#### DID YOU

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

#### THIS WEEK

Race: 3M Performance 400 Where: Michigan International Spee 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

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 Dalance.

forts 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

### MICHIGAN INTERNATIONAL SPEEDWAY

Track length: 2 miles
Race length: 200 laps/400 miles
Banking in corners: 18 degrees
Banking hontstretch: 12 degrees
Banking backstretch: 5 degrees
Frontstretch: 5,600 feet
Backstretch: 2,242 feet
Seating capacity: 137,243
First race: June 15, 1969; Motor
State 500

Qualifying record: Ryan Newman, Dodge; 194.232 mph; June 17, 2005 Race record: Dale Jarrett, Ford; 173.997 mph; June 13, 1999

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 EHIGAN

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(length: 2 miles length: 200 laps/400 miles ing in corner: 18 degrees ing frontstretch: 2 degrees ing fontstretch: 2 degrees ing backstretch: 2 degrees ing backstretch: 2 degrees ing backstretch: 2 degrees ing backstretch: 3 600 leet stretch: 2,242 leel no geapoit; 137,243 races: June 15, 1999; Motor 500

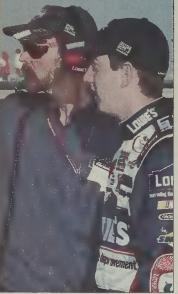
Frecord: Dale Jarrett, Ford; 197 mph; June 17, 2005 record: Dale Jarrett, Ford; 197 mph; June 18, 1999 me everything I know," he said. "Being able to watch my dad race throughout the years is where I started learning what I needed to do het suight to show the race car works and what it needs to go fast. He was always very hands-on."

Carl Edwards mother, Nancy Sterling, is more visible and the said him 6.

works and what i needs to be leave to the analy-hands-on."

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

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.

isince I've been here in NASCAR, but I don't think any-body 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-cylin-der ears 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."

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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 travelling.

"That was pretty cool."

## Rick Minter's OBSERVATIONS

Here are some of the top storylines this week heading to Michigan:

Crews try to ignore changes behind the wheel

Last week's news that Brian Vickers wants out at Hendrick Motorsports and that Casey Mears won't be returning to Chip Ganassi Racing aren't surprising given the frequency with which NASCAR drivers swap rides these days. But what often doesn't come to light is how the driver's decision affects the crew left behind.

the crew left behind.

Mears' crew chief, Donnie Wingo, and his No. 42 team found out last July that Jamie McMurray was leaving for Roush Racing. This year, Mears is vacating the ride.

Wingo told reporters at Pocono Raceway that he and his crew of veteran mechanics simply have to keep working and hope for the best.

Bottom line, you come here to race every week and you've got to put aside all this other stuff that goes on and just go do your job," he said. "It's tough. When you go home and sit down and think about it, you get pretty [upset], but there's really nothing else you can do about it."

It's not like Wingo's team isn't competitive. The last two years they've encred the last race before the Chase for the Nextel Cup, (Richmond) either 10th or 11th in points. The top 10 drivers following Richmond compete in the Chase for the Nextel Cup, but McMurray wasn't able to make the cut either year.

year.
Wingo said it's not because his crew hasn't worked hard.
"We just haven't been able to get there," he said. "We're not going to give
up. I think we've got a top-10 race team. We've been on the verge of it year
after year."

#### Perseverance pays off for Hamlin's team



#### Preparation key to double-duty weekends

The key to successfully running a Nextel Cup race at one track and a Busch Series race at another on the same weekend appears to be the preparation of the Busch car while the driver is at the Cup track attending to primary obligations there.

Last week Carl Edwards flew to Nashville Superspeedway, hopped into his No. 60 Ford and drove away from the field to win the Federated Auto Parts 300

No. 00 Ford and drove away from the held to win the Federated Auto Parts 300.

He said the hard work done by his stand-in driver, Hank Parker Jr., and his crew chief, Pierre Kuettel, was key to his victory.

"It made the whole double-duty thing easy," Edwards said. "All I had to do was show up and drive the ear."

The stand-in roles might a papear to be thankless ones, but drivers in search of a career jump-start seem glad to take them.

Kertus Davis, who has spent the bulk of his brief Busch career driving his father's woefully underfunded No. 0 Chevrolet, got to drive the Joe Gibbs Racing No. 20 Chevrolet for Denny Hamlin. Davis was fifth fastest in the car. "It's like getting into a Cadillac compared to what I'm used to getting into," he said, adding that he hopes his brief performance as a fill-in driver for Hamlin, who finished fourth at Nashville, will lead to a better ride down the NASCAR road.

"It feel like a lot of people know what I'm capable of doing if I'm in the right equipment," Davs said. "I think we showed that."

#### Hard times for some top drivers

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There are several drivers considered to be solid contenders for the championship in danger of not making the cut for the Chase for the Nextel Cup, which begins after the Sept. 9 race at Richmond.

Former Chase participants Kurt Busch, Ryan Newman, Elliott Sadler and Jeremy Mayfeld all are in danger of not being among the 10 drivers who will compete for the title over the final 10 races of the season.

Busch is 17th in the standings, 663 points behind leader Jimmie Johnson. Newman is 18th, 708 back; Sadler 20th, 740 back; and Mayfield, who made the Chase in 2004 and 2005, is hopelessly out of the hunt in the 32nd spot, 964 points behind the leader.

Four-time Cup champion Jeff Gordon, who missed the Chase last year, was in the top 10 in points before a hard crash in the closing laps at Pocono. He enters this week's race at Michigan 11th in the standings.

## Mark Martin

Catching up with ...

Mark Martin, third in Nextel Cuppoints after a 17th-place finish at Pecono 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?

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 the least spoiled by commercialism. It feels very pure."

Q. How do you maintain such a hection

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 river Bubba Gale, Cale made his Busch Series debut Saturday in the Federated Auto Parts Source Cale Gale made his at Nashville Speedway. The Mobile, Ala., native drove James Finch's No. 1 Speedway, finishing Dodge and was fastest in 20th in James Finch's practice. He qualified 10th and finished 20th He spoke with Cox News Service writer Rick Minter at the track.

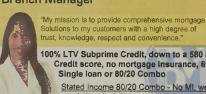


GALE
On his preparation for his Busch debut: "We ran the ARCA race at Nashville [in April] and tested at the Milwaukee Mile. went pretty well. I feel pretty good about everything so far."

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."

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