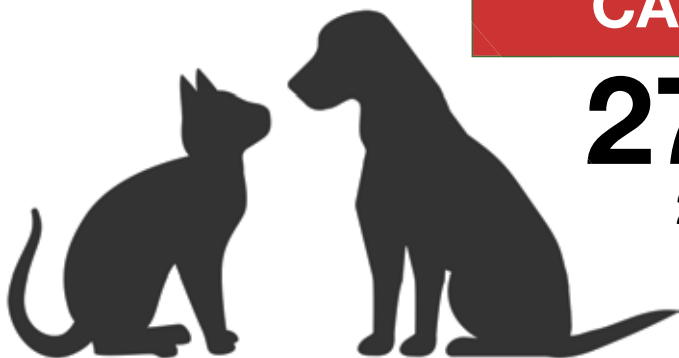
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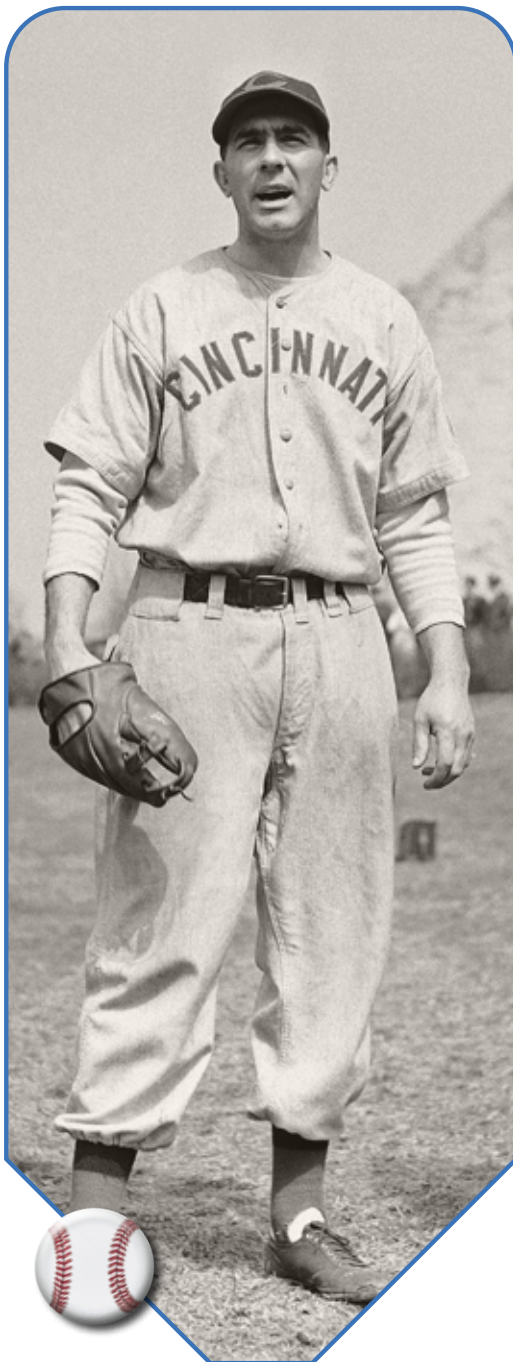
MLB SPEEDWAY CLASSIC '25



East Tennessee's Shoun

tossed a no-hitter for the Reds versus Braves in 1944

by TIM HAYES



The baseball game between the Atlanta Braves and Cincinnati Reds on Aug. 2 at Bristol Motor Speedway will be known as the Speedway Classic.

It could also be called the Hardrock Cup but that's not a reference to the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Bristol.

Clyde "Hardrock" Shoun of Mountain City, Tennessee, pitched five seasons for the Cincinnati Reds and three seasons with the Boston Braves in the 1940s.

The most memorable moment of a MLB career that spanned from 1935-1949 occurred when he threw a no-hitter for the Reds on May 15, 1944, and the opponent happened to be the Braves.

Lou Smith declared in a column he wrote for the Cincinnati Enquirer in 1948 that Shoun was the most honest player in Major League Baseball.

