



ONE on ONE SPORTS

Talladega just another racetrack

There was a point in time, not all that long ago, when any race at Talladega Superspeedway was among the most anticipated of the whole season.



Steven Taranto
Columnist

And why wouldn't it be? After all, Talladega was known worldwide for its snarling packs of more than 30 cars, all running two, three, and even four wide around the 2.66 mile oval at speeds approaching 200 mph. It was always unpredictable, and always extremely exciting to watch.

As the superspeedway portion of the NASCAR Sprint Cup, Nationwide and Camping World Truck Series schedules comes to a close, though, it would seem that those days are now a distant memory.

A new form of plate racing, the two-Car draft, has completed a successful coup of the traditional style of superspeedway racing, breaking up the big packs and creating a much maligned form of racing that seems almost unrecognizable.

While a form of the technique traces its roots back to the introduction of the Sprint Cup "Car of Tomorrow," the two-car draft formally established itself at Daytona testing in January.

There, teams discovered that two cars hooked together can not only be faster than a pack of cars by up to 10 mph. This connection can also be sustained by keeping the front bumper of the rear car out to the right of the

lead car, allowing air to flow through. This keeps two cars from having to constantly swap positions in order to keep the rear car from overheating and losing an engine.

The result has been a cancer to superspeedway racing, resulting in a form of racing characterized by spaced out strings of cars, team politics and a comical amount of radio interaction between drivers, which has turned racing at Daytona and Talladega from a spectacle of tight quarters at high speeds into a farce of the movie Top Gun.

Despite the frequency of two-car draft races with close finishes and large amounts of lead changes, the form of racing is almost universally reviled as boring by fans and frustrating by drivers, who complain that they have no control over their own destiny in a two-car draft.

As Dale Earnhardt Jr. put it quite bluntly, "This is a bunch of crap."

There was a glimmer of hope going into this past weekend's Good Sam Club 500 that the two-car drafts would be broken up per rule changes that NASCAR had made to make the racing prohibitive. Restrictor plates were increased by 1/64th of an inch, pressure valves were recalibrated by 8 pounds per square inch and teams were prohibited from putting grease and lubricants on the bumpers of the cars. However, NASCAR failed to account for cooler fall temperatures, which allowed drivers to continue running in two-car drafts, rendering NASCAR's changes null and void.

Watching a race at Talladega has ultimately become just like watching a race at Michigan, Chicago or any other track on the circuit. There's nothing special about it - and that's a tragedy.

ELON ATHLETICS ROUNDUP

RESULTS

Football	Oct. 23
Oct. 22	Elon 2
Chattanooga 42	Western Carolina 1 (2 OT)
Elon 18	
Men's Soccer	Volleyball
Oct. 21	Oct. 18
Georgia Southern 4	Elon 3
Elon 2	NC A&T 0
	Oct. 21
Oct. 18	Elon 3
Elon 2	Wofford 0
Wake Forest 0	
Women's Soccer	Oct. 22
Oct. 20	Furman 3
Elon 1	Elon 0
Appalachian State 0	

LOOKING AHEAD

Wednesday
Women's soccer @ UNCG — 7 p.m.

Saturday
Cross country @ SoCon Championships — All day
Football @ Wofford — 1:30 p.m.
Volleyball @ Western Carolina - 3 p.m.
Men's soccer vs. UNCG — 7 p.m.

Sunday
Women's soccer @ first round of SoCon Tournament — TBA
Volleyball @ Appalachian State — 2 p.m.

Tuesday
Men's soccer @ Duke — 7 p.m.

SPORTS BRIEFS

Harris named SoCon Freshman of the Week

Elon University volleyball's middle blocker Kris Harris won the Southern Conference Freshman of the Week award for the week of Oct. 24. Harris recorded 24 kills and four blocks in three games.

Cross country to compete in SoCon championships

The Elon University men and women's cross country teams will participate in the Southern Conference Championship in Charleston, S.C., on Oct. 29. Last year, the women finished fifth and the men finished sixth in Boone.

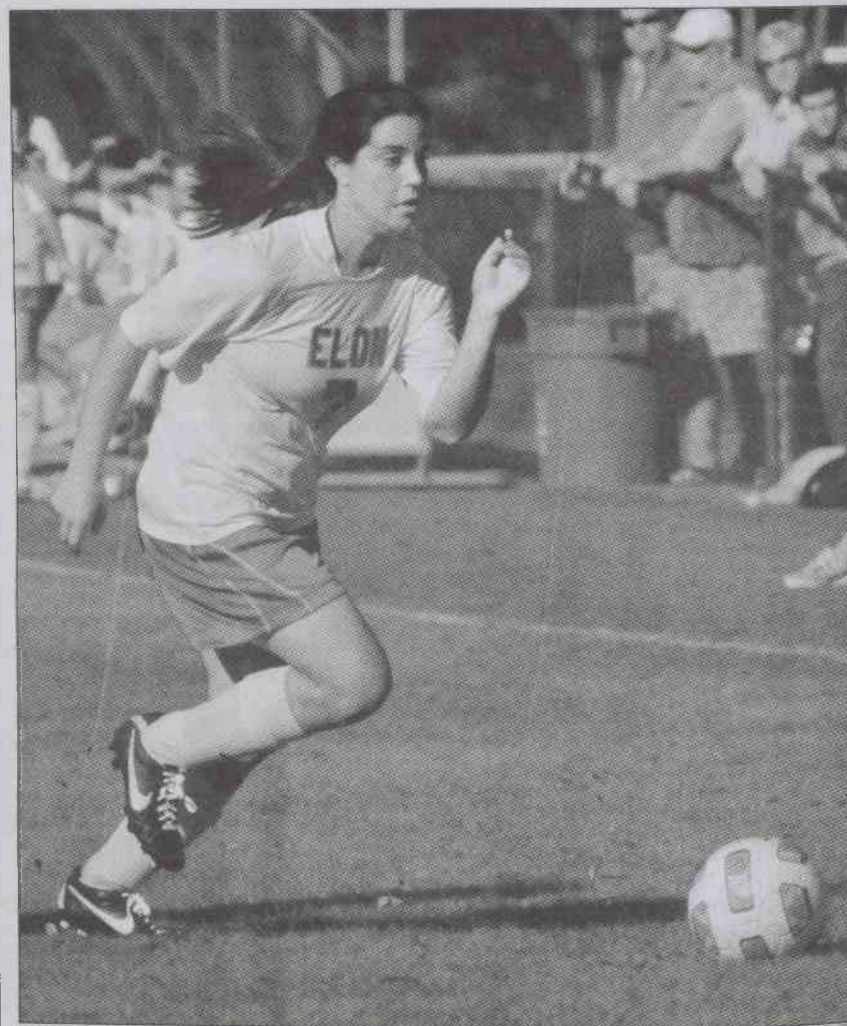
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End of season draws near



FILE PHOTO BY MOLLY CAREY

Elon University's junior midfielder Jaelyn Wood scored the first goal for the team against Western Carolina University on Oct. 23. The Phoenix defeated the Catamounts in a 2-1 double-overtime match. Sophomore midfielder Simi Dhaliwal scored the game-winning shot with nine seconds left in the double overtime period. This brings the team to 7-7-4 overall and 5-3-3 in the Southern Conference, tied for fifth in the conference with Furman University.

The team has one more match before the SoCon tournament, a 7 p.m. contest Wednesday against Furman University at home that will decide who will be the fifth seed in the tournament, which begins Sunday.