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It's Bristol Bal

2022

A publication of Six Rivers Media, LLC, parent company of the Kingsport Times News and the Johnson City Press

## Asphalt ace Logano aiming for another surprise on Bristol dirt

## Penske driver out to prove inaugural Dirt Race win wasn't fluke

### By Jeff Birchfield

SPORTS WRITER jbirchfield@johnsoncitypress.com

Joey Logano is often a favorite to win a NASCAR race, although that wasn't the case at the 2021 Food City Dirt Race.

The driver of the No. 22 Team Penske Ford had very little dirt-track experience. In fact, his first race in a dirt modified car was literally a couple of months earlier. He entered the Karl Kustoms Bristol Dirt Nationals, but it didn't work out well for him.

The 2018 Cup Series champion battled former Truck Series champ Matt Crafton throughout their heat race, but Logano blew his engine at the finish and didn't even get to race in the feature.

With only three dirt races under his belt, little was expected of Logano when NASCAR returned for the first Cup Series race of that nature since 1970. Kyle Larson and Christopher Bell, two drivers with extensive dirt experience, were the heavy favorites.

Those two were eliminated in a wreck on lap 51, while Logano got stronger as the race went on.

"It's incredible. How about Bristol on dirt?" Logano said following his surprising victory. "This is incredible, an unbelievable race track. We did a lot of work in the dirt department over those last few weeks. Obviously (crew chief) Paul Wolfe and this team gave me a great car to be able to execute the race that we did and get a win."

Maybe it shouldn't have been a surprise after all. Logano is a versatile talent



Joey Logano (22), the 2018 NASCAR Cup Series champion, raises his arms to the crowd after winning the 2021 Food City Dirt Race at Bristol Motor Speedway.

'There's nothing like winning at Bristol, but putting dirt on it and being the first to do it is really special.' — **JOEY LOGANO** 

who also started the 2022 season with a win in the Busch Clash on a temporary quarter-mile track constructed inside the Los Angeles Coliseum.

He is a talented driver that former NASCAR Xfinity Series champion Randy LaJoie, the father of current Cup driver Corey LaJoie, nicknamed him "Sliced Bread," as in the greatest thing since. Mark Martin labeled him as talented enough to race in the Cup Series as a teenager. He actually accomplished that goal, although there were some struggles at the top level.

His record over the last decade compares favorably to most as Logano won the 2015 Daytona 500 and the 2018 series championship. Now, he has wins on both the Bristol concrete and dirt surfaces.

"So amazing to get our Shell-Pennzoil Mustang into victory lane at Bristol," Logano said. "There's nothing like winning at Bristol, but putting dirt on it and being the first to do it is really special."



Logano celebrates after winning a NASCAR exhibition auto race at Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, on Feb. 6, in Los Angeles.

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## Race favorite? No surprise, it's Larson again

Defending Cup Series champion won in all types of vehicles, on variety of surfaces in 2021

By Jeff Birchfield SPORTS WRITER jbirchfield@johnsoncitypress.com

Kyle Larson had a dream season in 2021, leading NASCAR Hall of Famer Tony Stewart to call him the best driver on the planet.

After all, Larson won in every kind of car he drove. It didn't matter if it was sprint cars, dirt late models or midgets, Larson won big race after big race. The Chili Bowl Nationals in Tulsa, Oklahoma, for midgets, the Knoxville Nationals in Knoxville, Iowa for sprint cars and the Prairie Dirt Classic (Fairbury, Illinois) for Super Late Models were just a few of his major triumphs.

What about stock cars? Oh yes, the California driver became the first NASCAR Cup Series driver to win 10 races in a season since Jimmie Johnson in 2007. Driving the No. 5 Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet, Larson capped off the year with a win in the season finale at Phoenix and his first series title. Along the way, he also won at 1.5-mile venues and on road courses.

Larson even won at Bristol Motor Speedway, except it wasn't the race he was heavily favored to win. He captured the Bass Pro Shops NRA Night Race in September after his Hendrick Motorsports teammate Chase Elliott battled with Stewart-Haas Racing's Kevin Harvick in the final laps, opening the door for Larson. Most thought Larson would win at Bristol in 2021, but it was expected to be the Food City Dirt Race. After all, Larson has an extensive dirt background and even finished second

in a pair of Super Late

'There are a lot of high hopes and expectations. But, I don't put any extra pressure on myself to win there.' KYLE LARSON, Defending NASCAR Cup Series champion

Model races at the Karl Kustoms Bristol Dirt Nationals.

His passion for dirt racing led him to return to BMS and compete with the World of Outlaws sprint cars after the NASCAR weekend. He talked about his role of Food City Dirt Race favorite.

"I think I'm considered a favorite at most tracks right now," he said. "With it being a dirt track, people look at me with all the experience that I have on dirt as being even more of a favorite. But these cars are way different than



WADE PAYNE

Driver Kyle Larson (5) pushes Christopher Bell (20) after a wreck during last year's Food City Dirt Race at Bristol Motor Speedway. The two drivers were considered heavy favorites to contend for the win — until an accident on lap 51 took both drivers out of the picture.

what I typically race on dirt.

"They don't drive anything like what I'm used to with a sprint car, midget or dirt late model. These cars are way heavier and have a lot less horsepower than I'm used to on a dirt track. I still think I've got a good shot, but I don't know if I have an advantage over anybody, other than just being able to read the track surface, know kind of how that's changing, where to find grip and things like that."

Despite that experience, it didn't work in his favor in the 2021 NASCAR races contested on dirt at Bristol.

Making a rare appearance in the Camping World Truck Series, he crashed the No. 44 Niece Motorsports Chevrolet. He ultimately finished 35th in the Pinty's Truck Race on Dirt.

Later that day, Larson finished 29th in the Food City Dirt Race after being involved in a wreck with co-favorite Christopher Bell on lap 51.

A year later, Larson comes back to Bristol with a ton of momentum on his side. His first three races



Kyle Larson celebrates in victory lane after winning the Bass Pro Shops NRA Night Race at Bristol Motor Speedway last September. It was one of a season-best 10 NASCAR Cup Series victories for the 2021 series champion.

of the 2022 season included winning the pole for the Daytona 500, winning in his home state of California and finishing a close runner-up to teammate Alex Bowman at Las Vegas.

Still, there is something special about racing on

dirt. When Larson was suspended from NASCAR in 2020 for using a racial slur during an iRacing event, he proceeded to win 46 dirt races across the country.

He is even promoting a late model race at nearby Volunteer Speedway on Thursday prior to the Food City Dirt Race weekend at Bristol. While he wants to win the big NASCAR prize, he's not letting it get under his skin.

"There are a lot of high hopes and expectations," he said. "But, I don't put any extra pressure on myself to win there."

## **2021 FOOD CITY DIRT RACE RECAP** Logano outdueled rival Hamlin to win 2021 Food City Dirt Race

ASSOCIATED PRESS Joey Logano (22) leads Daniel Suarez (99) and the rest of the pack at the 2021 Food City Dirt Race at Bristol Motor Speedway.

Pre-race favorites fell by the wayside early, left veterans to battle for milestone victory

#### By Jeff Birchfield SPORTS WRITER

jbirchfield@johnsoncitypress.com

BRISTOL — Joey Logano outdueled Denny Hamlin in a battle of pavement specialists to become the first NASCAR Cup Series dirt race winner in 50 years.

With the 2021 Food City Dirt Race coming down to an overtime green-whitecheckered finish, Hamlin went high on the final restart in an attempt to get around Logano. The move didn't work and Logano's No. 22 Ford sprinted away for his third Bristol win, the first in the spring and the 27th win of his career.

"How about Bristol on dirt? This is an incredible, unbelievable racetrack," Logano said. "There's nothing like winning at Bristol, but putting dirt on it and being the first to do it is really special."

There will be a second race on dirt as BMS officials announced the dirt will be coming back for

Spring 2022. It was met with a huge roar of approval from the fans in attendance.

Logano, who led 61 laps, said racing an Open Modified during last week's Bristol Dirt Nationals helped him get familiar with the track, particularly when it was needed at the end of the race.

He became the seventh different winner in the first seven races of the season, the first time that has happened since 2014. He was the first Ford driver to win on dirt since David Pearson at the North **Carolina State Fairgrounds** in June 1969.

"This is obviously my first dirt win. It's only my fourth dirt race ever. so I had a lot of fun trying to figure it out," Logano said. "I was having a blast racing, trying to find the right lanes, moving around, watching Denny figure out the top after they watered the track. I was like, 'Oh no, now what do we do?""

Hamlin's move to the outside ended up costing him second place. Instead of gaining grip on the outside groove, his No. 11 Toyota slid up to the wall. Ricky Stenhouse Jr., a NASCAR veteran, but one with an extensive dirt background, passed him for second in the No. 47 JTG Daugherty Racing Chevrolet.

"It took me a little while to get going and I couldn't get it to turn on the restarts," Stenhouse said after his third runner-up finish at BMS. "We made some adjustments and went back and forth on what we were going to do. The start of the race we were terrible, but we got better and obviously had a blast."

Hamlin settled for third after battling Logano throughout the final stage of the race. He made several attempts for the lead 30-40 laps earlier, rubbing fenders with Logano's car, but never pushing him out of the way. Hamlin, the series points leader with six top-10 finishes in the first seven races, blamed himself for not pressing

the issue with Logano earlier.

"I cut the 22 too many breaks there when he was cutting us off, but at the end of the day it looked like he had a little bit better car in the long run." Hamlin said. "I went to the top and jumped the cushion, got a bunch of damage and that was all she wrote. All effort there."

Martin Truex Jr., who



Joey Logano celebrates in victory lane at Bristol.

dominated the NASCAR Truck Series race earlier in the day, charged to the front early in the Cup race. He won the first stage of the race and led a racehigh 126 laps. He ran in the top five most of the race, but cut a tire on the G-W-C finish and finished 19th.