Shoun was pitching for the Boston Braves at the time and a sports publication mailed him a questionnaire with a familiar query: "What was the greatest thrill

you ever got out of baseball?"

"Payday," Shoun answered in a candid and straightforward reply that Smith could appreciate.

Shoun played for pay for five different clubs over those 14 MLB seasons and while cashing those big-league checks was delightful, it's hard to imagine going to the bank was as thrilling as what Shoun achieved in 1944.

It was on that day 81 years while with the Reds, that Shoun twirled a no-hitter in a 1-0 triumph over the Braves at Crosley Field. He also pounded out two hits at the plate.

If there was going to be a pitcher throw a no-hitter in that game most would've bet on Jim Tobin of the Braves achieving the feat.

Tobin had thrown a no-no on April 27 against the Brooklyn Dodgers and entered the day with a 2.44 ERA.

His adversary on the other hand, Shoun, was making his first start of the season after four appearances out of the bullpen. His ERA at the

time: 6.23.

Of his 454 appearances in the big leagues, only 85 of them were starts for Shoun.

He was a relief specialist before relief specialists were cool, a durable and tough left-hander who was good for one inning or nine.

"I never take a rubdown," Shoun told the St. Louis Star and Times in 1940. "Don't need 'em. Oils, ointments, liniments and massages are all right for some pitchers, but I never use 'em. Once or twice last summer I put a little alcohol on my arm to cool it off after pitching a few innings, but generally speaking, I have a rubber arm that doesn't need all the care and attention that some pitchers require for their costly wings.

"In fact, I really don't have to warm up to pitch. I can go right out and throw a fastball now without taking any practice throws. Ordinarily, three or four pitches are enough to get me ready to face the batters."

Bucky Walters had



thrown a one-hitter for the Reds on April 14, 1944 in a win over Boston, but he would be outdone by his less heralded teammate 24 hours later.

Hardrock and his rubber arm must've been feeling good that fateful day at Crosley Field as umpire Beans Reardon gave the command to play ball and Shoun unleashed his first pitch to Cincinnati catcher Ray Mueller.

The 32-year-old retired Tommy Holmes, Max Macon and Chet Ross in order in the top of the first inning on two flyballs and a groundout.

Shoun had everything working that day against the Braves.

Boston got its only baserunner on in the bottom of the third when Tobin drew a two-out walk. Shoun wasn't flustered and got Holmes to fly out to left field to end the inning.

The only run of the game came in the bottom of the fifth inning when George Aleno homered on a two-out offering from Tobin. It was the only home run Aleno hit in '44 and one of just two the third baseman hit over the course of his four-year MLB career.

Right fielder Gee Walker and shortstop Eddie Miller both made key plays to keep the no-hitter intact according to newspaper accounts.

Shoun's only strikeout came in the second inning when he fanned Chuck Workman.

Shoun singled in the third inning and doubled in the eighth, but wound up being stranded on the bases both times. Not bad for a guy who finished with a career batting average of .202.

There probably wasn't much of a buzz in the ballpark that day as Shoun kept putting up zeroes since only 1,014 folks attended the contest.

Pinch-hitter Stew Hofferth

grounded out to start the nerve-racking ninth, while Tobin followed by popping out to Mueller in foul territory.

On the final pitch of the game, Shoun got Holmes to hit a weak grounder back to him. He handled the chance calmly and tossed the ball over to first baseman Frank McCormick for the final out.

"I threw my hard fast one to Tommy Holmes," Shoun explained to the Associated Press afterwards. "Putting everything I had on it."

Final Score: Cincinnati 1, Boston 0.

Time of Game: 1-hour, 19-minutes.

Shoun's no-hitter was a big deal in Cincinnati.

