

DID YOU

Bill Elliott won five of the six races at Michigan International Speedway from 1985-1987.

NASCAR INSIDER

THIS WEEK

Race: 3M Performance 400
Where: Michigan International Speedway
When: Sunday, 1 p.m. ET
Television: Fox
Defending race winner: Greg Biffle

A father's influence

Many NASCAR drivers credit their dads in helping their careers

By RICK MINTER
Cox News Service

Atlanta

The Nextel Cup circuit will celebrate Father's Day at Michigan International Speedway with the running of the 3M Performance 400 and nearly every driver in the field will be there, thanks to the efforts of their fathers.

Some drivers, including Dale Earnhardt Jr., Dale Jarrett and Kyle Petty, followed their fathers' tire tracks to NASCAR's elite circuit.

Earnhardt Jr. will honor his father and grandfather, Ralph Earnhardt, with a special paint scheme for the race.

Others, including Carl Edwards, Reed Sorenson and Kurt and Kyle Busch, also had dads who raced in lower circuits and influenced their sons' careers.

Kyle Busch said his father, Tom Busch, who is the spotter for Travis Kvapil, sacrificed much for his sons to become racers.

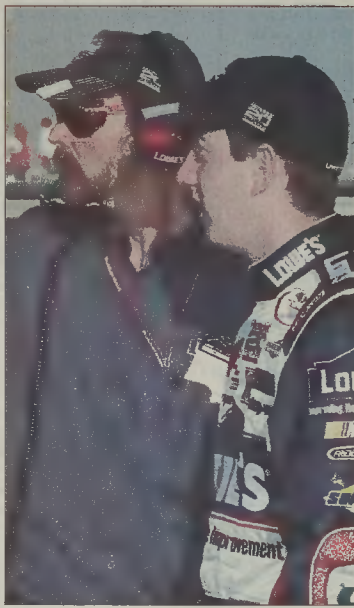
"It has been everything any boy could ask for," Busch said. "He stopped his racing career in order to allow me to pursue mine, and he worked awful hard to raise the money we needed to get going."

Busch said his father gave him a car and taught him how to make it run fast.

"He has been the main guy, besides my brother, who taught me everything I know," he said. "Being able to watch my dad race throughout the years is where I started learning what I needed to do. He taught us how the race car works and what it needs to go fast. He was always very hands-on."

Carl Edwards' mother, Nancy Sterling, is more visible around the tracks than his father and helped him finance his first racing ventures. But it was his father, Carl Edwards Sr., who taught him racing lessons he hasn't forgotten.

"Everybody talks about my mom because she's around a lot, but my dad is probably the smartest racer that I know," Edwards said. "I've met a lot of people



Hendrick Motorsports driver Kyle Busch (shown with his father Tom in 2004) says his dad sacrificed plenty to help establish his career and the career of his brother Kurt, who drives for Penske Racing South. Many drivers on the Cup circuit attribute their success to their fathers' efforts.

since I've been here in NASCAR, but I don't think anybody I've met has the ability to critically think like my dad, and I think that's something he really helped me with a lot."

Edwards said his father, who raced mostly four-cylinder cars on dirt tracks in Missouri, taught him to be self-critical and not make excuses.

"There's always a reason for everything happening, whether it was mechanical or emotional in a race car or mistakes you make," he said. "He was real cut and dried on that stuff."

Edwards said that racing also helped him make a connection with his father, who is divorced from his mother, that he otherwise might not have made.

"My dad and I didn't really do that much together, didn't hang out," he said. "I didn't know him as a person until we started racing together and then, when we did, it was like we were together all the time, racing everywhere together and traveling."

"That was pretty cool."

MICHIGAN INTERNATIONAL SPEEDWAY

Track length: 2 miles

Race length: 200 laps/400 miles

Banking in corners: 18 degrees

Banking frontstretch: 12 degrees

Banking backstretch: 5 degrees

Frontstretch: 3,600 feet

Backstretch: 2,242 feet

Seating capacity: 137,243

First race: June 15, 1969; Motor

Slate 500

Qualifying record: Ryan Newman,

Dodge, 194.232 mph, June 17, 2005

Race record: Dale Jarrett, Ford,

173.997 mph, June 13, 1999

Catching up with ...

Mark Martin

Mark Martin, third in Nextel Cup points after a 17th-place finish at Pocono on Sunday, is set to retire from full-time Nextel Cup competition at the end of the season and become a regular in the Craftsman Truck Series, where he has three victories in six starts this season. He recently spoke with Cox News Service reporter Jeff Hood about his change of pace.

Q. What about Todd Kluever taking over Martin's No. 6 car in 2007?

A. "I feel like we have not given Todd a chance to show what his true potential is. But we've got to get there pretty soon. He's a very solid guy. He's a really good driver and a really good person. There's still time, but we've got to get on the stick and give him an opportunity to rise to the oc-



Mark Martin (left) and team owner Jack Roush talk to the media following Martin's third truck victory in 2006 at Dover.

Q. How big a deal is it to win at Michigan, the backyard of the auto manufacturers?

A. "Only if you don't. If you do, it's not a big deal. -- We've won there a bunch of times and it really wasn't a big deal. But going into it, they make a big deal out of it."

Q. How is your son Matt doing with his Late Model racing career?

A. "He's coming along OK. He's just 14. He's got a good bit of talent. He doesn't race a lot, but races some. He makes progress with every year."

Q. What did you think about Kyle Busch tossing his HANS device at Casey Mears' No. 42 Dodge at Charlotte?

A. "I don't think it was that big of a deal. It was a big deal because of who did it and his history. That's what the big deal was."

Q. How different is it competing in the Craftsman Truck Series?

A. "The racing is more like it used to be. It's the best racing in NASCAR right now. It's least spoiled by commercialism. It feels very pure."

Q. How do you maintain such a hectic schedule?

A. "I put my foot down this year and said no triple-headers. I did that in November at Homestead. It's not the racing. It's the drivers meetings, qualifying, practice sessions. You take all that out, and I'd do triple-headers every weekend."

Spotlight on ...

Cale Gale

The 21-year-old son of veteran Late Model driver Bubba Gale, Cale made his Busch Series debut Saturday in the Federated Auto Parts 300 at Nashville Speedway. The Mobile, Ala., native drove James Finch's No. 1 Dodge and was fastest in practice. He qualified 19th and finished 20th. He spoke with Cox News Service writer Rick Minter at the track.

GALE On his preparation for his Busch debut: "We ran the ARCA race at Nashville (in April) and tested at the Milwaukee Mile. That went pretty well. I feel pretty good about everything so far."

On making it to one of NASCAR's three elite series: "I've been training my whole life to race. That's all I ever wanted to do, and it's all I've ever done. I want it really bad. I'm 21 now, and I've been racing since I was four. Let's go see what I've got."

On making his debut in a front-running car: "Running your first race in good equipment is definitely better than trying to struggle and make it on your own. James [Finch] had obviously seen something he liked in me."

On his name: "I was named for Cale Yarborough. My dad was a big Cale Yarborough fan, so it kind of went together with my last name. My dad had me destined to race my whole life. I was born to race."



Cale Gale made his Busch debut at Nashville Speedway, finishing 20th in James Finch's No. 1 Dodge.

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