Daniel Suarez, who finished fourth, passed Truex for the lead on lap 134 and led most of Stage 2 before Joey Logano got by on lap 193.

#### **FAVORITES ELIMINATED**

Pre-race favorites Kyle Larson and Christopher Bell were involved in a multi-car crash on lap 53 when Bell lost control, collecting both he and Ross Chastain. Larson, who had to go to the back of the field for an engine change

after Friday's practice, had charged from 39th place for fourth prior to the accident.

Larson finished 29th after being caught up in a couple more multi-car accidents.

Bell had to park his car after the first wreck as oil poured underneath it once he got to the pits. He finished 34th and took the blame for the accident.

"I knew it was a little bit slick, but I felt like I could go up there and make some time," Bell said. "I kind of entered shallow underneath of it and it was really greasy up there."

There were 10 cautions, including eight for multicar crashes — leading NASCAR to go to single-file restarts two-thirds of the way through the race.



JEFF BIRCHFIELD/JOHNSON CITY PRESS

Multiple cars are collected in an accident during the 2021 Food City Dirt Race.

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Wednesday, April 13, 2022 | Page 7R



# Toast of the town

'I hope we are adding to the vibe. ... Our beer is cold. Our food is good and I'm happy to add to the energy around Bristol.' — MICHAEL WALTRIP

## Two-time Daytona 500 winner Michael Waltrip living out dreams with brewery, television work

## By Jeff Birchfield SPORTS WRITER

jbirchfield@johnsoncitypress.com

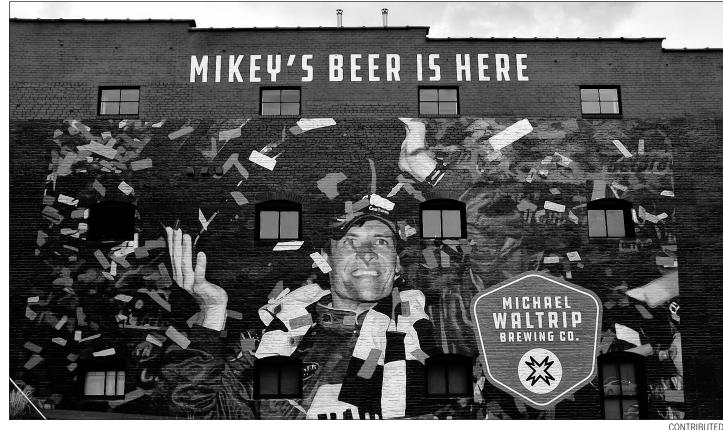
BRISTOL, Va. — Twotime Daytona 500 winner Michael Waltrip continues to live out his dreams. The retired NASCAR driver opened his new brewery in Bristol in September 2021.

Located on Moore Street, the brewery is an old fire museum and was opened as Studio Brew in 2016. Now, as Michael Waltrip Brewing, it has a large mural of the race car driver celebrating in victory lane on the side of the building.

Inside, there is a good selection of beer and tasty food items. The brewery also has a small outdoor patio. It was a natural partnership for Waltrip, who started the brewing company with friends in Arizona and looked to expand east.

Located a couple of blocks off State Street, the brewery is still close enough to add to the overall atmosphere of downtown. That's important to Waltrip, who has visited Bristol multiple times in recent weeks, walking around the downtown area and mingling with folks. He understands the town more than just from a racing standpoint.

"I hope we are adding to the vibe. I've been coming to town and walking around to see what's going on," Waltrip said. "There are a lot of smiles, a lot of people happy that we're here with our brewery. "There are a lot of great shows on State Street to



A large mural of two-time Daytona 500 winner Michael Waltrip adorns the side of his brewery.

watch live music. It's starting to feel like normal again and that's a great feeling. Our beer is cold. Our food is good and I'm happy to add to the energy around Bristol."

## WALTRIP AT BMS

Waltrip is the younger brother of Darrell Waltrip, who holds the all-time record with 12 NASCAR Cup Series wins at Bristol. Michael, now 58, has his own rich history at the "Last Great Colosseum" with eight top-10 finishes in 48 starts.

Waltrip's greatest success came in the NASCAR Busch (now Xfinity) Series, where he scored two wins. He still gets sentimental about the first victory. After crossing the finish line, he paid tribute to 1992 NASCAR champion Alan Kulwicki, who died in a plane crash less than 48 hours earlier in Blountville.



Waltrip opened his brewery in downtown Bristol in September, 2021

"Bristol, there are so many emotions when I come here, the wins and losses," he said. "Arriving here that Thursday evening and hearing on the news that Alan had died in a plane crash made it a difficult weekend.

"Being able to win the race and celebrate his life

by doing the 'Polish Victory Lap' in his honor, I had raced against him as a rookie in '86. He was a great competitor, and to honor his life, it's still really special to me. Same thinking about Dale (Earnhardt) in that 3 car

See WALTRIP, Page R9



Waltrip, twice a winner at Bristol Motor Speedway in the NASCAR Xfinity Series, is joined by BMS President Jerry Caldwell for a toast at the brewery's opening.

## WALTRIP

## From Page R8

and all that he accomplished here."

Waltrip's second win came a decade later. He was driving a No. 99 Chevrolet that Waltrip and friends built in a shop behind his house in North Carolina.

"We had like eight guys working on it," he said. "When we got the checkered flag in that night race, it couldn't have gotten any better than winning at Bristol in a car we all pitched in on behind the house."

The fact he was racing at all was a true miracle.

He survived one of the worst crashes in NASCAR history in a 1990 Busch Series race at Bristol. His car hit a metal gate at the end of turn two, and plowed head-on into the concrete wall.

Parts of his car disintegrated in the violent impact. Afterward, Waltrip was sitting in the middle of the wreckage on the backstretch with his feet literally touching the pave-

## 'Some of the things I've done since I stopped racing full time have been special.'

### **MICHAEL WALTRIP**

ment.

"I had been in a few bad crashes and usually when you're in those, you're knocked out," Waltrip said. "Usually when you come to, you don't know where you're at or what's going on. In this case, it knocked the breath out of me. A couple of minutes later, people are staring at me funny.

"I'm like, 'I'm fine. What's wrong with you all?' They said, 'Do you see your feet?' I'm like, 'Yeah, they're still on me.' They're like, 'Your feet are on the track and your steering wheel isn't there anymore.' I was like, 'I'm not hurt.' When I got to the hotel that night and watched the replay on the news, I understood what all the fuss was about. It was unbelievable I was able to walk away."



Patrons arrive for a 2021 function at Michael Waltrip Brewing.



JOHN RAOUX

Waltrip hugs the winner's trophy as he is introduced before the start of the Daytona 500 NASCAR Cup series auto race at Daytona International Speedway in Daytona Beach, Fla., in February 2015. Waltrip, who made his final Cup Series start in 2017, is a two-time winner of the "Great American Race," capturing the event in 2001 and again in 2003.

## **A BUSY MAN**

The veteran of 784 Cup Series races has stayed busy since his retirement from full-time driving. Besides his television work with FOX, he's participated in "Dancing with the Stars" and written a book about his first Davtona 500 win and the death of Earnhardt that was turned into a movie.

Most recently, he raced in the Superstar Racing Experience (SRX) Series, which included a fifthplace finish on the Knoxville (Iowa) dirt track after an extended battle with Helio Castroneves.

"Some of the things I've done since I stopped racing full time have been special," he said. "I wrote a book that was made into a documentary.

I'm sorry for the dancing thing. I was uncertain of



RALPH FRESO

Waltrip, a race analyst for Fox Sports, gives a thumbs up as he walks from pit road prior to a NASCAR Cup Series race at Phoenix Raceway, March 14, 2021, in Avondale, Ariz.

what I was doing. When they would start the music, I was like, 'Just don't mess up.'

"SRX was great to walk down memory lane and race against Bill Elliott, Tony Stewart and Bobby

Labonte again.

Then, I'm with Helio Castroneves, who just won his fourth Indianapolis 500.

Now, we're here, trading paint at a short track in America. I'm certainly blessed."





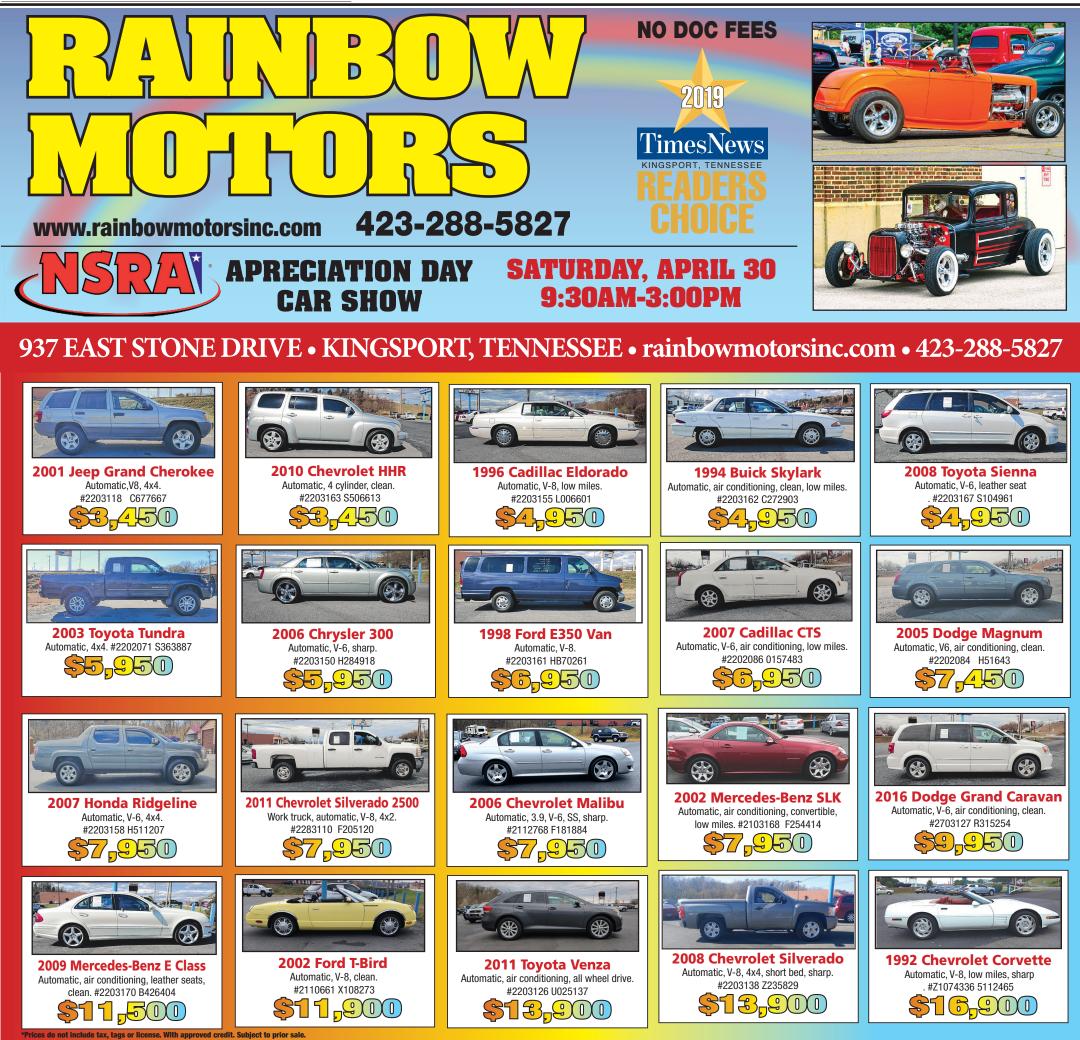
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Petty GMS