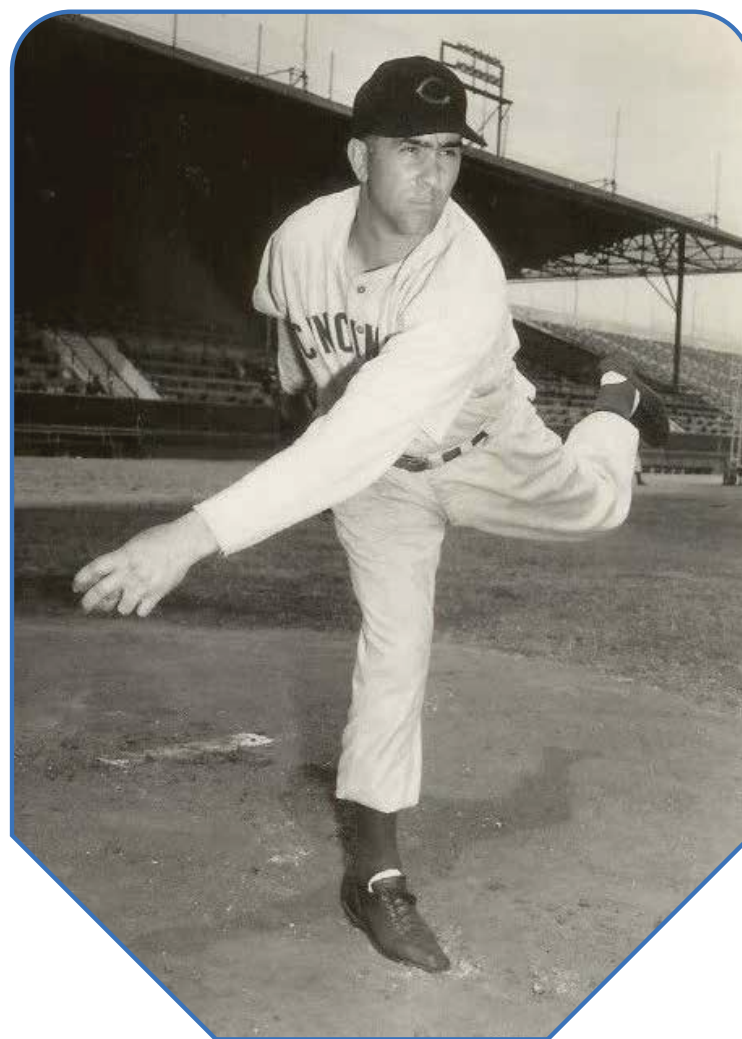
It was the first no-no by a Reds hurler since Johnny Vander Meer threw back-to-back no-hitters in 1938.

"If Clyde Shoun, the tall hillbilly with the long pantaloons, had a claim to fame before, it was not particularly because of his

“ In fact, I really don't have to warm up to pitch. I can go right out and throw a fastball now without taking any practice throws. Ordinarily, three or four pitches are enough to get me ready to face the batters.”



mastery of the art of pitching, for he has never been much more than a fair journeyman hurler, with rather unusual control and a talent for stepping into tough relief spots and getting out with a minimum of damage," Si Burick wrote the next day in



the Dayton Daily News.

It was an even bigger deal back in his hometown.

"I do remember that the older people told me later, that people were glued to their radios," Johnson County, Tennessee, resident Jack Swift told the Bristol Herald Courier in 2008. "They wanted to listen to the local boy's exploits in the big leagues."

Eight months after that game, Shoun was inducted into the United States Navy in Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, and spent 1945 suiting up for Uncle Sam in a non-combat role due to his age.

The southpaw's final stats in the majors: 73-59, 31 saves, 3.90 ERA, one no-hitter, one cool nickname.

"Back when I was a freshman in high school, a bunch of us were divided up playing a game, some from Doe Valley and the others from town," Shoun told

Jimmy Smyth of the Johnson City Press-Chronicle in 1949.

"That day I struck out 16 or 17 batters and the opposing players were quite a bit peeved because they couldn't get to first base. After the game, Tom Walsh, who is still in business here in Mountain City, explained it all by saying 'Shoun is just an old hard rock.' "

Shoun later became an alderman and vice-mayor in his hometown and was an avid outdoorsman.

He died on March 20, 1968, at the Mountain Home Veterans Hospital in Tennessee. Sadly, he passed away on his 56th birthday.

It's certain Shoun would have enjoyed seeing two of his old teams playing not far from his hometown of Mountain City.

Who knows? Maybe one of the pitchers will throw a no-hitter. ♦





Stenhouse Jr And Waltrip

JOIN MLB GREAT SWISHER FOR NEW YORK CITY MEDIA TOUR TO PROMOTE NASCAR AND THE MLB SPEEDWAY CLASSIC AT BRISTOL

A pair of NASCAR Daytona 500 winners -- Ricky Stenhouse Jr. and Michael Waltrip -- joined Bristol Motor Speedway executives recently part in a daylong New York media tour to spread the word about all things NASCAR and the MLB Speedway Classic at Bristol Motor Speedway. Stenhouse and Waltrip were joined by Yankees great Nick Swisher as guests on FOX & Friends to kick off a day of interviews hyping upcoming NASCAR races, including the crown jewel Bass Pro Shops Night Race at Bristol Motor Speedway in September and also talking a little baseball. The MLB Speedway Classic will be played in Tennessee at the legendary NASCAR venue when the Atlanta Braves and Cincinnati Reds take to the field inside The Last Great Colosseum on Saturday night, Aug 2. (FOX, 7 p.m. ET). After their visit with FOX & Friends, the group moved around New York City and had photo opportunities in Times Square with the MLB Speedway Classic Pace Car and at the prominent NASDAQ billboard to take



(From left to right) Michael Waltrip, Nick Swisher and Ricky Stenhouse Jr. pose by the MLB Speedway Classic pace car in Times Square Tuesday during a media tour to promote the upcoming baseball game at Bristol Motor Speedway and NASCAR.

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 **SPEEDWAY CLASSIC '25**

another memorable photo. The group then went to MLB headquarters for additional interviews and social media plays before taking part in a media zoom teleconference with a variety of journalists just before lunch.

During the zoom, the trio were joined by former Braves All-Star player Andruw Jones and Reds Hall of Famer Sean Casey as media tossed them some questions.

One journalist wanted to know the significance of all this. Both Swisher and Casey jumped in immediately.

"The fact that we are honored enough to be part of this amazing event is incredible," Swisher said. "Sports fans in general are going to want to be a part of this. For all of us who have played baseball, to see what MLB is doing to expand the sport, kudos to them. Reaching out to this many fans in new ways like the Speedway Classic at Bristol Motor Speedway is exactly

“For Major League Baseball and our sport, along with all the baseball fans, to have an opportunity to compete there given everything that has taken place there in racing and now to have this new chapter for all the baseball fans is just tremendous. Personally, for the guys who will be in this game, to give this amazing experience to these players, it’s a one-of-a kind thing. I’m excited to see it all go down.”



An early morning stop in the tour was with FOX & Friends.

what you want to do to grow the game."

Casey, who said he played in two special games during his career, one at the LA Coliseum and another in Japan, says these players need to recognize the opportunity and savor every second of it.

"The history of Bristol Motor Speedway and what that means to NASCAR fans and the drivers in that sport is really inspiring," Casey said.

"For Major League Baseball and our sport, along with all the baseball fans, to have an opportunity to compete there given everything that has taken place there in racing and now to have this new chapter for all the baseball fans is just tremendous. Personally, for the guys who will be in this

game, to give this amazing experience to these players, it's a one-of-a kind thing. I'm excited to see it all go down." As for preparation tips as the teams enter a stadium that has never hosted a baseball game before, Jones, a five-time All-Star with the Braves, said to just keep it simple.

"Have fun, enjoy it," Jones said with a big smile.

Swisher said he is jealous and would savor the opportunity to play in this game and that the MLB has done many games like this before in nontraditional places, so the players should be fine.