Chevrolet

N.C.

Donley.

Motorsports

Hometown: Lewisville,

Crew chief: Jerame

2021 Bristol dirt

finish: 26th.

Petty GMS

Chevrolet

finish: 9th.

Mich.

Elenz.

Motorsports

Hometown: Byron,

Crew chief: Dave

2021 Bristol dirt

23XI Racing Toyota

Hometown: Las

Crew chief: Billy

2021 Bristol dirt

**JTG Daugherty** 

**Racing Chevrolet** 

Hometown: Olive

Crew chief: Brian

2021 Bristol dirt

Branch, Miss.

finish: 2nd.

Pattie.

Vegas, Nev.

finish: 16th.

Scott.

**42 TY DILLON** 

**43 ERIK JONES** 

**45 KURT BUSCH** 

## FOOD CITY DIRT RACE DRIVER CAPSULES

## By Jeff Birchfield

SPORTS WRITER jbirchfield@johnsoncitypress.com

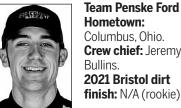
## **1 ROSS CHASTAIN**



**Trackhouse Racing** Chevrolet Surgen. finish: 35th.

Hometown: Alva, Fla. Crew chief: Phil 2021 Bristol dirt

## 2 AUSTIN CINDRIC



Columbus. Ohio. Crew chief: Jeremv Bullins. 2021 Bristol dirt finish: N/A (rookie).

### **3 AUSTIN DILLON Richard Childress**



Racing Hometown: Lewisville, N.C. Crew chief: Justin Alexander. 2021 Bristol dirt finish: 21st.

## **4 KEVIN HARVICK**



## **5 KYLE LARSON**



Hometown: Elk Grove, Calif. Crew chief: Cliff Daniels. 2021 Bristol dirt finish: 29th.

Hendrick

Chevrolet

Motorsports

## 6 BRAD KESLOWSKI



7 COREY LAJOIE Spire Motorsports Chevrolet Hometown: Kannapolis, N.C. Crew chief: Ryan Sparks. 2021 Bristol dirt finish: 38th.

## **8 TYLER REDDICK**



**9 CHASE ELLIOTT** 



## **10 ARIC ALMIROLA**



## **11 DENNY HAMLIN**



## **12 RYAN BLANEY**

**Team Penske Ford** Hometown: High Point, N.C. Crew chief: Jonathan Hassler. 2021 Bristol dirt finish: 8th.

## **14 CHASE BRISCOE**



**Stewart-Haas Racing** Ford Hometown: Mitchell. Ind. Crew chief: John Klausmeier. 2021 Bristol dirt finish: 20th.

## **16 NOAH GRAGSON**

Kaulig Racing Chevrolet Hometown: Las Vegas, Nev. Crew chief: Matt Swiderski 2021 Bristol dirt finish: N/A (rookie)



**18 KYLE BUSCH** 

**19 MARTIN TRUEX JR.** 

## **17 CHRIS BUESCHER**

**RFK Racing Ford** Hometown: Prosper. Texas Crew chief: Scott Graves.

Toyota

Beshore.

Toyota

N.J.

Small.

finish: 17th.

Nev.

2021 Bristol dirt finish: 14th.

Crew chief: Ben

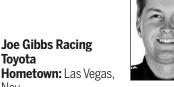
2021 Bristol dirt

**Joe Gibbs Racing** 

Hometown: Mayetta,

Crew chief: James

2021 Bristol dirt



Motorsports Chevrolet Hometown: Charlotte, N.C. Crew chief: Rudy Fugle. 2021 Bristol dirt finish: 6th.

23XI Racing Toyota

Hometown: Mobile,

Crew chief: Bootie

2021 Bristol dirt

finish: 27th.

Hendrick

Ala.

Barker.

## **31 JUSTIN HALEY**

**23 BUBBA WALLACE** 

24 WILLIAM BYRON

#### Kaulig Racing Chevrolet Hometown: Winamac, Ind. Crew chief: Trent Owens.

2021 Bristol dirt finish: N/A.

## **34 MICHAEL MCDOWELL**

## **38 TODD GILLILAND**



## **41 COLE CUSTER**

#### **Stewart-Haas Racing** Ford Hometown: Ladera Ranch, Calif. Crew chief: Mike Shiplett. 2021 Bristol dirt finish: 24th.



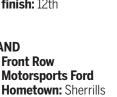
Chevrolet Hometown: Monterrey, Mexico. 2021 Bristol dirt finish: 4th.















**Trackhouse Racing** Crew chief: Lee Leslie.







Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet Ariz. 2021 Bristol dirt



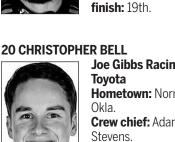


47 RICKY STENHOUSE JR.

Hometown: Tuscon, Crew chief: Greg lves.

## **99 DANIEL SUAREZ**





Joe Gibbs Racing Hometown: Norman. Crew chief: Adam

2021 Bristol dirt finish: 34th.

## **21 HARRISON BURTON**



Wood Brothers **Racing Ford** Hometown: Huntersville, N.C. Crew chief: Paul Wilson. 2021 Bristol dirt finish: N/A (rookie).

**22 JOEY LOGANO** 

## Team Penske Ford

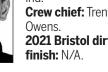


Middletown, Conn. Crew chief: Paul Wolfe. 2021 Bristol dirt finish: 1st.











**Motorsports Ford** 

Crew chief: Blake



## BMS, Food City celebrate 30-year partnership

Track's Cup Series sponsorship with well-known grocery chain second longest in series history

## By Bristol Motor Speedway

BRISTOL — Wow, time sure does fly when you are having fun.

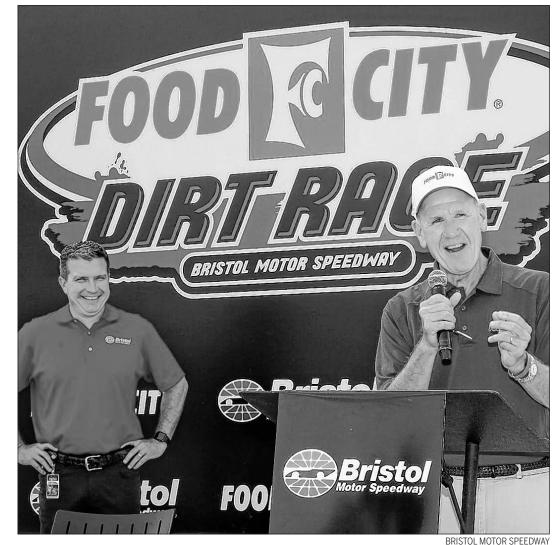
Locally owned and operated supermarket chain Food City, with headquarters in Abingdon, Virginia, started its Bristol spring race sponsorship in 1992, and in figuratively the blink of an eye is now celebrating its milestone 30th anniversary as one of the sport's most tenured entitlements.

Food City's Bristol sponsorship is the second longest on the NASCAR Cup circuit, behind only the Coca-Cola 600 at Charlotte Motor Speedway.

During the past 30 years, the Food City races have showcased it all: impressive winning streaks, firsttime winners, dominating performances, new car debuts, side-by-side battles, dazzling backflips, driver skirmishes, fender-rubbing feuds, crashes, bump-n-run maneuvers, impounded race cars. milestone victories, moving tributes, family spats and the world's best drivers getting down and dirty on the red Tennessee clay.

"We are so blessed to have such a passionate partner like Food City who has become more like family to all of us here at Bristol Motor Speedway during the past three decades," said Jerry Caldwell, president of Bristol Motor Speedway.

"It's rare in professional sports to have a sponsorship that becomes such a perfect fit with a long-



BMS President Jerry Caldwell listens as Food City CEO Steve Smith fires up the crowd prior to the 2021 Food City Dirt Race.

standing commitment and this one with Food City has definitely achieved that status. We look forward to many more years of creating wow moments with our friends at Food City."

Said Steve Smith, Food City president and CEO: "We're proud to be celebrating the 30th anniversary of our Food City title sponsorships here at Bristol Motor Speedway. We would like to thank our loyal customers, associates and vendor partners for making this partnership possible through their continued support of our company and NASCAR motorsports."