"Protocols are in place that have to be followed," Swisher said. "They will make sure the field is the best, in tip-top shape. I think we are good

at bringing a couple of our own "NASCARs" out for the game in speedsters (Elly) De La Cruz and (Ronald) Acuna. The two worlds with NASCAR and baseball couldn't be better. People are going to be pleased with what they see that night."

Said Casey: "I would encourage all players to check it out when they get there and take a look at the walls and find out where the lips are on the grass to the dirt. When you get to Bristol you are really going to have to take a look and see how things work, how the ball plays off the wall. I hope the Braves and Reds really lean into that, two teams getting to experience Bristol and enjoy that."

Waltrip and Stenhouse Jr. also

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PROGRAM

MONDAY, 5:30 P.M.: Youth Competitions (see rules on back)

TUESDAY NIGHT: Old Time Fiddle, Dobro, Mandolin

WEDNESDAY NIGHT: Bluegrass Fiddle, Dulcimer, Bluegrass Banjo

THURSDAY NIGHT: Clawhammer Banjo, Autoharp, Guitar

FRIDAY NIGHT: Old Time Bands and Bluegrass Bands

SATURDAY AFTERNOON (Beginning 12 Noon): Folk Song and Dance-Flatfoot

SATURDAY NIGHT: Bluegrass Bands and Oldtime Bands

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1. Age 15 and under for both individual and band members. Must have parent or guardian to accompany contestant at gate and at registration.
2. Registration to be held on Monday, August 4th, 2025, from 2:30 P.M. to 4:30 P.M. in the tent. No advanced registrations accepted and there is no registration fee and no refunds for competition. Competition starts at 5:30 P.M.
3. Categories & Program Order

1. Old Time Fiddle
2. Bluegrass Fiddle
3. Mandolin

4. Clawhammer Banjo
5. Bluegrass Banjo
6. Guitar

7. Band

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had some suggestions based on their years of experience competing on the all-concrete high banks in their race cars. "Bristol is a unique venue because it's so electric," said Waltrip, who is now a racing analyst on FOX Sports. "It has everything you want to be successful. The fans are incredible. The atmosphere is intense. It's really cool to me how MLB and NASCAR are on the same track, each reaching out to new audiences and fan bases. The NASCAR world is broadening its horizons as well. To know on August 2nd we are going to play a Major League Baseball game at Bristol Motor Speedway and then turn around on September 13 and have NASCAR there with the Night Race is just so cool to me."

Stenhouse, who says he was a left-handed pitcher and played some first base in his high school days before making auto racing his full-time job, says he would love to have the opportunity to check out the field first-hand but NASCAR's schedule is in Iowa that weekend. "I would love to get on the mound and throw some pitches," said Stenhouse, who currently drives the No. 47 Chevy for Hyak Motorsports.

"It would be neat to get there and take in the field." Stenhouse recommended that every player take a look at some video of the track when it's in full beast mode. "Bristol is my favorite place to race and to watch a

ing to win at Bristol before I do. But seriously, I can't wait to tune in and watch these guys play. If they hit one over the wall, I want to see where it lands." To show how tough Bristol can be, Waltrip suggested looking up a video

half-mile track. You're just constantly in the corners at speeds upwards of 150 miles per hour. It's just crazy how precise and how technical you have to be to be successful there."

Another journalist asked which team would be favored with the fanbase. Track president Jerry Caldwell said both teams are well represented by fans throughout the region.

Both teams' stadiums are approximately 300 miles away from BMS. Even though technically the Reds are positioned as the "Home Team" for the game, Jones still thinks the Braves may have more fans in attendance. "You could call it Braves country honestly, all throughout the Southeast," Jones said.

"We built a big fan base there through TV. It's a

good thing to be part of it and we will have a lot of Braves fans out there for sure. We hosted some NASCAR nights at Braves games back in the day and we always had a lot of NASCAR drivers there visiting us who are Braves fans."

Swisher, who now works as a baseball analyst and consultant, says he's pumped to get to Bristol and take in the game after having a great time during the media tour with Stenhouse and Waltrip.