In celebration of this

impressive milestone, below are the results, key moments, thrilling finishes and amazing memories from each of the spring Cup Series races at BMS sponsored by Food City, listed in chronological order. As you take a look back at the drama, intensity and excitement generated during this great event, you'll better understand Food City's steadfast dedication to the sport and why NASCAR nation has had so many reasons to cheer at The Last Great Colosseum.

**1992:** Alan Kulwicki was the first driver to celebrate in victory lane as a Food City 500 winner. Food City founder Jack Smith congratulated Kulwicki on his victory that day as the grocery chain embarked on its sponsorship of a NASCAR event, expanding from its beginnings in the sport, which included sponsoring Food City Family Race Night starting in August 1987. **1993:** When Rusty

When Rusty Wallace won the 1993 Food City 500, he provided the fans with a memorable salute to the popular Kulwicki by performing Kulwicki's patented "Polish Victory Lap." Many winning drivers did the same in upcoming races to show their respect for the late 1992 NASCAR

#### Cup champ.

**1994:** Running Hoosier tires in a car formerly owned by Kulwicki, Geoff Bodine had dominated most of the race. However, a late caution flag put him a lap down and opened the door for Dale Earnhardt to rumble on to the victory.

It was the Intimidator's fifth and final victory in the Bristol spring race, and his first in a Food City winner's circle.

**1995:** NASCAR's new kid on the block, Jeff Gordon, powered his No. 24 DuPont Chevy to the victory in convincing fashion. It was his first Bristol victory in the Cup Series and ultimately led to his first NASCAR Cup championship crown. Veteran driver Darrell Waltrip, once a winner of a record seven straight Bristol victories, posted a top-five finish in the race.

**1996:** Gordon goes backto-back at the Food City 500. He was named the official winner by NASCAR on lap 342 after soaking rains moved into the area.

**1997:** Proving that the famed Bristol bump-n-run isn't limited to only the Night Race, Gordon pulled the oft-used Bristol maneuver on Wallace in 1997 to take the victory.

Wallace had led the race for most of the day, but Gordon was charging, picking his way through traffic.

Gordon ultimately caught Wallace in the closing laps and used his bumper to get around the Penske driver in turn three on the final lap.

Despite wobbling up the track after the contact, Wallace managed to regain control quickly and bring his No. 2 Ford in for a second-place finish.

**1998:** Wallace led the most laps, but Gordon ultimately took the checkered flag, capping his amazing streak of consecutive Food City 500 victories at four.

Terry Labonte, who led 115 laps, finished second in his Kellogg's Chevy.

**1999:** Wallace ran off and left the field to take another Food City 500 victory.

The bigger story was that fourth-place finisher John Andretti's Richard Petty Enterprises Pontiac was impounded after the race by NASCAR officials to check the engine. Andretti's car was later cleared and awarded the top-five finish.

**2000:** Bristol dominator Wallace took the victory, his race-best sixth in the spring race and the milestone 50th of his lengthy career.

**2001:** Rising star Elliott Sadler broke through for his first Food City 500 victory.

More importantly, the race finish was a throwback, as legendary teams Wood Brothers Racing and Petty Enterprises finished 1-2 in a Cup race for the first time since 1977.

2002: A rivalry grew into a bitter feud at Bristol when Kurt Busch and Jimmy Spencer tangled on track for the second time in as many seasons. After a dust-up in Phoenix in 2001 where Busch and Spencer tangled for the first time, Busch returned the favor a vear later at Bristol in April, spinning Spencer en route to the Food City 500 victory. After their Bristol tussle, the two continued to spar during several races in 2002 and into 2003. Their multi-year war remains one of the most celebrated feuds in NASCAR history.

**2003:** With 95 laps to go in what had been a physically demanding race with many lead changes among several drivers, No. 9 qualifier Kurt Bush moved

See FOOD CITY, Page R15

## FOOD CITY

From Page R14

around Bobby Labonte for the lead and never gave it up as he drove his Roush Racing Ford to a second straight victory at the Food City 500.

**2004:** Busch drove away from Wallace on a greenwhite-checkered restart to win his third consecutive Food City 500.

He didn't take the lead until lap 382, but he took over the race from that point. He held the lead the final 119 laps, which included five restarts.

**2005:** Bobby Hamilton and Ken Schrader made contact and chaos ensued on lap 332. Their bump initiated a 14-car pileup and collected many of the front runners.

Kevin Harvick eventually took the checkered flag.

**2006:** Tempers flared at the finish of the 2006 Food City 500 when the usually calm and cool Gordon released an angry outburst and shoved Matt Kenseth on pit road, knocking the Wisconsin driver back several feet before NASCAR officials jumped in the middle of the fray.

The physical altercation followed an on-track incident on the race's final lap where Kenseth retaliated from an earlier bump by Gordon and used the same move to get past Gordon on the closing lap.

Kenseth's bump dropped Gordon to a 21st place finish, when he was likely to finish third or higher.

Gordon was fined \$10,000 by NASCAR for his postrace conduct, the first time in his career he received such a penalty. Kurt Busch took the checkered flag.

**2007:** Kyle Busch won the race, but the major story of the weekend was the debut of NASCAR's Car of Tomorrow. Busch claimed the win in his Chevy Impala COT, the first win for an Impala at a NASCAR track since Wendell Scott's



Kevin Harvick celebrates after winning the Food City 500 race at Bristol in 2005.

historic victory in 1963. 2008: The race was the final regulation points NASCAR Cup start for Dale Jarrett, and his father, Ned, waved the green flag to start the race. The sentimental choice for victory fell back early in the race and gave way to a tight pack of contenders for the win. With two laps to go several leaders fell one by one to the wayside, first Harvick, then Tony Stewart and then Denny Hamlin. The race went six laps past 500 in the greenwhite-checkered finish rule and was ultimately won by Richard Childress Racing's Jeff Burton. He led the first RCR 1-2-3 team finish in history as he was followed by Harvick and Clint Bowver.

**2009:** Kyle Busch dominated the race by leading 378 laps and he held off his teammate Hamlin, who finished second.

Veteran driver Mark Martin earned the top qualifying position for the event.

**2010:** Perhaps it wasn't Dale Earnhardt finally winning the Daytona 500, but Jimmie Johnson's first BMS victory had its share of drama.

Johnson had won 49 races in NASCAR competition, but none at Bristol. He was finally able to change that stat when he notched his first 'W' at the 2010 Food City 500 with a convincing victory at the controls of his Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet.

**2011:** After beloved track president Jeff Byrd's death in 2010, Food City and Bristol Motor Speedway agreed to name that event to honor Byrd. Kyle Busch won the Jeff Byrd 500.

**2012:** Brad Keselowski started fifth and proved to have enough horsepower in his Penske Ford to take the victory. He led the most laps, 231, and held off polesitter Greg Biffle and a host of other top challengers, including Kenseth and Martin Truex Jr.

**2013:** Even though Kyle Busch seemed to be on a path to continuing his domination at Bristol by setting a track record during qualifying at 129.535 mph, Kasey Kahne emerged from the pack to claim his first Bristol win.

The race also marked the start of a bitter feud between Hamlin and Joey Logano, after Hamlin and Logano's cars made contact during the race.

**2014:** Hamlin won the pole and led for much of the race. A late race caution flew while Carl Edwards was in the lead. Edwards maintained his lead and the race finished under caution, giving Edwards the victory.

As was his trademark, an Edwards backflip was part of his post-race celebration.

**2015:** A race that was plagued by rain throughout the day with multiple red-flag stops due to the wet stuff, finally finished on lap 500 late in the evening.

Kenseth broke a 51-race drought from victory lane when he took the checkered flag.

**2016:** There were 15 caution flags during the race, but pole winner Edwards led a staggering 276 laps of the event and ultimately won the race at the controls of his Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota. It was Edwards' second Food City 500 victory in three years.



Driver Kyle Busch hoists the trophy with Steve Smith, president and CEO of Food City, after winning the 2019 Food City 500 at Bristol Motor Speedway.

fully said he would've

to his bumper in the

the Cup Series at BMS,

wasn't easy as he had to

spin in the opening laps.

rebound from a multi-car

He charged back from laps

down and finally took over

the lead on lap 384. Late in

the race his pit crew made

elected not to pit. It proved

to be the right move as he

held on and led the final 19

2020: A global pandemic

forced the spring race to be

rescheduled from April 5 to

May 31 and it was renamed

the Food City Supermarket

laps to take the victory.

the right call after a cau-

tion on lap 487 and Kyle

closing laps.

wrecked his brother if he

could've got close enough

The win, Kyle's eighth in

**2017:** Johnson scored his second Bristol victory in convincing fashion, powering his No. 48 Chevy into the lead on lap 480 and staying there till the checkered flag dropped. In all, he led 81 laps and held off a tough group of challengers, including second-place Bowyer, Harvick, Kenseth and Logano.

Kyle Larson started the race from the pole and led the first 202 laps of the race — the most of the event but he eventually finished sixth as the race had seven different leaders.

**2018:** Some simply called it the Kyle & Kyle Show. Kyle Busch and Kyle Larson put on a thrilling and memorable performance for the fans as they battled intensely during the last 120 laps of the race. The two exchanged the lead five times during that stretch and Busch finally took over for good with six laps to go and put his No. 18 machine into BMS

Victory Lane once again. Larson led the most laps, with 200, but finished second on Busch's heels. Johnson, Ricky Stenhouse Jr. and Alex Bowman completed the top five.

**2019:** The Busch Brothers, who have both had their fair share of Bristol success, finished 1-2 in a dramatic run to the checkered flag. After the race Kurt playHeroes 500 in honor of the great work done by grocery workers on the front lines during the first year of COVID-19. A late-race skirmish —

A late-race skirmish on lap 490 — between Chase Elliott and Logano battling for the lead also collected front-runner Hamlin, who had led the most laps and opened the door for Keselowski to power his No. 2 machine to the victory.

Keselowski held off Bowyer in the final five laps to take the win. Johnson, Kyle Bush and Erik Jones completed the top five. Meanwhile, Elliott and Logano had an animated nose-to-nose, postrace conversation in the pits about their on-track contact.

**2021:** For the first time in more than 50 years the NASCAR Cup Series returned to its roots with the running of the Food City Dirt Race on a dirt-transformed half-mile oval at BMS.

Logano, who started 10th, was one of the race's five leaders and he took over with 61 laps to go and held on to take the historic victory.

Stenhouse earned another BMS second-place finish and was followed by Hamlin and Daniel Suarez.

Suarez had one of his best runs in his Cup career, leading 58 laps midway through the race in his No. 99 Chevy.

Martin Truex Jr., who won the Pinty's Truck Race on Dirt earlier in the rain-delayed doubleheader day, also led nine laps before falling back to finish 19th.

Pole-sitter Kyle Larson, who had big expectations for a victory — given his success in the dirt track arena — got caught up in a couple of multi-car incidents and finished a disappointing 29th.

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## 'Pleasantly surprised': Truex scores upset win in '21 Truck race

2017 Cup Series champion collects first career Truck Series victory on dirt

#### By Jeff Birchfield SPORTS WRITER

jbirchfield@johnsoncitypress.com

BRISTOL — Martin Truex Jr. stormed through the field at the 2021 Pinty's Truck Race and left his competitors in his dust at Bristol Motor Speedway.

The 2017 NASCAR Cup Series champion, who has limited experience racing on dirt, surprised himself by dominating the Camping World Truck Series race on the track's temporary dirt surface. Starting 15th, Truex raced the Kyle Busch

Motorsports No. 51 Toyota to the lead at the end of Stage 1.

He led the final two stages, leading 105 of the 150 laps overall and rolling to a 1.149-second win over runner-up Ben Rhodes. Truex, whose only previous win at Bristol came on concrete in a 2004 Xfinity Series race, surprised himself with the strong performance.

"You always expect to win when you come to the race track, but I'm pleasantly surprised to say the least," Truex said. "We came here this weekend and I wanted to run this truck just to get some experience and try to help with the Cup car. Who would have thought that I would get my first Truck Series victory on dirt?

"This was a lot of fun. We weren't supposed to come here and win. That's really the icing on the cake."

It was the first career Truck Series win for Truex, who became the 35th driver to win in all three of NASCAR's top



Driver Martin Truex Jr. poses with the Pinty's Truck Race on Dirt winner's trophy after winning last year's NASCAR Truck Series race at Bristol Motor Speedway.

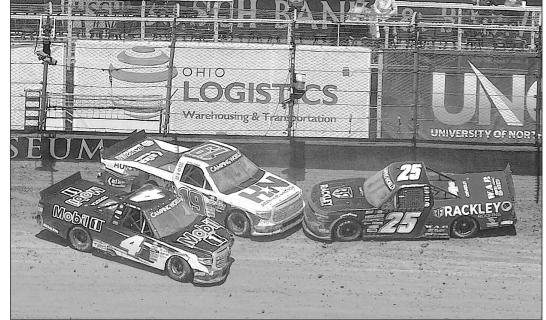
three series.

Rhodes, driving the No. 99 Toyota, missed a shift on the final restart, allowing Truex to scoot away. Although Truex had been dominant all day, Rhodes closed some at the end. He felt the mistake took away a great opportunity to score his first Bristol win.

"I was running him back down the last few laps," Rhodes said. "I had an issue getting it into fourth gear early on and didn't think much of it. I just missed the shift. It's a bummer, the closest I've been at winning here. I'm a little aggravated with myself. I really thought I could have brought home a trophy."

Raphael Lessard and Todd Gilliland, a pair of other racers with limited dirt experience, finished third and fourth, respectively, in a Chevrolet and a Ford.

Chase Briscoe in a Ford



JEFF BIRCHFIELD/JOHNSON CITY PRESS

Things got a little hairy for John Hunter Nemechek (4), Derek Kraus (19) and Timothy Peters (25) as the trio were caught up in a wreck in Turn 2 at the 2021 Pinty's Truck Race on Dirt at Bristol Motor Speedway.

rounded out the top five. After concerns over Saturday heat races being canceled because of a muddy track and torrential rains causing another postponement Sunday, there were picture-perfect conditions for Monday's race. It led to an actionpacked race with 12 cautions for 56 laps and 11 lead changes.

While no one had the speed to match Truex, the

racing was often two- and three-wide behind him.

Grant Enfinger, in a Ford, finished sixth with Chevrolet driver Zane Smith placing seventh. Parker Kligerman, driving the No. 75 Toyota for the Abingdon-based Henderson Motorsports team, was eighth. Austin Hill and Austin Wayne Self rounded out the top 10.

Six NASCAR Cup Series drivers, including Truex and Briscoe, were in the overall field.

Pre-race favorite Kyle Larson was never a factor during the race. He ran into the back of Mike Marlar's slowed truck in Turn 3 and was collected by Danny Bohn in the No. 30 as his truck spun sideways. He finished 35th in the 40-car field.

"My spotter said they were slow down the backstretch," Larson said. "I saw everybody down at the bottom so I thought I would go up top and make up some spots. I committed to the top and there was somebody there. Then I slid down there and the 30 didn't have anywhere to go."

Other Cup drivers included Bubba Wallace in 11th, former series champion Kevin Harvick at 15th and Daniel Suarez finishing 17th.

Pole sitter John Hunter Nemechek, who was involved in a multi-track accident after contact with Matt Crafton, finished 39th. He remained the series points leader after Bristol, but wasn't happy with Crafton or Derek Kraus, who slid into his wrecked truck seconds after he hit the wall.

"Matt just hooked me. I will keep that one in the memory bank," Nemechek said. "I don't know what's wrong with the 19 (Kraus) and his spotter. I guess they need some glasses."

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## Holy smokes! Ridgewood among area's favorite barbeque joints

When it comes to barbecue offerings in the Tri-Cities, NASCAR fans have plenty to choose from on race weekends, or any time

#### By Douglas Fritz SPORTS WRITER dfritz@johnsoncitypress.com

When it comes to racing, it also comes to eating. And that tends to lean toward the barbecue side of things.

Here's a look at some of the top BBQ joints in the Tri-Cities vicinity of Bristol Motor Speedway.

#### RIDGEWOOD 900 Elizabethton Highway, Bluff City

Earning its spot foremost in people's minds is the iconic Ridgewood BBQ in Bluff City. Just a few hops, skips and jumps from the raceway, this hickorysmoked joint has been piling up fan favorites since 1948 years. Yes, 74 years!

The restaurant boasts "southern comfort food" that is "sure to satisfy any appetite." The recipes the sauce is a closely-guarded secret known by only two members of the founding Proffitt family — have been gathered over three genera-



CONTRIBUTED Although the original business has changed hands, Pardners in Piney Flats has been serving up mouth-watering barbecue for nearly four decades.

tions.

Included on the menu are pork and beef sandwiches, and Mrs. Proffitt's barbecue beans.

At the top of the list is the award-winning pork and beef, worked up for eight to 10 hours in custom smokehouses. It's all done "Tennessee style," as the meat soaks in the flavor of a sweet, tomato-based sauce.

It's off the beaten path, but owners say it's "worth every turn."

### PRATT'S 1225 E. Stone Drive, Kingsport

Another restaurant with a historical story, Frank and Edna Pratt purchased "Honest" John's Restaurant in 1970 — and architect Larry Poole designed what is now Pratt's Barn in Kingsport. In those days, there were 45 seats and fried chicken

dinners were 99 cents. After about a year, Frank and Edna turned the



Ridgewood Barbecue in Bluff City has been serving up fan favorites for 74 years — long before Bristol Motor Speedway's arrival on the NASCAR scene. The restaurant has been a staple for fans, drivers and officials alike through the years.

restaurant over to son Tom and wife Chris — daughter of prominent restaurateur Pal Barger. Tom and Chris built the business up, specializing in breakfast and barbecue.

These days, Pratt's hams are a regionally famous holiday tradition. Pratt's is one of the longest running businesses in the area at 45 years and counting.

Included on the menu are pork, brisket, turkey, and chicken smokehouse sandwiches — along with rib platters and honey-glazed ham.

## FIREHOUSE

**627 W Walnut St., Johnson City** Another longtime server has been piling up barbecue since 1980. That's when Firehouse was originally opened by Tom Seaton and Jimmy Carter



You can't go wrong wit the ribs, or anything else on the menu, when dining at the Firehouse in Johnson City.

as Bucwood Bar-B-Que. Outgrowing their first

location, the duo purchased the Walnut Street Fire Station and opened the new digs in 1981. The Firehouse began as a 130seat quick-service restaurant for lunch and dinner, six days a week.

On today's menu are barbecue platters that include pork, chicken, ribs and brisket. Sandwiches and burgers are also part of the every-day equation.

### SOUTHERN CRAFT 601 Spring St. No. 101, Johnson City

Rounding out the Tri-Cities' flavor tour is one of the newer kids on the block.

Southern Craft has been serving up smoked pleasures since 2017 in Johnson City.

On the menu is a significantly varied list of smoke meats: ribs, pork, turkey, salmon, brisket, sausage and chicken. Wings, smoked sandwiches and burgers are also part of the offerings.

## PARDNER'S 5444 Hwy 11E, Piney Flats

Founded in 1983, Pardner's has carried on a barbecue tradition for almost 40 years. And in 2017 new owners took over and modernized the restaurant, which boasts "delicious, hickory-pit-cooked BBQ."

The new group says the original recipes and traditions of Pardner's have not changed. And the legendary "Pitmaster" has been at the restaurant for over a quarter of a century, "smoking meats and preparing sauces that have made Pardner's a family dinner favorite for decades."

On the menu are signature beef, pork and chicken sandwiches. Other sandwiches include grilled chicken, baked and country ham, pork loin, southern fried and grilled catfish.