The MLB Speedway Classic Pace Car was in New York City making the rounds and the game was featured on the prominent NASDAQ billboard in Times Square.

race," Stenhouse said. "Hopefully the fans will show up at Bristol and enjoy the game and then some of those fans will come back in a few weeks and watch the Night Race. I've finished second at Bristol a handful of times, so it's killing me knowing that one of these two teams is go-

as well. The one from the 1990 Xfinity season that shows his car disintegrating after impact with one of the track walls. He says the track is just unique among all the places NASCAR visits. "The banking is straight up," Waltrip said. "You can barely climb up it, and it's only a

"I've had a blast today hanging out with Mike and Ricky, we're blessed to have ambassadors like this to help spread the word about this project," Swisher said. Later, Waltrip and Stenhouse ended their day by traveling

to nearby Citi Field to cheer on the Braves. Prior to the game they were both invited to attend Braves batting practice. Following the media tour it was apparent the buzz for the game is filled with anticipa-

tion and with only 36 days until the words "Play Ball!" are uttered inside the Last Great Colosseum, the sense of urgency for the MLB Speedway Classic is intensifying. "It's going to be one of those special nights that goes

down in history," Caldwell said. "People are going to want to be there and want to be a part of it, or tune in on FOX and take in this event."



BMS President Jerry Caldwell (left), MLB great Nick Swisher, NASCAR Cup driver Ricky Stenhouse Jr. and NASCAR FOX Sports personality Michael Waltrip were in New York City Wednesday promoting NASCAR and the MLB Speedway Classic.





Baseball personalities *share thoughts on Speedway Classic*



MLB All-Star players from the Cincinnati Reds and Atlanta Braves posed for an historic photo beside the MLB Speedway Classic Pace Car Monday prior to Media Day for the MLB All-Star Game in Atlanta. Reds players Andrew Abbott and Elly De La Cruz are on the left and Braves players Ronald Acuna Jr. and Chris Sale are on the right side of the car, which is positioned in front of the Coca-Cola Roxy Theatre next door to the Braves' home field and home to this season's All-Star Game, Truist Park. The much-anticipated MLB Speedway Classic presented by BuildSubmarines.com will feature the two longtime National League rivals and be played at Bristol Motor Speedway on Saturday night, August 2 (7 p.m., FOX). It is the first MLB game to be played in a motorsports venue and also the first to be played in the state of Tennessee.





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Several baseball personalities were interviewed during MLB All-Star Game Media Day last month in Atlanta to get their thoughts on the upcoming MLB Speedway Classic presented by BuildSubmarines.com at Bristol Motor Speedway featuring the Atlanta Braves and Cincinnati Reds on August 2.

**Atlanta Braves Outfielder
Ronald Acuna Jr.**

"It's my first time playing in a game like that. It's so exciting to get to play in the game against Elly (de la Cruz, Reds) and we will have fun there. It's a most special place to play."

**Cincinnati Reds Shortstop
Elly de la Cruz**

"I'm so excited to play there. I know there's going to be a lot of people. I like playing in front of a lot of people, so I'm super-excited. It's great to be a part of it."

**Atlanta Braves pitcher
Chris Sale**

"It's going to be really cool. I went to the London series (2019) and I really enjoy these one-off type games. Having it at a motor speedway is pretty cool. My family is really into racing, so they are excited. But once the game gets going, it's just baseball. You know, some of the ceremonious stuff is going to be before the game starts and the first inning, but once the game gets going, I think it will be like any other game. It's the same game you've played all your life. Go out there and try to leave it all on the field."

**Cincinnati Reds pitcher
Andrew Abbott**

"I grew up a NASCAR fan so I'm getting a little taste of my childhood right now. I think it's going to be great for the game. I think it's going to hit some areas where we don't have influence. I think it's good for both sports. I think it's good for the players to get that extra exposure and it's good for the MLB as well."

**Atlanta Braves First Baseman
Matt Olson**

"It should be an electric crowd.