## **PROJECT BBQ**

## 3301 N. Roan St., Johnson City

Previously serving Texas-style barbecue out of a food trailer, the owners now have a building and have turned it into one of the hottest BBQ spots in the area.

Project BBQ specializes in brisket, pulled pork and smoked turkey, among others. It's locally owned and family run, and as they say, "You can taste the love and family arguments in every bite."

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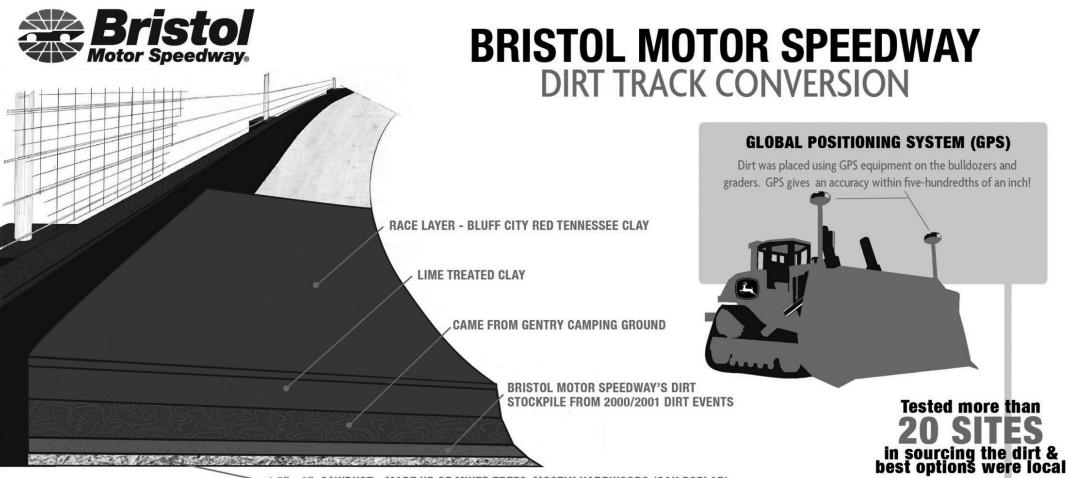






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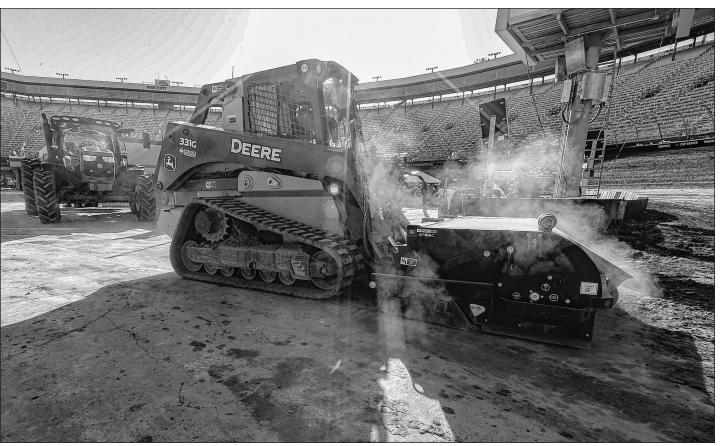


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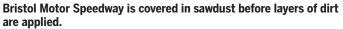
BRISTOL MOTOR SPEEDWAY



A sweeper gathers dirt at the pit exit.

WADE PAYNE/AP

BRISTOL MOTOR SPEEDWAY





A dozer pushes dirt against the inside retaining wall at Bristol Motor Speedway.



Dirt covers the inside of the track at turn 3 at Bristol Motor Speedway.

BRISTOL MOTOR SPEEDWAY

Bristol Race Wee



Bristol Race Week

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Johnson City driver Connie Saylor won the Daytona 500 consolation race in 1984.

## **Tri-Cities Top 10**

## The best NASCAR showings by local drivers

#### By Jeff Birchfield SPORTS WRITER

jbirchfield@johnsoncitypress.com

Tri-Cities area racers have made quite the impact on motorsports at the national level. There have been major victories in NASCAR, NHRA and motocross. For this

list, we look at the top 10 moments by local drivers at the NASCAR national level.

It's not a top-10 drivers list as Sherman Utsman and Bill Morton each had nine top-10 finishes at the Cup level. Sergeant George Green had 29 top-10 finishes in 116 races driving for local car owner Jess Potter. The family tradition continued when Mike Potter made 60 Cup Series starts from 1979-93 and finished second in an ARCA race at Talladega.

Here are the moments that stand out as the top 10 for Tri-Cities drivers. It doesn't include a couple of other major moments as Dr. Don Tarr of Mountain City led six laps at the first Talladega Cup Series race and was the first NASCAR driver to have an in-car radio for an ABC Wide World of Sports broadcast.

#### **10. SAYLOR WINS DAYTONA CONSOLATION RACE**

In the early 1980s, the drivers who failed to qualify for the Daytona 500 were able to participate in a consolation race on the Friday before the big race.

Johnson City driver Connie Saylor



Dr. Don Tarr was the first NASCAR driver to use an in-car radio for ABC's Wide World of Sports. He led six laps in the first Cup Series race at Talladega.

started 22nd in the 25-car field in 1984, but drove the Lain Racing No. 37 Pontiac to the front by the midway point. He led 12 laps to win by 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> car lengths over Canadian driver Laurent Rioux.

### 9. JOHN KING TAKES TRUCK SERIES OPENER

Listed from Kingsport, but actually from Fort Blackmore, Virginia, John King shocked the racing world winning the 2012 season-opening NASCAR Truck Series race at Daytona.



See TOP 10, Page R27 Southwest Virginia native John King earned a stunning Truck Series win at Daytona in 2012.



Johnson City driver Brad Teague — above, in a 2007 Xfinity Series race at Milwaukee and at right, before making his final career Xfinity start at Bristol in 2015 — had two main highlights in a career that spanned more than 30 years at NASCAR's national level. Teague held off Dale Jarrett to pick up his only career Busch Series win at Martinsville in 1987. That came six years after he finished second nationally in the 1981 Late Model Sportsman season.

## **TOP 10:** Johnson City driver Teague makes list twice

#### From Page R26

King's No. 7 Toyota pulled away from teammate Todd Bodine on the final restart. He held off another teammate, Timothy Peters, to win the race — which ended when Joey Coulter crashed on the final lap.

#### 8. BRAD TEAGUE BEATS DALE JARRETT AT MARTINSVILLE

Johnson City driver Brad Teague led the final 89 laps to win the 1987 Miller 200 for the NASCAR Busch Series at Martinsville. Making the feat more impressive, Teague held off future Hall of Fame driver Dale Jarrett over the final third of the race. It was the era when the Busch Series were running V-6 engines and Teague was racing a Chevrolet Celebrity. Teague nearly won two years earlier at Darlington — but was passed by Harry Gant, who was relief driving for Jack Ingram, with four laps to go.

#### 7. BROWNIE KING ON THE BEACH AND THE TRACK

Brownie King was among an elite group of drivers, which included such notables as Lee Petty, Buck Baker, Fireball Roberts and Curtis Turner, that competed in the last Daytona race on the beach in 1958 and the first Daytona 500 in 1959.

King actually drove a convertible in the first 500 and that season, he finished one spot behind Richard Petty in the NASCAR Convertible point standings. Also of note, Church Hill driver Bill Morton finished 13th in the final race on the beach.

#### 6. HERMAN BEAM'S RECORD STREAK

Herman Beam was nicknamed "The Turtle," employing a strategy of rarely abusing his race cars and simply making laps. In an era where mechanical failure was common, the Johnson City racer set a NASCAR record of finishing 84



Brownie King is among a select group who competed in the final NASCAR race on the beach at Daytona and in the first Daytona 500.



consecutive races from 1961-63. In those days, with so many cars falling out of races, Beam actually posted three top-five and 57 top-10 finishes in 194 races. He also finished fourth in the final 1959 point standings. His record stood until 2014, when Greg Biffle broke it in a race he, ironically, finished 38 laps down.

#### 5. BRAD TEAGUE 1981 NATIONAL RUNNER-UP

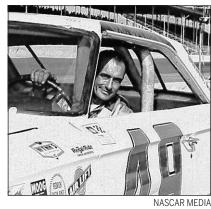
Teague is the only driver to make the list twice, thanks to his 1981 Late Model Sportsman season. The Johnson City driver was coming off a huge win in a 1980 national invitational event at Kingsport Speedway, where local drivers bested the out-oftown visitors with Gene Glover and John A. Utsman running second and third.

With that momentum, Teague won the third race of the 1981 season at Richmond and led the points the first half of the year. He was eventually overtaken by Tommy Ellis, but still finished well ahead of third-place Geoff Bodine in the final year before it became the Busch Series.

### 4. LONG CAREER OF G.C. SPENCER

Originally from Owensboro, Kentucky, G.C. Spencer was a boyhood hero of Darrell Waltrip.

RANDALL PER



G.C. Spencer made over 400 starts in NASCAR Cup Series competition.

He took his famed Flying Saucer race car and moved to South Carolina as his career blossomed The veteran of 415 NASCAR Cup Series races later relocated to Jonesborough as his wife, Faye, was from Johnson City.

Spencer produced one career pole in 1965 at Hickory, N.C., where he finished third behind Junior Johnson and Ned Jarrett and one position ahead of Johnson City driver Paul Lewis. Most famous for driving the No. 49 Dodge at the Cup level, he retired in 1977, but the equipment he sold in 1983 became the basis for Morgan-McClure Motorsports.



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## TOP 10: Lewis won at Maryville

## From Page R27

### 3. GENE GLOVER 1979 NATIONAL CHAMPION

Gene Glover finished third in the Late Model Sportsman national standings in 1978. A year later, he easily outdistanced two-time defending champion Butch Lindley to capture his own national title.

Wins that season including a June race at his hometown Kingsport Speedway, where Lindley finished third. Glover won at Virginia tracks — South Boston and Manassas — and capped off the year by beating Jack Ingram in a 250-lap invitational race at Kingsport in October.

#### 2. JOHN A. TEAMS WITH BENNY AT BRISTOL

The most famous moment for any local driver was Bluff City's John A. Utsman serving as a relief driver for Benny Parsons at the 1973 Volunteer 500. On a hot July day around the Bristol Motor Speedway, the two combined to win the race by seven laps over runner-up L.D. Ottinger.

Parsons drove the first 250 laps of the race, then Utsman took over for 170 laps. Parsons got back in the car the final 80 laps for the only win of his championship season. With the races held in the heat of the day and no power steering on the cars, relief

drivers were commonplace at Bristol during this era.

Utsman had a reputation as one of the best, scoring eight top-10 finishes in 11 relief appearances. It includes relief driving Janet Guthrie's car to her career-best sixth-place finish in 1977.

#### 1. LEWIS SMOKES 'EM AT SMOKY MOUNTAIN

While Utsman's feat is more well known, Paul Lewis is the only Tri-Cities driver recognized as an official winner at the Cup Series level.

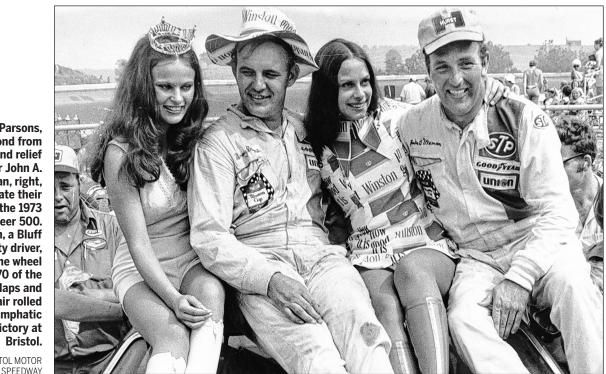
The Johnson City driver won the 1966 Smoky Mountain 200 at Maryville with David Pearson the only other driver on the lead lap at the half-mile dirt track. Herman Beam served as the crew chief and they also posted a second-place finish at Bristol that season.

Running a limited schedule in 1966, Lewis scored 14 top-10 finishes in 21 races. Lewis finished in the top-three nine times in his Cup Series career and he even drove one race for Petty Enterprises and another for Bobby Allison. He set a track qualifying record at Bristol in 1973 that stood a decade, but nothing tops his win at Maryville the only official victory for a Tri-Cities racer.



BRISTOL MOTOR SPEEDWAY

Johnson City's Paul Lewis won the 1966 Smoky Mountain 200 at Maryville, the only official win for a Tri-Cities racer. Lewis also set a Bristol Motor Speedway qualifying record in 1973, a mark that stood for a decade.





Kingsport racer Gene Glover, pictured in 2007, won the 1979 Late Model Sportsman national championship.

Benny Parsons, second from left, and relief driver John A. Utsman, right, celebrate their win in the 1973 Volunteer 500. Utsman, a Bluff City driver, took the wheel for 170 of the 500 laps and the pair rolled to an emphatic victory at Bristol. BRISTOL MOTOR

Page 30R | Wednesday, April 13, 2022

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# **Bristol masters**

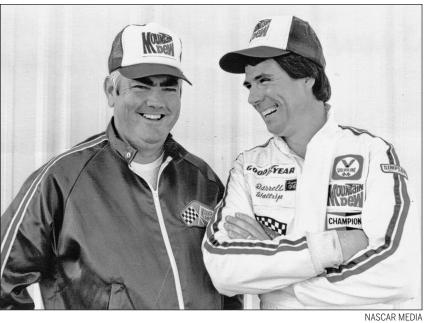




DAKOTA HAMILTON

Kyle Busch holds the sword after winning the 2018 Food City 500 at Bristol Motor Speedway. He ranks first among active drivers with eight Cup Series wins at Bristol.

Rusty Wallace celebrates his win in the Valleydale Meats 500 on his way to the 1989 NASCAR championship.



Car owner Junior Johnson and driver Darrell Waltrip teamed to win seven straight Bristol races from 1981-84.

## Just a handful of drivers have earned the title

**By Jeff Birchfield** SPORTS WRITER jbirchfield@johnsoncitypress.com

Bristol Motor Speedway is one of NASCAR's toughest tracks.

However, a handful of drivers have been successful in conquering the high-banked oval. While none of these "Bristol Masters" had the pleasure of racing on the dirt surface, they have set records which others can only envy. When it comes to Bristol, the list starts with the track's all-time Cup Series winner, Darrell Waltrip.

Waltrip scored a record 12 Cup Series wins at Bristol, including an amazing seven in a row from 1981-84. The three-time NASCAR champion has commented several times how hard it was to simply run all 3,500 laps during that time period. It's highly unlikely his seven straight Bristol wins will be matched, particularly with the facility having a dirt surface in the spring and back to concrete in the fall.

Waltrip's first Bristol win came at the 1978 Southeastern 500 while driving the No. 88 Gatorade Chevrolet for DiGard Racing. He finished a full lap ahead of runner-up Benny Parsons in the No. 72 Oldsmobile. Waltrip led the final 102 circuits around the .533mile oval, taking the lead from Parsons on lap 399 and staying out front the rest of the way.

See **MASTERS**, Page R33

## **Bristol's best**

The drivers with the most Cup Series wins at Bristol Motor Speedway:

Driver	Wins
1. Darrell Waltrip	12
t2. Dale Earnhardt	9
t2. Rusty Wallace	9
t2. Cale Yarborough	9
5. Kyle Busch	8
6. Kurt Busch	6
t7. Jeff Gordon	5
t7. David Pearson	5
t9. Bobby Allison	4
t9. Carl Edwards	4
t9. Matt Kenseth	4



In the speedway's most famous finish, Dale Earnhardt (3) spins Terry Labonte (5) to win the 1999 Bristol Night Race.

## **MASTERS:** Waltrip holds win record with 12

#### From Page R32

Eight of Waltrip's wins were driving the No. 11 machines for Junior Johnson Racing. He won once in the No. 17 Tide Chevrolet for Hendrick Motorsports.

Waltrip's final BMS win was memorable as wife Stevie had just given birth to their daughter. In a memorable victory lane celebration, Waltrip, as a driver-owner of his No. 17 Western Auto Chevrolet, blew kisses to his wife and newborn daughter.

All of Cale Yarborough's nine Bristol wins came behind the wheel of Junior Johnson's No. 11 machines. Johnson owns the record for 21 wins at Bristol as a car owner, but no one had as dominant performances as Yarborough.

Yarborough led every lap in the 1973 Southeastern 500 and finished two laps ahead of runner-up Richard Petty's No. 43 Dodge.

Yarborough led 495 laps and won by an incredible seven laps in the 1977 Southeastern 500 behind the wheel of the No. 11 Holly Farms Chevrolet. During his dominant stretch, Yarborough swept Bristol races during the 1974, 1976 and 1977 seasons. He won the first Bristol night race in 1978. His last Bristol win came in the 1980 Volunteer 500 when he took the lead from Waltrip with 23 laps to go and held off Dale Earnhardt by two car lengths at the end.

Earnhardt scored his first career victory at the 1979 Southeastern 500, holding off four-time Bristol winner Bobby Allison and Waltrip at the end. He repeated the following year in Rod Osterlund's No. 2 Chevrolet with Waltrip and Allison again his nearest challengers.

Five of Earnhardt's wins were between 1985-88, including a time he ran most of one race without power steering. It furthered his reputation from sponsor Wrangler as "One Tough Customer." His final victory in 1999 behind the black No. 3 Goodwrench Chevrolet for Richard Childress Racing is the track's most famous finish. Earnhardt spun two-time Bristol winner Terry

Labonte on the last lap to win the 1999 Goody's 500.

See **MASTERS**, Page R34



4 Rusty Wallace celebrates his 50th career Cup Series win at Bristol at the 2000 Food City 500.



Cale Yarborough (11) led every lap of the 1973 Southeastern 500 at Bristol Motor Speedway.

NASCAR MEDIA



Seven-time NASCAR champion Dale Earnhardt is with BMS owner Bruton Smith at a 1996 press conference.



Cale Yarborough dominated Bristol races for a decade with nine wins in Junior Johnson-owned cars.



Darrell Waltrip, shown here with wife Stevie, won a record 12 NASCAR Cup Series races at Bristol Motor Speedway.

#### 9.

From Page R33

In a famous victory lane inter-

didn't mean to wreck him. I just

involved in some famous Bristol finishes and, like Earnhardt,

scored his first career win on the

Missouri driver, who came from

the Midwest ASA tour, captured

the win in the 1986 Southeastern 500, winning by 10 seconds over

high-banked short track. The

Wallace won again in his

behind the wheel of Roger

Pontiac or Ford. It included

Penske's No. 2 cars, whether a

holding off Ernie Irvan in the

No. 4 Morgan-McClure Chevrolet

championship season of 1989 in

car owner Raymond Beadle's No. 27 Pontiac. Seven wins were

view, Earnhardt declared, "I

meant to rattle his cage."

runner-up Ricky Rudd.

Rusty Wallace was also

to win the 1991 Valleydale Meats

**MASTERS:** Busch leads active drivers with 8 wins

500.

One of his most emotional wins occurred in the 1993 Food City 500 when Wallace paid tribute to NASCAR champion Alan Kulwicki, who had died three days before in an airplane crash near Blountville. He swept races in 2000, including a milestone 50th career victory at the 2000 Food City 500.

Kyle Busch is the modern master of Bristol Motor Speedway in his No. 18 Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota with eight Cup Series wins. However, he holds the all-time record for Bristol wins as his 22 victories include nine in the Xfinity Series and five in the Truck Series.

In fact, Busch is the only driver in NASCAR history to sweep all three national series in the same weekend at any track. He's done it twice, both times at Bristol in 2010 and 2017.