You know, I really like the field of dreams type games so it should be really cool. I've never been to a NASCAR race, so being able to see it and play a game at a racetrack will be fun."

**Atlanta Braves Manager
Brian Snitker**

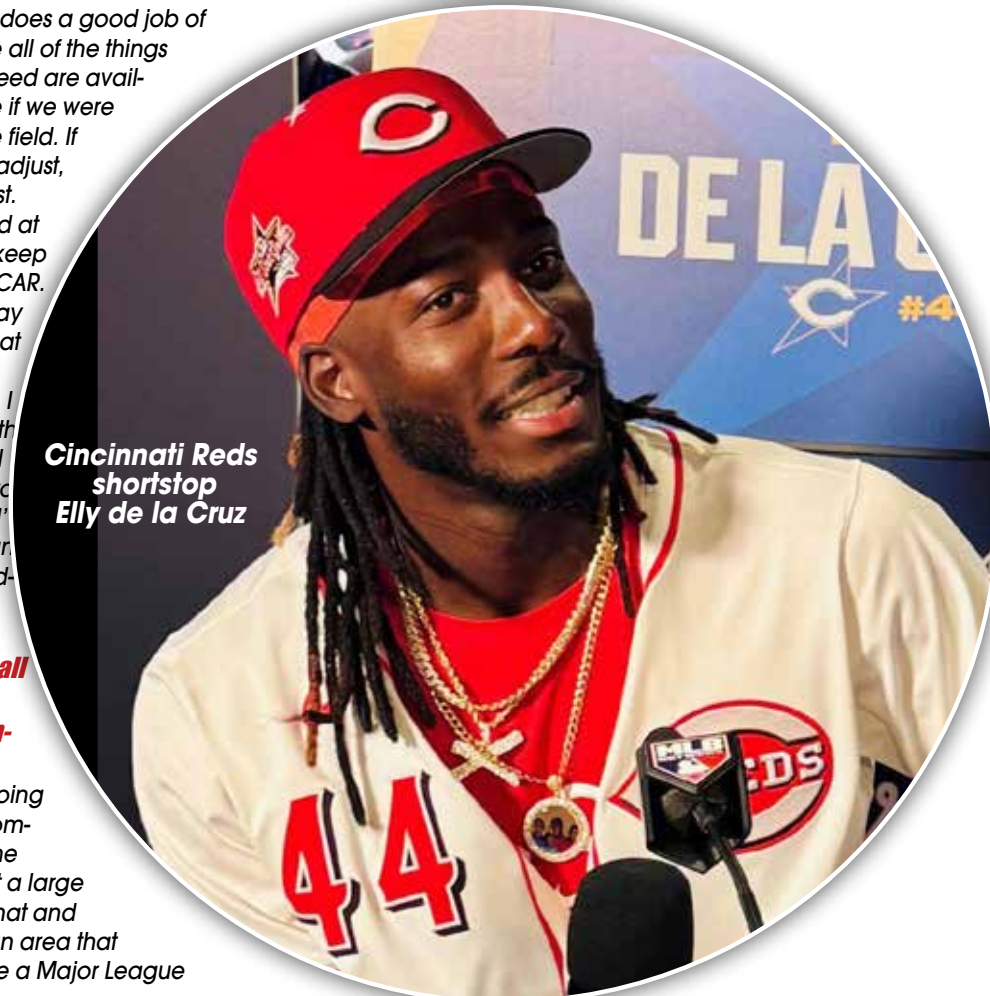
"It's a huge place, it will be interesting to see how they can configure a baseball field inside a NASCAR track. It's something different that we don't get to do a lot. It's going to be fun. I know in those situations MLB always does a good job of making sure all of the things the teams need are available just like if we were at our home field. If we have to adjust, we will adjust. We are good at adjusting. I keep up with NASCAR. You could say I'm somewhat of a fan. I watch when I am around the house, and I have been to a few races - I've been to Atlanta Motor Speedway."

**ESPN Baseball Analyst
Harold Reynolds**

"I think it's going to be phenomenal. Anytime you can get a large crowd like that and reach into an area that doesn't have a Major League



Atlanta Braves pitcher Chris Sale



Cincinnati Reds shortstop Elly de la Cruz



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team, it's going to be exciting. I've been to all of them. I've been to Iowa, to the cornfields. I've been to Rickwood, but this one here is going to be the biggest one of them all. It's going to be a good time."

University of Tennessee Baseball Head Coach Tony Vitello
"It should be astounding to see that many people watching one Major League Baseball game. It will grow the sport not just locally, but around the country. It's grow-

ing in our state, because the population is going up, and baseball is getting better. The Smokies have always been in the state of Tennessee, but they're growing because now their ballpark is in downtown Knoxville. It's a pretty

good time to be in our area for baseball, but this event is literally a global event." To purchase tickets please visit the MLB Speedway Classic website. 



Major League Baseball recently announced the FOX team for coverage of the MLB Speedway Classic at Bristol Motor Speedway on August 2 between the Atlanta Braves and Cincinnati Reds. The lineup includes (from left to right) announcer Kevin Burkhardt, Alex Rodriguez, David "Big Papi" Ortiz and Derek Jeter.



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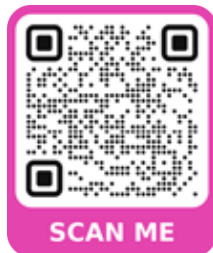
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SPEEDWAY CLASSIC '25

AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY



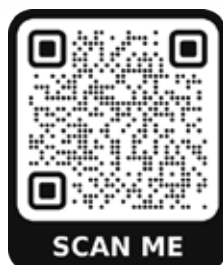
MAKING STRIDES AGAINST BREAST CANCER FOR NORTHEAST TN AND SOUTHWEST VA

Saturday, October 18th
Hard Rock Hotel and Casino

10:00 AM

Register

[www.makingstrideswalk.org/
easttnswva](http://www.makingstrideswalk.org/easttnswva)



Little Pink Dress Party

Saturday, September 27th
Hard Rock Hotel and Casino

6:00 PM

Individual Tickets

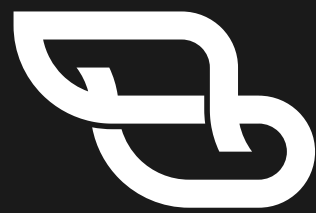
\$125

Table of Ten

\$1000

www.PinkDressParty.givesmart.com





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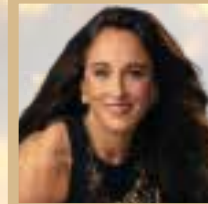
Cindy Hornsby
276-608-8262



Reed Thomas
423-341-6866



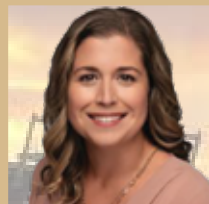
Rob Thomas
423-341-6954



Rebecca Arnold
276-734-5085



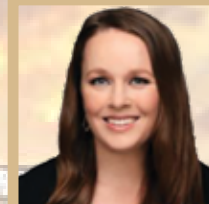
Daniel Shew
276-274-5271



Shelley Martin
423-416-0303



Debra Kennedy
423-956-4228



Brittany Rutherford
989-670-2627



Debra Ball
423-366-7556



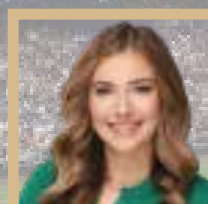
Shannon Smith
423-827-4462



Margo Sexton
276-356-2657



Andrew Neese
276-619-1187



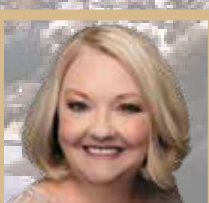
Ashton Adkins
423-956-9863



Connie Cook
423-646-8436



Chris Martin
423-967-7075



Annette Leonard
276-356-9191



Bethany Johnson
276-356-2289



Joan Lawson Pierce
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