The younger brother of sixtime Bristol winner Kurt Busch won on the high banks for the first time at the 2007 Food City 500, driving the No. 5 Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet in the debut race for the infamous "Car of Tomorrow." After winning the race, Busch talked about how terrible the car was to drive.

Once he moved to the Gibbs team, he won four of five Bristol races from a sweep in 2009 to 2011. He won three of four races in 2017-18, to date his last Bristol wins.

In the 2018 Bass Pro Shops NRA Night Race and 2019 Food City 500, Busch held off Kyle Larson to win both occasions.



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## Looking for something to do?

## Don't worry — there are lots of things to keep you entertained in the Appalachian Highlands

By Tanner Cook SPORTS WRITER tcook@johnsoncitypress.com

There are plenty of places to go and experiences to have in the Tri-Cities. Whether you're a local that has lived here for over 30 years or visiting for the weekend, there are endless

possibilities for fun and adventure. The following are a few examples of museums, zoos and other attractions throughout the area.

## BIRTHPLACE OF COUNTRY MUSIC MUSEUM

The Museum — located at 101 Country Music Way in Bristol, Va. — is an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution and tells the story of the legendary 1927 Bristol Sessions. This was a historic event that sparked what is now known as the "big bang of country music." These recordings continue to influence and inspire the music of today.

Through text and artifacts, multiple theater experiences, and interactive displays along with a variety of educational programs, music performances, and community events — the exciting story of these recording sessions and their far-reaching influence comes alive.

Rotating exhibitions from guest curators and other institutions, including the Smithsonian, are featured throughout the year in the Special Exhibits Gallery. The museum also houses a collection of related objects, photographs and paper ephemera, and digital items.



The exhibits in the Birthplace of Country Music Museum celebrate the work of Ralph Peer, who recorded artists such as The Carter Family at the Bristol Sessions in 1927.



Kids of all ages — and adults, too — can learn a thing or two at Hands On! Discovery Center in Gray. For more information on the Museum's extensive history and a wealth of information, visit the website at www.birthplaceofcountry music.org.

## HANDS ON! DISCOVERY CENTER

The Hands On! Discovery Center is a nonprofit, allages science center offering fun interactive programs and experiences that include immersive interactive exhibits, a musical Tesla coil, giant building blocks, a 3-story Paleo Tower and an art studio.

It is located at 1212 Suncrest Drive in Gray next to Daniel Boone High School. The Gray Fossil site and Museum is also at this location.

See **HIGHLANDS**, Page R37



age R37 **Birthplace of Country Music Museum in downtown Bristol.** 

## HIGHLANDS: With multiple zoos in the area, animal lovers have plenty of options

From Page R36

Visitors are invited to engineer a rocket, create a masterpiece and uncover something new.

You can get up close and personal with an active fossil dig site dating back five million years with exhibits and programs featuring plant and animal fossils that have been unearthed at the Gray Fossil Site, including tapir, red panda, rhinoceros and a 10-ton mastodon.

For more information, you can visit www.visithandson.org.

#### **BRIGHTS ZOO**

Beginning in 2007, Brights Zoo opened the gates for school tours of the facility. The tours are designed to educate children of any grade level about pivotal issues concerning the support and welfare of animals everywhere.

Hours vary depending on the season, so check www.brightszoo.com/index.php for the most up-to-date schedule. The zoo is located at 3425 Highway 11E in Limestone.

#### **CREATION KINGDOM ZOO**

The Creation Kingdom Zoo is ranked as one of Virginia's best zoos and the Tri-Cities area's top attractions.

The zoo offers you the adventure of a lifetime, experiencing a variety of animals from around the world. From giraffes, bears, leopards and apes to camels, zebras, wildebeest and many species of primates, you'll see conservation at work. Daily keeper talks will answer questions about the animals for which we care and our role in preserving them for future generations.

The zoo is a proud conservation partner with the Species Survival Program (SSP). Creation Kingdom is just minutes from Johnson City, Kingsport and Bristol, located at 1692 Snowflake Road in Gate City, Va. Visit www.creationkingdomzoo. com for more information.

### **BAYS MOUNTAIN PARK**

Bays Mountain Park & Planetarium in Kingsport is a 3,650-acre nature preserve and the largest city-owned park in the state of Tennessee.

The park features a picturesque 44-acre lake, a Nature Center with a state-ofthe-art Planetarium Theater and Animal Habitats featuring wolves, bobcats, raptors and reptiles.

The Nature Interpretive Center was dedicated and opened on May 24, 1971, with eight park staff on board to continue the work that had already begun in serving the public and numerous school groups already visiting.

Since that time, the park has only continued to grow and serve. Animal habitats,



Giraffes sit at the top of the height rankings among the many animals at Brights Zoo.



ROGER DAVIS/KINGSPORT TIMES NEWS

Kingsport's Bays Mountain Park features more than 40 miles of hiking trails within its 3,650 acres. One of the most popular attractions is the fire tower, which offers spectacular views of the nearby mountains and valleys.

such as the otter habitat, deer habitat, Herpetarium housing native reptiles and amphibians, have been added — and in 1992, gray wolves joined the lineup of species featured at the park. The Farmstead Museum was built and opened in 1988, preserving the story of those families



Scott County's Creation Kingdom Zoo has welcomed two Bengal tigers to its collection of rare animals.

mentioned earlier who lived on the mountain years ago.

In 2009, the park experienced another great development when the planetarium was totally renovated and upgraded. The \$1.3 million project gave the new planetarium improved seating, a 6.1 surround-sound dome and, thanks to a Zeiss star projector, it now has a star field so realistic visitors can use a pair of binoculars to see stars on the dome they cannot see with the naked eve.

For more information, visit www.bays mountain.com.

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## **Outdoor options abound for NASCAR fans**

#### By Kevin Mays SPORTS WRITER kmays@timesnews.net

Most NASCAR fans love spending time outdoors. In addition to soaking in the sun while watching their favorite drivers on the track, fans like spending time outdoors setting their own pace on hiking and biking trails or just relaxing and taking in all that nature has to offer.

Fans visiting the Bristol Motor Speedway for the dirt race on Easter weekend have a plethora of activities to explore when it comes to outdoor recreation.

#### STEELE CREEK PARK 4 Little Lane, Bristol, Tenn.

More than 24 miles of walking, hiking and biking trails are available at Steele Creek's 2,220-acre park that also includes a 54-acre lake and 150 acres of developed recreational area for kids of all ages

The 20 different trails range in degree of difficulty from novice to expert and span in length from the 454-foot Overlook Trail to the South Ridge Trail that covers 3.13 miles.

#### SUGAR HOLLOW PARK 23261 Sugar Hollow Road, Bristol, Va.

Sugar Hollow is a 400-acre park that includes several athletic fields and picnic facilities with several miles of trails open to walking, running and biking.

### SOUTH HOLSTON LAKE

The 7,580-acre lake spans from Tennessee to Virginia and is operated by the TVA.

About 60 percent of the shoreline is blanketed by the Cherokee National Forest with about 182 miles of the shoreline open to recreational boating and fishing.

A foot bridge from the parking lot below the South Holston TVA Dam leads to Osceola Island along a one-mile nature trail. The area also includes two mountain biking trails — the

3.1-mile Dam Builders loop trail and the 1.1-mile Yelling loop trail.



Steele Creek Park features a nice walk along the lake.

#### WHITE TOP CREEK PARK 310 Sportsway Drive, Bristol, Tenn.

Located across Highway 394 from the Bristol Dragway entrance, White Top is primarily known for its softball and soccer fields. However, the park with easy access to BMS also has a one-mile walking trail and 1.5acre pond.

## **CEDAR VALLEY PARK** 405 Cedar Valley Road, Bristol, Tenn.

For the true nature lover, Cedar Valley, covering some three acres, allows for nature walks along the calm Cedar Creek.

#### **MENDOTA TRAIL** Mendota Trailhead. 2421 Mendota Road, Mendota, Va.

The trail is a 12.5-mile biking and hiking recreational trail between Bristol and Mendota.

#### **VIRGINIA CREEPER TRAIL** 300 Green Spring Road, Abingdon, Va.

On of the most acclaimed trails in the country, the Creeper Trail is a rail-to-recreation trail that spans just over 34 miles from Abingdon to Whitetop Station in the Mount **Rogers National Recreation** Area.

#### **TWEETSIE TRAIL** Intersection of Legion and Alabama streets, Johnson City

The trail is open to walking, hiking, running and biking traverses between Johnson City and Elizabethton.

Future plans call for expanding the trail to 10 miles, which will make it the longest rail-to-trail in Tennessee.

## **KINGSPORT GREENBELT**

The Greenbelt is located

throughout the city of Kingsport and provides 18 miles of walking paths, as well as biking trails throughout the Model City.

#### SYCAMORE SHOALS STATE PARK 1651 West Elk Ave., Elizabethton

The Park offers various trails, dotted throughout with signs explaining the significance of various sites in the park.

### WARRIORS PATH STATE PARK 490 Hemlock Road, Kingsport

The 950-acre park offers 12 miles of hiking trails through bluffs and waterways.

The park has over 12.5 miles of scenic and challenging bike trails, which are also open to hikers. The bike trail is part of the National Recreational Trail.

## WINGED DEER PARK

4137 Bristol Highway, Johnson City

The mostly-recreational park includes a half-mile walking trail and a payed fitness trail that winds through the forest section of the park.

## **BUFFALO MOUNTAIN PARK**

## 570 High Ridge Road, Johnson City

The park has eight hiking trails for the serious outdoor lover who does not mind a challenge.

The 725-acre park includes 40 acres of wooded terrain for hiking and trail running.

### NATURAL TUNNEL STATE PARK 1420 Natural Tunnel Parkway, Duffield. Va.

The park has seven walking trails, with the longest measuring 2.1 miles.

Most trails in the park are open to mountain biking.

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